

By the time you read this, a true hero will have been retired from a long and accomplished career with the Calgary Police Service. His name is Kowboy,



and he is a registered Canadian sorrel gelding.

The end of September marks the end of Kowboy's service with the Mounted Unit. He was acquired in the fall of 2003 and has been pounding the pavement of Calgary with Sergeant Derrick McGougan ever since.

In 2003, when Sergeant McGougan went to evaluate the three year old gelding from breeder Dennis Dyck in Rosemary, Alberta, he thought Kowboy would be a good fit in the unit. "He was laid back from the get go, really personable and liked to be around people," Sergeant McGougan remembers.

At the 2012 Annual Horse Breeders and Owners Conference, Sergeant McGougan spoke about the selection and development of a bomb proof horse. In the accompanying proceedings manual, his paper elaborated on the traits that he looks for when selecting horses for the unit: "Reaching the point where we can ride our horses through heavy traffic, carry flags, cross deep water, push into aggressive crowds, stand for gunfire, sirens and smoke requires a true partnership between horse and rider." The top traits he looks for are horses that are respectful and calm, which was Kowboy to a T.

Sergeant McGougan took Kowboy on a six week trial. He proved himself in week one when Sergeant McGougan was riding in Weaselhead Park on a concrete bridge and a helicopter flew directly overhead; Kowboy was unfazed. "And he was just a three year old," Sergeant

McGougan adds.

Kowboy was also just a three year old at Sergeant McGougan's property when his daughter Lauren, who was eight at the time, was found sitting on the top of a fence braiding a very relaxed Kowboy's mane. When asked what she was doing, she answered that she was going to take him for a ride. While that did not happen that day, Kowboy has since turned into a go anywhere, do anything kind of horse.

Despite being employed for almost 10 years with the Calgary Police Service Mounted Unit, Kowboy is still loves being around people. Sergeant McGougan comments, "It is sometimes his biggest drawback because we need horses to get aggressive with crowds but he is a gentle giant."

Although Kowboy has had many accomplishments while on duty with the Mounted Unit, he has also had his share of the spotlight. This July, he safely carried hockey player Sheldon Kennedy in the Calgary Stampede Parade. In addition, he also carried the torch for the 2010 Winter Olympics. "Well, he carried the person who carried the torch," Sergeant McGougan laughs.

For Kowboy, retirement is well-deserved and timely. He has built up some arthritis so will gladly trade pavement for pasture. Kowboy will stay with Sergeant McGougan and his family at their home where he will still be used for trail riding and ditch riding.

Calgary Police Service might be losing a dedicated "officer," but it looks like Lauren McGougan who bonded with Kowboy as a youngster will finally have her horse back.