



LIFE LESSONS

Did I grow up in a time when things like this really happen?



My dad is a cattleman through and through, so when any of us kids ever mentioned the word, **horse**, it never went over well. I feel like every time that word came up, we were told horses run cattle, and sometimes they run cattle to the point of running them right through the fence! So, I kinda realized my dad was not a horse person and you are either a horse person or a cattle person, but the two shall not mix.

Just a few weeks ago, I was sitting around with some neighbors at our cabin when we started joking around about a hot tub for everyone to use. Now, none of us really wanted to spend the money on a hot tub, but as the hypothetical plans for this hot tub grew, the more we laughed about who would be the sucker to buy one for all of us to use. I was asked if anyone ever sold a house and needed to unload a hot tub.

As we were laughing and the conversation was coming full circle to the realization that the only way a hot tub was going to be set up here was if *a free one fell from the sky*. It reminded me that could actually happen (*not the fall from the sky part*) and I was reminded of a story from my childhood I just had to tell.

I don't know if this was some sort of parenting plan on my dad's part or just a way to say NO permanently without really having to say NO (I think it was the latter). I must have been a Junior or a Senior in High School when I went to my dad and asked if I could buy another horse, so that my boyfriend could also ride. My dad replied with a look that I knew very well, and then followed with a verbal NO. The kind of NO as if I was asking for something crazy.

Our family had 2 horses at that time, including my brother's horse which no one could ride, and 2 were too many. I'm sure, I continued to ask and must have finally gotten him worn down to where he said this, **"You're not going to buy another horse when there are plenty of horses out there people are tired of feeding. Go find one of those..."** Well, that was as good of a YES as I was going to get!

We started out by driving gravel roads after school, searching for a horse that looked like the owners were tired of feeding it. We did a lot of driving and a lot of knocking on doors. We would see a horse out in a field, and then we would try to

figure out which house it belonged to. Sometimes we would go to the front door together or take turns knocking and asking if they had a horse they wanted to get rid of – **for free.**

We knocked on a lot of doors!

Field after field and door after door, this was getting old, and at times very intimidating. Some people looked at us like we were crazy; some people seemed upset and just said NO; some people tried to sell us their horse; some people just wanted to talk, and the best one of all...some people wanted to know who the heck my dad was.

I don't really know how many days or weeks passed by, but one day we passed a field where there was a gorgeous palomino grazing all alone. It looked impressive against the lush grass and not at all like the owners were tired of feeding it. We almost didn't even stop and ask about this horse, but after all, who was going to give away that beautiful horse. We decided to keep on track with what we had been doing.

We went further up the county road to a house and knocked to see if they owned the horse. When an older gentleman answered the door, we asked the usual question. We prepared ourselves for whatever response he was going to give. He listened, and then he asked if we would like to see the horse, but he certainly wasn't interested in getting rid of him.

We walked as he drove down to the gate where he then called out for the horse to come. The horse came running right up to us. When the man started to open the gate to pass through, I felt the horse brush by us, and we all turned to watch it head up the road. It galloped with the strong sound of its hooves slapping against the road surface. **I wanted that horse!**

I looked over at the man still holding the gate in his hand – he had that old-man-mad look where I didn't know if he was going to cuss or spit. What was clear is that something was going to come out of his mouth, and it was going to be at us or at that horse. He yelled with all his words blended into one, for us to jump into his truck. We all headed up the road in this stranger's truck, chasing his runaway horse.

The horse finally stopped about a mile away at the next field. He walked up to the horse, put the halter around his neck and said a few mumbled words. We led the horse back while he drove behind us. Once back at the house, he directed us to take the horse to a large shop to the side of his house. Once

inside, he took the lead rope and proudly displayed all the tricks this horse could do. It had been a show horse, with the trophies and ribbons to prove it. Our private show ended with a bow and he asked if we wanted to come back tomorrow.

Our after school visits continued because it was just so nice hearing his stories and brushing the horse. One day he asked if I wanted to ride the horse and boy did I. I still remember getting up in that saddle because this horse was tall, much taller than my horse at home. I rode him all around the yard as the man shouted out commands for the horse.

On the next days' visits, it was made clear to me that he was thinking about giving it to me. He also made it clear it was to be my horse only, which I very much liked the idea of. We didn't have a horse trailer, so I had to figure out how to get the horse home. I thought of my neighbor, Brad, I knew when I was a kid that lived down the road and he would always let us pet his horse, Chinka, whenever he happened to ride past as a teenager. Brad Scrivner is now the Manager of the Callaway Water District #1. He was so nice to haul my horse home for me – **for free.**

You just can't make this next part up...once Brad arrived at our house with the horse, my dad then said, **"There's plenty of overgrown pastures around here, you need to find one of those next..."**

Well, guess what...WE DID!

We went around the same way we did for our free horse and found some free pasture (An interesting side note that I haven't even thought to tell Brenda Leydens with Mid-America Bank. That free pasture is right on the land where she now lives.)

When I finished telling my *Free Horse Story* that night to my friends wanting a hot tub, I then said, **"There are a lot of hot tubs on back porches not being used, and we just need to find one of those..."** (I don't think anyone has gone door-to-door yet, and there has not been a hot tub purchased either.)

I hadn't remembered my horse story for years, but ever since I told it that night, I've been thinking about it. Did I just grow up in a time when things like that could really happen? What would happen if the same words were said to one of my children.

Would they come home with a free horse?