

GRINS, GRIT & GRACE

Stories From Stable Days Youth Ranch

OUTSIDE

BY Caryl Lester

Sticks, mud, gardens, hens, horses, and butterflies! At the heart of the Stable Days programming is the philosophy that we all, children and childlike, flourish when given the time and space to play in the God-designed, sensory-rich, experiential-learning, nature-based environment that is found on the other side of inside.

Outside, in the winter, holding witness to the rising of the sun, while dawn becomes day a new story unfolds. The crisp air, a most perfect refreshment as we listen to the hens cackle their greetings telling us that morning has begun. Each sunrise of winter, with the wind at our back, we seek new mercies and the promise of snow-filled playfulness. We can find drive for our novel mind and peace for our soul.

Outside in the spring, as the earth seems to come to life again, buds bloom with the hope of longer days. The dawn chorus has ended, and mid-morning has begun. The new greens brighten the fresh fields as the grandness of nature cannot be ignored. Each morning of spring, with our face tipped to the sun, we can find respite for our overactive mind

and refreshment for our soul.

Outside in the summer, damp from the sweat of the day, we pause for a moment to catch a fresh breeze. We sit watching the wind bend the corn stalks in emerald waves, hearing the unrestrained guffaws of laughter while we settle deep into play and drink in the sweet garden smells. There are no words to describe what our heart can sense. Each day of summer, with the sun kissed flora as a backdrop, we can find inspiration in the daisies, focus for our engaged mind, and strength for our soul.

Outside in the fall, waiting for the day to become night, the sun lowers as it heralds in the silvery moon. The turned leaves glisten as the shadows of the trees begin to dance, dappling the wood as it creates a new picture with each moment. We can find new joys to brighten our dreams, we can speak prayers of thanksgiving for God's unending grace, we can find peace for our laden mind, and yes, it is well with our soul.



“DET FINNS INGET DÅLIGT VÄDER, BARA DÅLIGA KLÄDER”

THIS COMMON SWEDISH MAXIM “THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS BAD WEATHER, ONLY BAD CLOTHES” SOUNDS, IN ENGLISH, LIKE A ONE-LINER. IN SWEDISH, ITS MEANING IS FAR CLEARER. IT MEANS “GO OUTSIDE”!

RANCH LESSONS

BY Elizabeth Meares

There is no shortage of activities to choose from at the ranch: Learning the joys of fresh veggies and fruits in the garden; cuddling with sheep and mini donkeys; hand feeding grass to chickens; canoeing or fishing on the river; chasing frogs or bugs; or one of our most favored activities of spending time with the horses, be it grooming, riding, bathing, or just simply being in the presence of such great animals. There is nothing quite like seeing the awe of discovery when a kid tastes snaps peas right off the stem, or the laughter and sour expressions when tasting a not-so-sweet currant berry (there's a reason most recipes call for a lot of sugar!), or the peace of relationship when a thousand pound horse chooses to follow their leadership. I could reflect over countless deep and moving stories from the ranch or the great many lessons God has taught me through His awesome creation, but recently it was the light-hearted laughter of water fights that shines bright.

There can be a love of the horses and the animals and certainly a love of harvest season in the garden, but there is absolutely nothing quite like a good water fight. We'll drag out the hose and fill a Rubbermaid tote full, watching expectantly (and with only a moderate amount of patience) and then chaos breaks loose! Squirters and water guns are filled and emptied fast enough to make you dizzy and no one in range is safe from the shocking yet refreshing blast of cold water on a hot day. Alliances are formed and teams rail on each other only to be switched and



A LITTLE NONSENSE NOW AND THEN IS RELISHED

BY THE WISEST MEN.

-WILLY WONKA

Fred Rodgers -

“When we treat children’s play as seriously as it deserves, we are helping them feel the joy that’s to be found in the creative spirit. It’s the things we play with and the people who help us play that make a great difference in our lives.”

reformed with a previous opponent moments later. What can start with only a single participant and mentor combo can quickly turn in o a ranch-wide, all-out war as the shrieks of laughter call out like a beacon for all to join. For some, the large tote of water is just too inviting and a full-on climb on in and submerge yourself is what is called for!

