

THE ROVING COWBOY

By

J. D. Bilbro Ph.D.

CHAPTER 1

Early one morning Jim struck up a conversation with his dad, James. They were seated at the breakfast table when Jim said, “Dad you remember that some time ago we got into a discussion about my joining the army, but we didn’t come to any clear understanding about my really joining up; so why don’t you give me your feeling about it. My feeling is that I should go ahead and join up with the Army now.”

James pondered for a few minutes, and then said, “Jim, I really would hate for you to go because I would miss you so much. But you are nineteen years old now, so you should be allowed to make your own decisions about your life. So go on and join up and I will just keep praying for your safety. And I will expect you to write me and Mom pretty frequently and keep us posted on how you are doing.”

Jim got up from the table, hugged his dad, and said, “Dad, you realize that we have to tell Mom about this and it won’t be easy. However, it will probably not be a real surprise because I think she has heard us talk about this in the past.”

James said, “But I think you will agree that she will accept your decision for the same reason I have—you are nineteen years old and should be allowed to make your own decisions.”

About that time Jim's mother came into the kitchen and said, “I did not mean to eavesdrop but I did hear the last part of the conversation. Jimmy, my beloved son, I hate to see you go, but you are old enough to make your own decisions. And be assured that we will certainly keep praying for you, and we will be expecting to see you back home in just a few days.”

At this, Jim stepped over to his mother, gave her a big hug, and said, “Mom, I love you very much, and I will feel safe knowing you and Dad are praying for me.”

Jim packed his suitcase, kissed his mother, and went out to the carriage where his dad was waiting for him. James flopped the reins on the horses and they rode off, waving at Lillie who was standing on the porch waving at them.

They rode the mile to the depot, and Jim bought a ticket for the Amy Training Station that was on the east coast of Florida.

CHAPTER 2

The train arrived in about fifteen minutes, so Jim hugged his dad, said “Goodbye,” and then he boarded the train carrying his suitcase.

The train had several passengers so he chose a seat next to a young man who looked to be about his age. He introduced himself as Jim Bailey and the young man replied “Pleased to meet you, Jim, my name is “Tex Ritter.”

In just a few minutes they struck up a conversation and exchanged “summaries” of their lives.

Tex said he grew up in San Antonio but his family had recently moved to Trimon which was just a few miles west of Ferguson, located in Central Texas. He said he was headed to the Army Training Station on the east coast.

Jim said he was born and raised in Ferguson in Central Texas, and was also headed to the Army Training Station!

The two young men continued their conversation and were soon friends. About nine o’clock they were offered bunks in the sleeping car and immediately took up the offer.

About sunrise the next morning they were awakened and found that they were just a short distance from the Army camp. They arrived there shortly, climbed down out of the train, and were soon in a small restaurant eating breakfast.

CHAPTER 3

After they finished breakfast they walked over to the Training Station and asked a soldier where they should go to enlist in the army. The soldier pointed out the building, and Jim and Tex hustled over to it.

They walked inside and then over to a desk occupied by a sergeant. Jim said, "Sir, we would like to enlist in the army." The sergeant looked at them and said, "Just walk through that gate over there and you will be in the Army." The boys looked at each other with a puzzled look and walked through the gate.

After four months they were in good shape in every segment of their training. Then they were sent to the east coast, loaded onto a ship, and taken to the major military camp on the southern tip of Florida. Here they were instructed on the fighting characteristics of the Spanish soldiers they would be fighting. And they were told why they would be fighting them so they wouldn't think they were just wasting their time and risking their lives for nothing.

After four days of additional preparation they were reloaded on a ship at five o'clock in the morning, and taken the short distance to the United States Army Base on the eastern edge of Cuba.

They took their equipment and other belongings to the base barracks and placed them on the bed where they were going to sleep.

It was soon sundown so the troops were fed and then led to the bunkhouse. They were told to go to bed immediately because they would be awakened at five o'clock the next morning to get ready for breakfast.

The next morning they got out of bed in response to the bugle, dressed, and went to breakfast. After breakfast they were lined up behind Colonel Marvel who led them to the battle grounds at the base of Hugon Hill.

The Colonel then told them the Spaniards would probably not start firing on them until they got to the top of the Hill; the Colonel was wrong!

As soon as they started up the base of the Hill the enemy opened fire and killed or wounded several soldiers; but some of the soldiers continued the attempt to capture the Hill, but Colonel Marvel gave the signal for retreat.

But being part way up the Hill and not knowing exactly where they were, Jim and Tex sprinted off in the general direction of the base camp. And immediately they came into a field having several small stacks of wheat straw. Unfortunately the enemy was not far behind, and their shouts to each other soon alerted the boys; so they wormed their way into a stack.

In a few minutes one of the Spanish soldiers came over to the stack and began thrusting his bayonet into it. As he circled the stack thrusting, he stuck the bayonet into the left leg of Tex. Tex gritted his teeth and did not make any movement or noise.

CHAPTER 4

As soon as the Spaniards left the field, Jim immediately cut three wide strips off the right leg of his uniform, and began to tie them around Tex's wound. The bleeding slowed to a seep, so Jim took Tex's arm over his right shoulder and began to help him hobble along. Fortunately, they were not far from the camp and soon found it. Tex was immediately taken to the makeshift hospital and given proper aid to stop the blood seepage. Then they cleaned the wound, treated it with medication, and bandaged it.

By now the rest of the American soldiers had re-assembled, restocked their ammunition, rested, and drank a quenching amount of water. In the meantime Colonel Marvel and the other officers formulated a new plan.

The plan worked, the Spaniards surrendered, and a peace treaty was signed; then the American troops were sent back to the Army base in Florida.

Tex was hospitalized in the hospital there, and his wound was cleaned and stitched shut. He asked how long he would have to remain in the hospital, and he was told about three weeks.

So Jim decided he would try to get a temporary job until Tex got out of the hospital; then they could ride the train back home together.

Jim was very well trained in working with horses, so he got a job at the local stable. His pay was fifty cents per hour which was a good salary at that time.

He groomed the horses and rode them several miles a day to keep them healthy. He also fed them and mucked the stables.

He did such a good job that the owner, Mr. Headley, hated to see him leave. But when Jim explained that his friend, Tex, was getting out of the hospital and they needed to return home, he understood and wished them well.

When Tex was discharged from the hospital, he was no longer in pain. However, he favored the leg and walked with a bit of limp. But he was ready to go home, so they got their tickets and boarded the train.

CHAPTER 5

The boys arrived at Ferguson the next evening. Then they called their parents and asked them to come to the station and get them.

Jim's parents got there sooner than Tex's parents because Tex's parents had to ride their carriage a longer distance. So before Jim left to go home, he told Tex that he would call him that evening so they could set the time to get together and make plans for the future.

Jim kept his word, and that evening he called Tex and invited him to come over to his home the next day; Tex said that he would be over early.

When Tex arrived the next morning, Jim led him back to his study and offered him a seat and some coffee. Tex took him up on his offer for coffee; so Jim went to the kitchen and soon returned with two cups of coffee. The boys sipped their coffee, chatted for a few minutes, and then got down to business.

Jim said, "I saw a story in a magazine that said the Army is buying horses by the dozen in order to get their Cavalry expanded, and they want first class horses that have been properly trained.

The article said that the ranchers in the South Texas area, near Blumberg, are providing a lot of horses to a company named 'We Break, You Buy.' The article also said that the Company buys first class horses from the surrounding area, and then trains them to meet the qualifications of the Cavalry. The article stated they were in need of cowboys who could train the horses."

"Jim, it sounds like a job that we could qualify for, doesn't it? And I'll bet the company will pay good wages to qualified boys like us."

Jim said, "Tex, I'm ready to go to South Texas and see if we could get a job breaking horses. How do you feel about that?"

Tex answered, "Well, we have a pretty good chunk of money that we got for serving in the Army, certainly enough to pay our expenses to go down there and to come back if we decide not to take the job."

So two days later the boys said goodbye to their parents and boarded a train for Blumberg. They arrived there late that evening, and got a room in a hotel. Immediately Jim said, "I'm hungry as a bear."

Tex replied, "Well, I believe I could eat a buffalo." So they went down to the café in the hotel and got their supper. Then they went back to their room and went to bed.

After breakfast the next morning, they went back to their room and looked up the phone number of "We Break and You Buy." Jim called the number and talked to the company manager. He told him they were looking for a job and would like to come to his office for an interview.

