



AROUND *the* FIRE

NEWS FROM CRYSTAL PEAKS YOUTH RANCH

SUMMER 2009



ISAAC

BY KIM MEEDER

Sometimes God allows us to go to the very edge of what we think we can bear, not because He doesn't care about us... but because *He cares so much*. It is nearly always from within this place of suffering that we begin to understand the true depth of how immensely He loves us, supports us and even carries us. There is no horrendous 'breaking' that this world can exact on us that God's magnificent healing cannot conquer.

So often, it is within these times of complete devastation that we feel overwhelmed by the pain of our situation.

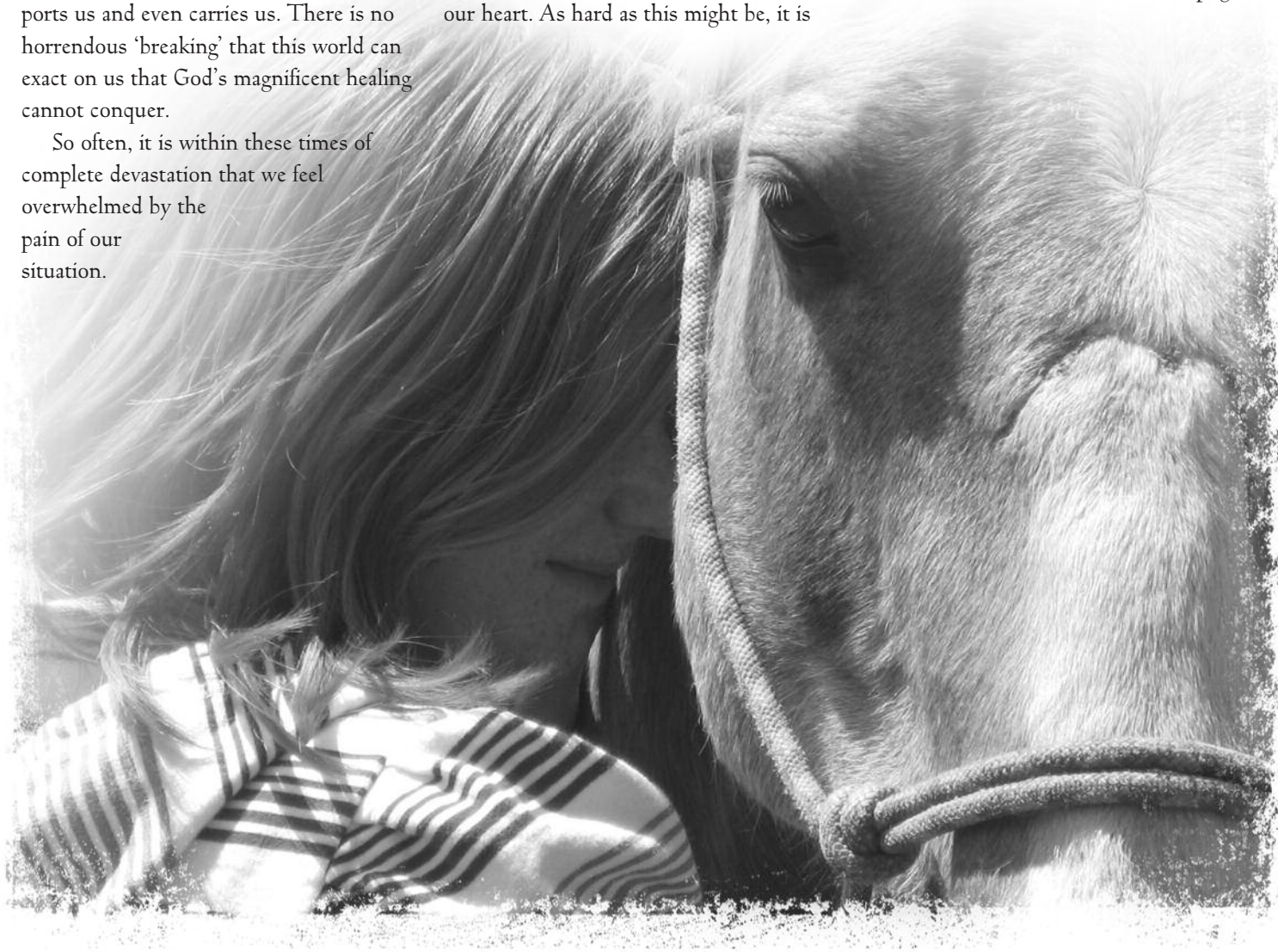
Wandering alone within these consuming flames, it is the sheer enormity of what we bear and the great fatigue it hails that calls us, luring us to simply give up. It is a terrible thing to give up on yourself. And yet, perhaps it is even more painful when others choose to relinquish their loving grasp of our heart. As hard as this might be, it is

