

# RESCUE THE EQUINE AROUND the FIRE NEWS FROM CRYSTAL PEAKS YOUTH RANCH SUMMER 2012

## The MASTERPIECE of His Plan

BY KIM MEEDER

In this life, we'll never fully understand the perfect balance of God's master plan. Often my sister has encouraged me with this truth, "If you don't like the current picture of your situation, it only means that *God isn't finished yet.*"

"God isn't finished yet." Every life is a masterpiece *in process.*

This simple truth reminds me that if we're willing to trust God, to walk forward in faith, knowing that His ultimate design is being developed within and through us with each brush stroke of heartache... if we're looking... every now and then we'll see a glimpse of His perfect plan.

A few years ago the ranch rescued a young golden mare with a severe wound on her left shoulder. Radiating from a central impact point were three very deep gashes, each measuring six inches in length. It appeared that at one time the injury had been closed with dozens of staples, nearly all of which had failed. The hideous result was a large chunk of muscle, gaping wide for all to see.

The mare was brought to our attention when her elderly owner and caregiver died unexpectedly in her corral. With no one left to manage her wounds, the distraught family asked if we could continue her care and give her a new home.

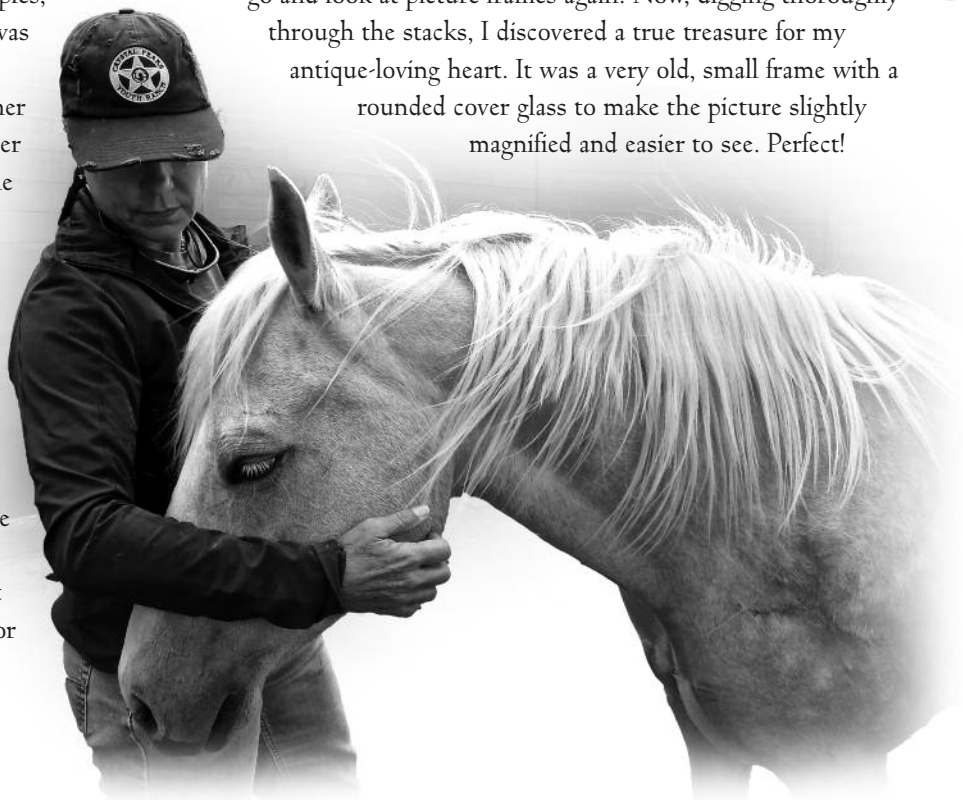
We decided to name the mare "Alulla" because her resulting scar is somewhat "star" shaped. Over the years, Alulla has had several unrelated lameness issues that have largely kept her out of our riding program. Yet, in the hope that she would pull through and make a fine children's horse, we've continued to keep her at the ranch. With limited space for horses that can be ridden, I wouldn't be honest if I didn't confess that I've often wondered if this was the right decision for her and the ranch.

But, God's portrait wasn't finished yet.

A few days ago, I needed to pick up some picture frames for a project I'd yet to finish. "Lord, where should I go?" I prayed as I climbed into my truck. The answer was strangely immediate, "Goodwill." Trying hard to live by a simple truth of pray-listen-do, in no time I was shopping the aisles of the local Goodwill store.