The manager, Mr. Kennedy, said that would be fine, and told Jim how to get there. Fortunately, his office was only a few blocks from the hotel, so the boys just walked over to it.

They entered the office and told the receptionist they had come to see Mr. Kennedy, and that he was expecting them. The receptionist dialed Mr. Kennedy's number and told him that the two young men he was expecting were here to see him.

In just a few seconds Mr. Kennedy appeared, introduced himself, and invited the boys into his office. The boys introduced themselves then sat down in the chairs close to Mr. Kennedy's desk.

"So you young fellows are looking for a job breaking horses," Mr. Kennedy said. "Well, why don't you just tell me why you feel qualified for the job?"

Jim spoke up with enthusiasm and told Mr. Kennedy that they both had grown up on ranches in Central Texas, and that they both were experienced in breaking horses.

Jim said they also had experience in training horses to neck-rein, and to stop and stand still when both reins were dropped.

"Sounds like you fellows can do all that is necessary," Mr. Kennedy said. "We don't require any special training for the horses we will sell to the Army except neck-reining; so you should be able to train a horse in a very short time.

"Another thing in your favor, these horses have been running in our pastures for about two months, mingling with a bunch of horses that have already been broken and trained.

"Also they are fed alongside our cowboys' horses, and treated very gently. So I'd say you fellows should be able to break a horse in a day or two; and I'll pay you a hundred dollars for each horse you break.

"Now Jim, Tex, I want to tell you what facilities we have in case you fellows want to stay out at the ranch. We have a nice building with all the things you will need for comfortable living when you are through for the day. We also have a nice house near the bunkhouse where you will eat your meals.

"My ranch manager is Jack Morgan. He is a fine man and very efficient. His responsibility is to run the ranch just like he owns it. He has worked for me for eleven years and I fully trust him. His wife, Norma, is a very pleasant lady, and she is also a good cook

"She takes care of the building where she cooks all the meals, and where the cowboys eat. And for fifty dollars per month she will fix all your meals, do your laundries, change your sheets and make your beds, and keep clean the bunkhouse where you boys will be living.

"Now as for the wages: As I have said, I will pay you fellows one-hundred dollars for each horse you break and have taught to neck-rein.

“I will furnish you with a cowboy who will help you rope the horse, snub it to a post, and help you get the bridle and saddle on it. Then he will ‘ear it down’ until you are well seated in the saddle and have a good grip on the reins. And finally he will remove the rope from the horse’s neck and turn him loose. Then he will open the gate to the pasture so you can ride out into it.

“You will have the whole pasture to ride your horse in for as long as you need to. Being experienced in such matters, I’m sure you will know when you have gotten rid of any remaining ‘wild’ tendencies that the horse may still have. Are you agreeable with all of this?” The boys quickly declared that they were.

Then Mr. Kennedy provided them with a carriage to ride to the ranch. They arrived there and took their belongings into the bunkhouse; then they spent the rest of the day getting acquainted with their new surroundings and the cowboys.

Supper time came and the boys enjoyed the food and visiting with the other fellows. Mr. Kennedy ate supper with them, and then introduced the two boys to those cowboys they had not yet met.

As soon as supper was over, Mr. Kennedy made an announcement (for the benefit of Jim and Tex): “Boys, hit the hay early tonight because we have a very busy day waiting for us tomorrow,”

Then he added with a grin, “Just like we have every day except Sunday. And for the benefit of Jim and Tex, breakfast is at six thirty every day.”

CHAPTER 6

After breakfast the next morning the men filed out of the dining room to go about their duties. John, the man assigned to help Tex and Jim, led them to the corral to select the first two horses they wanted to train.

Tex selected a brown horse with white ankles and a white stripe down his forehead. Jim, on the other hand, selected a coal black one.

Each horse had a loop of rope attached tightly to his neck; and a short piece of rope was attached to the loop so the horse could be easily led.

The boys thought it proper to name their horses, so Jim named his "Midnight" and Tex named his "Brownie." And to get genuinely "acquainted" with their horses, they thought they should often call them by their names.

Holding the leading-rope tightly, they carefully followed John, their assistant, to the training lot which was surrounded with a high wooden fence. Inside the lot were two hitching poles to which the horses could be tied so the boys could put their bridles and saddles put on them.

They got the bridles and saddles on their horses without any difficulty. This prompted Tex to say, "It appears that these two horses are really not very wild, and we should be able to break and train them without too much trouble."

"I sure hope you're right, Tex, because the quicker we get them trained the more money we will make in a given length of time. And I choose to believe we will be able to train them in two, or no more than three days. Time's a wasting so let's get on with it."

John "eared down" Midnight by pulling one of their ears down and biting it. Apparently this drew the attention of the horse to the bitten ear, and this allowed Jim to climb into the saddle without any problem.

Once Jim was seated in the saddle, had his left hand gripping the saddle horn, and his right hand tightly holding the reins; then John quickly removed the rope from Midnight's neck, and jumped back so Midnight couldn't kick him.

Midnight started bucking, so Jim held tightly to the saddle horn with his left hand, and pulled strongly on the reins with his right hand. This pulled Midnight's neck down so he could not see how to run; so he just bucked.

But after a few seconds Midnight quit bucking, so Jim eased up on the reins and Midnight raised his head and started running toward the gate that John had opened.

He ran at full speed for quite a distance; then he slowed down. When this happened, Jim spurred him and he quickly speeded up. Then Jim began to alternate his technique: speed up then slow down, speed up, and then slow down. His objective was to use this technique until Midnight was completely exhausted, but not "wind broken."

When Midnight got to the point of being almost wind-broken, Jim would let him walk until he began to breathe almost normally. Then he would spur him into a gallop and ride back to the corral.

Once Jim reached the corral he dismounted and let Midnight drink a little water. Then he took off the saddle and rubbed Midnight thoroughly with a large cloth made for that purpose. And all the time that Jim was rubbing him down he would talk to him with a soft, “loving” voice.

Jim continued the rubbing and smooth talking until Midnight was completely rested and quieted down. He could tell when Midnight was completely calmed down by looking at his eyes and listening to his breathing.

When Midnight reached this stage of calmness, Jim led him to the water tank and let him drink his fill. Then he led him into the barn and fed him some grain and hay. And while he was eating, Jim kept talking and rubbing him with a large towel to remove all of his sweat.

Jim was very pleased with the results of his training; and tomorrow he would put the saddle and bridle on Midnight and go for a “pleasant” ride—he hoped! In the meantime Tex had followed Jim's technique to the letter and fortunately had essentially the same results.

Tomorrow came and Jim took Midnight out for a ride. He was very pleased with his behavior, and began teaching him to neck-rein. This was not a difficult thing for Midnight to learn, and in just a couple of hours he was neck-reining very well.

Jim was elated and promptly rode back to the corral and told Tex and the cowboys he was through training Midnight!

Then he told Mr. Kennedy he wanted to buy Midnight. Mr. Kennedy said he would sell Midnight for the price the Army would pay for him: two hundred dollars. So Jim got out his wallet, pulled out two hundred dollar bills, handed the money to Mr. Kennedy, and said, “Now I’ve got a real horse to take me wherever I want to go!”

Tex thought Jim had done a real smart thing, so he immediately bought Brownie.

Then Mr. Kennedy said, “You boys are being very good at breaking horses for me, so I’m going to give you the bridle, saddle blanket, and saddle for your horse as a gift.” The boys were very surprised, and thanked Mr. Kennedy for his generosity.

When the boys turned their thinking back to breaking horses, Jim said, “I sure am glad that these horses were prepared for training before we took the job. It certainly is making it easier on us;” Tex quickly agreed.

Time went by quickly and in two months they had trained all the horses that were to be sold to the Military.

CHAPTER 7

“Well,” Tex said to Jim, “Do you have any ideas about what we might do now?”

Jim thought for a minute, and then said, “I saw an ad in the newspaper a few days ago that stated that cowboys were wanted for a ranch down next to Newville on the Mexican border.

“I copied the phone number and address into my little notebook so we could contact them if we got interested—and I guess I’m interested. How about you, Tex?”

“Well, Jim, you know me. I have confidence in your decisions; so I’m ready to go.”

But Jim had some reservations about continuing to work so far south because he didn’t like the high levels of heat and humidity.

