

FIFTY-TWO SUNDAYS

TO

***HORSE-SAGE-ISM***

Autobiography,  
Equine Guided Journey in Life Leadership,  
&  
Memoirs on How to Live a Lifetime

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The Ultra Elite Culture for Humanity

By:

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## **Acknowledgments**

To All the Horses and Special People in my Life who Helped Me Discover and Live the  
Ultimate Elite Culture, aka, Horsesageism

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## **Preface**

Homo Sapiens have been on this planet for around 200,000 years. Whether it was a result of evolution or by some other means, humans separated themselves from other animal species on earth, by having an executive functioning part of their brain. The executive frontal lobes account for around 40% of the human brain and are much larger in humans compared to our closest non-human primate relatives.

Just like that, the planet was now home to a free-thinking species that wonders why they are here, where they are going after death, and at a loss as to how to get along with each other, since they all have differing ideas and beliefs based on how they see their environment.

Just imagine early cave men deciding to join forces and start sharing a cave, and all the duties required to survive. After about a week of trying to work together, problems start to arise between cave members, such as, what is acceptable behavior, and what to do with lazy members that don't do their fair share. I could probably do a whole chapter on the possible issues and differences even after a week, but I think you get the picture. Anyway, this necessitates an individual or group of individuals to come up with some sort of culture to define and manage the group. Very simply, culture, as I see it, consists of the beliefs, behaviors, values, practices, objects, and other characteristics common to the members of a particular family, group, tribe, or society. This description could also apply to an individual, as well.

The newly formed culture consists of beliefs including gods, religions, political/governing system, and whatever else the leaders of the group come up with. Now that a culture is in place, the group grows into a tribe where members buy in and share similar beliefs especially related to religion and political/governing structure. I think it is worth mentioning, as a side note, that there is a lot of research that supports the contention that many religions were invented to control and govern people, with new ones springing up when there was dissatisfaction with the current ruling system. Interesting to say the least.

We now have a tribe of cave folks that have a sense of belonging and have decided to follow each other within that group. For those members who don't agree, they can either leave and

go find another tribe, or make changes more to their liking within the tribe. Either option usually comes with conflict, mistreatment and killing each other. More on these sub-cultures in a minute. The members of the new cave man tribe now share the same culture unique to the group. From there, the group defends their culture from real and perceived enemies including other tribes and ethnic groups. Emphasis is put on the importance of passing down the tribe's unique culture to the offspring of the group. As time goes by, more and more cave folks form new cultures/tribes, or join existing ones. Before we know it, humans inhabit places all over the world existing in their unique cultures, tribes, and societies. Oh, and one other phenomenon begins to occur. Most every culture, tribe, and society believe that theirs is better than everyone else's, so they push their way of thinking and doing things on those cultures, tribes, and societies that are different, or disagree with them. This is especially true when it comes to governing/politics, and religious beliefs. And the outcome usually involves human conflict, mistreatment, and killing each other.

The 200,000-year road to modern day society has not been a pretty one. Sure, some human societies have made it to developed status, and or, to an industrialized country-mature and sophisticated economy, advanced technological infrastructure and diverse industrial and service sectors. But nothing has really changed from the early cave man days when it comes to differences in cultural, tribal, societal, political/governing, and religious beliefs as the root cause of human's inability to get along. And when you add to that, the fact that every human has their own unique individual culture, families have a unique culture, and groups within a tribe and society have their own unique cultures. things really get complicated. Think about it. History shows us that subcultures of extreme groups can form, reverting to conflict and tribalism within a society. Depending how it is resolved, more often than not, humans end up mistreating, or killing each other. In fact, this very thing is happening right here in the United States. The republican and democratic parties have polarized, there is clear and present danger to our democracy, and the possibility of authoritarian rule is in the conversation.

Not to sound like a broken record, but the result has remained the same during the 200,000-year human experiment. Humans continue to mistreat and kill their own species, primarily due to the differences I just discussed. Oh, ya, you can also throw in ethnicity, which kind of fits in

the cultural box, but skin color is another one that fits in a box of its own. What species would kill and mistreat their own kind, just because they are a different color? Complicated!

As a member of modern-day society, I was very lucky to have been born and raised in a developed country by caring and loving parents that had a family culture characterized by mostly good values and practices. Their beliefs included the Catholic religion, and republican views in a democratic and capitalistic society. There were, however, toxic components including: Catholicism and capitalism to an extreme, and racism, sexism, homophobia, and white supremacy to name a few.

I sometimes wonder why I was so fortunate to begin my life in a time and place so much better than the living environment endured by most other humans in this world, past and present. Luck of the draw, I guess. And before I forget to mention it, both of my parents served in World War II, I vividly remember as a kid how close we came to World War III with the Cuban missile crisis, then the Korean War, how I barely missed getting drafted during the Vietnam War after high school, and the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and still counting. Way to go humans, your conflict streak remains intact.

You're probably scratching your head, asking yourself where I am going with this mostly negative assessment of humans. Very simply, I came to the realization that all humans perceive the world differently with their perceptions and beliefs shaped by their environment. Beginning from the day you are born, development of your perceptions and beliefs are being decided by someone else, and other outside factors as you experience life. First you are assigned a name, then whatever family culture, (If you are lucky enough to have a family), you are born into, starts the process of building a shell so to speak, around the true you. This shell continues to grow in layers as you go through life, heavily influenced by factors such as your assumptions, how you think you are perceived by others, your ism's (racism, sexism, capitalism, socialism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Mormonism, Communism, etc.) The list of ism's humans adheres to is literally immense. They take on such a broad description, the important thing to remember is that toxic ism's usually are reality illusions. But always remember that Horse-Sage-Ism is a good ism! The point is, if left unchecked, your shell layers of reality illusions will continue to multiply as you travel down the road of life.

In the following chapters I am going to take you through my life journey of transformation and self-discovery. During my journey I learned that the vast majority of humans, including myself, develop a toxic personal culture based on, marginal values and practices, combined with a unique shell infested by reality illusions. It is this toxic culture, mainly underpinned by faulty values/practices, and reality illusions, that prevent most humans from living their best life during their brief time here on earth. If I have scared you with this non-conventional line of thinking, and frankly, a dose of reality, don't give up reading quite yet. Or, if I have sparked some concern that you may not be living your best life, we are off to a go start.

Fortunately, my life with horses has been, and continues to be instrumental in helping me transform my toxic culture, by discovering, adopting, and practicing a personal culture comprised of awareness, harmonizing core values, superior core practices, and attention to consistently deflecting shell illusions. I am now living my best life, as the true me. My priority is to live in the present moment, with me, and only me, as my life leader. Let me show you how. You only have one life to live, as far as I know. Why waste it like almost everyone else has, does, and will continue to do. Horses have survived for over 50 million years compared to our mere 200,000-year existence. It is their wisdom that offers us an alternative in life, if we are willing to listen and take action.

## **Introduction:**

Allen J. Hamilton in his book entitled *Zen Mind Zen Horse* tells the story of The Japanese Horse Master. It goes like this: There's a wonderful story about a Japanese horse master who had lived to be one hundred years old and lay on his deathbed expressing regret that the end was near. His oldest, most dutiful son was at his side, attending to him.

Suddenly the old man sighed and said, "What a pity that I must die now, at this time."

The son looked back at his father with disbelief and said, "Father, how can you have regrets about dying now? You are one hundred years old. No one in our village is older, wiser, or more revered than you are. You are the most celebrated horseman in Japan. Could anyone ask for more? Why despair about dying?"

"Because", said the old man, "it was just last week that I began to truly understand what horsemanship is about. It's such a pity to die now. I was off to a good start!"

Way back in July 1976 I had the good fortune to attend a two-day colt starting clinic in Wheatland Wyoming put on by a true legend in horsemanship-Ray Hunt. Ray and the Dorrance brothers probably did more to change how humans interact with horses in a positive way, than anyone else in horse-human history.

Ray passed away several years ago, but his legacy will live on for many years to come. Ray was similar to the Japanese Horse Master described by Allen. He considered good horsemanship a metaphor that could be applied to everything else in one's life.

Anyway, during the clinic, about 20 of us are riding our colts around the arena with Ray shouting out instructions and some of his famous "Cowboy Logic" one liners. "Why does it take a lifetime to learn how to live a lifetime?" Ray boldly shouted. Everybody kind of looked at each other sort of wondering what that had to do with horses, then he moved on to yelling out more of his logic: Fix it up and let him find it! Feel Timing Balance! Make the wrong thing

difficult, and the right thing easy! Recognize the smallest change, the slightest try! I thought to myself, Man, I have never heard this stuff before, if this guy is the real deal, I have a lot to learn.

Turns out Ray was the real deal! and in the many years since 1976 I have come to appreciate what these horse/life philosophers like Ray and the Japanese Horse Master are trying to tell us. The parallel between Horsemanship and Life is real, and to be honest with you, quite eerie.

Biomimicry is defined as an approach to innovation that seeks sustainable solutions to human challenges by emulating nature's time-tested patterns and strategies. The core idea is that nature has already solved many of the problems we as humans grapple with. In my 60 plus years of interacting with horses, I am here to tell you that nature via horses does in fact offer solutions to many of our life challenges if we are willing to listen and learn from them.

***“Don’t let people discourage you from living your dreams”***

*David DeNotaris*

## ***Part 1-Horses, The Power of Their Presence, No Matter How Remote***

### **Chapter 1 The First Encounter**

The oldest of four kids, I grew up in a suburb of Denver Colorado. Early on, there were wheat fields by our neighborhood. My dream to be around horses and become a cowboy is my earliest and most vivid memory. We had middle class neighbors. We knew most of them. No horse folks, just nice people raising a family. Times and roles in the 50's and 60's were much different. The dad's role was to work while the mom stayed home doing the cooking, cleaning and everything else that was deemed "woman's work" at the time. In fact, living up to your role was so important, a story about my dad rings true. As my mom tells it, when they were first married, she would pack my dad's lunch box, he would catch the bus to work, and return each evening with a home cooked meal waiting for him. This went on for a month or so until he announced one night at dinner that he had finally landed a job. Turns out he didn't have a job the whole time, and he just rode the bus around most of the day looking for a job. Guess he rationalized that it was his role to go to work every day, even if he didn't have a job. Interesting.

Anyway, my dad worked for many years at Gates Rubber Company as an industrial engineer until he passed away at age 50. And my mom was a traditional stay at home mom, who eventually went back to work as a registered nurse when us kids got older. My dad was a horseman if you count going to the track every weekend to bet on the ponies. Watching from the rail would push his comfort level. He was scared to death of horses. My mom grew up in a small Nebraska farm town. She had no experience with horses, no interest in horses, but probably gave me some kind of horse DNA going back to her distant farmer relatives. So, you can see, the thought of horses inspiring me was improbable. But as far back as I can remember, I was, and still am, under their spell.

I would be twelve years old before actually owning my own horse. Sure, before that, I was always an animal person. Dogs, rabbits, turtles, hamsters, fish, you name it, I always had pets

around. But to this day, I still remember going to bed early on a Friday night so Saturday morning would arrive quicker. That's when my favorite time of the week would begin. I would watch Fury, Sky King, Roy Rogers, Lone Ranger, and the Rifleman. Then that night, I would get to stay up and watch Bonanza and Gunsmoke. Then to finish off the weekend I never missed the High Chaparral. I would marvel at the horses, and dream of being a cowboy. So as a kid, I did not feel an absence of the horse, but rather the power of their presence, no matter how remote.

Charles Rossiter, my dad. Great father, and husband to my hero mom Dorothy who my dad called "Liz". We called him "Pop" instead of dad for whatever reason. He was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska along with his two brothers Todd, and Dave, and sister Peggy. Never met my grandfather who had passed on before I was born, but his mom was a real gem. She was of Irish descent with a maiden name of Ratigan. All of her kids were musically inclined, just like she was. Never could read music, but sing her a song or play it on a record player, and she could play it back perfectly on the piano. All four kids had a great voice, and they all could play musical instruments. No horse DNA there. Grandma Rossiter was a real people person, just like dad. They both had a great sense of humor, however Grandma never showed much of a temper as compared to dad. In fact, I remember one time when she came to visit. While she was taking a shower, brother Jim snuck in the bathroom, grabbed her false teeth that she had set on the sink, and flushed them down the toilet. Dad beat the tar out of Jim, and grandma just chuckled. She was kind of hard to understand the rest of her vacation since she didn't have a spare set of teeth with her.

From what I remember, she worked at Cantoni's restaurant in Omaha for many years as a cashier. Over the years she saved a lot of rare coins that passed through her cash register, which she gave me years later since I was her first grandchild. I still have the collection to this day even though during tough times I was very tempted to cash them in. Sure, glad I didn't. Now I have to decide who I will pass them on to. Probably my first grandchild Tenley. After grandma passed away I learned that her other role at the restaurant was acting as the resident bookie for Cantoni customers. She always worked the night shift so that her customers could place their bets with her for the next day's horse races at Aksarben (Notice it is Nebraska

spelled backwards) Racetrack. Then she would go to the track the next day and place all of the bets, and cash in the winners. Not sure what her cut was, but I would guess it paid more than tips in the restaurant.

