

GRINS, GRIT & GRACE

Stories From Stable Days Youth Ranch

EWE ARE SO BEAUTIFUL, TO ME!

BY CARYL LESTER

Penelope, our beautiful, amazing, sweet, cheerful, hilarious, cripple-legged, one-eared ewe landed at Stable Days in the spring of 2015 as an orphaned lamb. Penelope's mother, one of a few hundred ewes, was nameless as is common in large flocks, but was one of her shepherd's treasures. She was a good momma, seasoned and mature. She had seen many lambing seasons but this time around she was carrying triplets and that rarely goes well. Labor was long and hard for Penelope's mom but she muscled through and delivered the first lamb without incident, a healthy baby, accepted by her mom and ready to start her first day in the warmth and care of her attending mother. The second lamb was a boy and was born weak but not critical. The mom, sensing her boy's weakness, refused her affection and remained focused on her stronger, healthier first born.

Penelope was the last born and like her brother born just seconds before, their mom didn't even give her a nod; it's hard to say if she had even taken notice that her baby girl was born still.

Fortunately, this is the beginning and not the end of Penelope's story. The kind quick hands of her shepherd gave her a second start at life by placing his syrup coated fingertip under her tongue and on the roof of her mouth. She stirred and her shepherd gave a sigh of relief as she started to smack at the syrup. It wasn't long before Penelope and her brother were standing wobbly kneed and hoping for their mother's care.

The shepherd spent hours trying to interest the mamma in her

lambs but she wanted only to care for her first born. Perhaps it was the weakness of the lambs or the exhaustion of labor and delivery, but the worn out mom had made up her mind and would have nothing to do with those two needy, noisy babies.

It was the great compassion and strong endurance of their shepherd that saved them both that day. He cleaned, dried, and bottle-fed, day and night, the two precious lambs while enjoying the snuggles and the joy that comes with the deep



**HE TENDS HIS FLOCK LIKE A SHEPHERD:
HE GATHERS THE LAMBS IN HIS ARMS AND
CARRIES THEM CLOSE TO HIS HEART .**

ISAIAH 40:11

Stable Days offers an inclusive and COST FREE 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 wwwwww.stabledays.org. We would love the opportunity to serve you.

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care of the flock that he loves.

A few weeks later the babies were thriving and Penelope, along with her brother Peter, were brought to the ranch to what we hoped would be their forever homes.

Penelope and Peter grew up fast, as all babies do, and before long the bottle-feeding was replaced by water tanks and in a blink of an eye they were living out in the pasture with a donkey, two delightful mini donkeys, a couple of crazy, sometimes annoying goats, and Penelope's new BSF (Best Sheep Friend), Piper.

The pasture was peaceful and the little barnyard crew were all happy and healthy. It was a pleasant spring evening and the dinner chores had already been completed when a horrible cry came from the barnyard pasture. Ben and I ran from the house to find Piper laying on the ground, blood running down her face and her neck twisted off to the side in a grotesque break. Her little body was shaking with pain. Her suffering took our breath away as we stood over her knowing there was nothing we could do but say goodbye.

Was this an accident or an attack; what could have happened to cause such injury? We were troubled and baffled. After laying Piper to rest in a freshly dug grave, we returned to the house and sat in silence.

I've heard it said that trouble often comes in twos, and sadly the next day showed this to be true at least some of the time. Although there was no cry, or at least none we heard, when we drew close to the barnyard pasture for breakfast chores, we saw Penelope laying on the ground, blood running down her face and out of her ears. She lifted up her head and turned to watch us race towards her. Before we could cover the ground that was still between us she stood up and met us part way. "Thank God, she's not dead!" were the first words out of my mouth. With reasons we'll never know in this life-time, Rab, the full-size donkey who was charged with protecting the sheep had turned violently on them. If it were not for the spattered blood on his chest we would have thought the attack had been made by some unknown predator. Sadly we separated Rab from the rest of the

barnyard crew, and quickly moved our injured friend to the barn.

While we waited for the vet to arrive we prayed and we cried. We busied ourselves with cleaning up her blood stained wool. "Sheep are either healthy, or dead. They rarely survive any trauma." The words I had just heard at a rancher's clinic were now personal and I did my best to shake them from my thoughts.

After the exam, Jeanette, our vet, was not optimistic that Penelope would pull through and feared that she would no longer be of sound mind but regardless of her chances Jeanette gave Penelope the needed care and best chance of recovery she could offer.

With one ear amputated and the other half missing, Penelope was ready to start her very slow, year long journey to recovery.

