

## A HORSE NAMED HARLEY

By John F. Hall

I was sitting on my front porch swing, and I looked over at the horse that was grazing in my neighbor's front yard. He was playfully banging up against what I call a free-standing metal gate fence. I believe that a horse fly was biting him and he wanted to crush it against the fence. I sent Jade, Lexie, and Skyler a picture of the horse. Lexie said the horse is very pretty and she would enjoy a story that involved the horse. When I'm trimming my apple trees or cutting down small trees growing next to the old stock barn, and the horse hears me working, he will nicker. That is a sound he creates with his mouth closed, from his vocal cords. The strength and tone of the nicker usually tells me that he wants me to come visit him. I don't know if a horse gets lonely, since this is the only horse on the farm. I can tell you that this is a very spoiled horse.



The horse's name is Harley and he belongs to my brother-in-law, Roger Garner. Every morning, Roger will walk in front of my old house, and then past the old stock barn, and then down to a small stable that he built for Harley. As I mentioned in previous stories, I just own one acre and my old house in the middle of an ISO-acre farm. Roger and his wife, Marsha own four acres that surround the sides and back of my acre. The widow woman that owns the farm, also owns the old stock barn. Her great grand grandson, Corey Harrison, “the Preacher man,” and my son, John store construction materials in the old stock barn. ’



When Roger goes down to the small horse stable, he would put a harness on Harley and walk the horse back to the fenced-in yard in front of his house. The road in front of my house is mostly chip and seal pavement. Roger always picks up any horse droppings left by Harley. Roger's movable fence is easy to set up and relocate. After grazing on the grass for an hour or two, Roger will walk Harley back in front of my house, and then back to the horse stable. Roger told me the story about Harley's mare (mother), that passed away about ten years ago on the farm.

Roger said that he drove Harley's mare to Bowling Green and paid a \$700 stud fee to Harley's sire (father) who is a registered American Saddlebred horse. That type of horse had excelled in many non-traditional disciplines such as dressage, eventing, show jumping, combined driving, and endurance, as well as recreational and competitive trail riding. Saddlebreds are also used as military mounts. They can perform a walk, a trot, and a cantor.

William Shatner, who played Captain Kirk on Star Trek, raised Saddlebreds. He used one of his own mares in an episode of star trek. Harley was born 15 years ago. A horse is equal to 6 ½ human years for the first three years of the horse's life. At the horse age of three the equivalent changes and is approximately five years to a man. So Harley is equivalent to a 79-year old man. Harley the happy horse, has never worked a hard day in his life.

Harley is Roger's pet. I kid him that Harley has him well trained. Several times I've watched Roger riding Harley down Dyers Hill Road, and across the pasture field in front of the old stock barn. A cowboy in the old West loved his horse. It was his friend and partner. I read a story about a thin, old man who was holding the reigns of a horse. He was talking to a young boy. He asked the boy a question: "Look at this horse and tell me what you see?" The little boy said, "I just see a horse." The old man told the boy: "If you have a clean heart, when you look into the horse's eyes you will see the face of God. You respect what is inside the horse and the horse will respect you."

Throughout the course of Biblical history, horses were the mounts of kings, princes, conquerors, and soldiers. My earliest experiences of being around horses occurred when I was 11 years old. I was at a county fair in Miami, Florida. They had riding stables and people could pay a fee and ride a horse or a small pony for up to 20 minutes. I asked the man in charge if they needed any help. He said they were short one person, and if I did not mind dirty work, they were looking for someone to keep the stables clean and to water the horses, during the week of the fair. I was hired and I used a muck fork to remove the horse manure from the straw. I would put it in a muck bucket and then dump the the manure into a dumpster. The pay at the stables was really good and I didn't mind being a water boy.

Looking back down memory lane I remember the times, many decades ago, when I would feed my father-in-law's cattle and mend the barbwire fences on the farm. I always felt that, I would have made a good cowboy. Country singer Toby Keith wrote the song "Should've Been a Cowboy." These are just a few of his lyrics: "I should've been a cowboy, I should've learned to rope and ride. Wearin' my six-shooter, ridin' my pony on a cattle drive...".

I learned a few things about horses. I learned that it is better to approach a horse from the side, and pet and rub the side of the horse. The horse can see you better from the side and your body language and out stretched arm is less likely to be misunderstood as aggression by the horse. Harley has seen me all his life and I rub his face as Roger holds him. He likes the attention. Roger takes very good care of Harley. In the winter, he buys the best hay that is not dusty or moldy. And he feeds Harley a good mix of grains.

Rory Lee Feek, Jenny L. Yates, and David C. Banning wrote the song "The Horse Nobody Could Ride." These are their lyrics: "She was a wild young Mustang, no bridle, no reigns, full of fire and spirit inside. The last of a rare breed, born to run free, the horse that nobody could ride. A hundred young takers, all tried to break her. Their stories were told far and wide. Sure as the windblown, each cowboy got thrown by the horse nobody

could ride. Then down out of Cheyenne, came a quiet and shy man. Dared to try something that no man had tried. We sat down in the warm sun, a hundred yards away, from the horse nobody could ride...”.

“For awhile she ignored him, then she moved in towards him, and circled and stood by his side. Then he whispered I won't hurt you and he reached out his hand to the horse nobody could ride. As he stood up and walked around, she lowered her head down, then softly upon her bare back he did slide. And with all of her fear gone, the cowboy rode off on the horse that nobody could ride, the horse nobody could ride.”

If Harley had lived in Jesus's time, He would not have rode him. The reason is because in the ancient Biblical world, a leader rode on a horse if he was coming in war. Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem, not just in fulfillment of the prophecy as found in Zechariah, Chapter 9, Verse 9, but because riding a lowly animal is a symbol of peace.

I start each day thanking Jesus for all the gifts that he has given me. I thank him for all the people that love me. There are three young people that receive my stories in the mail. The “Spirit of Life” prayer is prayed for them. These are some of the words: “Bring Your hope and happiness into the lives of young people. Guide them as they search for meaning and purpose in their lives. Take special care of those who struggle with issues of self-worth, rejection, and despair. Safeguard them from danger, and bring peace to their minds and hearts. May Your grace enfold to those young people, and bring them closer to You...”.

Like the horse named Harley, I'm getting on in years. I've been so blessed, but pain and time have taken a toll on my worn out, old body. Some days I feel like a tired, old mule. I enjoy watching Harley eating the grass in his owner's front yard. More importantly, I enjoy just sitting on my front porch swing and looking out at the bright green fields of corn. I like feeling the fresh cool breeze caressing my face. I enjoy just listening to the sounds of spring. I read what Thelma Grace Ide wrote about “So Many Things.” These are her words: “So many things we take for granted, because we think they are so small. But through God's love and mercy, He gives to one and all. I must thank Him for each and every gift He graciously sends my way. And through His Word I've come to learn, He answers when I pray. We can all claim salvation, for His blood was shed for all, but each must come before Him in answer to His call. When we give our all to our Savior, we can have sweet peace and rest. His Word was proclaimed for His loved ones, and we know our lives will be blessed.”

Sitting there, I realize that my talent to write short stories was given to me for a reason. And it is on loan from the Good Lord that so inspires me to write. I am so thankful for all the people, young and old alike, that Christ has put in my life, and who enjoy reading and receiving my stories. I put several pictures of the horse named Harley with this story. He can sleep standing up, sleep on three feet (horses can do that), or just laying down on a bed of straw. I know a few more things about Harley, but it's time to end this story. I'll end with the words found in John, Chapter 1, Verse 16: “For from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.”

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\*Read other stories by John F. Hall at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>