So he sat down and wrote his cousin, Sam Humphery, in Wichita, Kansas, and asked him if he knew of any jobs for a cowboy who didn’t like the climate in South Texas.

Sam wrote back and said he did not know of any such jobs, but if he heard about one he would let him know.

So Jim decided ‘to bite the bullet’ a little longer; and he made up his mind to tolerate the climate of South Texas as long as necessary.

The next day he called the owner of the ranch near Newville and asked if they could come down for an interview. He also gave the owner, Mr. Crane, a brief summary of their experiences taming horses and caring for them.

He was impressed and asked the boys to come down for an interview. Then he gave them clear instructions on how to find his ranch.

So the boys collected the remainder of their pay, placed their loaded saddlebags behind their saddles, and headed south toward the Mexican border.

It was not very far to their destination, and they arrived at the ranch before sunset.

They rode up to a building that appeared to be the headquarters for the ranch, dismounted and went inside. The man behind the desk introduced himself as Mr Crane. Then he asked the boys for their names as he shook hands with them.

Jim said, “Mr. Crane my name is Jim Bailey, and this is my friend Tex Robins.” Then Mr. Crane motioned for them to have a seat in the chairs near the desk; and then he asked them to tell him about their experiences with horses.

Jim spoke up, “Well, sir, we were brought up on ranches in Central Texas where we learned first-handed a lot about raising horses and training them.

“And we have just finished training horses at Blumberg for the Army. So now we are now hoping for a job with you people.”

“If you have just finishing training horses for the Army, I’m sure you can do a good job working for us.

“My ranch is not a very large one compared to others in this part of Texas. I only have about 500 head of livestock, but I keep enough cowboys to take good care of them.

“Just recently two of my men quit and went north. They said they had taken all the heat and sunshine they could stand, so they were going to go as far north as necessary to get all the cold they wanted in the winter time.

“But I try to keep at least four hands on the job in order to give my livestock the care they need; you two will bring my number of hands back up to four men.

“All the hands live in the bunkhouse, and we supply them with everything they need; and in addition I pay them a hundred dollars in wages each month. Do you boys still want the job?” Mr. Crane asked.

Jim and Tex exchanged looks for an instant and then Jim said, “Yes sir, we will take the job, and if you are willing we will start today.” Mr. Crane said, “You are hired as of now;” and he shook the boys’ hands.

The boys were soon very much at home. They took an immediate liking to Mrs. Mary Crane and the other two cowboys, Jack and Fred.

Mary was a good cook. She was also a very good housekeeper. She took care of the boys’ laundry, and kept their living quarter’s spick and span.

Jack and Fred were a very likable pair that liked to play penny ante poker. That was just fine with Tex and Jim, and the four of them spent many an evening playing the game.

During the day the boys were always busy taking care of the livestock: feeding them supplement feed, keeping the salt containers with plenty of solid salt in them, and being sure they were grazing on the right one of the four sections.

There were the four fenced sections of equal size on the ranch. When the grass in the section the cattle were on was getting short, the cattle were moved to another section where the grass had regrown. By doing this the grass was never overgrazed.

The boys took turns riding along the fences to be sure there were no unstapled posts or broken wires. Also, they would check the windmills to see if they were pumping enough water. Infrequently one of the windmills would not be pumping enough water. In this case two of the hired hands would have to pull the jet rods and replace the “leathers” on them.

CHAPTER 8

One of the two couples would have to work on Sunday, and the other couple would be free to wade through the Rio Grande River and into Juareta, a town close to the river. Then the following week the other couple would have Sunday off to cross the river, or to just goof off.

Jim and Tex were curious about Juareta. So Jim asked Jack what the town was like since he had been there many times.

“Well, Jim, it is not a big town but it does have a good dance hall and a good group of musicians to play for dancing.

“However, there are some things you need to be cautious about. Mexicans, particularly the men, are not too fond of us “gringos,” so you need to be careful about what girls you ask to dance with you.

“What we do is sit on the sidelines and watch the dancing. If we notice two girls not being asked to dance, we feel a little safer asking them for a dance. However, sometimes those girls have brothers there but they are not sitting with the girls. And in most cases the boys are very particular about whom their sisters dance with; so be caution about who you ask for a dance.

“That pretty well sums up the situations in the dance hall, but there are usually one or two fights outside in the parking lot.

“Oh, by the way, I almost forgot to mention it, there are tables and chairs all around the dance floor, and the dance starts at six thirty.

“Well, Jim and Tex,” Jack asked with a laugh, “Do you think you might want to go to “wonder land,” or do you think you would rather stay here and play Penny Ante Poker with Fred and me?”

Tex spoke up with a grin and said, “I believe I’d like to give Juareta a try, if Jim will go with me.”

Jim laughed and answered, “I’ll be glad to go with you, Tex, if you’ll promise to not start any fights.”

CHAPTER 9

The next Sunday was Tex and Jim's Sunday off, so they dressed up in their best clothes and went to Juareta. They arrived a little after six thirty and the dance had already started. But they went right in and got chairs behind a table that was close to the door. "I think this is a good place, Tex, because if all hell breaks loose we can exit this joint in just a second."

Tex nodded and said, "I agree, but I sure hope we don't ever need to."

The boys ordered a couple of cokes and sipped them as they slowly looked around the dance hall.

They did spy some girls who were not sitting with any boys, and they were not dancing. And just as the boys expected, some of the girls were very pretty, some of them just plain looking as their makeup was only a little lipstick.

"Jim, notice the plain girls are not doing any dancing. Do you think it might be a safe idea to see if they will dance with us? I figure we are less likely to get into trouble if we choose the plain ones for our first partners."

"By George, Tex, I believe you have just come up with a doggone good idea." So the boys left their unfinished cokes on the table and sauntered down to where the two girls were seated.

Jim extended his hand toward one of the girls and said, "Senorita, may I have this dance?" The young lady looked very surprised, but after a second or two she took Jim's hand and replied, "Yes, Senior, I would be happy to dance with you."

Jim was surprised as to how well the young lady spoke English. But he just took her hand and stepped onto the dancing floor with her.

Jim introduced himself as Jim and then the lady introduced herself as Juanita. But the noise was so loud they agreed to save their getting acquainted until they got back the table.

Tex carefully observed how Jim had so quickly made his move and got the young lady to dance with him. So he followed Jim's technique and asked the other plain girl for a dance. As soon as they go onto the dance floor Tex said, "My name is Tex, and may I ask you what your name is?"

The young lady answered, "Yes, you may ask my name, it is Maria."

Maria was a better dancer than Tex, but she tried not to show it for fear she would embarrass him. They danced without talking because of the high noise level.

When the music ended the boys escorted their ladies back to the table. Then they asked the ladies if they would like something to drink. They thanked the boys for the invitation, and said they would like to have some cokes.

Jim motioned a waiter and soon the girls were drinking their cokes. They thanked the boys again, and the conversations began. The boys told the ladies all about their background while the girls sipped their cokes and listened with obvious interest. Then it was the ladies turn to tell their stories.

The boys listened as the girls took turns telling about their lives. The first thing they told the boys was that they were twin sisters (but not identical) in a fairly wealthy family as their father owned a clothing store.

They had been taught English from the first school year through their senior year because a majority of their costumers came from the United States.

They also explained that they deliberately were “plain” because did not want to attract the men; they just came to the dance to enjoy the music. Then they confessed that they had always wanted to dance with a “Gringo” just to see if it was different from dancing with a Mexican.

Jim then answered with a question and a laugh, “Well, was there any difference?”

Juanita answered with a big smile on her face, “Yes, there is a big difference. You gringo’s are much better dancers—you don’t walk on our toes, you don’t jerk us around, and you don’t try to squeeze the breath out of us.”

“Maria grinned and said, “That’s right, but don’t you boys get the big head because you are good dancers!”

They all laughed and Jim said, “We’ll try not to get to big-headed because we’ll want to dance with you lovely ladies every time we come down here.”

They continued their alternation of dancing and talking, and it appeared to the boys that the girls were really having a good time.

But finally it was time to close down the dance hall, so the boys ushered the ladies to their home three blocks away. They thanked the ladies for giving them such a good time, and they promised them they would be back in two weeks.

The boys kept their promise and went back to Juareta at the end of the two weeks.

They arrived a few minutes before the dancing started, but they went inside anyway and got chairs behind a table. They had been there for only a few minutes when two beautiful ladies walked in the door.