Anyway, she loved us kids, and always looked forward to our summer trip to stay with her. She still lived in the old three-story house that the kids grew up in. We would make the 500-mile trek from Denver to Omaha, which back then was a real journey. We stopped a lot for bathroom breaks, while dad filled the oil and checked the gas. He would appropriately call all of his cars a jalopy. Not a real car buff or accomplished mechanic. In fact, he was so inept at fixing things he would need a box of band aids after changing his license plates every year. Looking back, I think he figured the money he would waste on a new car would be better spent on the family, Saturday morning golf, Saturday afternoon horse races, Wednesday night bowling, Thursday poker night, and Saturday night bingo at the church.

On the very first trip to Omaha, which by the way, I remember better than any of the others, it was like a family reunion. The first night started with dinner and everyone except the kids sitting around the kitchen table drinking beer and playing cards. My grandmother stopped the game to make some announcements. First off, it was getting late. Bud (my dad's grownup nickname) and Todd, you need to set up the baby bed for Jim (my little brother who was one at the time). And kids, tomorrow morning you can go through everything under the old staircase. It is full of toys and stuff from when your father, Uncle Todd, and Dave, and Aunt Peggy were growing up. And Sunday night we are going to dinner at my friend's house. Little Dave, they have horses. After that announcement, all I could think about was Sunday.

Well, everyone went to bed late as Bud and Todd had some problems assembling the baby bed. Around 3 am the next morning we heard a loud crash upstairs and my brother screaming bloody murder. The baby bed collapsed due to an assembly flaw. Jim survived the collapse, and it took my mom a while to speak to dad again. Good music genes, not so good at common sense and reading directions. Or maybe it was too much Falstaff and Pabst Blue Ribbon beer.

So, after breakfast we are all ready to tear into the goods under the mystery staircase. The house was a huge Victorian style mansion (seemed like a mansion to a 6-year-old kid) with the

elaborate dark wood staircase that climbed to the second and third story. Todd and his Falstaff had me pretty leery of entering the darkness under the staircase as he cautioned us the night before about the possibility of unknown demons, since nobody had been in there for many years.

Since I was the oldest, I figured I would man up and be the first to enter through the half size door and fend off whatever danger lurked. No light under there, so Grandma handed me a flashlight. Before I entered, I kept telling myself, be careful because you can't miss tomorrow. Dinner at the horse place. So, I walked in and much to my surprise there was a mountain of cool stuff. I handed out tennis racquets, roller skates, dolls, baseball bats and baseball gloves. It was like Christmas morning all over again. Sister Pam was not really excited since most of it was guy stuff. And Jim was too small to really appreciate how cool some of these things really were. And sister Deb was not born yet. I kept digging and toward the back I came across the krem de la krem, a pair of cowboy boots. They say timing is everything. What are the odds of finding a pair of cowboy boots the day before the first encounter with a horse.

I immediately dusted them off and slipped them on. They were a size 9, and I was 6 years old, so go figure. Grandma said, "Little Dave, those belonged to your dad when he went to the University of Wyoming in Laramie". Mom said "Boy, they look brand new", and my dad replied "Ya I bought them to try and fit in with all my cowboy classmates, but they hurt my feet". Another indication that horse and cowboy DNA did not exist, but hey, now I had a pair of cowboy boots. I wore them all day and to bed that night. I learned how to walk shuffling my feet so they wouldn't fall off.

The big day had finally arrived. It was Sunday afternoon, and we were all heading out to have dinner with Grandma's horse friend. This was my big debut as a cowboy and my first encounter with a live horse. I had my boots on with my jeans tucked in the top because they were so big my jeans wouldn't fit over them. That was OK though. That's exactly how Roy Rogers wore his. I had a red neckerchief around my neck and donned a brand-new white cowboy hat that Uncle Dave bought me the day before. I can still feel the excitement like it was yesterday. In my own mind I was convinced that I really was a cowboy, and that I knew about everything there was to know about horses.

About 45 minutes later we drove through the gate of a nice country estate. There were some horses out in the pasture grazing, surrounded by a nice white fence, only taking notice when we piled out of the car. There was a nice barn next to the house with a couple of dogs sleeping in the breezeway. We went up to the door and Grandma introduced everybody. I don't remember their names, but the husband was a big heavy-set guy with a deep voice. He had a cigar in his mouth and a can of beer in one hand. His wife was tall and slender and from the minute we met, I did not like her, and she did not like me. She looked at me laughing, commenting that he must want to be a cowboy when he grows up. Everybody laughed except me. I already am a cowboy.

Well, they herded us through the house into their back yard for a nice country barbeque. Pam and I sat there quietly until I couldn't stand it any longer. I went to Grandma and asked if I could go look around. She asked her friend permission, and her response was: "We are not used to having little kids on the property, so after dinner we can give you a quick tour. Our brood mares are in the pasture and our stud horse is in the barn. Much too dangerous for a 6-year-old kid to be wandering around on his own." Oh, that's fine said Grandma. A glance from my dad reinforced that I better not wander off.

So, after dinner we walked out to the barn. Standing in the stall was a big black stud horse. As the husband approached him, he wheeled around kicking the stall door, and stood there shaking. The wife said the horse was dangerous and that her husband was the only one that could handle him. He made all of us stand back while he entered the stall, put a stud chain on him, and started jerking him around until he stood still just shaking. All the non-cowboys in the crowd stood there in awe as this big fat guy muscled this horse around. I myself was just thinking of how to get back out here so I could get better acquainted with this cool looking horse.

When the show was over, we all filed back through the house to the back yard. Since all the mares were visible from the back yard, my only chance was to get back to the stud horse. So, when everybody dug into the homemade ice cream I told my mom I didn't feel well and that I was going to lay down in the car. That's fine, she said. So off I went to the barn. I walked up to the stud horse, and he wheeled around and kicked. I stood there for about 5 minutes until he

turned around and put his nose through the fence. The first thing I noticed was that he was not shaking, and he seemed to be totally relaxed with me. And believe it or not, for some reason I was also totally relaxed with no fear. I took a brush that was sitting on top of a nearby bale of hay, took off my boots, and climbed up on the stall gate. I sat on top of the gate and started brushing his back as he leaned over.

What an awesome feeling. Such a huge powerful animal that really seemed to like being around me. "What are you doing you stupid kid. Get down from there before you are killed" I knew I didn't like that lady. She pulled me down from the fence in a fit of anger, and drug me out to the car where everybody was waiting. It was a long ride home getting verbally abused by my dad. My Grandma didn't seem too upset saying that her friend was a little high strung, and that she was just worried about my safety. But deep down I think she understood my love for horses. Maybe not the best outcome, but a big step towards becoming a real cowboy and horseman. Oh, and to make matters worse we had to turn back around halfway home to go back and get my boots that were still in the barn.

## **Chapter 2 Separation Anxiety and a Pugsly Look Alike**

Here we are, making the trek back home to Denver from Omaha. I am still buzzed by my first encounter with a horse, and it's all I keep thinking about. I am sitting in the back seat with my sister Pam and little brother Jim. Dad's driving while mom is sound asleep. I guess Dad's singing just put her to sleep. You see, he was a really good singer who thought he sounded just like Bing Crosby. He was good, but luckily, he stuck with his day job. Anyway, no seat belts back in those days, so everybody was free to move around. We would fight for window positions, and for the prime location, lying in the back window. It was a 1950's green Buick sedan with no air conditioning. Since it was August all the windows were down, so it was hot and windy.

Dad always had gimmicks to try and keep us occupied. In those days the roads were just a two lane, so passing slower traffic was always interesting in Dad's jalopy with minimal power. Anyway, he would have us count cars with Colorado license plates when in Nebraska, and vice versa when we were in Colorado. Then he would always blink his headlights at oncoming trucks to see if they would do the same. And his favorite was having us hang out the window when passing a truck giving the horn signal. It was a real treat when the trucker would then blow his horn when we passed him.

There was always something unique about Dad and driving. It seemed like driving a car was his form of doing yoga. He would wear the big aviator glasses that you could flip up and down depending on the intensity of the sun. And he would stretch out on the car seat with his left arm leaning out the window and his right arm centered on the steering wheel. It was truly poetry in motion. In fact, he liked driving so much, that almost every evening in the summer after dinner, he would take us for a spin as he called it. He would load us all up and we would drive from our house at 2564 South Yates, down Sheridan Blvd, past Bear Valley shopping center, through BelMar estates where all the rich folks lived, then down the hill to Centennial Horse Racetrack. He knew the guard at the gate who would wave us through, and we would drive around the barn area looking at all of the racehorses sticking their head out of their stall door. I was never allowed to get out of the car, but at least I got to see horses. Then before we returned home, we would stop at the A&W drive in for a root beer float. I certainly liked seeing the horses, but it was sure hard to beat that root beer float on a hot summer night.

Anyway, Dad finally quit singing and my mom woke up asking where we were. "About an hour from home Liz" dad said. Then my mom started going over everything I was going to need before starting school after the Labor Day weekend. "Since you turned 6 last December, you are going to be older than most of the other kids in your kindergarten class," said Mom. That didn't make me feel much better since I was basically kind of an insecure little kid, not looking forward to my first day of school. Oh well, I will think about that later. Back to thinking about my first encounter. I keep thinking about how the fat guy interacted so forcefully with that horse. I never saw the Lone Ranger or Roy Rogers act mean to their horses. I like how the Ranger and Roy treat their horses as friends rather than scaring them to death. When I get my horse, we are going to be friends.

In an era when women were expected to do housework, shopping, laundry, etc., dad broke the mold in a couple of areas. He did all the grocery shopping, and clothes shopping for us kids. He was always looking for deals, so naturally he gravitated to a local discount clothing store called Sell-Low. Every fall before school started, Dad would buy us our school clothes for the year. So, dad buys me a new pair of off brand jeans, two shirts, a winter coat, and a pair of dress shoes for my first day of kindergarten. Since I was kind of a chubby kid, no not kind of, I was chubby, the jeans were way too long since they had to fit my waist. Not a problem. Back then you just rolled them up and you just grew into them. And since I had wide feet, the cheap shoes were narrow and always hurt my feet. That's ok, they will stretch out over time.

Our house was a massive 1,400 square foot tri-level brick house. It was in a middle-class neighborhood where basically everybody knew their neighbors and spent a lot of time socializing with each other. Doull Elementary School was exactly 5 blocks away. No need for a school bus, as it was in easy walking distance for even a kid in kindergarten.

The night before at dinner Mom explained to my dad that the school requires a parent to drop their kid off the first day so that she can meet them and discuss any issues the kid might have. Dad naturally volunteered since he could just drop me off on his way to work, and oh by the way, they only had one car anyway. So, the big day arrives. I had a fresh buzz haircut, brand new blue jeans, neatly rolled my legs, big black glasses (I had a lazy right eye) and brand-new shoes that squeaked every time I walked. Actually, I looked a lot like Pugsly from the Adams family now that I think about it. In retrospect, living my early years as a goofy looking fat kid with other kids making fun of me, actually toughened me up to where I quit listening to what other people thought of me. I carry this trait with me today, which has served me very well over the years, for the most part.

Well, I don't remember much about that first day because I tried to forget about it over the years. You see, we walk into the classroom, Dad meets the teacher (don't remember her name) walks over to me and shakes my hand while he says, "I will come back for you when you're 18", then leaves the classroom. I was in panic mode and could not hold it any longer, so I started crying. The teacher took me to the side and asked me what was wrong, and I told her what Dad said. She tried to explain that he was just kidding around, but I wasn't buying it. So, she called Mom, who borrowed the neighbors car and came and got me. Kind of a rough first day that I have tried to forget. Dad didn't mean any harm. It's just that everything in life with him was jokes and fun for the most part. Just rolled off of his tongue without even thinking, which as I got older, I grew to appreciate, because he was so funny. Unfortunately, I suffered separation anxiety for a while after that, (not sure that term had been invented yet, but hopefully you get the picture).

The next day I walked to school, and everything went fine except the girl sitting next to me lost control of her bladder soaking one of my new shoes. At least it quit squeaking for a while.

By now you are hopefully getting a sense of the energy and enthusiasm for life that my dad had. He loved to shop, sing in the choir, go bowling, golf, play poker, go to the horse races, play bingo, watch college and AFL football, watch baseball, watch Friday Night at the Fights, and pride himself as always being the center of attention at parties, while singing and telling jokes. Well, you can add one more to the list. He loved Christmas. It was his favorite holiday for a number of reasons. Lots of parties, singing his solo at Notre Dame church (both midnight mass, and high mass on Christmas day), doing all of the Christmas shopping, and probably most of all, watching everybody open presents on Christmas day.