Having found several frames, I made my way to the counter. "Not yet" resounded in my heart. I looked around the store and realized that I might be able to find a few items of clothing for a speaking tour that I was soon to do in a very warm climate. With little delay, I found a top and a pair of sandals that would work well. As I moved back toward the checkout counter, again I heard a very clear "Not yet."

"Okay Lord, what else?" I thought as I walked back toward the center of the store. Slowly, I had a strong sense that I needed to go and look at picture frames again. Now, digging thoroughly through the stacks, I discovered a true treasure for my antique-loving heart. It was a very old, small frame with a rounded cover glass to make the picture slightly magnified and easier to see. Perfect!



# "God isn't finished yet." Every life is a MASTERPIECE in process.

For a third time, I made my way to the checkout counter. This time, I felt nothing but release. Moving into the next-in-line position, it was finally time to purchase the items I'd found.

Immediately, the single cashier declared to the customer in front of me, "Oh, I don't know how to do this transaction. I will need to call the manager." With a slightly flustered cry for help, the temporarily decommissioned cashier called for another employee to come up and help me with my purchase.

From the aisles appeared a small midtwenties woman with bright red hair and striking blue eyes. In a monotone voice she asked, "Did you find everything you needed?" A ringing phone stole her attention away before I could answer her. While she spoke on the phone, I had a moment to study her. Even though her voice and demeanor revealed that she was tired and frustrated, she was still a stunning beauty. On her smock, was a nametag that read "Angel."

Hanging up the phone, she turned to me again and asked in the same emotionless tone, "Did you find everything you needed?"

I answered by explaining, "Actually, I found much more than I was looking for. I was able to find some clothing that I will need for an upcoming speaking event."

Without glancing up she asked, "So, what do you speak on?"

"Well," I began, "I get to speak about hope." And then I shared a brief explanation of the ranch.

"Huh," was her dutiful response. Still, she gave no eye contact.

Feeling lost in a superficial exchange about hope, I asked God, "*What do You want me to say to her?*" Without hesitation, the response was clear, "*Point blank her with what I've done for you.*"

Leaning into the plow of pray-listen-do, I looked at her directly and said, "I agree with you that everyone needs hope in their lives. I'll never forget the day that I found genuine hope. I was nine years old. It was the same day that my dad murdered my mother and then killed himself. In my grief, I cried out to Jesus—the Author of hope—and He has been in my heart ever since."

As if suddenly struck by an unseen arrow, Angel stiffened and drew in a quick breath. She glanced at me and then stared at the floor. She stood frozen in place, seemingly locked in time. In what looked like slow motion, her eyes gradually rose to meet mine.

What they held was liquid sorrow. In a voice I could barely hear, she said, "When I was twelve, I saw my mom kill herself right in front of me." Her nostrils flared, and she pulled in her bottom lip. Then she continued in a whisper, "I've never told that to *anyone*."

There, over the counter of the local Goodwill store, I opened my arms and a new friend collapsed into my embrace.

I held her for a long time, whispering encouragements from one former orphan to another. It was then that a beautiful piece of God's profound plan dropped into my view.

"Angel, I would love to have you come to my ranch. I have a very special horse that I'd like for you to meet. I think that the two of you might understand each other perhaps better than anyone could understand either of you." Her eyes were leveled on mine and her lips were parted in silent anticipation. "Not long ago our ranch rescued a horse that watched the one person on this earth that she loved the most, die right in front of her. When her master's body was discovered in her corral, she was standing over him. Even though she couldn't stop what happened, she still loved him very much."

I watched as the brokenhearted young woman before me wordlessly nodded in subconscious understanding. Telling Angel about herself through Alulla's story, I continued, "She's a precious horse that just needs someone to help her know that she's going to be okay. Do you think you can help me with that?"

Still trying to process all that had just happened, Angel's beautiful eyes blinked a few times before she responded, "Yes, I would love that."

When I walked out of the Goodwill store with my bag full of treasures, I glanced back at the real treasure standing behind the counter. She was beaming with a rare radiance. "I'll see you soon!" I called to her.

"Yes, you will!" she called back.


Climbing into my truck, I realized how our all-knowing God had woven difficult threads from my life into something beautiful, something redeeming. It was His plan all along to seam together the loss of my parents, my reaching out to Jesus and the rescue of a wounded, brokenhearted horse into fabric that would bring comfort to a wounded, brokenhearted girl.

My sister was right. If we don't like the current picture of our situation, the painful parts of our life... it only means that God isn't finished yet. As the Master Artist, He doesn't waste a single brush stroke... *ever*.

"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things He planned for us long ago" (Eph. 2:10, NLT).