Jim and Tex were opened-mouthed as they wondered who the beauties could be. The girls just walked over to Jim and Tex who were standing against the wall and watching the dancers. Suddenly they recognized the girls and for a moment they were speechless.

Juanita and Maria laughed, then took the boys by their hands and led them to some chairs behind a table, and they all sat down.

“You ladies are beautiful, Jim said, “And aren’t we the lucky ones, Tex?”

“Yes indeed, Jim, but we’re probably going to have a lot of competition tonight. So I suggest we just keep the beauties busy dancing and don’t allow anyone to cut in. Are you ladies willing to let us do that?” The ladies agreed with that, much to the relief of the boys, and then the band struck up the music.

Everything went well as the girls refused to allow another man to cut in. Finally the girls got tired of dancing and wanted to sit down.

As soon as they did, an intoxicated Mexican “gentleman” came over to the table and said in a drunken drawl, “Which of you ladies want to dance with me?”

The girls said nothing so the man took Juanita by the hand and tried to pull her onto the dancing floor. She resisted, and Jim said, “Sir, please let the lady alone.”

The man turned toward Jim and took a swing at him, but Jim dodged and he missed. Then Jim jumped to his feet, grabbed the drunk by his collar and the seat of his pants, and forced him out the door. Then he hustled the drunk over into the parking lot and turned him loose. He immediately slipped to the ground and passed out. Jim returned to the table in the dance hall and sat down.

Tex said, “Jim, you did that mighty slick, but I have a feeling there are going to be some Mexicans who will be very angry, and will want revenge. So I suggest we take the ladies down to a café and have some refreshments.” The ladies agreed with that plan and said they knew the location of a very nice café that was just a short distance away—close enough to walk to.

The boys were pleased about the café location because they did not have a buggy, and the ladies were not dressed properly to ride double on a horse.

After they had consumed a coke and some cookies at the café, the girls said they needed to get home before their parents started worrying about them.

Fortunately the girls lived just two blocks from the café, so it was easy for the boys to walk them home. When they got the girls home the boys thanked them for the wonderful evening, and said “Good night.”

Then Jim promised they would be back in two weeks to meet the girls at the dance hall. The girls seemed pleased with that promise, and said they would be waiting for the boys to meet them there. The boys then walked to their horses, mounted them, and started for the ranch.

CHAPTER 10

On the way back to the ranch they had a continuous discussion about the events of the evening, and soon the discussion turned to the kissing of the girls.

Tex said, "I have never kissed a girl and I don't know how it is done. Jim, could you give me some pointers on this subject for I am sure you have kissed girls."

Jim laughed at Tex's question and said, "Tex, there is really nothing hard about kissing a girl. The hardest part is being sure she wants to be kissed. So you just have to 'read' how she looks at you, and what she says to you. If you have hugged her up very closely and she seems to enjoy it, the chances are very good that she is ready for you to kiss her.

"So open your mouth just a little bit, and slowly approach her lips. If she makes no move to prevent your kissing her, gently press your lips on hers. If she makes no sign of resistance, gently press your lips firmly to hers. If it is your first kiss, don't hold the kiss more than a few seconds. If she indicates that she enjoyed it, give her another one. I could tell you a lot more but I won't. Just a last warning: If you are getting serious, be darned sure you are really in love with the lady, and not just having a puppy love experience"

Tex looked at Jim with questioning in his voice and said, "Jim, how could you know so much about kissing and marriage when you have never been married?"

"I have dated several girls, observed many marriages, and read much information about marriage. But you can bet your bottom dollar that when the right girl comes along, I will marry her. End of discussion!"

By this time the boys were back at the ranch, tired, and glad to be back at their bunkhouse. They went to bed and day-dreamed about their beautiful girls, and having another date with them in just two weeks. They finally went to sleep.

The next day came all too soon, and the boys had to hit the saddle right after breakfast and make a survey of everything that pertained to raising cattle. They found a few problems and spent the day taking care of them

Time sped by and the boys continued going to see their girls. Finally, about a year later, Tex told Jim that he thought he was really in love with Maria, and he knew she was in love with him.

Jim was not surprised but didn't really know what to say about the situation. But finally he said to Tex, "My good buddy, you have heard my spiel about marriage. So if you feel like this love is strong enough to last a lifetime, I say go ahead and get married. But by the way, do Maria's folks know how you feel about getting married to her?"

"Yes, Jim, her family has gotten to know me, and they believe I would make her a good husband."

"And what would you do for a living if you did get married?" Jim asked.

“I have asked Mr. Crane about a permanent job with him, and he assured me that I could have a job as long as I was able to work. He said that after I got to old to work we could live on our income from the investments he said he would help me make. And by the way, I really don’t mind the climate down here.”

“Well then, Tex, I believe you should get married; and if I’m here, I’ll be the best man for your wedding!”

“How about you and Juanita? I know you like her a lot, and I believe she is fond of you?”

“Juanita and I have had some discussions about our relationship, and I have come to the conclusion that our marriage would never work. She has told me that she did not want to move from Mexico because she wants to be near her parents.

“Then what do you plan to do when you leave here?” Tex asked.

“Well, Tex, I have a cousin, Sam, who lives on a farm and ranch near Wichita, Kansas. And I got a letter from him yesterday saying he was moving to Martha, Oklahoma, to work on the ranch of a wealthy man named Starkey. He said that Mr. Starkey told him that he needed one additional man because he had recently enlarged his ranch by several hundred acres.

“Sam told him about me, and said I was a very good cowhand looking for a job. Then Mr. Starkey told him to contact me and ask me to move up to Martha and go to work for him.

“So you see, Tex, things are really working out for me. But you know that I really hate to leave you behind as we have been good buddies for a lot of years.”

“Well, Jim, we won't say ‘goodbye,’ we will just say, ‘I’ll be seeing you.’ And I really believe that the time will come that we will indeed see each other.”

The next day Jim packed his belongings, and told Mr. Crane why he was moving to Oklahoma. Mr. Crane was very understanding and told Jim that he was sure that he would make his new boss a very good hand.

Jim had given his horse to Tex, so Tex took him to Newville in his buggy to catch the train for Martha, Oklahoma.

Jim bought his ticket and then walked back to the buggy with Tex. The boys embraced each other, and said goodbye with tears running down their cheeks. Then Jim turned around and walked to the depot wiping the tears from his eyes.

The train was on time so Jim was soon riding down the rails, trying to stay dry eyed. He was successful in doing this, but he couldn’t keep from thinking about Juanita and his other friends that he was leaving behind.

CHAPTER 11

The next evening he arrived at Martha. He found a café and hotel a short distance from the depot. So he checked in to the hotel, then went to the café and ate his supper.

After breakfast the next morning he looked in a phone directory and got the number of the Starkeys. He called the number and Mr. Starkey answered. Jim told him who he was and why he was calling. Mr. Starkey thanked him for calling and told him he would send one of his men to get him.

The fellow, Roger, arrived in about twenty minutes as the Starkeys' ranch was not far from Martha. The two fellows exchanged names, walked out to the buggy and climbed in.

While riding to the ranch Roger told him a little about it and the Starkeys. Jim was glad to hear Roger describe both the ranch and the Starkey family as "top notch." He also told Jim that Mr. Starkey, Burt, had a very lovely wife and two very pretty young daughters.

They soon arrived at the ranch and Roger let Jim out of the buggy at the porch of the home. Jim walked up to the door and rang the doorbell. Mrs. Starkey opened the door, introduced herself as Beulah, and asked Jim for his name. Then she asked him to come in.

She introduced him to the young ladies, Debra and Susan, and then said that Mr. Starkey had gone to the barn, but would be back in just a few minutes.

Beulah told Jim to have a seat on the couch, and then offered him a glass of iced tea; Jim took up the offer. About that time Mr. Starkey came in, walked over to Jim, and introduced himself. Jim stood up quickly, shook Mr. Starkey's hand, and introduced himself.

Then Mr. Starkey said, "Jim, as you will soon find out, this is a big farm and ranch, and for that reason there will be a few things you will need to learn. However, from what I have learned in a phone conversation with Sam, you are a quick learner. But there are a few things I can tell you about this place right now.

"We have a special house for the meals for the hired hands. They have their own cook, Jane, and she also cleans the bunkhouse and launders the men's clothing. We pay her for her work so you boys will have all of your checks to spend.

"Now Jim, let's take a tour around the ranch and you can learn a little more about the size of this place and how it is laid out. Now let's go get a buggy and get started."