within this place that the Lord carries us.

Such was the case of our most recently rescued horse.

With tall cups of coffee in hand, Kelsie and I were returning from a small town south of Bend when my cell phone rang.

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The number on the small screen was one that we both knew well. It was one of our Equine veterinarians. Kelsie answered the call. In moments she relayed the story of a horse being treated who had just suffered a horrific trailer-ing accident. All that we were really able to gather was that a gelding had been incorrectly loaded, resulting in a crushing injury to his face. Unable to afford the surgery, their only other option was to put their eight year old gelding down.

With carefully chosen words, Jessi, one of the veterinarians, explained over the phone that the young horse's injuries, although serious, were clearly not of a life threatening nor life

terminating nature. Her question was simple, *"Would you be interested in interceding for this wounded horse, thus saving his life?"*

Having agreed to meet the veterinary team at the equine hospital, Kelsie and I rushed in only moments after the wounded horse arrived. As we came into the surgery center, he was already secured in the stocks. Standing with his rump toward me, the first thing that I noticed about the gelding was that he was a dark palomino with four white stockings. While assessing his feet, I couldn't help but notice the sizeable pool of bright red blood that had already stretched out on the floor. Closing the short distance to the horse,

I also could clearly see that he was exhibiting full body tremors, most certainly the combined result of terror and pain.

Intuitively, Kelsie and I separated; she circled around to his off side as I approached his nearest shoulder. In so doing, it was our hope to surround him with comfort. As I touched his trembling, golden coat, I softly spoke,



"Hold on my friend... you're gonna get through this... you're not alone..."

After a few moments of reassurance, I peered around those who were attending his wounds so that I could get a glimpse of his most critical injuries.

What I saw took my breath away.

This frightened horse had sustained one of the worst crushing injuries to his face that I had ever seen. Across the bridge of his nose was a gapping wound so severe that I could see into his nasal cavity. Dr. Wayne, who had also just arrived, confirmed that the blunt force needed to produce a facial fracture this serious usually occurs as a result of an extreme traffic accident. With the skin that normally covers the crest of his face slumped down towards his nostrils, jigsaw-like shards of shattered bone were clearly visible. The impact had

"I cried out to the Lord in my suffering, and He heard me. He set me free from all my fears. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those who are crushed in spirit."

— Ps. 34:6 & 18

been so great that a three by four inch section of the bridge of his nose had been smashed inward. The gelding, instead of having a formidable and straight bridge supporting his face, now had something that looked nearly like mismatched 'bar-room doors' swinging open into the depths of his sinuses.

Once quieted with medication to create deep standing sedation, Dr. Wayne pried out the destroyed bone fragments on the right side of the gelding's face. Thankfully, the four inch fragment on the left side of his wound was still partially attached on the posterior end. Because of this, Dr. Wayne was able to pull the fractured piece of bone up and flush with surrounding, stable bone and wire it back into place. This 'bridge of bone' could then support his facial skin which was reattached back up into a normal position. Once the surgery was finished, the horse's respiration pathways were completely restored. All that remained of the previous carnage was a suture line below his eyes in the shape of an 'M.' Had this line been stretched out straight, it would have reached more than eight inches.

The following morning, we carefully brought our new golden boy home.

Amidst the process of contemplating a name for him, I couldn't help but consider all that he has survived. Not only had he endured a crushed face, he also had a minor wound on his poll, another above his right eye, a significant split in his tongue and, curiously—

apparently from a previous mishap—had lost most of his lower lip. Clearly, this horse's life had been challenging.