This season, I knew that every Wednesday, my afternoon session would include a water fight (or else the session just does not feel at all complete for this kiddo). I came prepared with quick-dry clothes or an extra change. We budget into the time we have together. And while the lessons of strong but kind leadership with a horse, or being sure to get out the whole root of a weed lest it grows right back stand out strong to me, the reminder that laughter and sheer fun are so, so important is one that I find myself so in need of at times. When life is busy, very good but busy, we must remember to step back and make time to laugh our heads off while getting super soaked by a group of kids with hose water and a joy for life that our great Creator placed deep in our hearts. That is a ranch lesson well worth holding onto tightly.



*SHE SMELLED OF SUN AND DAISIES,
WITH A HINT OF RIVER WATER.
-AUTHOR UNKNOWN*

C.S. Lewis -

“Any patch of sunlight in a wood will show you something about the sun which you could never get from reading books on astronomy. These pure and spontaneous pleasures are ‘patches of Godlight’ in the woods of our experience.”

BOBBY

BY CARYL LESTER



There was a big black cloud hanging over Bobby's house. It grew darker on the days when the unspeakable things happened. He hadn't been outside for some time now and he didn't know exactly where he lived but he guessed it was states away from the home he remembered.

He was old enough to know that things were not right. Old enough to know that he belonged somewhere else. But so young, with his whole life to look forward to, with all the hopes, possibilities, and dreams that boys should have. But Bobby was robbed. Robbed of his innocence, robbed of sunlight and playgrounds and of so many, many other things. Too many things to count and too many things that are too sad to say.

Bobby spent a lot of time thinking and shaming and blaming and when the bad things came upon him he learned to think himself somewhere else.

Bobby was never whipped, never struck. The pain he faced came in a more raw, invasive, personal way. He was unbuttoned and left undone not only on the outside but left broken, pierced clear through to the very heart of who he was.

Chaos ruled Bobby's home and drove the man charged with his upbringing, the man he called dad, to a personal hell where years ago he had lost the fight with his many demons.

Bobby spend his days hours on end sitting in his own filth. He had nothing and no one, but still the solitude was the only reprieve from the ugly, evil things that happened in the dark of the night.

I wonder if in-between those horrific moments he looked to the

heavens and prayed for wings like a bird so he could fly far. Far away to a place of peace. I wonder if he cried out to God for protection, not understanding why his time of rescue was delayed. I wonder if he knew that he was worth more than the sparrows, and that God had not forgotten him. I wonder if he knew that he was loved by the very one who holds all things in His hands and even in the worst of times, when the unthinkable was present, God never abandoned him.

At some point, as he helplessly endured the unimaginable, his fears and tears became anger and hate, feelings that lay with the promise of strength and control while hiding the poison that would follow in it's wake.

The day that Bobby's rescue finally arrived, he was found, pale and bony, locked in a closet, with a growing and seemly bottomless rage that had all but consumed him. He was a lost boy, void of joy and vacant of life.

Months later a hint of normalcy could be seen in Bobby's new life, with his new family. But he struggled. He struggled with everything. He didn't know how to express himself. He didn't have the faith it took to trust others and he fought with impulses that were odd, excessive, aggressive, and explicit.

Bobby was neither excited or hopeful when he showed up at the ranch. Protecting himself with distractions he walked around with no engagement and no plans to let down his guard.

With his face downcast and his eyes hardened with focus and hollow with detachment, he followed always a step or two behind me as we set out to meet the horses.

TRAGIC TRUTH...

Of the 3.5 million children who were the subject of an investigation or alternative response, a national estimate of 676,000 children were victims of abuse and neglect. This data is based on Fiscal Year 2016 data, which is the latest data available as reported by the Administration for Children and Families .

Dakota, our big bay gelding with a striking white blaze down his face, was the last of our 10 horses for Bobby to meet. Dakota has laminitis and on this day he was alone in his stall, lying down to relieve the pressure and pain of his swollen hoof. There were a few piles of manure scattered around his stall and it smelled, well, like a horse barn would.

Instantly, something triggered in Bobby's heart and he looked straight into Dakota's eyes and deeply and sincerely sighed. I can only imagine what Bobby was thinking; it may have been the mess in the stall, the chain on the gate or the pain he could see in Dakota's eyes but Bobby was drawn in and fully present.