They went out of the house and across the yard to the shed where the buggy was kept. They hitched a horse to the buggy, and then climbed in and drove through the gate and out into the range.

They had not ridden very far until Jim spoke up and said, “Mr. Starkey you certainly have a good stand of grass on your ranch. And I’ll bet you have a herd of cattle that looks well fed.”

Bert laughed and said, “Yes Jim, I try to keep my herd fattened up and ready for sale anytime the price gets right. Of course I keep only steers, breeding cows, and a few bulls. Doing so enables me to keep the number of marketable steers fairly constant, and when the price goes up I will have a sizable number of them to market.

“As you will notice I have the land fenced off into four sections, and each section has a windmill, stock tank, salt block containers, and feed troughs. We keep a close eye on the section which the cattle are in. Then when the grass gets grazed to a certain level, we move then to another section. We do this because we have learned that if we move the herd when the grass gets grazed to a certain level it will recover more rapidly. Generally we will move the cattle to another section about every three months.

“The windmills are located in the center of the section as this seems to cause the animals to graze the grass more uniformly. And the windmills are checked every day to be sure they are working properly and keeping the stock tanks at a near-full level. The boys are very skilled; and if needed, they can replace the pumping leathers very rapidly and have the windmill pumping again within an hour.”

“Well, Mr. Starkey, you certainly have a good setup here, and a fine herd of cattle. I can assure you that Sam and I will keep everything up to par. And we thank you for giving us a chance to do a good job for you.”

They finished the tour and started back to the ranch house. Then Jim asked Mr. Starkey a question. “By the way, when is Sam supposed to get here?”

“Sam should get here this afternoon, and if he does, you and I will go to Martha to get him.”

Sure enough, Sam got into Martha at two o’clock and called the Starkeys to come get him. So Mr. Starkey and Jim rode into town to pick up Sam at the depot.

When they arrived, Sam rushed out of the depot and over to the buggy. Jim jumped out, grabbed Sam, and gave him a big hug. Then he turned toward Mr. Starkey, who was standing nearby, and said, “Sam, meet Mr. Starkey.”

They shook hands and Sam said, “Mr. Starkey, it’s sure good to meet you, and I want to thank you for hiring me ‘sight unseen.’”

Mr. Starkey laughed and said, “Well, Sam, if you are half as good as Jim says you are, I will be getting another real bargain.”

They climbed into the buggy and started back home. And while they were riding along, Mr. Starkey said to them, “Fellows I have certain rules for all of my hired hands, so I will give them to you while we are riding home. First rule: there

will be no drinking of any alcoholic beverage; second rule: there will be no goofing off; third rule: there will be no lying; fourth rule: there will be no disobedience of orders; fifth rule: you will treat my wife and daughters with respect; sixth rule: you will not try to date my daughters without my permission; seventh rule: there will be no swearing or use of bad language; eighth rule: you can go to the Baptist church with us on Sundays, or you can remain at home and do whatever jobs I assign to you; ninth rule: if you have any questions about a particular job you are to ask me, not some other person.

“We will have family picnics periodically so we can get better acquainted with each other. I like to think of my workers as part of the family, and therefore I expect you to act accordingly. Now, do you have any questions?”

The boys shook their heads and said “No sir.” The timing was perfect and they drove into the yard just as they finished talking.

Jim looked at the large house the Starkeys’ lived in, and said, “Mr. Starkey, you certainly have a large and lovely home, and it looks like it has two stories.”

Mr. Starkey answered, “Yes, Jim, the upper story has three large bedrooms, two of them are for the girls, and the third one is for guests.”

Then Mr. Starkey pulled over to the bunkhouse and said, “You fellows unload Sam’s bags and then spend some time reminiscing.”

“Your supper will be ready in the dining house at six thirty, and I will be there to introduce you fellows to the rest of the workers. I’ll see you then.” He drove the buggy to the garage and turned it over to a hired hand to take care of the horse.

Supper time arrived and Mr. Starkey appeared at the dining room just as he said he would. “Boys I would like for you to meet two more cowboys. This one is Jim Bailey, and this one is Sam Humphrey.

“Jim just came from Deep South Texas where he was breaking horses for the Army, and later he worked on a ranch as a cowboy. So if you boys have any problems with a horse, just get the help of Jim.” At this statement the men all laughed and clapped their hands.

Then he introduced Sam. “This is Sam Humphery, a cousin to Jim and he’s from a farm and ranch close to Wichita, Kansas.”

Then Mr. Starkey called the name of each cowboy and had him stand up so Jim and Sam could associate a face with the name. There were six of the cowboys and all of them were much older than Sam and Jim, and they had all worked for Mr. Starkey for many years.

CHAPTER 12

The next morning Mr. Starkey assigned Sam and Jim to two cowboys and told the cowboys to acquaint them with all the different jobs of the ranch. It wasn't long until they were acquainted with all of them.

The boys enjoyed the jobs to which they were assigned, and after two months of working, Mr. Starkey no longer had to assign them any. He was confident enough in them that they could decide on their own just what needed to be done.

He was glad when the boys got to this point because it lightened the load on him significantly. And at this time he told the boys they could call him "Bert" instead of Mr. Starkey.

The boys did not see the girls very often, but it was often enough to make them wish they could date them. But the first time they got close to the girls was when the Starkey's had a family picnic.

The picnic area was in a grove of trees where there was plenty of green grass, flowers, and shade. It also had very nice wooden tables and benches in it.

The older cowboys seated themselves close to Mr. and Mrs. Starkey; but Jim and Sam sat near the girls so they could get better acquainted with them.

The boys had never lived around any girls, as they had no sisters, so they had a little difficulty trying to carry on a conversation with girls.

But the girls recognized their problem so they very graciously asked the boys to tell them about their lives anyhow. Jim took the opportunity to do so, and gave them a story about where he was born, when he learned to ride a horse, and several other things while living on a farm and ranch.

The girls were actually interested in his story, and when he ended it they thanked him; and then they turned to Sam and asked him about his life.

Sam was very nervous and his story was a bit short. But he did tell them that he had been born and raised on a farm and ranch near Wichita, Kansas and had learned the same type of things that Jim had.

By the time the boys had finished their stories they were much more at ease. So they asked the girls to tell them about their lives.

Susan said, "I'll let Debra do that; she is a much better story teller than I am." So Debra just smiled and began her story.

"We are twin sisters but we are not identical twins. I'm sure you can tell we are not identical just by looking at us. I have red hair and brown eyes, and Susan has blonde hair and blue eyes."

The boys laughed, and Jim said, "And both of you are very pretty." Debra blushed and said, "Thank you, Jim," and then she continued with her story.

"We have gotten along very well, but I have been told that twins often are not very compatible. I was born first and I am about one hour older than Susan. And bless her heart, she lets me take the lead on about every thing we do together.

“And since we were born on a ranch we have always had a lot to do, particularly after we got to be teenagers. We have learned how to ride horses, feed them, and brush them, and put saddles and bridles on them. We have also learned how to herd cattle from one section to another.

“And thanks to our beloved mother, Beulah, we have been taught how to run a household, which includes cooking, cleaning, sweeping floors, and anything else that pertains to keeping a home spick and span.

“We don’t do all these things for nothing; we get a very generous allowance. And we have been saving up our money and will soon be able to start going to college.

“At the present time we both think we will go to a medical school as we have always played like we were doctors or nurses.

“We have an uncle, who is a medical doctor, and his wife is a nurse; they met while in medical school, fell in love, and got married. We love them both very much, and we think they are good examples of what doctors and nurses should be like.

“We have never dated any boys, for various reasons, so we will have a lot to learn about that. And we hope that we will have the opportunity to date you fellows so we can all learn about dating.”

They all laughed at that statement, and Jim said, “Thank you for your confidence, Debra, but we may not be very good examples of the average male. However, we plan to obey all the rules your father gave to us on our way out here to the ranch. And if we can live up to those rules, we should make pretty good husbands.”

Debra said, “Well, since we girls know what those rules are, we will agree that if you obey them you will make good husbands. Gee, it sounds like we may have found our husbands already.” At that statement they all laughed.

When everyone had finished eating, Bert stood up and addressed the group. “Now that we are all finished with our meals, let’s clean up everything and go back to headquarters. Who knows, we may all want to take a little nap.”