Months later she was still stall bound and her cheerful nature was replaced by a heavy sadness. Penelope was beginning to



**THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I LACK NOTHING. HE
MAKES ME LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES HE
LEADS ME BESIDE QUIET WATERS, HE REFRESHES
MY SOUL. HE GUIDES ME ALONG THE RIGHT
PATHS FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE.**

PSALMS 23:1-3

RECKLESS LOVE

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine I couldn't earn it, and I don't deserve it, still, You give Yourself away Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God! - Cory Asbury

show signs of depression. We sat with her as often as we could but we needed to find her a team. We wrote up a Facebook post recruiting sheep snugglers and in no time at all Penelope's popularity had grown and she had more friends that we could count.

Daily, she was read to, sung to, and given, by evidence of her weigh gain, a lot of treats. Her mood improved and many of her friends found such peace in her presence they began to feel that perhaps they were the ones in need of her company and care instead of the other way around.

After a year of being stall bound, the day finally arrived for Penelope to venture outside. With a sweet unbridled love for life and her signature sheepish grin, she ran and jumped and played and danced her way across the grassy field, before settling in to

her temporary outside stall. As we transitioned her to outside turnouts and overnight stall rest, her love of the great outdoors was evident.

Today Penelope stills needs occasional stall rest, but she spends most her time outside with her two mini donkey pals and her new BSF, Ewestice, who came to ranch this spring with her sweet cuddly little lamb, Lily (Lily of the Valley).

Penelope's charm is one of her strengths and she greets everyone who enters her pasture with enthusiasm and cheer. Running up to friends and strangers alike, Penelope with her crippled leg and one ear can help anyone find their smile.



PENELOPE IS IN NEED OF SPONSORS SO IF YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO FRIEND A SHEEP, GIVE US A CALL OR SEND US A MESSAGE.

PENELOPE WILL PLEASED TO MEET YOU!

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JUST FOR FUN...

A cowboy lost his Bible while he was mending fences out on the range. Three weeks later, a sheep walked up to him carrying the Bible in its mouth. He took the precious book, raised his eyes heavenward and exclaimed, "It's a miracle!" "Not really," said the sheep. "Your name is written inside the cover." Baaaaaaa-Dum-Tssss!

SPITTING IMAGE

BY HANNAH DEWEY

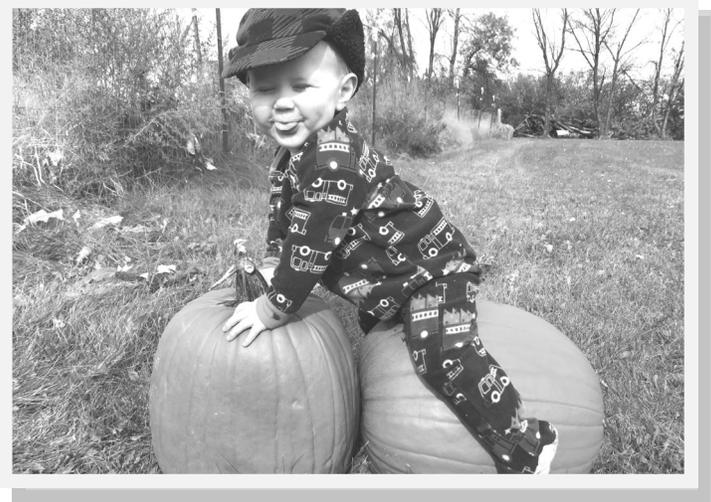
As a mother, it's a funny thing to be carrying around a sweet child that I grew in my womb and be told time and time again, "Gee, that boy looks EXACTLY like his father!" Now, for me, it brings great joy to hear that. My sweet son does look strikingly similar to his handsome daddy, in fact some would say he's the spitting image.

As I was pondering this phenomenon, I was considering what my life would have to look like for people to come up to me and tell me that I was spitting image of my Father: the God of the Universe, sweetest friend Jesus, constant companion Holy Spirit. Far too often I am only a reflection of how much sleep I squeezed in the night prior, how well I am handling my kids and/or marriage, or the trials and hurts I'm currently wading through in life.

I've been convicted of a better way to live though. What if when I met people I reflected joy? Peace. Patience. Kindness. Gentleness. Self-control. Grace. Mercy. Goodness. Faithfulness. Dare I say it, even LOVE. What if I was a river of life, full up to overflow with the fruits of having the Holy Spirit alive and active in my life? What if instead of joining in the whining, condemning, judging, blaming, self-pity, or self deprecation I met people with gentle and loving and encouraging truth? What if I built them up and spoke light and life about who they were in Christ or who God sees in them?

What if someone came up to you today with that attitude? Would it be contagious? I think so. I think that we can reflect our Heavenly Father and thereby help reproduce that attitude in others. I can catch a vision for that kind of world. I can get on board with spreading joy and love. And I can get on board with being in community with others who are on that same track.