There are no coincidences. His plans for you were forged long ago. In God's hands not a day of your pain is *ever* wasted. In HIS timing, He will use every single one—if—you're willing to trust Him, to walk *with* Him toward the completion of the masterpiece He is painting within.





*"My favorite horse is **Halo**. He's pretty, comfortable and a good riding horse. He's good at going through the cones. He's good in the wind, and he is easy to control. He is also good at taking baths. He has taught me that he trusts me and that next time he sees me he will walk right up to me."*

— Aiden, Age 8

*"**Hanalei** is my favorite horse because she is well behaved and I like her and her mom's story. She has taught me how much easier life is when I am well behaved."* — Jan, Age 10

*"My favorite horse is **Lightfoot** because he listens to me and he is really sweet—and he doesn't slobber on me when I feed him apples. **Lightfoot** taught me how to ride and how to stop. He taught me how to groom him. My favorite part is picking his feet."* — Cassie, Age 9

## What I've Learned from **MY FAVORITE HORSE**

*"**Gideon** is my favorite horse. He makes me feel safe and warm. He has taught me to be brave and stand my ground."*

— Kali, Age 11

*"**Robby** is my favorite horse. When I ride him I know I trust him. He has taught me to be patient with horses, and to know that when you find the right horse you'll want to ride it forever."* — Grace, Age 9

*"**Hero** is my favorite horse because he got hurt really bad and survived. He taught me that when he was hurt—and I understand that—that if you are strong you can get through it."* — Keegan, Age 9

*"**Cassidy** is my favorite horse. She's easy to connect to because she listens to me. She has taught me to step up and be a leader."*

— Drake, Age 15

*"**Hero** is my favorite horse because he learns quickly and really tries hard to get stuff right. I think he is an example of how everyone should keep trying no matter what."*

— Jessica, Age 17

*"**Little Bear** is my favorite horse. He taught me to be a good listener."* — Elizabeth, Age 6

*"**Remnant** is my favorite horse because he is very sweet and fun to ride. He has taught me that a lot of horses are treated bad, shot and worse; but we can still help."* — Michael, Age 13

*"**Robby** is my favorite horse because he's very calm and gentle. Robby taught me patience. He taught me this by me riding him. I know Robby likes to go very fast and not take his time, but he will listen and go slow if he is asked."* — Samantha, Age 14



# ISAAC

BY MARSHALL  
TEAGUE

ONE OF MY GOALS with our herd in the past few months has been to spend very intentional time with a handful of our horses. Isaac has been one of these. Isaac came to the ranch burned and scarred by the flames of a harsh life. Though our knowledge of his past is somewhat piecemealed and incomplete, what we do know is a somber story.

Isaac, left a stallion and untouched until he was five years old, was placed into training for two years where he was subjected to incredibly abusive “cowboy” ideologies. Disappointed with her investment and angry with a horse that she could neither handle nor understand, Isaac’s owner chose to sell him to a 4-H family. When the day came for Isaac to be sold however, his owner found that he was resistant to loading into a trailer. The insatiable promise of money for a valuable horse loomed on the horizon and the owner took no heed of Isaac’s hesitation to load. Instead, she increased her use of brutal and archaic methods to get him into the trailer. The incident culminated in Isaac’s head getting smashed repeatedly against the threshold of the trailer and the hardest bone in Isaac’s face being shattered.

A local veterinary practice was called to euthanize the damaged horse since he could no longer fetch a buying price in the deal with the 4-H family. Fortunately, the veterinarians who responded to Isaac’s case perceived the life yet left in this frightened horse, and instead of putting him down, called the ranch to discuss options. They would attend to the initial part of saving this horse’s life by providing

the surgery, stitches and care needed to treat his battered face if Crystal Peaks would provide a home in which he could rehabilitate. Fully committed to this unseen horse, Kim and Kelsie rushed to the equine medical center to meet Isaac for the first time.

Later, after reconstructive surgery on his face, Isaac was brought safely into his new home and herd here at the ranch. There were other ghostly marks on this horse that whispered of past atrocities that he had suffered. Isaac bore a laceration scar stretching between his ears and over his left eye, part of his tongue was ominously severed and his bottom lip was partially missing by some sort of phantom injury that we could only guess at. Prior to coming to the ranch, Isaac had tasted a sorrowful degree of human harshness.

Since we’ve had him, I’ve always noticed his understandable hesitation around trailers. To his credit, as well as Kim’s and Kelsie’s—as they’ve been the ones who’ve primarily worked with him—he will load with hesitation. Yet I have always had a specific desire to continue what they have started so well: a relearning of what the experience of

trailer *can* be. For several weeks, I took time to work with Isaac with the sole purpose of giving him more experience in safe, healthy loading. The following is an excerpt from one of those days in which this frightened horse began to make tremendous strides against the haunting fear that still lingers from his past.



