

A STORY OF BROTHERLY LOVE

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'Writer's Corner'

It was early spring and I was riding the backside of my brother, Rusty, on a horse that belonged to my eldest brother, Clay. We were taking a herd of milk cows to another pasture down by the town dump.

It was the dump where the town's people threw away their unwanted. Garbage wasn't dumped there because it was mostly fed to the chickens or the livestock in their backyards.

He didn't want to take me because he and his buddy, Walter Ussery, wanted to scavenge the dump to find unsuspected treasures. He would take me almost any place most of the time, even to the "picture shows" but he surely didn't want me to go this day. So I cried and threw a tantrum and being left at home alone until he relented.

Arriving at the pasture, they didn't know what to do with me. They decided to tie me to the saddle with the lariat. I whimpered but Rusty said I was a queen on a saddle throne. I would be able to see all over my domain and see them at all times.

Soon I became bored. I didn't feel like a queen. I began to wiggle in the saddle. Then the saddle began to move. Then suddenly over the side I went and I was looking up at the belly of the horse.

What if the horse, being only ground tied, ran away with me? Of she did, she would head for home and what would my mother say when she saw us?

Looking up from treasure hunting, Rusty saw the horse without a rider. He scampered across the dump, scaling the barbed wire fence. Seeing me upside down, he and Walter scurried to get me out of the situation.

He made me swear not to tell mother about the mishap and I had to swear before he would release me.

Coming down the gravel driveway, I started yelling for mother. At the back door, there she stood. I slid off the back of the horse, crying that Rusty did this and he did that and he forgot to cinch up the girt.

Ya can't trust a four-year-old to keep a promise.

RANCH LIFE IN THR 1930s:

Although we had mechanized farm equipment and even a car, neither of my parents learned to drive. They grew up in the late 1800s when horse and wagon was the mode of transportation. They depended on my older brothers to drive the car to take them where they needed to go.

Usually one of the boys drove them into town on Saturdays to buy staples like coffee, sugar and beans. By the time my parents had visited with all their friends in town, it took most of the day and they would usually get back in time to do the milking.

One spring day, recovering from a broken leg, my dad decided he needed to see how much fence my brothers had strung along the line separating our ranch from the Broadacre Ranch. Dad usually rode his horse, Nip, wherever he went, except into town. Since my brothers were not using the "jitney" as he called it, he would drive down to see how they were doing.

The jitney was a flat bed truck my brothers had put together from a frame they got from the shop where they sometimes worked. It didn't have a roof or windows but it had a solid front window with windshield wipers if someone could manually get them started. Remember back then some models had front windows that one could roll out a ways to let in fresh air. But this jitney didn't need any more air fresher than it already had. It was mostly used to haul hay from the field to the barn or if it was baled to the feed store down town.

The other truck had solid sideboards and was used to haul cattle or hogs into market or for other uses.

My brothers were mechanically inclined and had rigged the jitney where it didn't have to be cranked like most mechanical engines of the day. Dad got behind the wheel and pulled the "trigger" as he called the starter switch. Going down our long driveway he thought it wasn't going fast until he remembered to push up the gas lever on the steering wheel. Favoring his broken left leg, he neglected to push the clutch in, grinding gears as he shifted into second and he sot out of the driveway.

Nearing the field, he could see the boys far up in the pasture and the horses grazing. He turned the wheel to go up the side of the fence without braking. The jitney jumped the bar ditch, throwing my dad upwards, but he was able to hang onto the steering wheel. My brothers heard him hollering, "Whoa! Whoa!" but the jitney didn't stop. When he came down, got his bearings, he was into the fence and three strands of barbed wire, post and all were trailing behind.

Before my brothers could get to their horses, Dad hit a bolder and the engine died. By the time my brothers got to him they saw a longhorn steer from the Broadacre Ranch looking at him through the open window of the passenger side of the jitney and my Dad sat white-faced, looking straight ahead, still clutching the steering wheel.

There was usually a vigorous discussion at the supper table, but this night there was only silence.

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