

Peyote – our final “duel”

ONE OF MY NEATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS at Wolf Haven International was to convince Peyote that I wasn't a bad guy. When I first met Peyote he was many things to me, but a friend he was not. He was so scared of me that he would just run around his enclosure until I left the area. It hurt my heart to see him so scared and know that I was the root of that fear. This took such a toll on me that I eventually just didn't spend time around him. I'd simply do my animal care duties and leave. After awhile, I realized that this was not helping Peyote either; he was just waiting out his fears. I was sad that Peyote couldn't find peace in the one spot that he should have had it.

One day after repeating this senseless self-perpetuating routine, I charged him. He had no clue what to do at first and was in limbo somewhere

between panic and curiosity. He froze and looked at me while I looked at him. I could almost hear western stand-off music playing as we squared off. Suddenly we both made a move – I turned to the left and ran as fast as I could outside his enclosure and Peyote raced along the fence next to me. It was just him and me, and we had finally found a common ground, not only to meet on but also to run on. I stopped, turned on a dime, he on a penny, and we both dug in for round two, counterclockwise.

Before I left I stopped to look at



him and say thanks and what I saw was him stopped, saying thanks to me. We took a moment and regarded one another as friends. The next time I did the sanctuary walk-through, I again heard western dueling music blaring in my mind as I saw Peyote slowly walk up to his launching position. It was too late – we were already biting at the ground with our feet before even realizing that we

had formed a new tradition that was going to be a long-lasting one.

Peyote and I never became extremely close like he was with some of the other people in his life. But in

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some ways we got closer because we were able to experience two different kinds of relationships with one another. We were able to build a bridge across the gap between us and forge a friendship. Peyote, what a special guy you are. I miss you brother. 