We were only a few weeks away from Christmas and having several months of kindergarten under my belt I was ready for a vacation. It was early on a Monday morning, and we were eating breakfast before school. We had just celebrated Pam's 6<sup>th</sup> birthday the night before. I would turn 7 in a couple weeks. I hated my December birthday because it was so close to Christmas it was almost an afterthought. Anyway, there was a foot of snow on the ground, and it was freezing out. Dad walked in the house and announced that his car wouldn't start because it was frozen. "Not to worry he said, the problem is being fixed as we speak" A couple minutes later the phone rings and Mom answers it. "Charlie's car is on fire" yelled Ken, our next-door neighbor. Dad ran outside, opened the hood to flames and smoke. He grabbed the garden hose, but it was frozen. Ken, our neighbor ran over with a fire extinguisher and put the fire out. Dad closed the hood, jumped in the car and it started right up. "See I told you the

problem was being fixed". Ken just looked at him shaking his head as dad pulled out the outdoor barbeque minus the legs from under the car. The hot charcoal briquettes caused the grease under the engine to catch fire. Lucky for Ken's quick thinking, or the car probably would have burned up while Dad watched it with the frozen hose. An innovative approach, but not much common sense.

This particular Christmas was a rare occasion because Grandma Schafer, Moms Mother, came over from Scottsbluff to spend it with us. She hated leaving home, so I think this was the only time she ever came to visit. Like any kid on Christmas eve, I could hardly sleep. Back then, the Montgomery Ward Department store put out their Christmas catalog six months before Christmas, so I spent a lot of time looking through that catalog to figure out what I wanted for Christmas. As dad would say, "Everything in that catalog is also carried by Santa". I finally settled on a Johnny Reb cannon. It had its own wheels, and you could shoot plastic cannon balls the size of a baseball.

Sure enough, there was the cannon under the tree on Christmas morning. After everybody opened presents, I loaded a cannonball with the official ram rod. It was spring loaded and there was a rope on the side that you pulled to fire, just like the real thing. Mom said, "It's too cold to go outside, so take that thing down in the basement if you are going to shoot it off". So, I drug the cannon to the stairs and on the first step down the bounce on the stairs caused it to misfire. The cannonball ricocheted off of the living room wall and hit Grandma right on the side of the head. Luckily, she was sitting on the couch which allowed for a soft landing when she fell over, out cold.

Mom, being a nurse and all, got grandma revived without serious injury, while Dad was busy jerking my arm out of the socket yelling and screaming at me. Turns out that cannon packed a pretty hard punch, but back then there were no child safety regulations and no safeguard for a misfire.

The day ended up fine and I apologized to grandma. Then a few days later a package arrived from Uncle Todd full of presents. Sure enough, he remembered the catcher's mitt I asked for. I slept with that catcher's mitt along with my cowboy boots for a long time.

### **Chapter 3 Lifestyles of the Not So Rich and Not So Famous**

Ok, moving right along. I thought it would be fun to tell you about how daily life was, back when I was 6 years old, growing up in 1959. Probably the biggest differences from how we live today centers around technology, family tradition, and neighbors. I'll explain the neighbors later, but for now, let me walk you through my daily life back then.

On a typical Saturday morning I would get up early to watch Fury, Sky King, The Rifleman, and my favorite cartoons, Deputy Dog, Road Runner and the Jetsons. Back then there were only 3 channels, and they only came on between 6 in the morning and 12 o'clock at night. We only had one television and it was by far, state of the art technology. When you turned on the TV, all of the lights in the house would flicker because of the amount of electricity it would take to fire it up. The screen was about 30 inches wide, encased in a wooden console with big control knobs below the screen and above the speaker. The whole unit probably weighed about 300 lbs because of all of the wood and the innards of the TV. The innards consisted of a bunch of different sized tubes that gave off enough radiation to make your hair fall out. Come to think of it, maybe that's why Mom and Dad didn't have more than four kids. In fact, there was a big label on the back of the TV warning of severe electrical shock, and other dangers, if you removed the back cover!

Strategically placed on top of the TV was a contraption called Rabbit Ears. Two antennas came out of the base unit to ensure good reception and the ultimate picture quality. Unfortunately, the technology wasn't that good, resulting in a snowstorm on the screen, more often than not. But, not to worry, some brilliant engineer came up with the idea to wrap aluminum foil around the antennas which actually did help. So basically, most households had both the Rabbit Ears and the Apple Version of aluminum foil.

About half way through the Rifleman I would hear the milkman pull up in front of the house and deliver 2 gallons of milk, (no milk cartons back then, all glass bottles) in our milk chute that was located near our back door. The chute had a door on the outside and inside. Some of our neighbors that didn't go with this upgrade when they built their house had to settle for a

wooden box on their front porch. Needless to say, our family felt very special to have a milk chute.

No cereal for breakfast on Saturday mornings. Before leaving for golf, dad would drive to a nearby strip center that had a bakery, barbershop, and Italian food joint. He would buy two dozen, hot out of the oven, doughnuts right when they opened, and bring them home for everyone to devour. They sure went down well, washed down with that fresh cold milk!

About the time everybody was finishing breakfast the Bread Man would ring the front doorbell, holding out a huge tray of wonder bread, twinkies, and cupcakes. Mom would buy what she needed to make healthy lunches the next week. To this day, I am still amazed at how Mom could make sandwiches using both hands while smoking a cigarette at the same time.

After breakfast everybody had to go make their bed and pick up their room before they could go outside and play. Mom would decide who could go with dad to the grocery store after his return from golf and mowing the yard if it was summer. While we were cleaning our room, Mom would pull out her S&H Trading Stamp book and paste last week's stamps into the book. Back then, the grocery store and gas stations gave out green stamps based on the amount you spent on purchases. You pasted the stamps into a book that you would turn in for merchandise at the S&H store. Knowing that dad would bring home a bunch more stamps from the gas station and grocery store, she would catch up with the lick and paste process. Mom was obsessed with her green stamps and the stuff she was able to buy with them. We had some of the ugliest dishes and bowls that were vintage S&H.

Once dad got home, he would mow the lawn while Mom started the grocery list. Dad would finish the lawn and come inside to change the grocery list more to his liking. Two of us would jump in the car and wait for dad while we fought for the window seat in the front, (formally known as shotgun). The loser had to sit in the middle or take the back seat. Since there were no seat belts back then, you had plenty of options as to where you could sit, or just lay in the back window, (the back window was the prime location when shotgun was taken by Mom). On the way to King Soopers Supermarket, we would stop for the weekly fill up with gas. No self-service back in those days. The guy would come out and ask how much gas we wanted. While the gas was filling, he would open the hood and check the oil and fluids. He would then proceed to wash all of the windows while making funny faces at us kids. Dad would pay him, (no credit cards back then-cash or check only) collect his green stamps, and off we went to the grocery store.

While we were at the grocery store, Mom would sit and relax in the living room while there was some peace and quiet. Mom and Dad had this fancy stereo that, similar to the TV, was in a big wooden console about 6 feet long. With built in speakers on each side, you opened the top to load a 33 LP Record. I never looked in the back of the stereo, but there were probably radioactive tubes inside that thing as well. Mom's favorite album was the soundtrack (I think the music was produced by Rogers and Hammerstein) of the movie South Pacific. It was released in 1958, and her favorite song was "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outta My Hair". Now that's an interesting title-Any reference to Dad?

From the minute we walk in, to the minute we walk out of the grocery store, everybody we run into is dad's best friend, even if they are perfect strangers. He says hi to everybody, jokes and makes faces at little kids, and flirts with the lady cashiers who all call him Charlie. As the lady checks us out Dad gives careful instructions to the kid bagging our groceries making sure the delicate items like the additional loaves of Wonder Bread that builds bodies 12 ways, doesn't get smashed. Dad pays and bribes the blushing cashier for extra Green Stamps. Sure Charlie, see ya next week! Back then we thought it was fun to get picked for the grocery store detail, but as we got older and realized how embarrassing it was, we politely opted out.

When we pulled up in front of the house dad would blow the horn and Mom would quickly put out her cigarette, turn off the stereo and run outside to help carry in the groceries. With all of the groceries sitting on the kitchen table we would all watch dad methodically put everything away. Being an efficiency engineer and all, no one else could place each and every item in its most efficient space as well as dad. He was definitely a man on a mission with special talents.

After putting away the groceries, utilizing a process that would make Amazon envious, it was time for dad to head to the horse racing track, or to the barber shop. The barbershop was right next door to the bakery, and it had a barber pole at the front door. Three old fashioned swivel barber chairs spanned one wall, about 30 customer chairs along two walls, and a coat and hat rack along the other. In between some of the customer chairs were end tables stacked with magazines and newspapers. No female barbers or patrons, or TVs in those days. This was strictly a hangout for the male gender to discuss everything from sports to politics to women's rights and get a haircut and shave if you needed one. Jim, the owner and head barber, wore a white barber jacket that zipped up in front with a big black comb and fancy scissors neatly placed in the front pockets. The other two barbers matched his attire and protocol perfectly. Since Dad, brother Jim, and I all got buzz cuts it didn't take much hair styling to get it right. To this day, I still remember how nervous I would get watching them slap on shaving cream and

use a straight razor to give a trusting gent a clean and close shave. And as you would expect, whether in the barber chair or sitting in a customer chair, Dad was always the center of attention, telling jokes or giving his two cents worth on the current topic of discussion. Sports Clips has nothing on what this place used to be. I'm sure this old establishment as well as the tradition it represented is long gone. Looking back, it was kind of a rite of passage as a young kid to see how grown men should interact in the absence of the female persuasion.

Itching from the haircut we would arrive back home, and I was free to do as I please. If I didn't head out to the backyard, I would hop on my bike to go play ball or just hang out with my buddies. Mom's instructions as I was leaving never changed. "Be home by dark". In this day and age if you told a 6-year-old kid that, not knowing where he was headed without a cell phone, you would be on the evening news in handcuffs. But somehow Mom was always able to stay one step ahead of the law.

On Saturday afternoons when Dad wasn't at the track, he would take over the living room watching sports on the Radiation Box. He would be glued to the TV, and we were advised to only bother him if it was an emergency, which would include getting him another can of Falstaff beer.

As it started to get dark, I would walk in the back door only to find dad complaining to Mom about the stupid neighbor. About the same time, most Saturday nights, Dad would call Bob's Pizzeria to order takeout, (You guessed it, the third trip of the day to the same strip center). Located just inside our back door was the utility room that housed our washing machine, waste basket, milk chute, and our only telephone, which was conveniently located on the wall (Notice I didn't mention a clothes dryer because they were not invented yet. Our dryer was a clothesline in the backyard for warm weather, and a clothesline in the kitchen for cold weather). Our telephone was a rotary dial model, with a 20 foot curly cord so you could walk around while talking. Unfortunately, back then you were on a party line with several other neighbors. That meant, if a neighbor was using the phone, you had to wait until they were finished before you could use the phone. The unwritten rule was that you should not pick up and listen to a neighbor's conversation, but you could interrupt if it was an emergency. One neighbor lady was always hogging the phone on Saturday evenings which usually led to a heated discussion with she and Dad since he would declare an emergency involving Bob's Pizzeria.

So we would chow down on spaghetti, meatballs, and pizza. Even on the weekends we were required to eat dinner in our kitchen together. We all had assigned seats and a ritual of going around the table telling everybody how our day went. Our kitchen was so small that dad had to pull the table out from the wall so three of us kids could fit into our chairs. He would then push it back, essentially blocking us from getting out. When he said we were not getting up until we finished our food it was pretty much a given! That also applied to listening to his stories and endless jokes, although that was a little easier to tolerate than some of Mom's cooking, (More on that to come).

Well it's a Saturday night and we all get to stay up until 8:00 watching a snowstorm on the TV and eat homemade popcorn chased down by Shasta Cola. Dad would pop the popcorn on the stove and put it in a paper grocery bag. If dad was gone for any reason, Mom would go the Jiffy Popcorn route since she would usually burn popcorn worse, using Dad's organic method, (Just FYI, I recently saw that Jiffy Pop is on the FDA's list of most dangerous foods.). Coca Cola was too expensive so he would buy Shasta Cola which was much cheaper. We would huddle around the TV watching shows like Father Knows Best, The Andy Griffith Show, and I Love Lucy. Right at 8:00 we were instructed to brush our teeth, put on our pajamas, and hit the sack. I could brush for an hour and still not get the after taste from the Shasta Cola out of my mouth. I guess what doesn't kill ya makes you stronger.

We knew that we had better stay in bed and be quiet because Mom and Dad were now watching the Honeymooners with Jackie Gleason and Art Carney. Mom despised watching what was then Dad's favorite show. Jackie Gleason who played Ralph Cramden, a bus driver, was a real male chauvinist by today's standards, but pretty much the norm for that day and age. Mom just couldn't stand the guy, but usually 10 minutes into the show she was fast asleep, in her favorite chair.