Exhausted air, warm and soft, washed quietly throughout the inside of the horse trailer as Isaac released held breath from deep within his lungs. The trailer’s stall dividers, all secured to the inside walls, clanged easily and metallically as the weight shift from Isaac’s entrance settled into the fibers of the trailer. I watched him intently and serenely as he expelled not only the air within him but some of the tension that had surely coursed through him before making the last step to fully enter the trailer. His eyes, unlike times in the past, were not wide open but gently scanning. His neck was soft and relaxed instead of tensed with anxiety. No more was he blasting his breath in irregular, panicky spurts, but he peacefully pulled air







in before dropping his head all the way to the floor to inspect for any dropped hay.

My right hand held the lead rope that ran to the halter around his head, and my left hand stretched out quietly to scratch his neck. Though all of my outward body language was incredibly still and serene, I was feeling great waves of excitement flooding my thoughts. It pounded right up through my chest and all the way out to my fingers like shoreward waves moving between jetties. This was the *eighth* time today that he had loaded into the horse trailer calmly and quietly and with little or no hesitation. Just two weeks earlier Isaac was having trouble crossing the threshold of the trailer without another horse loading before him to buttress his courage against the weight of fear. Even when practicing loading the week before, he would only place one hoof into the trailer before capsizing with fear. There was no magic in what I had done with him. In fact, there was no monumental talent that I possessed that was allowing Isaac to accomplish this. I was simply someone (like other staff members before me) that provided him with opportunity after opportunity to trust. Slowly, he was learning that he could indeed be safe as he entered.

Even as I watched Isaac in all of my enthusiasm, I wanted to speak with him. I wanted badly to just have a conversation with him while we stood together in the solitude of the trailer.

"Do you know what your name means?" That's the very first question I would've asked him.

The imagined dialogue between horse and human was quickly interrupted when Isaac lifted his head with a heightened degree of alertness. I watched his jaw muscles tighten under his yellow hair and his eyes peer perceptively out of a series of windows on my right side. Though my

own tension threatened to grow, I remained iced in relaxation. Only my right hand changed as my fingers took up an imperceptible amount of feel on the lead line that connected me to Isaac. With a blow of air from his nostrils and a movement of his head, I felt his weight begin to shift back toward the door. In a quiet but confident response to his growing anxiety, I put an incredibly light amount of pressure on the line between us. By doing so, I silently asked him to disobey his fear driven intuition which begged him to step backward toward the exit, and instead step toward me and deeper into the trailer. I knew that if he continued to move toward the doorway his fear would grow exponentially with each unchecked step. He would end up blasting quickly out of the door, affording past memories once again victorious.

I felt the contact that I had on the lead line meet his head as his weight leaned further away from me and ever toward the exit behind. I could see him processing my request. His eyes came to me, his subtle movement backward halted. For only a moment I watched, unsure of whether he would choose to allow fear to command him or if he would trust me against his scarred past.

And then his answer met my appeal. Once more, against the objections of his fear, Isaac chose to

obey me. He took a step, but not toward the door. After his front left hoof planted itself eight inches closer to my side, Isaac stood a moment in silence watching me. An unknown intensity mixed in his brown eyes, and once again, he released tensioned air all around me. His jaw muscles loosened, his head dropped and he looked contentedly at the floor with a calm curiosity. He was changing and I was just lucky enough to be the one working with him to see it.

"Your name means laughter, Isaac," my imagined dialogue continued. Minutes passed in the quiet of the trailer. Sunlight spilled into the space as did noise from the surrounding world. "Do you laugh?"

His response came not in the form of words of course, but in his peaceful presence. It seemed to me that he is indeed on the journey of learning the meaning of his name.



Photo: Katie Jacobsen



# TEMPLETON'S REDEMPTION

BY KIM MEEDER

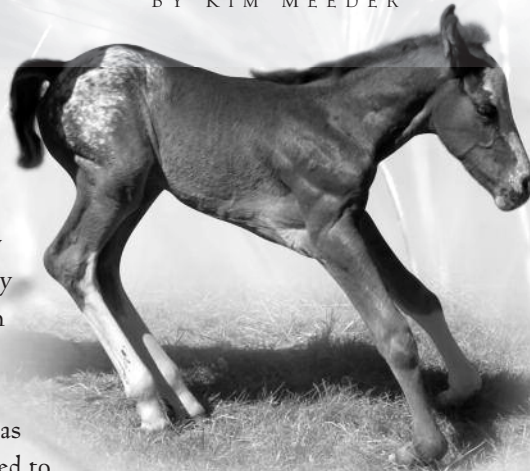
While watching the two-year-old colt trotting behind me, I couldn't help but think about the power of redemption. I was riding Covenant, my young gelding, and training Templeton by ponying him behind us. Looking like a boy scout on his first camping trip, Templeton was fully tacked up and carrying empty panniers over his small saddle.

