

## Hopi by Marty Felix

On September 25, 2014, the day after my 67<sup>th</sup> birthday, I went to the North Soda section of the horse range for a little R & R. I spent the morning roaming around the 180 acre field below the old cabin observing and photographing three bands of horses who were grazing there. I finally tore myself away and returned to my vehicle. I was hoping to find another band of horses on my way out so I could sit and have lunch with them. I only had to drive about a half mile before I saw the bay stallion Ricoboy and his grulla mare Mystic in a small open area. Perfect! I pulled over, grabbed my lunch, and sat down on a dead tree to watch my fourth band of the day. Mystic was resting in the shade of a large juniper tree off to my left, and Ricoboy was grazing near the tree line on my right. I hadn't even taken a bite out of my sandwich when a long-legged black foal got up from under the tree, walked over to Mystic, and started nursing! I was shocked because I had no idea Mystic was even pregnant! This baby appeared to be about a day old, and I realized that we had the same birthday. I instantly bonded with the newborn filly. Hopi, as we named her, was a healthy, energetic little girl, and she put on quite a show for my lunchtime entertainment. She ran around Mystic jumping and bucking a few times before she settled down for a nap. I considered this experience a late birthday present from the wild horse gods.

By March of 2015, Mystic and Hopi had left Ricoboy, who was 16 at the time, and were running with a young stallion and his five harem mares. Over the years, I enjoyed watching my little "Libra friend" grow up, and each time I saw her, I smiled and remembered the day we first met.

In early April of 2017, Billie Hutchings and I spent our afternoon in North Soda where we saw five bands of horses. We were thinking that it couldn't get much better than that. Ah, but it did! As we were approaching the cattle guard to exit the horse range, Billie thought she saw something moving in the trees on our left. We stopped and had a look. We determined that Legacy's band was in the woods, and not wanting to bother them, we parked and tried to take attendance to make sure all of the band members were there. All of them plus one! Hopi was the first horse to emerge from the pinyon trees, and she had a foal by her side. She and the baby trotted right toward us, almost as if Hopi wanted to show us her new foal. This little one was named Zuni, and she will be available for adoption on Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> along with her dam Hopi. Both of these horses are curious, friendly, sweet - and full of surprises. I will miss seeing my birthday buddy Hopi, and her yearling filly Zuni on the range. I pray someone adopts them and gives them a great home!