Without taking his eyes off of Dakota, he asked if it would be alright if we just sat with him for a bit. So we did. We pulled over a hay bale and placed it in the middle of the gate giving us a perfect view and we just sat. No words were spoken and none were needed. There was no awkward silence, just the quiet of hearts connecting.

When it was time for Bobby to go, I reminded him that Dakota and I would see him next week and that if he'd like he could help me wrap Dakota's hoof and we could spend another session by his side.

Bobby turned his face towards mine; I'm not sure if he was surprised that I would trust him to help me care for Dakota or if he was excited over the new found four legged friend, but he looked at me, agreeing to this plan with a smile.

That was the first of many smiles that Bobby and I would share over the course of the summer. He choose Dakota to be his horse so we spent part of each session cleaning his stall, washing his water buckets, and caring for his needs. The balance of Bobby's sessions were spent with his mentor, laughing, canoeing, pretending to fish, shooting arrows at made up targets, filling bird feeders, gardening and super soaking anyone who would join him in his epic and mostly undefeated water wars.

No one knows better than Bobby that we live in a fallen, mad, and tragic world where ugly fights beauty, evil runs rampant, and good can be hard to find... But praise the LORD we have His

words of truth, Jesus says...

"In this world you will find trouble, but do not fear for I have overcome the world!" -John 16:33

The day I met Bobby I cried. I wept for his lost days of boyhood-wonder and I missed, for him, the carefree childhood that should have been his. I hated the fear and anger that had gripped him and I prayed that God would heal this beautiful young man. I prayed that Bobby would find joy, the courage to forgive, and the faith to trust that God is good and all of His promises are true.

We didn't erase the painful memories of Bobby's abuse but we were able to tell him how much God loves him. We were able to help him find his smile, make a friend, trust in a hug, and love a horse.

"Those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint." - Isaiah 40:31



BIRDS FLYING HIGH, YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL. SUN IN THE SKY, YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL. REEDS DRIFTIN' ON BY, YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL! IT'S A NEW DAWN. IT'S A NEW DAY. IT'S A NEW LIFE. FOR ME...

**AND I'M
FEELING GOOD!**

- MICHAEL BUBLE

JUST FOR FUN...

A mother bird, a daddy bird, and their baby bird were getting ready to migrate. The mother bird said, "My instincts tell me to go Southwest." The daddy bird said, "My instincts tell me to go Southeast." The baby bird said, "My end stinks too, but it never tell me where to go!"



GO OUTSIDE AND DO SOMETHING, SOMETHING AMAZING THAT YOU'VE NEVER DONE BEFORE!

VOLUNTEER WITH US...

There are dozens of ways to volunteer at Stable Days, and most of the time the horses are the focus, but this newsletter we want to highlight the needs and opportunities of this 60 acre piece of paradise!

This winter we will spend some time planning the trails, pond and lower gardens. We'll also be researching ideas, plants, practices, and finding the inspiration we need to create a memory making, hands on learning space with a focus on exploration and adventure.

Ideas both creative and outrageous are welcome!



I TOOK A WALK IN THE WOODS AND CAME OUT TALLER THAN THE TREES -HENRY DAVID THOROUGH

LISTEN TO THE SERMON PREACHED TO YOU BY THE FLOWERS, THE TREES, THE SHRUBS, THE SKY, AND THE WHOLE WORLD. NOTICE HOW THEY PREACH TO YOU A SERMON FULL OF LOVE, OF PRAISE OF GOD, AND HOW THEY INVITE YOU TO GLORIFY THE SUBLIMITY OF THAT SOVERIGN ARTIST WHO HAS GIVEN THEM BEING.
-ST. PAUL D OF THE CROSS

JOIN THE HERD
Become a sponsor

Sponsoring a horse is a unique opportunity to impact the ministry by directly helping one of our horses. Your generous donation will help provide for hay, supplements, medical treatment, rehabilitation, training, fence supplies, equipment, and cover other costs that are directly associated with the care of your sponsored horse. A few of our horses have physical disabilities, some have medical needs, some scare easy, some are bossy, some are in need of learning to trust, and they all, just like our kids, want to be loved and cared for. The nurturing and caring of this herd is a privilege and one of our highest priorities. By choosing to JOIN THE HERD, you can further ensure quality care for our horses as well as a continued cost-free opportunity for the children who participate in this unique program.