In the way that only a horse can, he was grinning from ear to ear, completely thrilled to be a "big boy" out sharing a new adventure with his best friend. He was so engaged with "Covey" that I was soon able to tie his lead line to his saddle and allow him the freedom to explore untethered the wilderness that surrounded us.

Suddenly, the whole world became a vast game that needed to be experienced. Pausing to investigate, Templeton often looked up to discover that we'd continued on without him. With a long whinny and a burst of speed, he'd race to our side, often tossing in a few romping bucks to emphasize his pure delight.

Soon, we came to a water crossing. It was deep enough to reach Templeton's midchest. Covey walked right in, relishing the soothing rush of liquid cool on this warm afternoon. In a flourish of pawing, he made sure that we were both thoroughly soaked before he exited by climbing the opposing bank.

Having never experienced water in this way, Templeton was uncertain. Weaving up and down the bank, he looked for an alternate way to rejoin us. Then, something within him changed. Instead of focusing on his problem, his gaze shifted toward his goal—to the bank where we waited. First, he edged the tip of his hooves into the water. Then he pressed in up to his pasterns. Soon, his hind feet followed. I watched in wonder as water swept up his sides as he conquered what only moments earlier seemed impossible.



As I watched, the whole scene made sense. This courageous moment was a picture of Templeton's life. By taking small, consistent steps, he had moved through what most would've considered impossible.

Only two years earlier, the colt who was now triumphantly making his way up the bank, was born with tendons so severely contracted that he was unable to walk or stand correctly.

Because he was unable to stand and nurse, within days of his birth he nearly starved to death.

After being confiscated by the Sheriff's Department, the dying colt was rushed to Bend Equine Medical Center for emergency treatment. During his preliminary examination it was discovered that on both of his front legs, the tendons on the back of his cannon bones were so severely contracted that the opposing tendons on the front of his cannon bones had ruptured. This condition made it impossible for him to lift either of his front toes to take a normal step.

Impossible.



Gratefully, Luke 18:27 states what's impossible with men (and horses), is possible with God. I'm learning that "impossible" is not a word in God's vocabulary. It's a word that I use when my focus is in the wrong place... on my big problems... instead of my infinitely BIGGER God. But just like Templeton, when I choose to lift my focus above my problems and look toward the solution—the beautiful face of my Lord—my heart fills with the truth that there's nothing that the unfailing love of Jesus Christ cannot see me through.

There is *nothing* that He cannot redeem. A little "once-broken" horse taught me that.

Not long ago, Templeton couldn't walk or stand. His front legs were wrapped with heavy bandages. He had to be carried







everywhere for the first several months of his life, laid down when it was time to sleep and lifted to his feet when it was time to eat. His very survival was thought to be impossible.

Yet, here he was, standing before me, a soaking wet, rambunctious two year old. This happy Appaloosa colt didn't seem to listen to those who said it couldn't be done. Instead... he just *did*. In his own unique way, he lived out the truth found in Psalms 23 by putting one foot in front of the other and walking *through* his "valley of the shadow of death." Instead of giving up and collapsing under the weight of overwhelming challenge, Templeton is now ready for the next season of his life, to begin his formal training as a children's horse at Crystal Peaks.

"So take a new grip with your tired hands, and stand firm on your shaky legs. Mark out a straight path for your feet. Then those who follow you, though they are weak and lame, will not stumble and fall but will become strong" (Heb. 12:12-13, NLT).

Templeton continues to teach me what a joy this life can be when we choose to allow our faith in Jesus... to be greater than our fear of the impossible.

Check out our website [www.cpyr.org](http://www.cpyr.org) to view video footage of "Templeton's Redemption" in action. Click on "Templeton" under the Latest News section of our homepage to see just how far he has come!



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

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# JOIN US FOR CPYR'S ANNUAL HOEDOWN!

Saturday, July 21, 2012  
4:00-8:00 p.m.

Come and join the fun and games, wearing your best "Hoedown" apparel. You won't want to miss dancing the "Virginia Reel," racing in relays in the arena or simply joining friends for summertime fellowship. A barbeque dinner will be provided, and we will end the evening worshipping together on the grassy hill. WE HOPE TO SEE Y'ALL THERE!