So ends a typical Saturday.

## **Chapter 4 The Big Compromise**

“Class, class, class, that’s the siren going off for our duck and cover drill said my third-grade teacher Mrs. Pembridge. I know you’re sick of this daily routine, but one day, maybe sooner than later, it will prove to be the real thing, and it could save your life. So, take your positions right now”.

As I am walking home from school, I am thinking to myself how much I love playing baseball on the church baseball team with my dad as the head coach. It gets a little dicey however, when we lose games. Dad yells at me on the way home, blaming me for the loss, I start crying, and an argument ensues between Mom and Dad with Mom defending me. But hey, all my buddies love playing baseball just like me. I mean, what 10-year-old kid doesn’t love baseball. Roger Marris and Mickey Mantle are household names. But now I am 10 years old, it’s 1962, and I still long to be with horses after my first encounter almost four years ago. Dad always promised us kids that he would buy us a pony if we didn’t smoke cigarettes until our 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, but there is no way that I am waiting that long for a horse.

As I walk into the house, reality sets in’ as my mom is sitting at the table listening to Walter Cronkite (the most trusted newsman) on the radio. “Wow mom seems like all you do these days is listen to the news”. “I know I do, but your dad and I, as well as just about everybody in this country, is concerned about the Cuba missile crisis, and the possibility of a nuclear war.”

“Well, so is Mrs. Pembridge. She keeps making us do those stupid drills every day when the warning siren goes off”, I said.

I hurry and change my clothes so I can head out and meet my buddies for a pickup baseball game. Out the door I go, hollering at Mom over the radio. “Heading out to meet the guy’s mom”. “Ok, be home by dark for dinner” she said.

As I head home on my bike from baseball, I remind myself that it’s Friday night in our Catholic family household, which means some sort of fish for dinner. Mom usually has kitchen duties on Fridays with Dad taking over on Saturday nights with Bob’s Pizza, and Sunday nights with some burnt red meat offering on the grill. We would refer to his barbequed hamburgers as hockey pucks so as not to insult him. Anyway, the catch of the day usually came down to either breaded salmon patties with bone chips included, or fish sticks with gourmet tartar sauce on the side. As we all take our seats Dad slides the dinner table in to secure our positions and we are served half frozen fish sticks, raw kidney beans mixed with mayonnaise, and slices of white wonder bread with the option of adding real butter. No tartar sauce tonight because Mom forgot to put it on last week’s grocery list, and it got by dad when he redid the list.

While everyone is pushing their food around the plate wondering what to do with it, Mom comments that she isn’t all that hungry as she lights up a cigarette. Dad looks around the table and asks who wants to go first on today’s happenings. Mom replies: “This Cuba missile thing is really getting scary. I wonder what’s going to happen if Kennedy stands up to Russia?” “I don’t think we want to know,” said Dad. Sister Pam looks at Dad and said: “Can I have some girlfriends over tomorrow night to listen to Beach Boys records? I promise we will stay in my room and not play them too loud”. “Sure” said Dad, “but I have to warn you that I have Bingo tomorrow night, so if they want popcorn, Mom is searing her Jiffy Pop”

Dad looked my way and said: “What about you Roy Rogers”? Since the First Encounter he nicknamed me Roy Rogers since I was a self-proclaimed Cowboy. “Just the usual duck and cover drills at school” I replied. So, while everyone is staring at me, I am thinking to myself that no better time than the present to plead my case again. So here goes!

“Mom and Dad, there is something I need to talk to you about” Dad looked at me and said laughing: “You read my mind Roy. I agree, we are in hopeless need of a chef, but we just can’t afford it” “Very funny,” said Mom. “Okay, what is it you want to talk about,” said Mom. Dad looked at me and said: “Not this horse thing again. How many times do I have to tell you that I was around horse people in college, and they are very different, and not really what I would describe as ideal role models. Besides, you’re a city kid. Horse people grow up with horse parents. Mom and I are city slickers that don’t know the first thing about horses, nor do we want to, that is unless you have an inside tip on a horse running at the track tomorrow. And on top of that, we can’t afford to send you to a horse person for lessons. So, if that’s what’s on your mind, let’s just end the conversation right there”.

“I am not giving up on horses Dad. Someday I am going to own my own horse and become one of those horse people. I will find a way, but in the meantime, you just gave me a great idea when you mentioned horse lessons. What if I find a job to start saving for a horse, and to pay for someone to give me horse lessons”?

Dad looked at Mom, rolled his eyes and said: “You’re a 10-year-old kid. I don’t know who would hire you, but your welcome to give it a shot. If you do find a job, which I seriously doubt, it can’t interfere with school, CYRA baseball, Blue Knights Football, your Saturday bowling league, and your golf lessons. There is nothing more important than getting a good education and playing sports. I look forward to watching you play on the High School and College Baseball and Golf Teams. I just don’t want you to go down the wrong path with horses and miss those opportunities. You’re the oldest kid in the family, and you need to set an example for your sister, and brother, and any future sisters or brothers”, sheepishly winking at my mom.

I glanced over at Mom, and she winked at me when Dad wasn’t looking. I knew she was on my side on this horse deal and that she would keep trying to soften Dad up. At least he didn’t say no, so I ran with this one as a compromising win.

“Thanks Mom and Dad, I will keep you posted on my job search”. My Dad shook his head and said: “Good luck Roy!

‘Oh, and by the way. Kennedy forced the Russians hand, and they returned the missiles from Cuba back to Russia. No more duck and cover drills or a nuclear war-I took that as another win, thinking there were probably some real compromises for that to happen as well!

## Chapter 5 Collect for The Post

The grass is turning green, and the trees are starting to bud and grow leaves. That's a sure sign of spring in Colorado, and the end of the school year finally in sight. It's been a mild

winter with not as much snow as usual. That put a severe damper on my snow shoveling business, but I am optimistic that the launch of my lawn mowing enterprise will be highly successful. I made enough shoveling snow to buy a power lawn mower and hand clippers for edging, (weed eaters hadn't been invented yet). In a couple of weeks after the Memorial Day weekend, school will be out, and I can start canvassing the neighborhood for customers. They say one of the strongest motivators is proving someone wrong. I tried getting a job as a sweeper boy at our school, cart shagger, and bagger at King Soopers grocery store, and bus boy at Bob's Pizzeria. Same story, different places: "Sorry kid, your way too young to work here". Oh well, maybe Dad was right, but hey, there is no age requirement for working for myself, so keep plugging away.

It's Sunday morning on Memorial Day weekend. School is out and today is a big day. Dad sets up the portable swimming pool in the backyard for the summer and watches us swim while he barbeques a rump roast on the spit listening to the Indy 500 on a portable radio. We only last about 20 minutes in the pool since the water is just above freezing. Soon dad is left alone at the barbeque, content listening to the race, slapping barbeque sauce on the roast every 20 minutes, and keeping cool with a bottle of Falstaff. What is usually one of the most relaxing days for dad however, got off to somewhat of a rocky start this particular Sunday.

It wasn't the stress of Mom cooking bacon, eggs, and waffles for breakfast that got to him. He was used to the over easy egg order looking like scrambled, and the waffle order cancelled

because they stuck to the waffle iron and burned. No, this morning's stressor had to do with the Sunday newspaper.

Dad is standing in front of the picture window that looks out to our front yard and the street. "Come on everybody, breakfast is ready", said Mom from the kitchen. Dad starts shouting. "It's 9:00 on a Sunday morning and our idiot paper boy still hasn't delivered my newspaper yet". "Calm down Buddy, Ralph is a good kid. Maybe a little lazy and unreliable at times, but that's just how he is" said Mom, "Maybe he overslept, or something happened, he's just a 16-year-old kid". "Ya right, he is never on time. The Sunday morning paper is never here by 7:00, and the afternoon papers the rest of the week never get here until dark. And when he does deliver them, good luck guessing which bush they end up under. I have had enough. I am calling the Denver Post right now, to report this moron. Kids these days, they just don't want to work, or take responsibility for anything. What the hell is this world coming to", Dad shouted, with a beet red face. "I wouldn't complain too much" said Mom, "He rarely comes by to "Collect for the Post", so it's almost like you get the paper for free," said Mom.

Dad gave Mom a sneering glance as he looked up the number in the white pages phone book, and picked up the phone, only to hear the voice of the infamous neighbor lady talking away. He slammed the phone down and said, "That's it, I am going to smooth this kid out as soon as he gets here". So he went to the front door opened it, and stepped out on the front porch, only to find the newspaper laying in a puddle of water from last night's rain storm. While he was on the verge of cardiac arrest, Mom got him cooled down and used her hair dryer to get his newspaper dried out. Dad finally relaxed as he read the sports section eating cold eggs, extra crispy bacon, and a waffle substitute, charred wonder bread toast with grape jelly. A rough start to a Memorial Day weekend tradition, but not all was for not, with Dad's stressful morning!

As we are shivering in the swimming pool while Dad's hard at work at the grill, I am thinking that things surely happen for a reason sometimes. Even though Dad's stressful episode

probably aged him a couple of years, it was telling me that I should seize the opportunity at hand and see if I could take over for Ralph as the neighborhood paperboy.

Since Monday was a holiday, I planned on taking action on Tuesday with an altered agenda. Now with the newspaper idea, I would make that a priority ahead of the mowing business. Ralph only lived a couple blocks away, so I rode my bike over to his house about 9:00 on Tuesday morning. I knocked on the door and his mom answered. I asked if Ralph was around and she replied: "Yes, he is still in bed, and he gave me strict orders to not wake him up until noon since he doesn't have to go to school today. Your one of Chuck and Dorothy's kids, right? Before I could answer, she said: "I know your mom, she is so nice. Once a month I see her at one of our Tupperware parties. And that reminds me, I am going to have an Avon party next week, so I need to let your mom know". Then before I could say anything, she blurted out: "I am one of the top Avon producers in the whole area, and if things go as planned, I should win a pink Cadillac within the next two years". Man, I'm thinking to myself that this lady is a real air head that certainly never shuts up. No wonder Ralph is a loser.

After she takes another deep breath, she asks me if she can tell Ralph anything. Just as I start to answer she says: "Oh by the way, what is your name". Right away I replied: "Dave, and I was just going to ask Ralph how he likes being our neighborhood paper boy". "Oh, my goodness, he absolutely hates it. My husband Tony and I promised him we would pay for half the cost of a car if he paid the other half. It's been a nightmare. Customer complaints never stop. He seldom ever gets a day off. And when he goes house to house every month to collect his money, people are always stiffing him, so my husband ends up paying for most of the papers. He has enough money for his half of the car and has been trying to quit for two months, but his uncle John, who got him the job, and who is also his manager, can't find anyone that will take the job". Another deep breath and she's off to the races again. "Oh my goodness Dave, would you be interested in the job"? She took a quick pause to collect herself, realizing what she had just said, then did a quick recovery, and then said: "Honey, it's really not as bad as I just described. There is a lot of prestige in being the neighborhood paperboy, and probably a great

career path for the right person. We are so proud of Ralph, it's just that this particular job doesn't fit his personality and career interests. He is not a real people person, and manual labor is not his thing. You on the other hand, seem to be pretty outgoing, and your husky build would be a real plus". Ya, right, my plus, plus size is a real plus! There's another dig on my Pugsly look. At least she didn't take a shot at my black glasses. She is, however, pretty good at blowing smoke up my posterior apex, as far as changing the job description. I'll give her that one!

"Well, I might be interested. What would be a good time to come back and talk to Ralph"? I said. "Just come on in and I will give you some milk and chocolate covered donuts while I get him up. I'm sure he won't mind whatsoever."

Here we are sitting at the much too familiar dinner table again after a block buster morning that resulted in me landing my very first real job. Mom got a break tonight, since Dad stopped on the way home from work and got Chinese takeout. He got the usual which was chicken fried rice without the chicken. Including the chicken was way too expensive. "Everybody, your attention please, I have a big announcement to make" I said. "Effective this coming Saturday, I am officially the new neighborhood paperboy. Mom smiled, and dad started choking on a small piece of fried egg that took the place of the expensive chicken. He looked at me coughing and said: "You have got to be kidding". "No Dad, I am not kidding. I am dead serious about getting my own horse, and I told you I would figure out a way to get a job to make it happen". Mom intervened and said: "So tell us the details, we had no idea you were trying to become a paperboy. I thought you had to be 16 years old. And your awfully small height-wise aren't you"? (Couldn't she have just said I was just awfully small which would imply both height and weight, and left it at that? My own Mother taking a cheap shot-just plain pathetic.).

Mom leaned back in her chair and lit a cigarette, and Dad got a toothpick and started grooming his teeth. 'Ok, give us the scoop" he said. "After your episode with the newspaper I decided to go to Ralph's house this morning to see if there was an opportunity to get a job as a paperboy.

