

Will

From 1949 until 1995, Jedediah Island was owned by Al and Mary Palmer, originally of Seattle. Having lived on the island for decades, in 1995 they sold out to a consortium of preservation societies, which then turned the island over to the Province of BC to keep in perpetuity as a park. Once Al and Mary had left the island, the only remaining resident was Will, an aging chestnut horse.

The horse began his life living semi-wild in the interior of BC but in 1972, as a yearling, he found himself at an auction in Merville, near Courtenay on Vancouver Island. By day's end he and ten other horses were on their way to a new life on Lasqueti Island.

He had never been trained to saddle and, being a young stallion, was unruly and difficult to ride—so difficult that his owner christened him *Crazy Horse*. Lasqueti Island was open range at the time. Horse and cattle owners often let their animals range freely, and *Crazy Horse* was no exception. After some time, his owner moved away, and he settled into Island life, beholden to no-one.

But *Crazy Horse* was still an unruly stallion, and he caused problems. Stallions were not permitted on the open range, so one day the local RCMP came looking for him—to put him down.

I had bought my horse at the same auction as Will, and knew his owner well, so I arranged to have *Crazy Horse* gelded, to preserve his life.

The operation was a success. He quieted down and lived several more years on Lasqueti Island. Then he met Pete.

Pete and his wife lived in a small house in Long Bay, Jedediah Island. During visits to Lasqueti Pete had grown to admire *Crazy Horse* and eventually, realizing that the horse had no owner to care for him, Pete moved him to Jedediah Island, and even gave him a new name—*Will*.



Will found contentment on Jedediah Island. For the next decade Al and Mary Palmer fed him and cared for him. After the Palmers left the island, he had sheep and goats for company, and in the summer, visiting kayakers and boaters. He ate the fruit that fell from the trees in autumn, the grasses in the meadows, and during hard times, sword ferns and salmonberries. It was a life he was particularly suited to; it was said that prior to coming to Lasqueti, he had never seen a bale of hay or a sack of oats.

Will eventually died, at the age of almost 40 years, having started his life semi-wild in the BC interior and ending it the same way on the coast.

Kevin Monahan, March, 2022