After a few weeks the boys had learned all about the jobs of the ranch, and were going about them without any instructions from Mr. Starkey.

Then one evening Mr. Starkey had the boys come to his home for a little talk. The boys were puzzled about the invitation, but they cleaned up, walked the short distance to the house, and knocked on the door.

Almost immediately the door was opened by Mrs. Starkey. She greeted the boys and asked them to come in. Then she ushered them into the living room where the two girls and Mr. Starkey were seated. The boys greeted them politely, and then sat down close to where the girls were sitting.

Mr. Starkey then said, "Boys, the reason I invited you here this evening is that I have some news that I believe you will like to hear. Next Saturday night there will be a square dance in the city club house and we have been invited to attend. I'm not much for dancing, but I don't believe there is anything wrong with square dancing. I thought Beulah and I would take you boys and the girls to the dance. Are you boys interested?"

Jim glanced at Sam, then turned to Mr. Starkey and said, "Yes sir, we would be delighted to go to the square dance with you folks. It has been several years since we have been to one, but I am sure that the meaning of the caller's phrases will soon come back to us." The girls looked very pleased at Jim's reply.

"That's just fine, boys. Why don't you come up here for supper about six thirty next Saturday night and eat with us; then we will ride down to the dance hall."

Sam usually let Jim do the talking, but this time he spoke up. "Thank you for the invitation, Mr. Starkey, we will be very pleased to take you up on it."

Then Mr. Starkey stood up and said, "I know you boys are tired and would like to hit the hay because tomorrow will be another day of work." The boys stood up, said "Good night" to the ladies, and walked to the door with Mr. Starkey. He opened the door, and as the boys walked out he said "Good night fellows."

The boys walked back to the bunkhouse excitedly discussing the news of the evening. Jim said, "You reckon Mr. and Mrs. Starkey are going to make it easier for us to associate with the girls?"

Sam answered, "It sure looks like it, and I hope we are reading the indications correctly!"

Saturday evening came and the boys cleaned up really well, put on their best clothes, and arrived at the Starkeys' home promptly at six thirty.

Supper was on the table so they all sat down, and Mr. Starkey asked the Lord's blessing on the food and for His care during the coming events of the evening.

As soon as they finished their meal they climbed into the buggy and rode to the dancing hall. When they got there they were surprised at the number of people who had already arrived. However, they had not started the dancing, but the band was busy tuning up their instruments.

In a few minutes the caller walked onto the stage and welcomed the people. By then the band was ready, and began playing a square dance song. Jim took Debra by the hand and led her onto the dance floor; Sam took Susan's hand and followed suit.

CHAPTER 13

The boys were a little rusty, but the girls soon had them dancing well. And when the band began to play a waltz, Bert and Beulah got up and began dancing. The four youngsters were surprised at how well the couple danced to the waltz tune, and were very pleased that they had finally begun to dance.

The girls had never seen their parents dance before, and they noticed they were staying arm's length from each other while they danced. The youngsters felt that they were setting an example for them, so they quickly started dancing at arm's length from each other.

Mr. and Mrs. Starkey only danced once, but the youngsters danced every dance the band played. However, they finally grew tired and went back to the table where Mr. and Mrs. Starkey were sitting.

After the youngsters were seated, Mr. Starkey said, "I don't know about the rest of you, but I am ready to go home and relax a little before bedtime." The rest of the group agreed with him. So they all got up, went outside, and climbed into the buggy; then Mr. Starkey drove them home.

When they arrived there, the boys got out and escorted the girls to the door; and then they thanked the family for such a wonderful evening. The family replied that they too had a wonderful evening; and Mr. Starkey said that he would see to it that they repeated the evening again, and soon. Then the boys again expressed their thanks, said "goodbye," and walked back to their bunkhouse.

Over the next several months Bert kept his word and they all went to a dance every Saturday night. Finally it became apparent the boys were falling in love with the girls, and the girls were responding eagerly. Bert and Beulah noticed what was happening, discussed the situation, and wondered what they should do about it.

After much prayer and discussion, they decided it would be unfair to the girls, and to the boys, to force them to stop their courting.

Bert said the only thing lacking in the situation was that the boys had not turned their lives over to the Lord and become Christians. Being the staunch Baptists they were, they knew they could not let their daughters marry infidels.

So Bert called the boys to the cowboys' lunch room one evening and had an honest talk with them.

"Boys" he said, "I want to discuss with you a very important and very personal subject. I am very pleased with how you have obeyed my rules very diligently, and proven yourselves of your honest behavior with the girls. But there is one big fly in the ointment. You boys have not accepted the Lord Jesus as your Savior, and we cannot let our daughters marry you until you become Christians. Would you be willing to allow me to teach you the Bible and then lead you to the Lord?"

The boys were speechless for about a minute. Since they had never been asked such a question, and they were not sure how to answer it. Finally they looked at each other, and then they looked toward Bert.

Jim spoke up and said, "We love your daughters and really want to marry them. So if becoming a Christian is necessary, we can do that; and I am certainly ready to become one;" Sam said without hesitation, "So am I!"

Then Bert said, "You young men cannot know how much your willingness means to me and my wife, and I'm sure it will be wonderful news to our daughters.

"If you fellows are willing to do so, we will have a Bible study and prayers every Sunday afternoon, and every Wednesday evening." Both the fellows said they were more than happy to meet at each of these times.

The lessons started immediately, and the boys learned fast as they were both very intelligent and wanted to get saved as soon as possible. They also had one great blessing; both their mothers were Christians and had read the Bible to them when they were growing up.

After only two months of study and prayer, the boys believed they were ready to make Jesus their Lord and Savior, and Mr. Starkey felt the same way. So he led them through the sinner's prayer, and then a little later he baptized them in the church baptistery.

The baptism was witnessed by the girls and Mrs. Starkey, and thereafter the boys attended every church meeting with the Starkey family.

About two months later the boys were visiting with the girls in the Starkeys' home. The four young people began to discuss among themselves when they were going to get married. After much discussion, they asked Mr. and Mrs. Starkey if they had any suggestion about when and where their marriages vows should be taken.

Mr. Starkey said immediately, "The sooner, the better, and in the church." Every one was surprised at the quick response by Mr. Starkey, but they all agreed with him about the timing and the place.

The young folks asked Mrs. Starkey if she would make the arrangements with the pastor as to the time the vows should be given. She said she would be glad to.

The pastor set the time as two thirty on the next Sunday; he also suggested that the church members be invited. Mrs. Starkey said that would be fine.

The young folk immediately went to the clothing store and purchased dark blue suits for the boys and wedding dresses for the girls. And the boys purchased wedding rings for themselves and for their bride-to-be.

The next Sunday came; and at two thirty the four young people stood before the pastor, ready to take their vows. So the pastor started the ceremony by asking all those attending to bow their heads for prayer.

Then he prayed a very fitting prayer, asking the Lord to bless the young people and give them the power and determination to remain true to their spouses until death separated them.

Then he said to Jim, “Jim, do you take Debra to be your lawful wedded wife, to love and care for her till death separates you?” Jim answered, “I do.” Then he said, “Debra, do you take Jim to be your lawful wedded husband, to love and care for till death separates you?” Debra answered, “I do.” Then the pastor told them to put the ring on their beloved ones ring finger. They did that, and the pastor said, “I now pronounce you husband and wife. Jim you may kiss the bride,” and Jim kissed his bride with a loving kiss.

Then the pastor turned to Sam and Susan, repeated the ceremony, and pronounced them husband and wife. Then Sam kissed Susan with a loving kiss.

The four of them then turned around and hugged the church members who had come to the ceremonies.

The couples spent their first night in the hotel, and the next morning they had breakfast together in the hotel restaurant.

After they had eaten their breakfast, they loaded their suitcases into the horse and buggy Mr. Starkey had loaned them, and rode back to the ranch.

The girls invited their husbands to spend the day with them in their bedrooms. But of course they took Mrs. Starkey’s invitation to come down and have dinner and supper with her and Mr. Starkey.

Then after supper Mr. Starkey had the boys and their wives come to his office for some important discussions. He said, “I should have done this before the wedding, but I guess I was too tied up with my work to think of it. But here are some questions I wrote down back when I realized you were going to marry my daughters. Now here are the questions.

“Where are you going to live? Do you plan to remain in the area? Are you going to build a home? Are you boys planning to continue to work for me?” The newly-weds had been discussing these very questions, so Jim was prepared to answer them.