I first spoke to his mom, who is a real piece of work by the way. She spilled the beans that basically Ralph didn't want the job anymore, and that his uncle, who just happens to be his boss at the Denver Post, was having a hard time finding a replacement. Then she got Ralph out of bed, and they got Uncle John on the phone, and he hired me right on the spot. He said my age was not an issue as long as I get less complaints than Ralph, which shouldn't be very hard to do. Ralph gave me his paper bike, dual paper carrying bags, and front and back walking bags. I am going to work with him until Saturday, learning the ropes, and officially take over Saturday afternoon". After fielding detailed questions about the job that I couldn't answer quite yet, Mom said: "Congratulations, we are glad you took the initiative to seek out and land a job, even though it seems a little suspect since it sounds like they couldn't find anyone else to take it". Then Dad said: "Just like we discussed before, make sure it doesn't interfere with school and sports. And oh, by the way, don't wake me up on Sunday mornings to help you fold papers and deliver them out of the back of my station wagon". I replied: "Not a problem Pops, are you interested in buying a used lawn mower and edging clippers by any chance"?

***“Don’t do what they expect, do what you dream”***

*Unknown*

## **Part 2-A Journey From City Slicker to Beat Up City Slicker**

### **Chapter 6 Ginger, and Another Step Closer (6<sup>th</sup> grade, 1965)**

It's mid-summer and I have my paper route routine pretty well figured out. The key was to deliver the papers on time, placing them next to the door or inside the screen door if they had one. This resulted in good tips from the non-cheapskate customers. Also, to maximize profits from receiving good tips, it was imperative that I did my monthly "Collect for the Post" at the dinner time hour because that's when the man of the house was at home, and he usually controlled the household finances. Ralph made the big mistake, that is when he got the energy to do it, of trying to collect during a weekday afternoon and the wife wouldn't have any money to pay him, so he would give up coming back after a few tries. The other advantage of showing up during dinner time, would be that most families would invite you inside, and you could socialize and catch up on things while the man of the house was getting cash, or writing out a check. Sometimes I would get invited to join them for dinner and get a reprieve from Mom's cooking, which was a real treat. In fact, I got to know just about all my customers so well, I was almost part of the family. Over time, I strategically dropped the fact that I was saving to buy my own horse, and they would occasionally ask how the savings fund was progressing, sometimes feeling obligated to throw in a little extra tip. In retrospect, my paper business was a great learning experience as far as building a good work ethic and people person skills. Many years later my wife Daphne would describe my people person skills as "Dave, the Ultimate Salesman", not meant to be taken as a real compliment, by the way. And to keep Dad happy, I had a staff of a few neighborhood buddies, including my little brother Jim, that would help me out on nights when I had baseball, or other pressing obligations that required my participation, usually per Dad's request.

“Hi Bobby, collect for the post “ I said: “Oh, hi Dave, I am really sorry but I had to use the money Mom left for you, so I could buy some gas. She forgot to pay me my allowance this week. She should be home from visiting her horse by around 8:00 if ya want to come back”. I said: “No problem, I can do that, see ya later”. What, her horse? Of course, I will come back. I never knew his mom had a horse, mainly because I never really talked with her before. She is never home so she always leaves my money on a table next to the front door for Bobby to pay me, which usually includes a nice tip.

Bobby is an interesting, not so typical High School kid. He makes Ralph look like a world class work horse. His Mom, Pat is a single mom who is a high-powered real estate sales lady. She drives a fancy Mercedes and is hated by most all the neighborhood mothers. She is very attractive, makes a lot of money, and most people are plain scared of her powerful personality. Not your typical housewife of the 60's generation. She scared Bobby's dad off years ago, leaving Bobby to pretty much raise himself, with the assistance of Mom's hefty pocketbook. He was always in trouble, with Mom doing whatever it took to bail him out.

“Hi Ms. Richards, my name is Dave Rossiter. I am your paperboy, and it sure is a pleasure to finally meet you”, I said: “Nice to meet you Dave, just call me Pat. You're here kind of late. Are you here for your money, or are you looking to buy a house”?, she said joking. “Ya, I was here earlier, and Bobby said he had to use the money for gas since you forgot to give him his allowance this week, and he just happened to mention that you would be home at 8:00 after going to see your horse. I would sure like to visit with you about your horse if you have a minute”, I said. “Sure, come on in and let's sit down at the kitchen table, and talk about horses while we knock back an ice-cold Coca Cola” she said. I walked in the door thinking what a treat a genuine, non-Shasta cola will be in this truly upper-class household!

“Well Mrs. Richards, I mean Pat, it's a well-known fact among most of my paper customers, that I am working toward buying my own horse within the next year or so. I have always wanted to be a cowboy and own my own horse. In the meantime, I would welcome any

opportunity to be around a horse to learn everything I can before I own one of my own. So, when I heard you have a horse, I thought I would ask if you needed any help taking care of it.”

She looked at me while taking another swig of her coke and said: “No, I sure don’t need any help”. Then she got up and walked in the other room to get her purse to pay me. She walked back in, laid the money in front of me, and said: “Anything else I can help you with young man”? I’m thinking to myself that this lady really is a bulldog, but at least she gave me another nice tip. As I stood up to leave, I said, “Nope, that was it. Thanks for the money and coke. It was very nice chatting with you.” As I started to leave, she looked at me and said: “Sit back down Cowboy, never take no for an answer.

“First off, when you are trying to sell something to someone, never ask a question they can just say no to. Instead, ask me about my horse”. “Okay”, I said: Pat, Bobby told me you have a horse, can you tell me its name and what you do with it”? “I would be happy to she said chuckling. Her name is Ginger, and she is a 15-year-old Quarter Horse mare that I got several years ago when my sister passed away. I offered to take her from my brother-in-law and promised him I would always take care of her. I thought Bobby would get interested in her, but that fizzled out after a month or so”. So, I chuckled, and said: “So if Bobby doesn’t do anything with her, tell me what you or anyone else does with her”? “Now you’re catching on” she said. She proceeded to tell me:

“I board her at a place that turns her out once a day, and feeds, cleans and takes care of her. I don’t ride, but I go see her when I get stressed out, just to groom her and chill with her. She is the only living being, human, or animal that relaxes and calms me down after a long day dealing with clients. Basically, I would rather be around her instead of most people, present company excluded of course.”

“Sounds like you really like Ginger”. I said. “It’s a real shame that nobody rides or exercises her, since you don’t have time, and Bobby is nowhere to be found. If you were to show me what to do, I can exercise, and ride her a few times a week free of charge. How’s that sound Pat”? (This

sales language stuff really works. I think I just asked to close the sale). Pat smiled and said: “Done deal” and shook my hand. As I was leaving, I thought to myself, another step closer!

I guess Pat took a liking to me because of my salesmanship, and the fact that I would spend time exercising Ginger for free. So much so, that she hired Millie to give me lessons once a week. Millie was about 75 years old, and the wife of the stable manager. She was too old to ride but I learned some basic horsemanship from her, as well as how to care for a horse, tack them up, and lope around the arena without falling off. By the end of the summer, I thought I had learned enough from Millie to ensure that I was ready to handle and care for my own horse. My time with Millie and Ginger was the second to the last piece of the puzzle towards getting my own horse. The last piece was the money. I figured I would have enough saved to buy a horse for \$150 before my 13<sup>th</sup> birthday on December 16<sup>th</sup>, so I now needed to put a plan into action!

“Ok, Millie, Ginger is all tacked up and ready to go. What are we going to work on today”? I said. “Well, now that you are starting to get a better seat, I think you are ready to begin working on the lope. We are lucky that Ginger is so well trained, and such an excellent horse to teach you how to ride, since you honestly don’t know a whole lot. Basically, Ginger is a valuable horse because she is a good teacher and babysitter. I have been trying to buy her to use as one of my lesson horses, but Pat said she would never sell her”, she said. Then she walked over to me and said: “You know Dave, you are very lucky that Pat took a liking to you, and that she lets you ride Ginger. There are not many people she trusts with this horse, and now that I think about it, not many people she even likes, for that matter”. I felt like asking her if she was among the many women that didn’t like Pat, but it was really none of my business. However, the more I was around her, I kind of figured out that she tolerated Pat for strictly monetary reasons.

It's Thanksgiving Day 1965, and we are all sitting around the dining room table ready to dig into what looks to be an unburned feast of delicious food. A very rare occurrence in the Rossiter household, that is normally characterized as being well overdone to say the least. The day started out with me delivering papers in the morning since it was a holiday, No watching the traditional Macy's Day Parade for a working kid. I finished just in time before a big snowstorm hit which rendered everybody confined to the house all day watching dad scream and yell at College Football on the Radiation Box.

Dad starts with the standard blessing of "Bless Us Oh Lord for These I etc., etc., etc.," then ends with: "And bless our soldiers who are spending this Thanksgiving in Vietnam risking their lives in the spirit of preserving democracy and human rights, Amen". Dad, being a World War 2 vet and winner of two purple hearts, (not sure if winner is the right word, but whatever), was always thinking about people in the military, and the sacrifices they make. At least he wasn't having to refer to a war with Russia that luckily, never materialized.

Since it was a holiday, and we were all in the official dining room, we were spared the usual around the table discussion of the day's happenings. Probably a good thing, since nothing really happened other than watching Dad coach College Football from our living room. Everybody finishes and gets up to help clear the table and Dad says: "Hey Roy, Mom and I want to talk with you this evening after the other kids go to bed. Since you don't have to go to school tomorrow, we will let you stay up past your bedtime since you're the oldest". I'm thinking, oh no, they are going to read me the right act about how I am not holding up my end of the bargain on our horse compromise. I guess I am guilty of spending a lot of time between my paper route and working with Ginger. At least I played baseball all summer, even though I quit fall football, and probably won't be able to do the bowling league this winter. But my grades in school really aren't all that bad, so that's a positive. I just as well spring my timing for buying a horse on him while we're at it and get it over with. As I look out the window watching the snow come down, I think to myself that if it was the end of the month, I could kill some time "Collecting for the Post" until the big showdown tonight. It would be a great evening to

make the rounds since everyone will be home at Thanksgiving. Oh well, I guess I will just go to my room and look at my baseball cards. As I am going through my cards the thought hit me that Millie sure took a different approach than the fat guy did with horses. She was good with Ginger as far as being calm and confident, but always following through when she asked her to do something. That's for sure the approach I am going to take with my new horse. Ginger and Millie sure taught me a lot.

Here it comes! "Ok Roy," said my dad, "Your Mom and I want to talk to you about where you are at on this whole horse thing. She has pretty much convinced me to lighten up on you as far as you're doing the things, I want you to do" he continued. "With that said, we are impressed with how you took the initiative to get a real job and stick with it at your age. "And don't let this go to your head, but I am also surprised how you found a way to learn about horses, basically for free". I am thinking to myself that there must be some sort of a catch here, or Mom really did transform Dad's thinking. "So, what's the bottom line here Dad, and what did Mom say to change your mind"? I said. "Well Roy, here's our thinking" he said. I know your almost 13, and you won't be eligible for the draft until your 18. Who knows how long this Vietnam thing will last, but if it's still going on when you turn 18, your headed to Vietnam. The only way that I would allow you to be a draft dodger is to be in college, which at least for now is a valid way to avoid the draft. And the only way your going to college is if you keep good grades and work to save money for college, since we can't afford to send you. So, the bottom line is keep getting good grades, make money, save for college, and buy your horse. If you can swing that, I will back off on all the sports stuff".

Truth be known, Dad was so military and patriotic he probably would have rather seen me go fight for our country. This approach was definitely Mom driving the bus. Turns out she was on to something. In January 1973 the Vietnam War ended with the U.S. suffering over 58,000 casualties. In 1969 the U.S. changed the draft to a lottery system, whereby eligible men 18 years or older were drawn each year by their birthdate. The last year of the lottery was August 1971 and the first year I was eligible. I was 19 and had just graduated from High School. My

lottery number was 128, but luckily, they only drafted up to number 95 that year. Dodged a bullet there since I was planning on starting college at Colorado State University, but didn't get in until the fall of 1973, (more on that later) . Anyway, true to form, Bobby Richards was a classic draft dodger. He was drafted at the height of the war, and since he was too lazy to go to college, Pat ended up sending him to Canada to join over 40,000 others who fled to Canada to avoid the draft during the Vietnam war.

"Thanks Mom and Dad" I said. "I won't let you down. As far as my horse, I have enough saved to buy one before my birthday for around \$150. I will keep the paper route going to pay for boarding the horse, and to start saving for college. You guys are the best". I'm thinking to myself that it's interesting how the older I get, the smarter my parents seem to get. Funny how that works.

The search for Equus has begun!