And just like our own beautiful children, they are not clones of us, but they can sure look a lot like us. I can picture God sitting on the edge of His seat, saying, "Yeah, there she goes. There he is. My kiddo looks exactly like me!"



Who Am I (According to Scripture):

- I am complete in Him Who is the head over all rule and authority—of every angelic and earthly power (Colossians 2:10).
- I am alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:5).
- I am free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).
- I am far from oppression, and will not live in fear (Isaiah 54:14).
- I am holy and without blame before Him in love (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:16).
- I have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5).
- I have the peace of God that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7).
- The Spirit of God, who is greater than the enemy in the world, lives in me (1 John 4:4).
- I have received abundant grace and the gift of righteousness and reign in life through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).

CHILDLIKENESS IS PURE JOY...

"When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up."

-C.S. Lewis

"Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a Child will not enter it at all."

-Mark 10:15

LEAN INTO LOVE

BY CARYL LESTER

Running and running through a daze of appointments, reports, and schedules, fraught with effort to reach above the never ending rise of “to do’s” . The garden needs attention, the horses need attention, the volunteers need direction, the kids need to be served, the pasture is once again overrun with the evil burdock, the newsletter is late, the state reporting is due, our apples need pressing (if I could just figure out how to put the press together...) and I just heard about this incredible NEW opportunity that I really, really should look into, the sink is full of dishes and yes, If anyone cares to judge, this IS the third day in a row that I’ve worn these jeans and the clean-ish state that they are in will not suffice for tomorrow.

I live in a special place, a place where respite is not hard to find; the pastures, the river, the trees, and the animals. It is a beautiful place, but today this beloved ranch feels demanding and obnoxious. Struggling through the seemingly never-ending responsibilities, I sit with a state of mind that reeks of exhaustion, leaving my heart longing for a change. The calm that I would like to believe defines me has been replaced by a self-induced frantic pressure to perform, while balancing the spinning plates that wobble right above my head.

Peace, even though it is right in front of me, won’t be found because I have allowed my heart and my mind to focus on what I can do and what I have left to finish. In forgetting His great love and steady hand of protection, I’ve lost sight of what He can do and what He has done.

I’ve always been one to run into opportunities with blazing and sometimes blinded passion, ideas flooding through my mind producing more adrenalin and potency than the black coffee I enjoy. Addicted to the rush of good ideas becoming good programs, birthing more ideas, I thrive on forward motion, or at least I often think that I do.

Yesterday, Angel, our buckskin Morgan mare, was showing her mood with sporadic ear pinning and head tossing. She was clearly not impressed with my idea to bring her up from her grassy frolicking pasture time for a bit of work. Not even half way through our stroll from the pasture to the barn, she stopped, and swung her head at me, grabbing me by the bicep with her open mouth, she bit down enough for contact but released me without any harm. I yelled out and backed her away with the end of my lead rope. We stood facing each other for a moment, both of us processing what had just happened. Angel lowered her head as if to say she was sorry. I just stared at her, feeling both shocked and furious. “What the heck was that about!?” I yelled. She of course had no reply, but she did keep her big, now kind, eyes locked on mine and her softened demeanor made it impossible not to step in, forgive her and



**BE ON GUARD. STAND FIRM. BE COURAGEOUS.
BE STRONG. AND DO EVERYTHING WITH LOVE**

1 COR 16:13-14

WILD SIMPLICITY

When our focus gets tangled in the weeds of challenge, it is easy for us to rely on ourselves instead of God. From this perspective, God is not truly God of our life—we are. While stuck in this trap, we are relying on ourselves for worth, value, love and position. —Kim Meeder, Encountering our Wild God

with the genuine love that I felt for her, I pressed my cheek against her neck and took in a deep breath.

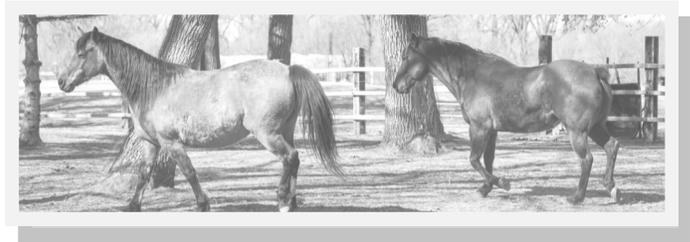
Horses are prey animals with a well-developed fight-or-flight response, but they can and do act like predators to defend their territory or herd. They create social hierarchies, which lead to a complex pecking order with the “herd boss” being at the top.