“Mr. Starkey, we plan to live with you and Mrs. Starkey until we can get together everything we will need for a home in No Man’s Land. This shouldn’t take more than two or three days.

“We had done some researching about what is involved in getting a half-section of land in No Man’s Land, and we decided we could live in dugouts while we were building our homes.

“The law says we must live on the land, which will be a one-half section, for at least five years before we can get a clear title to it. That should be no problem as we have no intention of moving anywhere else.

“There is one thing we are really praying for, and that is a half section that has been lived on by someone for at least five years and has built a home on it. From what I have read in various magazines, there are many half sections like that. It seems that a lot of easterners went to No Man’s Land with the idea of getting rich and living in comfort. However, they soon found out that the wind blows almost continually, and some times it carries dust with it. They were also quite disappointed that the rainfall is only about eighteen inches, even in what is called a “good” year.

“Obviously, No Man’s Land is far from a Paradise, and we are going to have to get used to the various things that might be called “undesirable. So have you sweet girls decided to stay here in Martha in view of all the “bad” things I have discussed?”

The girls looked at each other for a few minutes and finally Debra said, “Where our husbands go, we will go, regardless of the living conditions.”

Jim and Sam both heaved a big sigh of relief, and Jim said, “We thank God for the very sweet and understanding ladies we have married.”

The two couples went to town the next day and purchased the things they were going to need for the trip, and what they would need when they got located on the land they would be living on. The items they purchased were: two freight wagons, four horses, a thirty-foot length of rope, and all the household furniture and kitchen utensils they would need. They also bought enough food for the journey, mostly canned and dried food.

Fortunately the wagons were large enough that blankets could be spread on the floor and make beds for two people. They also bought water barrels they could attach to the wagons, and water buckets large enough to hold drinking water for the horses in case it was needed. They were also very thankful to learn there would be some towns along the way until they got near No Man’s and even though Oklahoma was not yet a state.

Just before they left the ranch they got their pistols, rifles, and ammunition out of the bunkhouse. Both men were expert marksmen as they had done a lot of practicing and hunting while they were growing up and while they were in the Army. They did not believe they would need to use their firearms, but the girls felt safer knowing the boys had the weapons in the wagons with them.

Jim and Sam had written their parents and told them where they were going, and that they would write again when they got settled in No Man’s Land.

CHAPTER 14

The next morning everybody got up early so the young folks could get started right after breakfast, and they did. After all the “good byes” were said, and all the hugging and crying were finished, the young folks waved goodbye to the Starkeys as they pulled away in their wagons, towing Midnight and Brownie.

It was a lovely spring day with the flowers showing their blossoms and the rabbits running along, stopping every once in a while to nibble on some of the lush, green grass.

The girls were more excited about the moving than the boys were. The girls had lived a rather isolated life, and they were now very excited because they were going to see the territory along the road from their home to No Man’s Land.

Susan was a little disturbed about the idea of being away from her home, but Debra was in no way distressed. She had the idea that as long as she had Jim she was going to be very happy and feel very safe.

Noontime came and they pulled off into a grove of trees to eat their lunch of pork and beans and soda crackers. After eating their meal the boys fed and watered the horses, and then they climbed back into the wagons and resumed their trip.

The afternoon went by without any trouble, and a little before sundown they pulled into a grove of trees and prepared their supper of jerky and canned beans.

Then the boys watered the horses, took them to a good patch of grass, and then hobbled them so they could graze the grass but not wander away during the night.

While the boys were tending the horses, the girls were laying out blankets as beds on the floors of the wagons; and in a short time they were all bedded down and asleep.

Fortunately the next three days went well and they got into Beaver, Oklahoma, about thirty minutes before noon. So they pulled the wagons under some big Elm trees and stopped. Then the boys fed and watered the horses and hobbled them.

The girls said they were very hungry for some hot food, so they all walked a short distance to a diner. They all ordered a steak, mashed potatoes, green beans, a piece of apple pie, and a cup of coffee.

While they were waiting for their food, Jim said, “As soon as we finish eating our dinner we will need to go to the Land Office and find out what land is available reasonably close to Beaver and Forgan. We want to be close enough to a town that we can ride in, do our shopping, and then get back home before sundown.”

The young folks finished their meals and then walked the three blocks to the Land Office.

They were warmly greeted by Mr. Reiss and told to take a seat in one of the cushioned chairs. Jim introduced the wives and Sam, and then himself to Mr. Reiss. Then he got right down to business and told Mr. Reiss they were looking for a homestead relatively close to Forgan.

Then to be more specific, he said, “Mr. Reiss, we are looking for two half sections side by side; in other words we are looking for a section of land in one piece. Sam, my cousin, and I want to be reasonably close neighbors for our wives sake, who just happen to be twin sisters.”

Mr. Reiss said, “Well, Jim, I may have just what you’re looking for. Two brothers bought half sections side by side, broke them out, put some of it back into grass and the rest they farmed.

“They bought the equipment needed for farming, and they also bought some horses and cattle.

“One big advantage to the farms is that they are only four miles from Beaver and five miles from Forgan.

“The farms are in good shape as I have had two men taking care of them for the three months since the owners left to go back east.

“When they asked me to sell the farms for them, the men said their wives did not like living here because it was so primitive: no operas, no social clubs, no women clubs, and so forth. They also said none of them really liked the climate of the area, and they all wanted to move back to New York City.

“If you folks would like to go out and see the farms first hand, I can draw you a simple map on how to get there. I will also give you the keys to the houses so you can examine them.”

They all agreed they would like to go out to the farms and look them over. So they took the map, loaded into one of the wagons, and drove out to the farms.

When they got to the farms and began to give them a close look, they were both surprised and very pleased. It was obvious the two furnished farm houses, and everything else, had been carefully maintained.

They drove back to the Land Office and asked Mr. Reiss what the price was for the two half sections just as they are. Much to their surprise, he said the owners were asking only eighteen thousand dollars for each of them.

The boys quickly counted out the cash, and in just a few minutes the couples were the proud owners of a section of land just four miles from Beaver and five miles from Forgan.

The girls did some grocery shopping while there in Beaver; and then climbed into their wagons with their husbands and drove to their new homes.

The girls fixed a supper that evening for both families at Jim and Debra’s home. After they finished the meal they visited for a while, and then Sam and Susan went to their home.

By nine o’clock they were all sleeping in well-furnished bedrooms in well-furnished “new” homes.

Since they had stocked up on groceries there in Beaver, Jim and Debra had a breakfast fit for a king: ham, bacon, fried eggs, oatmeal with milk, orange juice,

and toast with butter and blueberry jam; and Sam and Susan had a very similar feast.

After breakfast Jim and Debra saddled up Midnight and Brownie and rode around the farms to get a closer look at the livestock, fences, and pasture grasses. And they were very pleased with the condition of everything they looked at.

Adjacent to the well houses there were five hundred gallon steel tanks, which were well insulated, and sat on large poles fifteen feet long. This height of the tanks gave the water a good deal of pressure.

Water from these large tanks was piped underground into the kitchens, and bathrooms. It also ran into insulated wooden boxes adjacent to the kitchens.

These boxes were cooled by the water that ran through them and then outside into flower beds. The perishable foods, such as ham, bacon, butter, and milk, were kept in these insulated, cooled boxes.

The houses of both families were surrounded by trees and bushes that greatly reduced wind speeds and also furnished a good deal of cooling shade to the homes.

The second day there the boys set about slightly modifying the farms to improve them.

They built two fences, five feet apart, from their barns to the nearest side of their houses. This fence-lane was to be used during a snow storm when the boys needed to get to the barns so they could feed the livestock. Also, the boys ran underground pipes with automatic cutoff valves to the water troughs that were in the barns and chicken houses.

CHAPTER 15

Summer came and went with no problems. The Lord had sent rain anytime it was needed. So the animals had plenty of grass to eat in the range land, and the girls had plenty of rain for the new shrubs and trees they and the boys had planted.

Then one morning Debra woke up sick at her stomach. She could not imagine what she had eaten that would cause her to be ill.

Suddenly she realized that she had missed her “period.” She was a little fearful about what Jim might say; but she was happy by the fact that she was pregnant. She couldn’t tell Jim at that moment because he had already gotten up, dressed, and gone into the living room to plan the days work.

So Debra got up, went to the bathroom, and upchucked a little bit of her supper. Then she dressed and went to the living room where Jim was.

