

An American Quarter Horse *in* France

After his owner took him with her to France, "Bandit" fit right in, even developing a taste for French cuisine.

By Kathy A. Johnson

WHEN MONICA JONES NEEDED A DRASTIC CHANGE of scenery to aid her emotional healing after her mother passed away, she decided to move from her home in New York to France, something she'd always dreamed of doing.

The question mark in this plan was what to do with Bandit (registered as Lenas Cut Up), her then-25-year-old Quarter Horse. Would she bring Bandit with her to France? The dilemma weighed on her mind during the six months or so it took to research the prospective move and determine if she would still be able to run her marketing and branding firm, *3dstudios.net*, from France.

Then one day she had a conversation with a friend who said, "I think I found a place for Bandit. She has got this great field, she has got other horses, and he'd be perfect there."

"And I started crying," Monica says. "Up to that point, it had been sort of a question, but it became obvious that he had to come with me.

I had to find the money and get him on the plane.

"I knew from a physical standpoint, he would be OK. If he was a frail horse, I probably wouldn't have tried it. In fact, I probably wouldn't have moved to France. But he's sturdy," she says.

Monica and Bandit Move to France

MONICA MOVED TO FRANCE IN NOVEMBER OF 2015, and Bandit moved to France just before Christmas of that year. Her friends at the barn in New York kept an eye on Bandit until Monica got settled and found a barn for him near her new home. Monica lives in Chartres, about an hour from Paris by train. Bandit's boarding barn is in Barjouville, about eight minutes away from Chartres.

Monica says it wasn't complicated to move Bandit; she simply hired a company to do all the work for her. But it was expensive.



Monica Jones, who describes herself as a photographer and storyteller, loves focusing her camera on Lenas Cut Up, aka "Bandit," the American Quarter Horse she brought to France with her.

"I think they usually moved horses that were showing. I don't think it's that common that someone is moving their pet, so they had to be a little more hands-on with me because I was calling them every 20 minutes asking what was going on, was the plane late, and so on. They had to stay in touch with me the whole time, and they were really, really great. They did everything from start to finish, from paperwork to transportation, everything that needed to be done," she says.

The move took about four days, with breaks to allow Bandit to rest. He trailered from his barn in New York to John F. Kennedy International Airport, and stayed there for the night before flying to Belgium. After he landed in Belgium, he stayed overnight at a barn next to the airport before being trailered to Monica the next day. There were no quarantine requirements.

"When Bandit first arrived, I made a point of

clearing my schedule so I could spend a significant amount of time with him every day until he understood that this was his new home and I was here. A part of me really thinks that



When Horses Fly

Get a first-hand account of what it's like to fly horses across the ocean, as *The*

American Quarter Horse Journal's Larri Jo Starkey escorts a California-born reining horse to his new home in Europe. Read her story in the digital edition of *America's Horse*, accessible at www.aqha.com/americanhorse.

he thought I had abandoned him because I was gone for two months before he saw me," Monica says.

"I have a video of the day he arrived. You can see when he heard my voice, he looked up, and there was shock on his face. He was exhausted and kind of creaky and didn't notice I was there at first," she says. But when Monica called his name, "His head snapped up. Then all the fatigue disappeared. He wanted to walk around, and he took to everything like he was born here."

Quarter Horses are uncommon at Bandit's barn, and most of the horses around him are much larger than his 15.3 hands. "They call him a pony here," Monica says. "I keep telling them, he's not a pony!"

Bandit has now turned 29, and Monica still rides him once a week on average.

"Quarter Horses are seriously amazing stock. He's in good-enough shape to work every day," she says. "But A, I don't have time, and B, I just don't see why it's necessary. He's out every day, so he gets his exercise. I keep an eye on him to make sure he looks good. I go out to see him almost every day. Even if it's just a swing by to give him some carrots, I'm there so he can see

my face. If I miss two days, he is like, 'Where have you been?'

"They've embraced me here, and everyone loves Bandit. They say, 'This horse is so crazy, we just love him to death! He's amazing, he's in such fantastic shape, are you sure he's 29?'"

Oatmeal Cookies and Baguettes

"HE REALLY IS QUITE A CHARACTER, THIS HORSE," Monica says. "He has personality in spades; it's almost too much! For someone who can't speak, he's really adept at letting you know what he does and does not want to do."

"He's very lazy and very much not in agreement with me working him at all. He feels that he is too old for it, and he should be in retirement. We should go for walks with me on the ground, and I should bring him treats and carrots. I think he thinks that's pretty much all we should be doing, so we kind of have an argument every time we try to work. He's like, 'I don't think I should have to do this,' and I'm like, 'Listen, you have to do this so you can stay healthy, because I can't afford for you not to be healthy.'"

Bandit has a sweet tooth, with a particular

Monica (inset) and a host of her friends celebrated Bandit's 27th birthday in style. The charismatic gelding is now 29.



COURTESY OF MONICA JONES



MONICA JONES

Monica jokes that Bandit is a great communicator. He's not crazy about riding anymore, but long walks accompanied by treats are perfectly acceptable.

fondness for Dollar Store oatmeal cookies, something Monica must rely on friends to bring from the U.S. when they come to visit.

"They don't have oatmeal cookies in France. They don't exist. So I decided that if I couldn't get oatmeal cookies for Bandit, I would try to make him oatmeal cookies. So I went through this whole thing and got all the stuff. And I thought they came out quite well. They were nice-looking cookies, they tasted good. He took one bite, chewed it, spit it out and refused to eat any more. And I'm like, 'Wow, that was so rude! Do you know how much trouble I went through to make these cookies for you?'"

He has also developed a taste for dried baguettes. (The baguettes must be dried out before they can be safely given to the horses.) When Bandit first arrived, a woman at the barn asked if Bandit would like one.

"I was certain that was something he wouldn't eat.

They're not sweet, and not a texture that he's going to like. She walks over, hands it to him, he looks at me and takes a bite. Wow, make me look like an idiot, why don't you?" Monica says, laughing. Now when she has leftover baguettes, "I leave them out to dry and take them to Bandit."

Monica adds one final story about her character of a horse. "He had one criteria when we had the conversation about potentially moving to France," she says. "He did tell me he would be willing to go. However, he would not learn French! If I talk to him in French, he will not respond to me. His name in French is (pronounced) 'Bon-dee.' If I call him by that name, he will not acknowledge me. I have to say 'Bandit.' If I say 'Bon-dee,' he says, 'I don't know who you're talking about.'" ■

Kathy A. Johnson is an AQHA member and freelance writer from central Florida who recently traveled to France.

Quarter Horses on the Continent

ALTHOUGH AMERICAN QUARTER HORSES AREN'T THE MOST COMMON BREED IN EUROPE, THERE are still plenty of them there. According to the 2017 AQHA Annual Report, there are 9,493 Quarter Horses in France, making it the third most-populous European country, in terms of American Quarter Horses.

Germany boasts 37,849 Quarter Horses, while Italy has 24,838.

Curious to see how your country, state or province stacks up? Go to www.aqha.com/annualreport to see American Quarter Horse populations worldwide.