Less than 24 hours earlier, he had nearly been sentenced to die; yet, here he was—alive—resting quietly in my quarantine corral. When all help seemed to abandon him... *hope did not.* When his family regretfully had to turn away ... *God did not.* In the same moment his life seemed to be lost... *he was actually found.* His existence was nearly forfeited, but—just like Abraham and Isaac—God intervened. And because He did, the depth of His great love was revealed. As a testimony to this, our new horse now carries the name 'Isaac.'

Within these difficult economic times, there are many who might feel like Isaac, rejected, abandoned, hopeless, near ruin. Perhaps you have given up, or you might feel that others have given up on you. Either way, the truth is that our Great God NEVER turns away from us, He NEVER abandons us, He NEVER loses hope. It is from within these moments of suffering that we can begin to truly comprehend just how immensely He loves us, desires to support us and carry us through.

"I cried out to the Lord in my suffering, and He heard me. He set me free from all my fears. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those who are crushed in spirit." (Ps. 34:6 & 18)

Isaac, our new blond boy is physically making a rapid recovery. The once jagged line of sutures that stretched

over a gapping hole in his face, have transformed into a barely noticeable pink 'M' across the bridge of his nose. His heart is slowly recovering too. Understandably wary, he is learning how to trust, proving his new progress by allowing strangers to touch his healing face. As difficult as his life has been, he seems to be letting go of what once was... and reaching out for all that can be. Even though his face and lip are permanently damaged, *his heart is not.*

In all the ways that horses can, his actions give evidence that he is embracing the fact that love has rescued him. He is embracing a new name and a new outlook. After all, Isaac... means *'laughter.'*



FREEDOM

BY KELSIE PATKA



She was a ten year old girl with pigtails, dressed in a pink shirt and blue jeans. She stood close to her mother as they made their way up the ranch driveway, her eyes never leaving the ground. The child's lifeless appearance gave silent evidence of the years she had spent trying to hide the secrets of her abuse. As I watched the small girl from a distance, a flood of memories rose within me. Instantly, I relived that same scene—only I was the little girl—ten years earlier. In my memory, it was me walking up the driveway, hoping to hide the same secrets.

As the little girl reached our Welcome Center, I understood what others must have felt when I first came. I wanted this child to find a safe haven, a place where she too could escape from her pain. I wished for her to find the same oasis of peace that I had, a shelter far away from the abuse she had survived. I wanted her to find what I found in this place so long ago.

I smiled and introduced myself to the

child. I knew that at this time, I could not say anything that would help her understand how beautiful and loved she was. When I was in this place, it was humans who broke that trust within me. Yet, it was through the gentle 'voice' of a horse that I could receive the truth and begin to find healing for my brokenness.

"I have a very special horse that I need your help with. Do you want to meet him?" I asked the girl. She looked up at her mom as if to see if it was okay. The child's mother nodded and off we went, toward what I hoped would become a healing refuge.

The small horse's name was Jacobi and he had arrived at the Ranch a couple months earlier. Although he had come from a loving home, he had spent most of his life in a stall. Being a Welsh Cobb pony, he was trained as a jumper and was very good. In his prime, Jacobi was the National Pony Jumping Champion. Even though he barely stands at 14

hands, he could easily clear a four foot fence! Now retired at the age of 17, his jumping days were behind him. With his previous glory fading, he now spent most of his life in a stall, occasionally coming out for lessons. It was at this time that we were contacted by his former owner, who relayed that Jacobi exhibited the beginning signs of COPD, an equine lung condition that is exacerbated by mold, dust and dampness. He needed a drier climate to prolong his life and she thought he would be a great horse for us.

We felt that Jacobi would be the kind of pony who would assimilate into our program with no problem. Soon, Kim, Marieke, Rachel and I brought him home to his new life at Crystal Peaks. Immediately, we discovered his adjustment on the Ranch was not going to be as seamless as we had anticipated. Being a show pony, he was used to steady contact on the bit. Without it, he didn't understand how to be on a loose rein and would speed forward to find it. Outside constant pressure and direction, he would just run... and run fast!