As a sponsor, you are welcome to set up an appointment and come out to say HAY! And if you would like to groom or provide more hands on care for your sponsored horse we would be glad to train you!

To "JOIN THE HERD" go to www.stabledays.org or give us a call at 701-330-9952.

HORSE SPONSORSHIPS

To sponsor Fern, our fall featured horse, or one of the other SDYR horses go to our website at <https://www.stabledays.org/join-the-herd.html> or mail your support to 17721 429th Avenue SW, East Grand Forks, MN 56721



Breed: Quarter horse | Gender: Mare
 Color: Chestnut | DOB: 2011 | Height: 15 hands

Fern was used to Minnesota weather. She knew first-hand the chill of winter and the sweat of summer.

It was mid-July, a long hot day, the air was heavy and the suffocating, humidly pressed down around the herd. The scent of rain grew strong as the quiet of the day was broken by a low roll of thunder coming from somewhere off in the distance. .

For a moment, everything stops; even the wind seems to hold its breath telling everyone on the farm that a change is coming. A cool, almost chilling breeze brings a moment of relief before the lightning and heavy wall of rain arrives with it's fierce and destructive wind. Trees bowing, branches splitting, shelters shaking. Time seems to bend and then once again nature stands still.

It was a common Minnesota storm, quick to come and quick to go, no warnings or apologies. Leaving in its wake both the wonder of God's protection and the prayer soaked, sickening silence that envelopes you when you realize that all may not be well.

Fern, shaken and confused lay waiting in her pasture for help. Her left eye had been pushed out of the socket and her cornea was crushed. Blood covered her mane and face making it difficult at first for her people to assess the severity of her injuries.

Four years later Fern, now navigating life through her one remaining eye, has turned her disabilities into great moments of possibilities as she provides both adventure and respite to the Stable Days kiddos she serves.

Federico Tesio -

A horse gallops with his lungs,
 Perseveres with his heart, And wins
 with his character.

Yes! I would like to give to Stable Days Youth Ranch .

Please use my donation for:

- Where it is needed most
- Youth Mentoring Sessions
- Animal Care
- The Share Garden

Payment method:

A check payable to Stable Days Youth Ranch or SDYR for \$_____

Send donations to: Stable Days, 17721 429th Ave SW, East Grand Forks, MN 56721

You can also make your donation at www.stabledays.org

I would like to receive receipts via:

- Email
- Mail

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____

Zip Code _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____

I would like more information about:

- Visiting the Ranch
- Youth Mentoring
- Volunteering
- Internships
- Horse Sponsorships
- In-kind or Financial Donations

Please make my donation a gift

In memory of: In honor of:

Send a gift acknowledgement (receipt) to:

Name _____

Address _____



17721 429th Avenue So. West
East Grand Forks, MN 56721
(701) 330-9952
www.stabledays.org



This year's Round Up was a huge torrential success!

We had sheets of rain, mud up to our eye balls and just around 500 quests that braved the weather to show their support. A huge shout out and thank you to Skip's Gourmet Grub for rustling up a fantastic "Cowboy Supper" and the famous and talented Mud Buckets for their amazing "Cowboy Tunes".

This year's Farmer's Market Kid's Club

Apple Days was another damp but fun day as we pressed apples, milled grain, painted pumpkins, rode horses and dashed between the barn as the rain poured down our smiley faces.

Rain or shine events certainly take a good measure of Grins, Grit and Grace. Thanks for showing up Greater Grand Forks!



THE WORLD IS FULL OF MAGICAL THINGS
PATIENTLY WAITING FOR OUR SENSES TO SHARPEN!
-WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Stable Days offers an inclusive program that allows ALL KIDS, ages 5 - 17, including those who are healthy, those considered disadvantaged or disabled, or those who are labeled at-risk to experience the many benefits of adventure and equine based mentoring. If you are interested in learning more about Stable Days contact us or visit our website at www.stabledays.org. We would love the opportunity to serve you!

www.stabledays.org | info@stabledays.org | 701-330-9952