## **Chapter 7 A Dream Come True-Turns into Black and Blue**

“Hi Millie, how was your Thanksgiving?” I said. “It was ok, I guess, same old story: worthless and lazy relatives, just a different year, different turkey. As usual I did all the work while everybody else sat on their oversized butts watching TV. Glad it’s over, how about you Dave”. “It was great since I got the green light from my parents to buy a horse. My dream of having my horse is finally going to happen. My plan is to find a cheap place to board, buy tack and supplies, and then find and buy a horse before my birthday on December 16<sup>th</sup>.” “Sounds pretty ambitious since that’s only a few weeks away. My advice to you is to take your time to find a horse that is a been there done that type. No such thing as a bombproof horse, but that’s just what you need, similar to Ginger. They are hard to find, but it’s well worth taking your time to find one, since your still green when it comes to horses. As the old saying goes, Green Horse with Green Rider equals Black and Blue Rider” she said laughing. “If you need any help finding tack and a horse, just let me know. I am happy to help you” she said. “Thanks Millie, I really appreciate all you have done for me.”

As I am riding my bike up the steep hill on Sheridan Avenue towards home, I noticed that I wasn’t breathing like an old hoover vacuum cleaner anymore. Between packing papers every day and riding eight miles several times a week to see Ginger I realized that I had not only lost all my excess weight, but also gotten into pretty good shape. The days of wearing size husky jeans from Sell Low were finally behind me. And my lazy right eye also got into shape, and I was able to shed the black glasses. Via Con Dios Pusglsly. As I crest the hill like a not yet born, Lance Armstrong, I am thinking to myself that I better take Millie’s advice, and really spend the

time to find a horse like Ginger. I probably won't meet my December 16 target, but that's ok. I have waited this long, so what's a few extra weeks. I'm sure mom and dad won't care.

After finishing my paper route that afternoon it was starting to get dark as I walked in the house. Since it was the day after Thanksgiving, dad got home early but was nowhere to be seen as I strolled through the house. "Hi mom" I said. "Where's dad at?" "He is in the upstairs bathroom using the bathtub to make his Home Brew Beer, and you know what that means" she said. We all knew that when dad was mixing his secret ingredients for his homemade beer, he was not to be disturbed. He was well known around his circle of buddies to brew some of the best beer imaginable. In fact, he would only pull out his private stock for visitors if they were very special. I guess he considered our church priest and three nuns special when he had them over one night and they all got sloshed. (Whatever it takes to get to the kingdom of heaven, I guess). Now that I think about it, he was very environmentally conscious for those times, as he would use the same beer bottles repeatedly for each new batch. He even had a state-of-the-art bottle cap machine.

"What do you want dad for?" said mom. "Oh, I just need to give you guys an update on the horse, since I talked with Millie this afternoon". "What a coincidence" she replied. "Dad has some great news on a horse that he wants to talk to you about. We can talk over dinner tonight. That just reminded me, I need to take the Swanson TV dinners out of the freezer". "That got me thinking of two things. Number one, turkey TV dinners were horrible, but a definite upgrade to the usual fish fare on a Friday night. And number two, what on earth could the great news on a horse be, coming from dad?"

Tonight, dad changed up the blessing to add some humor to set the tone for a fine Swanson's dinner. "Four potatoes for the five of us, thank god there's no more of us, Amen. Got some great news for ya Roy" he continued. I was talking to my buddy Frank Webster at work and told him you were looking for a horse. Eileen in the typing pool overheard us talking and mentioned she had a horse for sale. Seems her husband just left her, and she can't afford horses anymore,

so she sold all of them off except for one. It's a girl horse about 5 years old, brown color, and according to Eileen, a very smart horse. And it gets even better. I paid her fifty bucks for the horse, and she said she can deliver it for free next Saturday. I just saved you a hundred buckaroos, so you can pay me back my fifty, use fifty for tack and supplies, and put the other fifty in your college fund. She said she has never been ridden before, but I figure with all your experience with Ginger you should have no problem busting her, or whatever term you horse folks use".

Dad was so excited that he found a horse and saved me a pile of money in the process, I just couldn't burst his bubble by telling him what Millie said. "Boy dad, I really don't know what to say other than thanks for all of your help, and by the way, my green grape jello next to my mashed potatoes is starting to turn black and blue." Mom looked over at me kind of puzzled and said: "What did you want to tell us about a horse and Millie"? I am never at a loss for words, so I replied: "Oh, she just told me good luck finding a horse, and that she really enjoyed Thanksgiving with all her fantastic relatives who are so energetic and always willing to lend a hand preparing the dinner. I just can't wait to tell Millie and all my paper customers that I finally got a horse".

Here I am on the next Saturday December 3<sup>rd</sup> huddled up next to a blazing pot belly stove in the official wild bunch clubhouse at the Hiwan Ranch on the Bear Creek River. It's snowing and twenty degrees outside. Several of the members of the wild bunch who had just finished their routine Saturday afternoon ride. are now passing the bottle around before going home to their irate wives, after being gone all day drinking and playing cowboy. "Okay everybody" said Russ, who is the barn manager. Russ is an ex-jockey, about 60 years old and walks with a crippled up left leg from a racehorse accident. As he was waiting for everyone to stop talking and give him the dirt floor, he pulled out a paper, then a pouch of tobacco, sprinkled tobacco on the paper, licked the paper, rolled it up perfectly, put it in his mouth, then lit it right up. Not only had I never seen someone roll their own cigarette before, but to do it so fast was just downright impressive.

“I want to introduce our new boarder, Dave Rossiter, and his new horse Starfire. He went on to say “We all were pretty entertained this afternoon watching the lady try to get her to back out of that fancy two horse trailer. But I think I speak for all of us in stating that Starfire is one motley looking animal with some major behavioral issues”. “And what really topped it off is when she bit Dave on the arm while he led her to the stall.” Everybody started laughing and passed the bottle around again. Then Russ said: “Don’t take it personal kid. If you’re going to hang around this place you have to be man enough to accept our joking around, and in your case, the reality of your horse situation. In all seriousness, welcome to the ranch and we are all here to lend you a hand, not if, but when you need help with that fine steed.”

“Hi Dave, my name is Marv. That lady must have seen you coming from a mile away. My advice is a shot to the head behind the barn. I have a pistol in my pickup you can borrow” More laughter ensued as they passed the bottle around again. “Pleased to meet you Dan, my name is Jim Halbert, everybody just calls me Halbert. A nice two by four between the ears will straighten her right out, it sure worked with my horse” slurring his words and calling me by the wrong name. “Hi Dave, I am Casper Hoppess. You can just call me Hopp. “The good news is we can probably help fix the behavior issues, but you’re stuck with the confirmation and pathetic looks of that poor animal. She might bring fifty bucks, if you sell her to Pres to go to the killers. That’s probably your best option”. Who is Pres, and what the heck are the killers? I thought to myself. “Ok, that’s about enough abuse for Dave’s first day. It’s going to be getting dark soon, so anybody want to give Dave a ride home since he rode his bike here. “ said Russ. Ride with one of these drunks? No way, I will take my chances in the dark and freezing elements. “Oh no worries, I will be fine riding my bike home, it’s only a couple of miles, and it’s not snowing that hard yet. Nice meeting everybody, and thanks for the advice”. I walked through the barn to say goodnight to Starfire, before heading home, thinking to myself: Not what I had expected on the first day of finally owning my own horse. I don’t think I want any of these guys helping me with Starfire since their advice is to either shoot her, send her to the killers, which I just now figured out, or use a two by four between the ears. Sounds like fat guy horsemanship to me!

I walked in the door as everyone was seated at the table celebrating sister Pam's twelfth birthday. "How's your new horse Roy?", said dad. "She is a real dandy dad; you really outdid yourself on this one. Sell Low couldn't even come close to this level of a smoking deal" I said, while walking downstairs, to wash my hands, and my bloody black and blue arm.

### **Chapter 8-The Big Break-Meeting a Real Cowboy**

My 13<sup>th</sup> birthday came and went without much fanfare. Since I couldn't afford a saddle yet, I was mainly working with Starfire to lead, without her leading me, and picking up her feet without her reaching around to bite me. I actually think the wild bunch quit drinking so much because they were so entertained watching the Dave and Starfire comedy show. I was too embarrassed to ask Millie for help, and even though they offered to help, I steered clear of the Wild Bunch, on account of their fat guy horsemanship methods.

Christmas morning finally arrived and my belief in Santa Clause was shattered, (not entirely true, as I had been getting somewhat suspicious over the last couple of Christmases), when I saw Bobby Richard's saddle under our tree. I couldn't believe my eyes and pretended that Santa really did come through so I wouldn't ruin it for Pam and Jim. "Gee Mom and Dad how did Santa know where to find a saddle. It wasn't even in the Montgomery Ward catalog." Both mom and dad winked at me. Then I reminded myself that dad really is softening up and giving into my horsey aspirations. What a great Christmas present.

Starfire had never been ridden or had a saddle on, for that matter. I spent the next month getting her desensitized to it, to where she wouldn't buck every time it was on her back. Then I spent another month leading her around in the arena and pasture preparing to eventually get on and start riding her. It was late February, snow on the ground, and just starting to get dark. I had not been to the east end of the 100-acre pasture, so I led Starfire over in that direction

and noticed a neighbor's house and barn with about fifty horses in one of the pastures. There was a cowboy looking guy riding a black and white paint horse in the arena along with another guy wearing a baseball cap smoking a cigar and riding a big buckskin horse. They waved to me, and just as I raised my hand to wave back, a jackrabbit jumped out of a nearby bush. Starfire took off in a terror, and I held on to the lead rope for dear life until I finally let go after getting drug for what seemed eternity. Crippled up, with my knees and elbow killing me, and all scraped up, I went to catch Starfire who was long gone, and packing my Christmas issue saddle. I looked back to see if the two guys saw this fiasco unfold, and sure enough, they had. There was a gate from their arena into the Hiwan pasture, that they had already opened, and gone through, as they were in hot pursuit of Starfire at a full gallop. It was one impressive sight watching what looked to be some real cowboys catching up to Starfire. The guy on the paint reached over at top speed to grab the lead rope and dally it around his saddle horn. Starfire pulled back to escape but hit a brick wall when the paint didn't flinch, dragging her along like she wasn't even there. I was thinking, that's probably the first time in her life she hasn't gotten her way. Maybe there is a place for getting tough every now and then when training horses? These cowboys got more done with her in five minutes than I had in two months.

"Here's your horse kid" said the cowboy on the paint horse as he handed me the lead rope. "My name is Preston, and you can just call me Pres. And this big fella here on the buckskin, is Ken, we call him K.J for short," he said. I replied, "Nice meeting you guys, and thanks for retrieving my horse. My name is Dave, and you can just call me Dave for short". "Looks like you have your hands full with this fine-looking animal" said K.J. I was hurting pretty bad and didn't feel like engaging in another discussion about this less than desirable horse, so I just said: "That's an understatement". I then tried to start the long walk back to the barn but could barely walk. "We would pony your horse and give you a ride back to the Hiwan barn, but we don't get along with Russ and the Wild Bunch. Were not welcome on this property. Since your all stove up, why don't you jump up behind me if you can. I will take you and your horse to my place, and my wife Lorretta can patch you up and you can turn your horse out in one of my pastures until your able to come back and get her," said Pres. "Sounds good" I said, as I gritted by teeth and swung up behind Pres. As we rode off into the already set, sunset, aka, pitch dark,

I am thinking to myself that this may be the big break in my horse training journey, I had been waiting for: to meet up with a real cowboy, the possibilities might be endless!

### **Chapter 9-A Wake-up Call and Sunday Night Story Telling**

Here I am sitting at the kitchen table with my family again, but this time it's almost 57 years after that cold dark night in Colorado when cowboy Pres, and K.J saved the day when Starfire drug me and ran off with my new saddle on. The family and kitchen are also different, compared to back then. I am now sitting at the table in our Gilbert Arizona ranch house, with my wife Daphne, the love of my life, and bride of 38 years, daughter Kelli, who is 34 and married to her husband Mark who together have two fine daughters. Tenley is in second grade, and Everly is in pre- kindergarten. And then there's my son Max who is 32, and has a daughter named Oakley, also a pre-kindergarten scholar.

Daphne said: " It's sure nice that we can revive our Sunday night ritual of family dinner together, now that Covid is pretty much behind us, and things are getting back to normal. I take that back; I mean somewhat normal. Living the past two years with people around us sick or dying, and basically a wholesale change in how people including all of us, led our daily lives, is sure a wake-up call". I was thinking to myself that there are some positives that came out of the Covid era. Even though Daphne's cooking is way better than my moms was, she hates cooking. Without in-person dining, restaurants survived by featuring the ultimate in-home delivery services. Now, with Covid in the rear-view mirror, Daphne is addicted, and has become a master at ordering dinner on her cell phone. Home cooking is even more rare, than it used to be, as are in person restaurant visits. Plus, Covid also gave rise to home delivery from Supermarkets. Simply order what you want on the store app, and the store picks out your groceries and delivers them to your front door.