Because of this, only staff were currently riding him. Although he was very gentle and learning to relax, there was still a chance he could speed up with a child and frighten them.



Therefore, he was not fully within our children's riding program. Yet, as I had prayed for this little broken girl, his profile kept coming to my mind. *Really Lord? Is Jacobi the one You want me to use? What happens if he doesn't listen?* Yet, Jacobi's image held fast in my heart. This led me to consider my own first experience at the Ranch.

I was thirteen when, for the first time, Kim walked with me to the ranch round pen. Inside was a little bay Arabian mare named Libby. She trotted around in a circle, snorting as she went; she had a fire about her. I learned that she had been severely abused and needed to learn how to trust again. She was going to become my 'project.'

Slowly, she and I began to build a friendship. Every day that I could, I would be with 'my horse.' Because Kim had listened to the Lord, in spite of the fact that Libby could have been a 'fast' horse, my life was changed. I wondered now if this could happen with the broken little girl who was walking at my side.

"Do you think you can show Jacobi what it is like to have a friend? That you are not just going to be someone demanding something of him?"

Do you think you can help teach him that being with humans can be fun and not just a job?" I asked.

Without a word, she nodded her head. A glimmer appeared in her eyes, I wondered if it came from the realization that she knew how this horse felt.

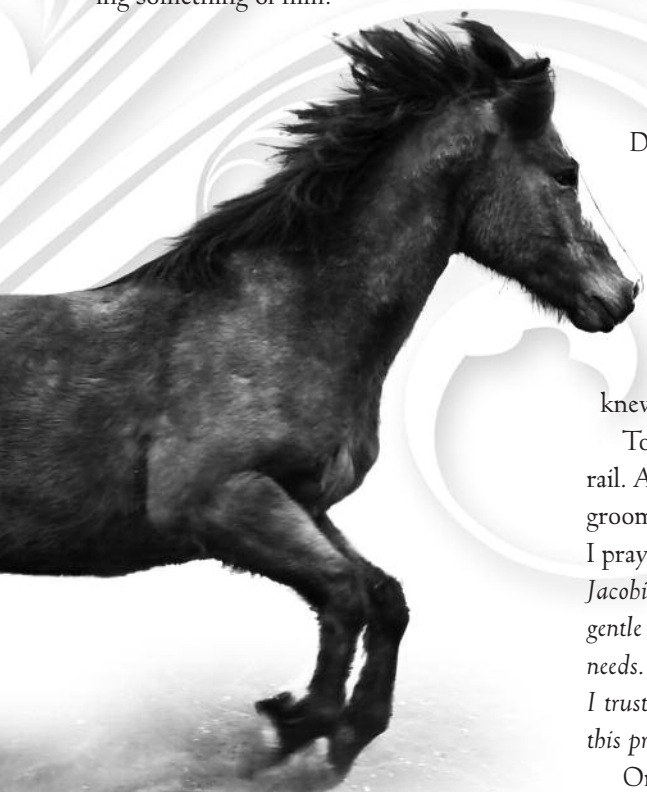
Together we led him to the hitching rail. After tying him up, we began to groom him. It was during this time that I prayed, *'Lord, You are the one in control. Jacobi needs Your peace today. Help him be gentle and quiet, let him be what this child needs. Show him what she has been through. I trust You to use him in a mighty way with this precious girl.'*

Once we finished brushing and tacking

him up, I smiled and sent my new little friend back into the tack room to get a helmet before we went into the arena. "Okay Jacobi, it's your turn. You're up, little man," I said as I patted his side. He turned his head and looked at me as if to say, *"Don't worry, I won't let you down."*

The little girl had only ridden a couple times before, but very quickly she learned at this ranch, we seek to build a relationship with our horses. Pony and girl were soon off the lead line and riding on their own. I stood back and smiled as Jacobi walked along with his head hung low in a completely relaxed position. During their time together, there was no sign of the once anxious horse that I knew. When we were through, we tacked him down, gave

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our little prince treats and a bath. My small friend seemed to love every minute. Soon, our time was over and we parted ways, knowing that we would play again tomorrow.