Angel lives in the west pasture with two very mild mannered geldings. Up until last week a third very kind but dominant horse lived with them. Sampson was the best kind of herd boss, assertive but not aggressive. He was young and healthy so we were all shook when Sampson was found laying in the pasture, his eyes telling us a story we didn't want to hear; he was not okay. 32 hours later I stood weeping over his grave, heart sick and grief-stricken. Officially, he was my husband's horse, but to me, he was always my guy, my heart horse.

It hadn't occurred to me until after Angel's meltdown, that she too had lost a friend and to add to her stress, she no longer had a dominant horse to oversee her and her little band of horses. In the aftermath of Sampson's passing, Angel was trying to figure out her new place in the herd and with me. Instead of trusting me to lead her, she needed me to prove that I was able to, she was looking for me to be confident and present, and I came to her both bothered and distracted.

Like Angel, instead of trusting God, the one who is leading me, I have been flailing along pushing my way out from under His unfailing peace into the chaos of my own making. But, unlike me, God is the perfect leader, always present and always able.

Father, in this moment I choose to trust You, to surrender my agenda and lean into Your love, resting calmly in the truth that Your plan for me never includes more than You have already prepared me for. Your perfect plan for me is to simply and passionately act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with you, my Father, my God, Amen!



WHY ARE YOU STRIVING THESE DAYS? WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO EARN GRACE? WHY ARE YOU CRYING? LET ME LIFT UP YOUR FACE, JUST DON'T TURN AWAY... 'CAUSE I'LL BE BY YOUR SIDE WHEREVER YOU FALL IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT WHENEVER YOU CALL. PLEASE DON'T FIGHT THESE HANDS THAT ARE HOLDING YOU!
BY YOUR SIDE - TENTH AVENUE NORTH

WILD ENCOURAGEMENT

Discouragement is the traveling partner of fatigue and nearly always waits until our defenses are weakened by exhaustion. Once our hearts are tired it doesn't take much to fracture our resolve. Raw discouragement always sweeps us away from the Lord's plan. —Kim Meeder, Encountering our Wild God (paraphrased)



**IF YOU HAVE A GROUP THAT WOULD LIKE TO
VOLUNTEER, PLEASE CONTACT US AND WE'LL FIND
A TIME FOR YOU TO SERVE!**

VOLUNTEER GROUPS

This season we were blessed by a visit from a local Boy Scout pack who came ready to work, and work they did! This group of 9 kids smashed the cleanup effort with vigor, gathering debris, sticks, and logs from the pasture and tree line and stacking it to burn. This is a great help in keeping pasture and grazing areas clean and safe so our horse pals don't get hurt. It also benefits the land, as the areas can begin producing helpful vegetation that the horses can feast on.

We are grateful for the Boy Scouts, the heritage it represents, and the parents who are committed to raising children with solid values and a positive outlook on life.

If you have a group that would like to volunteer with us, please let us know! Stable Days is a volunteer run organization and we need the support of our community to stay on top of all the chores, projects and ground upkeep.

Yes! I would like to shoulder with Stable Days to support children, horses and families in need.

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

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 _____

City/State _____

Zip Code _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____

GETTING INVOLVED

Stable Days programs are free of charge, allowing families to participate without financial concerns. But while our programs are free, our cost is high, so if you would like to join our team through giving, mail in the above form, contact us by e-mail at info@stabledays.org, call 701-330-9952, or visit our website at www.stabledays.org.



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



SDYR 2.0

The Ranch is undergoing a major 'facelift' as construction continues on the new indoor riding arena and barn. The 40 x 60 barn will be home to 4 stalls, a horse wash bay, tack room, feed storage, and plenty of space for caring for our hooved pals.

Over the course of the 2017 summer season, approximately 35% of sessions were postponed or cancelled due to weather. This has been an ongoing challenge since founding the ministry, and these interruptions create a break in our valuable time with the kids and volunteers that just can't be duplicated.

The vision for this facility was originally birthed years ago. Working with Polk County Zoning officials and Lakeside Builders, we developed a plan that would provide year-round access to a safe riding area while providing ample space for vetting and horse care.

We are currently in need of skilled labor volunteers. If you are handy with tools please consider lending us a hand!



**THANK YOU TO GOWEN CONSTRUCTION FOR THE
GENEROUS DONATION OF SAND FOR THE ARENA
FOOTING! IT LOOKS AMAZING!**

GETTING INVOLVED

Interns and volunteers, if you like to share your faith, support youth, encourage wellness, chop wood, nurture animals, garden, tend to the land, knit, fold newsletters, ride horses or just work hard at whatever jobs are placed in front of you...You are welcome here! Volunteer forms can be found on our website at www.stabledays.org.