“I’ll say it’s a wake-up call”, said Kelli. I think people got a dose of reality seeing that life can be gone in a flash, and you better start living your life with different priorities since you might not be here tomorrow. Look at all the people who have quit their jobs, (the great resignation) or are requiring that their employer give them more flexibility in the workplace. People got used to working from home, and they don’t want to return to the same old grind and long commute to the office. A lot of my friends, as well as Mark and Max, are still able to work from home, full or part-time, and have more flexible work hours and time off as well.”

“Your kind of quiet Max. Got anything you want to add to this conversation”? I said. “Funny you should ask dad. I have been delegated to be the spokesman for me and the rest of our family.” “That’s great Max, good choice by the other family members, (even though it’s only mom, Kelli, and Mark). You’re probably the best orator of the bunch. Just what did you have in mind to orate about?” I said. “Before I begin, does anyone need their drink refilled? Another Diet Dr. Pepper Mark? Another Coors Light dad? Another bathroom break Kelli or mom? No, we are all good to go, was the collective response.

Max stood up at the head of the table and began by saying: “Let me first mention an article that I ran across and shared with Kelli and Mom. It talks about a lady in Australia that worked for several years as a Hospice Nurse, caring for patients in the last days of their lives. She recorded their epiphanies and she put her observations into a book called The Top Five Regrets of the Dying. None of us read the book, but the 5 regrets surprisingly don’t have anything to do with wealth, or material things. We all thought those would be at the top of the list. Interestingly enough, the top five were: 1) I wish I’d had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me. 2) I wished I had not worked so hard. 3) I wish I had the courage to express my feelings. 4) I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends. and 5) I wish I had let myself be happier. We compared notes and agreed that all of them were pretty self-explanatory except for: I wish I had the courage to express my feelings. We dug a little deeper and they went on to explain that many people suppressed their feelings in order to keep peace

with others. As a result, they settled for a mediocre existence and never became who they were truly capable of becoming”.

“Can I interrupt you for a minute”? I said. “Sure, said Max, what is it?” Not sure where you’re going with this, but you and Kelli are in your early thirties. I can understand why mom might be thinking about regrets in life, since she is at a later stage in life, compared to you guys. But what prompted you kids to take an interest in this stuff anyway”? “Good question, so please let me continue” he said.

“Me, mom, Mark, and Kelli got to talking one day about how good we have it in life compared to most people. Actually, very similar to how you described your situation in one of your stories where you talked about your family culture early in life. Anyway, the ramifications of living in the Covid era got us asking ourselves if we really are living the best life possible. Then we got to talking about you. Don’t let this go to your head, but you seem to have things pretty well figured out. Based on the many stories you have told us as well as seeing you in action firsthand, it seemed to us that you have lived a cool life so far, almost 70 years and counting. You’re a great father/husband, you don’t care what other people think of you, you always seem happy because you’re doing what you want to do, you don’t have a temper, and it seems like everyone you meet becomes your friend. And basically, you seem to be your best life leader”. “Ok, I think he gets the picture, now let me mention some of his not so desirable traits, just kidding,” said mom.

“With that said, before Covid hit you were taking us through your equine guided leadership story. It was fun to hear about your early years and realizing your dream of owning your own horse. Oh, and by the way, you really left us hanging, not knowing what happened after you rode over to Pres’s house to get patched up. But honestly, what we are really interested in, is hearing about the rest of your journey and how horses changed your life by, as you described it, teaching you how to live a lifetime”. I think before Covid, we enjoyed the story telling, but where you were taking us was not yet resonating. Now, post Covid we are in a much better

mindset to listen to what you have to say. Since it obviously is working for you, it is our hope that it will prove to be life changing for all of us as well.”

“Boy, I am both flattered and dumbfounded to say the least”, I said. I never expected this. You can add this request to the evolution of the restaurant and supermarket home deliveries as some of the few positives that came out of Covid”. They all looked at each other wondering where that statement came from. “So how do you want to proceed?” “Well,” said Kelli, since we are getting back together every Sunday night for family dinner again, why don’t we all agree that you will use about 30 minutes during dinner for a story telling session. How’s that sound dad?” “Book it guys”, I said. See everybody next Sunday, when I will begin by finishing the story on going to Pres’s house. Oh, and one last thing. Let’s all give Max a nice round of applause for the fine presentation.” “Thanks everybody” said Max, as he raised his glass of water to give a toast, and said: “Here’s to having no regrets!

### **Part 3- A Journey from City Slicker to Cowboy to Horseman**

#### **Sunday #1 A Cowboy and Real Hand (Oct 30)**

Well, everybody, here we are on our first Sunday night of our journey in storytelling. So, before we get started, what's new with everybody? "Not much", said Kelli. "Just been getting the girls ready for Halloween tomorrow night at our house. At least the weather is finally cooling down. Hopefully the 100-degree days are behind us until next spring. How is yours and Max's training going for your triathlon next month?" "Good", said Max. "We both did a long bike ride today and it wasn't too bad". "Speak for yourself Max", I said. "After a sixty-mile bike ride in ninety-degree heat, I feel like I have been rode hard and put up wet". "Is that some of your cowboy lingo we will be learning about from these Sunday night sessions"? said Mom with a smirk on her face. "Funny you should say that dear. That's exactly where I am going tonight, talking about becoming a cowboy", I said.

I waited in front of Pres's front door while he unsaddled his paint horse. I was freezing and my left leg was throbbing from being drug like a water skier without water across the pasture by a runaway Starfire. "Dave, this is my wife Loretta", said Pres. "He got kind of banged up tonight, so could you patch him up, and I will give him a ride home". "Well, that should do it," said Loretta. "Those are some nasty scrapes, so make sure you keep them clean, and don't let them get infected". Pres walked back in the room and said, "You sure don't seem to know your way around horses, so how did you end up with that bronc at Hiwan Ranch?" I told them the whole story about how Starfire is my first horse, and how I am a city kid, but my dream has always been to be a cowboy. "Well, our son Mike is in the service, and just shipped out to Germany. I

need help, so if you are really serious about becoming a cowboy, and a real hand, you can go to work for me, but it's going to be a lot of hard work and dedication. Talk to your folks and maybe we can work something out". "I will get back to you tomorrow when I come back to pick up Starfire", I said, as I slid out of his truck and limped towards our front door. I'm thinking to myself that this is really the opportunity I had been waiting for. Mom and dad won't care since it's a real job. The big problem is going to be finding an unsuspecting sucker to take over my paper route. Luckily, I have acquired some valuable salesmanship skills!!!!

It's 11:30 at night and I am loading eight head of horses into Pres's six horse gooseneck trailer at the sale barn in Fort Morgan Colorado. After riding around 15 horses in the sale ring that night I am pretty worn out, but not quite as tired as Pres who is passed out in the front seat of the truck from a non-contagious case of exhaustion and Jack Daniels. After just three months of working for Pres, I am well on the road to becoming a cowboy, and an accomplished driver at 13 years old. It's become very clear that when Mike left for Germany, Pres was not only losing a ranch hand, but a private chauffeur as well. That's ok, though, good cowboys do whatever it takes to get the job done.

About halfway home, I pulled over to the side of the road with red lights flashing behind me. I looked over and Pres was wide awake, sitting up straight as could be, and said, "Let me do the talking". I rolled down my window and the highway patrolman said: "Can I see your license sir, I mean kid"? I looked over at Pres who said: "Is that you Ben"? "Oh, no, is that you Pres, he said. "Ya, it's me. Mike shipped out to Germany, and I am grooming his replacement". "Come on Pres, I cut you a lot of slack over the years when Mike was too young to drive, but this kid can barely see over the dashboard". "I know" said Pres, "but in my current condition he is a much safer driver than I am. Can ya just cut me some slack, just this one time"? "There have been way too many "just this one time" times over the years Pres. Next time I just may have to take you in to the station. But tonight, it's late, I'm tired, and my shift ends in 10 minutes. So kid, get these horses home safe, and this fugitive out of my sight. Good to see you Pres and tell Loretta I said hello". Pres leaned back in his seat, tipped his hat over his eyes, and said: "That takes care of that, just wake me up when we get home and you have all the horses unloaded, fed,

and watered.” I guess he wasn’t kidding when he said it would be a lot of hard work and dedication. He did fail to mention however, that it entailed breaking the law from time to time.

As time went on, I came to appreciate how much effort and thought Pres was investing in me. He was a tough cowboy who was proud of how he could get things done with horses, and especially his ability to make a living buying and selling horses. He went to great lengths to bestow these qualities on me. Looking back over my eight years, on and off tenure working for Pres, it was almost like attending “The Pres Houtchen’s School of Get ER Done Horsemanship.” His business model was buying horses as cheaply as possible, and turning them over for a profit, in as short amount of time possible. Horses were merely a commodity. The handling and riding techniques I learned were in the category of force, domination, intimidation, and coercion. Sort of like a master-slave kind of relationship. At the time, these methods were pretty mainstream, from my point of view, because I didn’t know any other way of interacting with horses. All the cowboys, including Pres, that I encountered or worked with, were revered for using these techniques to perfection, (with several exceptions, which I will discuss later), so why would I even think of questioning them.

From day one, Professor Pres put me on the fast track. He drove me out to his big pasture in his truck and trailer and told me to spend the first week practicing driving between cones and backing up. The second week he taught me everything about saddles and tack, and how to tack up horses, (his way, not Millie’s way by the way!). The third week I spent every afternoon riding his bucking barrel. The fourth week, he started putting me on all the new horses that came in for resale. But before I got on, I had to look at their mouth and tell Pres how old they were. Pres was an expert at mouthing horses, and all the sale barns used him as a ring steward to mouth horses and take bids. It took me a long time and lots of horses to get good at aging horses, but it was well worth it. Then he taught me how to sale prep horses, which more times than not, entailed using a scotch rope to hobble a hind leg, and using a twitch, so they would stand still for the loud clippers used to boot their legs, trim their face, ears, and wherever else was necessary. Once at the sale barn, I would check in our load of horses, and get them tacked up and situated. Then I would watch Pres and the other horse traders hone their skills at what was termed “Chute Trading”. They were basically a den of thieves that would try to buy horses

as they were being unloaded by unsuspecting sellers who had not yet checked them in. Knowing full well what they would bring in the sale ring, the strategy was to intimidate the horse owner into selling the horse to them cheap, and then turning around and reselling it in the sale a couple hours later for a quick profit. In fact, if the horse was lame, they would buy it for next to nothing promising the owner that it would not go to the killers. They would then drug the horse, so it showed sound in the sale ring insuring a nice profit in a record amount of time. I got a good education watching the traders buy horses and identify all the soundness problems they would point out. Everything from blindness, to lameness, splints, windpuffs, spavins, and many other things that were not many times not visible to the untrained eye.

Once the sale started, I would show our horses in the sale ring, already knowing from riding them at home what I could get away with on each horse. In between riding Pres's horses, I would ride horses for people that paid a fee to the sale barn to have their horse ridden. Pres had an arrangement with most of the sale barns where they paid him half of the riding fee on each horse I rode. Sometimes I would ride 20-30 horses a night for a sale barn, but still got the same hourly pay and free dinner at the sale barn café from Pres. Needless to say, they didn't have child labor laws in place back then. Usually there was a reason people paid extra to have someone else ride their horse. Even though it got pretty western at times, I just chalked it up to experience, and part of being a good cowboy.

By the time the sale was over, Pres was wearing down, so he would give me a signed check and I would go into the office to pay for the horses he bought, and collect a check for the horses he sold, my riding fee, and his ring steward pay. Paperwork in hand, I would collect the new horses, and take them to the loading chute area, where Pres would be waiting with the truck and trailer passing the bottle around with his horse trader cronies. Once I got the horses loaded, I would say goodnight to Pres as he started to nod off and begin the usually long drive home.

The next day, the process would start all over again with the addition of some extracurricular activities. Pres peddled a lot of horses by attracting buyers via advertising in the newspaper. He also had several other innovative practices which included gymkhanas. On weekends when there were no horse sales, Pres would have me tack up six horses and load them up in his

trailer. He would then haul us to a local gymkhana, unload the horses, and go enter them in whatever events he thought each one would excel in. There was western pleasure, barrel racing, pole bending, keyhole race, rescue race, watermelon race, trail, and obstacle course, and whatever else the organizers could think up. I would ride the horses in the events, and if the horse placed, Pres would announce to the crowd that the horse was for sale during the ribbon presentation, (Purchase of the horse came with the ribbons). He also had special signs on his trailer and pickup announcing, "Horses Bought, Sold, and Traded". I got a lot of experience riding horses at these events while Pres had a lot of success selling and swapping horses. Even people not entered in an event would show up to just to see what horses Pres would show up with. Any purchase would come with a guarantee that if the horse didn't work out, he would replace it with one that would. This gave him another opportunity to make more money on the deal, which usually included a trade with boot money from the buyer. The epitome of a true Equine Entrepreneur! As a bonus for riding all these horses at gymkhanas, Pres and Loretta would take me and enter me in local Junior and Little Britches Rodeos in the bareback, bronc, and bull riding events. They truly loved the rodeo atmosphere and watching me build my rodeo skills, or lack thereof. They're hopes of one day watching me compete at the National Finals Rodeo in Oklahoma City never materialized, but that didn't stop them from going to watch the event for their annual vacation every year.