As our season together stretched on, every time Jacobi came out, he was a complete gentleman. Our little horse was always so kind and ready to do whatever she wished—at a relaxed speed. Soon, they were able to canter on a lunge line in

the main arena. With each ride, their relationship continued to grow.

Finally, it was September and because my small friend lived a great distance away, it would be her last time to visit for the season. I knew she wanted to canter on her own, and this would be her last opportunity. After reviewing all the safety tips, and practicing them at a trot, I felt that she was ready to try. She was so excited that she even called her mom over to watch.

I smiled and said, “Okay, my dear... go for it.”

Our plan was for her to walk Jacobi halfway around the arena and then ask him to trot a full lap. When he was going nice and slow, and she was ready, she would then ask him for a canter. As my small friend engaged in moving her horse toward the rail, I walked over and stood by her mother.

“Kelsie,” her mother paused, “thank you. I want you to know that you and Jacobi have started to give my daughter hope. She has been through so much. There have been so many times when she has had nightmares about the past; yet, the other day she told me something new, something that she has never said before. She said that within her bad dreams, sometimes Jacobi canters in right when she needs him the most. She jumps on his back and together, they ride away to safety.” With tears streaming down her face, she said, “You don’t know how *much* she needs this. She feels free when she is riding him, as though nothing bad can happen to her.”

Looking up, we saw the Lord working HIS miracle in the moments that followed. The child had just asked Jacobi to canter. As he reached into a soft lope, a big smile spread across her face. Jacobi traveled on a loose rein, cantering as slowly as possible. Suddenly, it occurred to me that it took a little girl to teach a little horse what it meant to have a friend. And in return, he had given her the gift of freedom. Immediately, I remembered the first time I questioned using Jacobi and how he looked back at me with an expression that seemed to say “Don’t worry, I won’t let you down.” True to his word, *he didn’t*.

Smiling up toward the sky, I breathed,

‘Thank you Lord that You are true to Your word. When I asked for help... You gave it... through a little horse named Jacobi.’

GENEROSITY

BY SARAH BECK

As I gazed down at the paper before me, my heart marveled at God's provision. Without request, an amazing gift had been presented to our ranch. Kevin Klett, a local young man in pursuit of the honorable Boy Scouts Eagle rank, had offered to build our precious horses a much needed wind shelter. Although they had one previously, it was in need of repair and had sustained a great deal of damage from the teeth of many young horses. What had been presented to me was a record of the numerous people who had sent donations to finance this project. Although the list was simple, it was such a powerful reminder of God's ability to provide in creative, beautiful and unexpected ways.

It's a fact that God could snap His fingers and immediately materialize the answers to our need. Yet, in His wisdom, He rarely chooses this route. Instead, He allows us, 'His kids,' to become a part of His master plan. Paul speaks of this in Ephesians when he writes, "He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." (*Ephesians 2:10*) Our God did a *good thing* through a young man in Boy Scout troop 25. Because of his efforts, funds were raised, labor was provided, lumber was custom milled and a professional carpenter was summoned to advise him as the structure took shape. Through his charity, the ranch now has a beautiful and safe place for our horses to seek shelter from the elements. All this was made possible because of the committed generosity of a young man named Kevin.



Yes! I would like to shoulder with Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch to support children, horses and families in need.

Please use my donation for:

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FOCUS ON THE FAMILY BROADCAST RE-AIRING

BY JULIE LOVE

In 2004, we were astounded by the overwhelming response that flooded into our Ranch office because of a single radio interview with Focus on the Family.

This conversation between Dr. James Dobson and Kim Meeder went on to become the most popular show of the year. Because of this, the entire broadcast was re-aired over the following Christmas season. Kim and Troy were invited back to FOTF in 2007 for an additional opportunity to share the message of hope through the airwaves. This interview was divided into

three broadcasts which were also extremely popular.

Recently, these interviews were aired across parts of Europe, Holland and South Africa!

Once again, we are humbled to share that Focus on the Family will be re-airing the original broadcast tentatively slated for August. Please join us in praying that the hope of Christ will encourage every weary heart who hears this message. Be watching our website for the exact dates of this airing.

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