

## Katy 1<sup>st</sup> Ward Spiritual Message #33

What does Spiritual Magnificence have to do with rodeo time?

You would have to have known my dad like I did to understand how much he loved horses. He was born in 1900 and grew up in Star Valley Wyoming in what was a wilderness then.

When I was about 12 or 13 years old I had an interesting rodeo experience. My dad took me to the Days of 47 horse parade in Salt Lake. They always had a horse parade just before the rodeo. We went there many times together. We always sat on 3rd South and West temple for some reason, to see the horse parade and then we would walk to the Salt Palace after to see the rodeo.

This night was no different than any other, at first. I loved the smell of the rodeo. I still to this day like the smell of cigarette smoke and manure. Isn't that silly. It just makes the circus a circus or the rodeo a rodeo. A big part of the excitement is the smell.

Oh the excitement. My excitement. We always sat right above the announcer's booth so we could look down into the shuts and watch the action as they herded the big bulls and horses into the gates ready for release out into the arena for action. That was half the fun of the rodeo to watch the riders trying to get on the bulls. You could see the fire in the eyes of the bulls we were so close where we always sat. Most of all, I loved the bull riding and the bravery of the clowns. Did you know that the clowns are actually there to be bull fighters to protect the riders when they fall off, not clowns to make the crowd laugh?

One of the fun and exciting parts of the rodeo was the wild horse event. After they had the opening ceremonies, they then turned all the bucking horses loose into the arena at one time that were going to be ridden that night. There would be about 20 wild horses in the arena at the same time. They were just loose, bucking, kicking and running wild. Because of the excitement of the crowd, the horses would run all over the arena. They were probably just scared and so they would kick their hind legs up higher than the air and often let out embarrassing noises of gas. That made the crowd laugh and carry on even more. It was quite a site. We all enjoyed that part of the rodeo.

I can only surmise from my dad's surprised look on his face that he did not know ahead of time what was going to happen next. It was not announced or on the program that I knew of. It was just a wonderful surprise to me. After the wild bucking horses were all shooed out of the arena back into their holding pens ready to be ridden, the crowd quieted down and the lights dimmed. Then a spot light came on to the main gate and as it opened, and out came the famous Budweiser Clydesdale horses pulling their little beer wagon.

We were all astonished. Dad and I did not know they were going to be there. I do not remember seeing them in the horse parade. In all my life I have never seen such magnificence. After seeing all those wild bucking, kicking horses and now this. When those 8 magnificent creatures came literally prancing into the arena pulling that little wagon behind, I was just stunned.

I don't know if you know much about horses. I doubt you have ever seen a true Clydesdale horse up close like those horses. If you imagine what a normal horse looks like you probably see in your mind that it is about as tall as you are. The top of the back of one of these Clydesdale horses is at least 6 feet in the air. They are huge. Each one looks as big as a small elephant compared to a regular horse. Their hoofs are as big as dinner plates. They are huge. Each one is a beautiful reddish color with white trim. They all have 4 white stocking feet legs from their knee down to their hoof. They are magnificent to watch.

We had just seen all these much smaller, wild bucking snorting horses running around the arena wild and uncontrollable. Then in come these 8 magnificent huge horses. Each one twice the size of any one of the bucking horses. It was so beautiful to see them all prancing in unison. Each one putting his huge hooves high in the air and then down again making the whole horse bounce up and down in a dancing motion. Each one of them were actually doing it in unison. It was an unbelievable site. It was simply spectacular. I did not look but I assume my dad was crying like I was at the beauty of these horses.

As they got to the center of the arena it was very obvious that these 4 teams of horses hooked one behind the other and then the wagon behind them was way too long to turn around in the arena. Remember now these horses are twice the size of a normal horse and there are twice as many of them as you see on a Stage Coach in a movie or on TV. I remember wondering how they were going to get them back out when there was only one gate and it was behind them. Then the life changing event happened.....

The driver of the horses pulled gently on all 8 of the reins. He had a rein from each horse coming back from the horse to his hands. Each of the reins were then between one of his fingers. The rein for the four horses on the left went to his left hand and the four reins for the four horses on the right went to his right hand. The rein just came to his hand, between his finger and then down in front of him so he was sort of holding the reins in his fists.

The arena was now dead silent. You could hear the horse's hooves plopping up and down as the pranced but it still was very quiet in the whole arena. This made it possible for us to hear the voice of the driver because we were sitting right down on the edge. As the wagon got to the middle of the arena, the driver did not pull back on the reigns in a mighty yank like you see on TV with stage coach drivers to stop them. He just gently pulled both hands back and said WHOAH. All eight horses instantly stopped prancing and just stood there in the deafening silence. You could hear a pin drop it was so quiet. Everyone was spell bound.

Then because it was so quiet you could hear the driver's gentle voice. He just flicked his left hand enough to send a little ripple up the left reigns and then he said Yeahaaa. Not loud. Just in a normal voice that all eight horses could hear. Then these magnificent horses all started to prance again but stayed at dead stop at first. Just stood there prancing in place and then as he pulled gently on the left four reigns they all started to prance a little to the left side ways. The first two horses next to the wagon were practically not moving at all but gradually moving to the left. The front four horses were taking huge prancing side steps moving the whole team and the wagon in a circle to the left. Once they were all the way around from this side stepping so they were back to facing the gate again, the driver

just gently flicked both wrists and said Yehaaaa again and they all started prancing in unison forward and moved slowly out of the arena.

When the lights came back on I have never heard such a cheer from a crowd in my life. They stood up and gave them a standing ovation. We clapped and clapped until the announcer had to ask us to sit down. It was a demonstration of magnificence that I will never forget as long as I live. How could they train those huge animals to do that? How could they be so responsive to such gentle commands?

It was not until many years later that the full realization of the significance of that night at the rodeo came to me as a lesson of life. I was sitting in church one Sunday, and I saw this family come in a little late. They had six kids. The mom and the Dad and the six kids (eight total) all walked very reverently to an empty bench and sat down. The children all had their arms folded. As they sat down, there was no wrestling or rudeness by the kids as they took their seats. There was no angry talk from the parents as you so often see in church as the parents try to make the kids mind. I watched the family the whole meeting. I got the message clearly.

As I sat there watching them, the spirit whispered to me and reminded me of those beautiful Clydesdale horses. I could see such a similarity between this family and those horses. I kept thinking of my own family and my own children. I could see such a close parallel between those magnificent horses and how Janice and I and our six children as a family had tried so hard to be like those magnificent horses with the Holy Ghost as the driver in our lives. I could see how, as we have learned to be sensitive to the voice and the gentle flick of the rein from the voice of the Holy Ghost, we know what to do to work in unison as a family to live the commandments. By his guidance and whisper quiet voice to us we knew when to prance and when to go ahead and when to stop. We know how to turn our lives around when necessary. We had tried with all our might to learn just like the horses, to follow the prompting of the spirit.

Then I thought about the bucking horses and how sometimes we are all like that instead. Out of control in our lives. Not willing to let anyone or anybody tell us what is best for us or how to better live our lives. Sometimes we let our lives be filled with commotion to the point that we are not able to hear the quiet voice or the flick of the rein of the Holy Ghost in our life. Sometimes we start kicking up our heels, bucking and snorting and going uncontrolled against the commands of God.

Magnificence! I don't know of any time I have ever seen it better portrayed than that night with my dad at the Days of 47 rodeo in Salt Lake City Utah. And I don't know of any life's lesson I ever learned that helps me see more clearly our need to carefully follow the prompting of the spirit in our lives with exactness. That is how we can have spiritual magnificence in our lives and the lives of our children.

Brother Vail



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