Having graduated from High School in the spring of 1971, I spent that summer working for Pres, as well as starting colts for the Peppy Blue Dot Ranch in Parker Colorado. Between working, and traveling to High School Rodeos throughout High School, my academic endeavors, or lack thereof, had taken a toll. In retrospect, I am really surprised I graduated from High School without really even studying. I unfortunately didn't hold up my end of the bargain with dad when it came to good grades, however at this point I had enough saved for the first semester at CSU, if, and when that might happen. Anyway, it came as no surprise that my lack luster grades and poor SAT score were just not up to snuff for getting accepted to Colorado State University. I was however, offered a rodeo scholarship to Lamar Community College, but I declined because I was determined to go to CSU, and eventually apply to get into vet school.

After receiving the third rejection letter from CSU, with the fall semester already in full swing, I decided to take a drive to Fort Collins and meet with the admissions office to plead my case. “Thanks for taking time to meet with me Mrs. Tucker” I said. “No problem, Dave. I must say you are very persistent. I think you are the first applicant I have dealt with that has been rejected three times over the course of several months and just doesn’t seem to get the message. Your high school grades are very poor, and your SAT score is way below what is required”, she said. “Most students in your situation can eventually get accepted if they go to a community college for a couple of years and get good grades. That’s about your only option Dave”. As she is talking, I had a flashback to that meeting with Pat Richards in her kitchen years ago- Never Take No for an Answer. “Mrs. Tucker, going to a community college is not an option. What is the minimum SAT score that you will accept?”, I said. “Even if you retake the SAT exam, it is highly unlikely you could improve on your, how should I say this, somewhat embarrassing, no, quite embarrassing score of (I honestly don’t remember what it was). You would need at least a 1200, and even with that, you would be on probation for the first semester. Take my advice, and just go to Lamar and get good grades” she replied. “Now we are getting somewhere”, I said. “Can you give me a letter of acceptance under the condition that I score at least a 1200 on an SAT retake?” I said. “I have been doing this for over twenty years, and I am here to tell you that you’re not going to improve your score that much unless you retake high school”, she said only half joking. “But if a letter will make you happy, and get you on your way, so be it, I will type it up right now”. So, she lit up a camel, slipped on her reading glasses with the librarian chain on them, loaded a sheet of paper in the Underwood, and started banging away. With the letter in hand, I headed back to Denver wondering how in the world I was going to ace the SAT!

“How did things go with the admissions office”? said Mom. “Well, I got a letter of acceptance under one, not so minor condition. I have to get a 1200 or better on the SAT. Problem is, I have no idea how that’s going to happen”. “Why don’t you talk to our neighbor Sammy about helping you out. He still tutors kids, just like he did for your sister Pam when she was in junior high trying to pass her math classes. Remember how Dad would try to help her and it always ended up in a big fight with Pam going to her room crying and slamming the door? Sammy not

only saved her from your dad but successfully taught, you're not so teachable sister, math. If he got your sister through math, getting you to score above 1200 should be a piece of cake. He was the first person to convince Pam that math was not stupid. That was quite a feat in itself. Anyway, the poor guy is a paralyzed from the neck down and has been bed ridden his whole life, but he sure knows his stuff, and is a great teacher. In fact, he has a real talent for connecting, and getting through to young people. I think you will really like him." "Will do, thanks Mom"!

"Sammy, this is Pam Rossiter's brother Dave," said his mom. Sammy was lying in a fancy hospital bed in his bedroom that faced a big window so he could see out in the front yard and the street. Not knowing what to expect, I was somewhat astounded looking at this poor guy who had probably spent his whole life in this bedroom. His fingers were stubby and all puffy, and he had rosy, red cheeks. In a high-pitched voice, he said: "Come on over here Dave so I can see you" he said. I didn't realize that he couldn't even turn his head. "According to my mom, who spoke with your mom, you are looking to retake the SAT exam and score at least 1200 so you can enter CSU sometime in the near future. She also said you basically did the bare minimum to get through High School, and your SAT score was very poor. Do I have that right Dave?", he said. "That's correct sir". "You can address me as Sammy, sir is my dad's name, if and when we ever see him again. He left my mom and I years ago just in case you were wondering why it's just the two of us. Ok, I can help you if you are willing to put in the time and effort. However, I will require you to adhere to a few conditions. First off, no feeling sorry for me. You will get used to looking at me and eventually come to realize that I actually lead a very happy, purposeful, and fulfilling life. Secondly, the only compensation I require is that for every minute I spend teaching you, you agree to spend equal time reading to me. I can't hold up a book and turn the pages. And oh yes, regarding books, you also must agree to return and pick up books for me at the library. And last, but not least, I am big on character and integrity. I don't see that as a problem with you as I watched you over the years delivering newspapers and how you handled yourself with my Mom and our neighbors when you collected your money. As I say that, I am willing to overlook how you conned Ricky Walker into taking over your paper route." How the heck did he know anything about that. I would prefer the term

salesmanship rather than conned, but whatever. “Nevertheless, I require honesty and truthfulness. In that regard I adhere to a culture of Stoicism, which you will learn a lot about when you are reading to me. To get a 1200 we will be focusing on math, and a lot of reading and writing. Evenings will work best for me so you can do my daily journaling at the end of the day. It will help with your writing skills. If that all sounds good with you, just let me know when you are ready to start. No offense to your sister, but hopefully you didn’t get her math gene, or lack thereof”.

On a beautiful day in June 1973, I pulled into the CSU admissions office parking lot in my 1966 Ford F-150 three speed on the column pick-up truck. I can’t believe it’s been almost two years since my negotiations with Mrs. Tucker. I walked up to the receptionist and said: “I am here to see Mrs. Tucker please”. “Your name sir”, she said. It’s Dave Rossiter aka the embarrassing SAT score”, I replied. Not fazed by my somewhat sarcastic name, she didn’t even look up, and just told me to have a seat. “Hi Mrs. Tucker, not sure if you remember me or not”, I said. “Sure, I do, the persistent one. Did you finally take my advice and go to Lamar Community College instead of trying to better your SAT score”, as she thumbed through my file. As I handed her the admissions letter, she had originally given me, along with the results of my SAT test showing a 1280 score, I said. “No, and I guess Sammy proved you wrong, when you told me that I would have to retake high school in order to score at least a 1200”. She looked at the 1280 score and said: “What, a 1280 score, and who the heck is Sammy? I thanked her for her twenty plus years of experience and for all her help, and said: “See you this fall, as I handed her a fresh pack of Camel cigarettes, a new librarian chain, and a bottle of white out for her typing mistakes.

“Hi Dorothy and Dave, come on in and have a seat at the kitchen table”, said Loretta. “Pres will be right out, and we can start dinner. Thanks so much for coming over”. As my mom and Loretta are visiting, waiting for Pres to change his clothes, I walked over to the window and started watching the horses munching away on hay as it started getting dark. It was about this time of day, in what seems like just yesterday, that KJ and Pres ran down Starfire and my journey with Pres to become a real cowboy began. Now it’s August 1973, and a whole new chapter in my life is about to begin when I move to Fort Collins to start school next month. Had

I not just spent almost two years working with Sammy, I might not have been so motivated to go to college, and may have in fact, been satisfied spending the rest of my life working with horses. But Sammy opened my eyes to the value of knowledge and learning that exposed me to the many things I could pursue to compliment my life with horses. That said, I was excited about continuing my academic endeavors that were inspired by Sammy, who turned out to be a very inspirational and special person in my life.

“Hi everyone, where’s Charlie”, said Pres as he sat down at the kitchen table while we started passing around the food. “Sorry he couldn’t make it, but he has a big bowling tournament tonight and he didn’t want to let his bowling buddies down”, said mom. “No problem, it’s his loss as he is missing Loretta’s specialty, hamburger helper covered in her secret hot sauce, freshly picked sweet corn, homemade bread, and rhubarb pie with ice cream for desert. In fact, I picked the rhubarb down by Bear Creek just this morning”, said Pres’ all proud of himself. “I am going to go make another bourbon and water before I get started. Anybody need anything”, said Pres.

Pres sat back down, took a big swig of his drink, and said, “We just wanted to have you guys over before Dave heads off to college. Loretta and I want to thank you and Charlie for sharing Dave with us over the last eight years or so. He filled a real void for us when Mike left home. Admittedly, the adage that “He wouldn’t make a wart on a good Cowboy’s ass” pretty much described Dave when he started here. I know you guys are city folks that really don’t understand the “Cowboy Culture”, but nevertheless, I really applaud you and Charlie for supporting Dave in his pursuit to become a horse person, as he used to say.

“With that said, Dave has accomplished more than I would have ever thought, and I just wanted you to be aware of what he has done.” Boy, that’s really nice of you guys. It’s a shame Charlie isn’t here, since he is the one that has always been skeptical of horse people, ever since his days at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. But that’s ok, I am all ears”, said mom. “Well, Dave has mastered everything I do in my horse-trading business. He can ride anything, has a special way around horses, show preps them, mouths them with accuracy, knows how to get the most out of a horse in the show ring, competes well with horses at gymkhana events, and just about everything else that goes along with running my business”. It was no coincidence that Pres

failed to mention my chauffer duties which started at the age of 13, a very strategic omission. “Oh, I forgot to mention his success in rodeo. I know Charlie wasn’t with you, but I bet you were impressed watching Dave win the saddle bronc riding at the Colorado High School Finals last month. And, on top of that, and everything he has done for me, he worked galloping horses at the racetrack, riding cutting horses for Jim Warner, starting colts for the Peppy Blue Dot Ranch, starting colts for Walt Flanagan racing stables, trading horses out of Hiwan ranch, and other stuff that I am probably forgetting. I could probably go on with his accomplishments but let me stop there and tell you what this means in our way of life, which according to Charlie is maybe suspect”. I looked over at Loretta and she was starting to tear up a little bit, which got me wondering where Pres was going with all of this. Mom, the tough x-army nurse, still all ears, had just turned very curious, as she started to dig into her pie and ice cream.

“Let me explain Dorothy. The term Cowboy and horse person can mean a lot of different things to different people, so I shy away from using them to describe reaching the pinnacle in our way of life in the horse business, and life in general. I much rather prefer the term “Making a hand”, which is an expression that is short on words but big on meaning. It’s much more appropriate for describing the way of life we adhere to and represent. There is a lifetime of components built into it that are very important to us. It’s hard to put into words, but let me just say that Dave, you have made a hand in the eyes of me and Loretta, and you should be very proud of that. And Dorothy, you and Charlie should be very proud of that as well. Enough said.”

Loretta who had retreated to the bathroom crying, finally came out and asked if anybody wanted more desert. Pres who had just mixed himself another drink sat down and sensed that he better move the discussion to the lighter side so he wouldn’t set off Loretta again. “Anyway, I have a couple pieces of good news before we call it a night. I talked with Doc Pollero yesterday and he said that he can get you a weekend job at the CSU large animal clinic, so give him a call when you get settled in. And I got you hired on with me as a wrangler for next summer’s Roundup Riders of the Rockies weeklong ride. That way I know that I will see you at least once a year, and the tips you make will go a long way in helping you with your school expenses.

*"It was probably a step in the making of a cowhand when he learned that what would pass for heroics in a softer world, was only chores around here."*

*Wallace Stegner*

"That's the end of story telling for tonight everybody", I said. "I didn't know you did all that stuff with Pres", said Daphne, "especially driving horses around at 13 years of age. Things were sure different back then." "Ya, and thanks Dad, for insisting that Max and I get good grades when we were in high school. It sure doesn't sound like you were such a model student, which you conveniently failed to mention to us all these years", said Kelli. "Any more constructive comments", I said. "I never heard of this Sammy guy. Sounds like you spent a lot of time with him, and liked him a lot", said Max. "I really did, and there are so many positive things I learned from him that I will be talking about them in several of our future story telling sessions. Ok, so several takeaways from tonight that I want you to keep in mind as they will be playing into future stories are: First, becoming a real cowboy, and being called a hand by Pres and Loretta. At the time, this meant more to me than anything I had ever experienced, since I had been dreaming about it since I was a little kid. Had it not been for Pres and Loretta, this dream may have never come true. Second is, the positive influence Sammy had on me to pursue college and other endeavors to compliment my interest in horses. And third is having parents that were caring and supportive in pursuing my dream growing up. Ok, that's it everybody, now it's Tenley's turn to tell us a story", I said.