



Lorraine Melgosa drives the hearse carriage in one of the many military funerals she has assisted gratis.

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family has already given so much. I can't take anything from you. I can't take a cup of coffee from anyone, let alone have a family that's lost a soldier buy me a horse."

Lorraine says she lovingly argued with Phyllis over a period of time. However the family was so persistent that Lorraine eventually accepted the offer. The generosity of the Dietz family resulted in Lorraine purchasing Lady, a black Percheron mare.

Life went on for three years with Lady. Lorraine and Lady provided horse-drawn hearse services at more than 80 funerals, 21 of which were for active military personnel. Then Lady died suddenly of colic in November of 2009. She was just 14 years old. She is buried in Lorraine's yard next to Mike.

Near the time of Lady's death, the motor in Lorraine's truck died. Suddenly, two-thirds of her funeral business assets were gone. No horse, no truck. Lorraine almost quit the day Lady died. What was God telling her? She felt like she'd given enough. There was no shame in quitting.

After crying all day and night, the thought came to her, "Soldiers can't quit when their guys die. They have to keep going into battle. Why should I be able to quit?"

A good friend came to Lorraine with an idea for a fundraiser she wanted to organize to buy Lorraine another horse and truck. Lorraine balked at the idea of accepting the help and money of others.

"I don't feel right about this. I can find another horse. I don't need this," she recalls saying. She discussed her concerns over the fund-raising event with another friend, whose advice was, that Lorraine can't deny people the blessing of helping her. She wants to do all this for other people but part of God's test is seeing what she can accept, too."

Realizing that in order to give, one must learn to receive, Lorraine attended the benefit. The event was wildly successful and with the help of her local community she was able to purchase

her next horse. She felt that God was telling her to come back stronger and better than before.

She bought her next horse, sight unseen. When Lorraine saw the horse for the first time she wasn't sure she had done the right thing. The horse was just off the truck and still had his winter coat and his name was Bill. That was the first thing she changed and he became Duke because he was just not a "Bill" to her. Her father's nickname had been Duke, so she felt it was a fitting name for her new horse.

Back at home, she lit firecrackers to simulate the guns that are fired during military funerals and she walked him beside the trains tracks near her farm. Nothing she did fazed him. Duke has proven to be a superb horse. Today, Lorraine believes that Duke will be her best horse yet.

### Mission to honor others

Since the first military funerals Lorraine did with Mike, her mission in life has become clear to her. All she had been through prior to the wars was preparing her for what she's now doing. Lorraine and her horses have provided horse-drawn hearse services at 45 military funerals. She vividly remembers them all.

When asked if one funeral in particular touched her the most, she says, "They all do, they all have a story," she says. Lorraine has attracted the attention of the national media. She has been featured in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Denver Post*, and as well as on the "NBC Nightly News," during the Making a Difference segment.

She does not like the attention for herself but sees it as a means to an end, to bring attention to the servicemen and women and their stories. She's been called a hero and she immediately says she's not. To her the soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are the heroes. "They risk their lives every day and what do I do?" she says. "I put on a tux and go to work. There's a lot of other people