He looked at her and said, “Sweetie, you look a little pale this morning, are you ill?”

Debra said, “No, I’m just going to have a baby!

Jim was speechless for a few seconds, and then he jumped up, grabbed his wife, and said, “Honey, are you kidding me?”

“No,” she said, “You are just going to be a papa. And I plan to have three little girls in the next ten years.”

Jim said, “If there are all girls, and we just want three, let’s name the first one Beulah, the second one, Lillie, and the third one, Annie; and if by chance one of them is a boy we’ll name him James.” And over a period of the next six years Debra gave birth to three girls.

Jim stayed very busy looking after his family, and managing the farm and ranch. But he was not able to do all that was necessary to keep the farm and ranch from degenerating. Consequently he had to have some outside help for some of the tasks.

He hired a professional to bind some of their sorghum and put the bundles into the loft of the barns. He also had him harvest the grain off of some of the sorghum, put it into feed bags, and store them in the barn lofts along with the bundles of feed. Then if the weather was bad and the animals had to stay in the barns, they would have feed to eat. However, most of the time during the winter, the winter wheat, and rangeland grasses would have enough foliage to sustain the animals.

Everything went along well for several years for Jim and Debra. And during those years Debra gave birth to three girls; and they were named just as she and Jim had planned: Beulah, Lillie, and Annie.

Sam and Susan did very well with their ranching and farming. But then Susan got a letter from her mother telling her that her dad had had a stroke and was too crippled to run the farm and ranch.

So her mother thought she and Sam might be willing to move back to Martha to take the responsibility for running them. If they would do this, Mr. Starkey would give them ownership of some of his investments and a monetary investment in the ranch that would assure them of a good income when he passed away.

Sam and Susan discussed this at great length, and then went to see Jim and Debra. Susan told them about the stroke of Mr. Starkey and the proposition he had made them; and then they asked Jim and Debra for their advice.

On hearing what Susan had to say, Jim said he thought they should take Mr. Starkey up on his proposition because they had a lot to gain and nothing to lose.

The next morning Sam and Susan drove over to Jim and Debra's home and told them they were going to follow Jim's advice and move back to the Starkeys' home.

Jim said, "I think you are making the right decision. And now that you have made it, have you decided how much money you want for all your property?"

"Yes, Jim, we have decided we would sell to you and Debra everything we have for the price we paid for our ranch, which was eighteen-thousand dollars. Of course we would want to take with us the things we owned when we bought the place. Would that be okay with you folks?"

"Yes, Sam," Jim said, "that would certainly be fair." And then he wrote Sam a check for eighteen thousand dollars.

He handed the check to Sam and asked, "When do you plan to make the move? We will be glad to help you in any way we can."

"Well, in view of the situation at the Starkey's, we would like to leave early tomorrow, so we plan to do all of our preparations today. But we have so little to do to get ready to go, we won't need your help, but we certainly do appreciate your offer."

Debra spoke up and said, "We will prepare breakfast for you early tomorrow morning. That way we can visit with you one more time before you leave."

"That will be great, and we will see you in the morning." And after a loving and hugging session, the Humphrey's drove back home.

After breakfast with the Bailey's the next morning, the four of them had another hugging session. Then the Humphries got into their car and started their journey; they left behind two teary-eyed loved ones.

CHAPTER 16

Jim very soon realized that he was going to need a replacement for Sam. So he put an ad in the paper asking for an experienced man to take care of one-half section of land.

Shortly after the ad was published he had a visit from a Mexican and his wife. After about an hour of questions and answers, Jim was convinced that Juan Rodregus and his wife, Anita, were well qualified to replace Sam and Susan.

Anita could not have children so she made it a point to get acquainted with the Bailey's three girls. Getting acquainted with the girls was no problem because they took a real liking to Anita, and they spent a lot of time with her. And when Jim and Debra decided to go visiting or shopping, they would send the girls over to spend some time with Anita.

The years went well and the cattle herds grew in number and very fast. So Jim frequently had livestock to sell at the auction that was held on the first Monday of the month just one mile south of Beaver.

And almost every two months, Jim would load four yearlings into his stock trailer and haul them to the auction. His income from this source was enough for Juan's pay, and to buy the groceries and any other necessities, with some left over. This left over money was then deposited in the Beaver National Bank.

During the next year the work load on the two ranches increased considerably as a result of good rains, and Jim decided he needed a good bachelor to help with chores on both ranches. So he put an ad in the paper asking for a truly self-sufficient bachelor qualified to work on a ranch.

A few days later there was a knock on the door just after breakfast. Jim went to the door, opened it, and saw a young man standing there. The young man extended his hand and said, "My name is Brad Collins and I would like to take the job that you advertized about in the paper."

Jim shook his hand and said, "My name is Jim Bailey; won't you please come in?" Brad walked in and took the chair indicated by Jim, and then Jim introduced Brad to Debra.

After the introduction, he turned to Brad and asked him for his qualifications to fill the jobs with which Jim needed help. So immediately Brad began his story.

"I was born in a small town just a few miles from New York City. My dad was an engineer for the railroad line that ran by just a short distance from our home. My mother was just a housekeeper, and a very good one.

"I was their only child, but I don't think I was badly spoiled. I had a paper route from the time I was ten and up to the time I finished high school.

"And while I was still in high school I took manual training. And I also learned quite well four trades: carpentry, furniture making, and planning and building homes.

“In addition, while I was still in high school, I learned some other things. I had an uncle who has a ranch a few miles from where I lived, and after I was twelve I spent my summers working for him.

“I learned to ride a horse, herd cattle, milk cows, feed chickens, slop the hogs, feed the horses and groom them, and ride in horse races in our community.

“I never did win a race, but I came in second one time. And by the way, Mr. Bailey, my aunt used me in the kitchen enough that I learned to make my own meals; in fact, not to brag, I got pretty good at it.

“Mr. Bailey, do you think I have enough skills to fill your needs?”

“Yes, I do, Brad, and you can start to work tomorrow; and you will stay with us until we can get a three-room house built for you. The house we build will have plenty of room for a kitchen, living room, and a bed room.

“Do you think you have enough skills to design and build this kind of house?”

“Yes sir, I helped design and build homes while I was taking Manual Training; and I feel sure with a little help, I can design and build the house you just described.”

Then Jim said, “Okay, you’re hired. And if you will make a list of the materials you will need, and the quantity of them, I will get them for you. Also, while I’m at it, I will hire three carpenters to help you do the building.”

Brad made up the list and Jim went to Beaver to get some lumber. And he had to make three trips with the freight trailer to get all the lumber needed. On the last trip he hired three carpenters to help Brad build the house.

When they finished building the house, they furnished it with a bed, couch, chairs, wood-heating stove for the living room, and a table and chairs for the kitchen. In the kitchen they also installed shelves, cabinets, counters, and a cook stove.

Now Brad had a very nice home, cooked his own meals, and helped with all the work of the two farms and ranches.

CHAPTER 17

Unfortunately things turned bad in the next few months. A drought set in, and the price for beef took a severe drop. This left Jim in a financial bind; he was having trouble getting enough money for groceries, and enough to keep everyone paid. Debra was busy taking care of the children and keeping house, so she could not be of any monetary help for Jim.

Naturally Jim did not like the situation. So he went to his banker in Beaver and asked the owner, Mr. Riley, if there was something he could do to increase his deficient income.

In answer to Jim's question, Mr. Riley said, "Jim, I would like to have you on my staff, but to be honest about it, I don't have an opening.

"I don't know how you feel about being a lawman, but Sheriff Adams has been looking for a good man to be a deputy. I feel sure he would like to have you on his staff. So why don't you go over and have a chat with him?"

"Thank you, Mr. Riley, I really appreciate your suggestion, and I will go over there right now and have a talk with him."

Jim walked the three blocks to the sheriff's office, walked in, and greeted Sheriff Andy Adams. Then he said, "Andy, I just learned that you are looking for a deputy, and I came over here to apply for the job."

Sheriff Adams laughed and said, "Jim, you don't waste any words do you, you just cut right to the chase. So why don't you tell me your qualifications for a deputy sheriff."

"Well, Allen, I was brought up on a ranch, learned to ride a horse with the best of them, fought in the Spanish-American war after being well trained for it, broke and trained horses for various people and the Army Cavalry; and presently I am trying to make a living raising cattle on a farm and ranch just about four miles from here.

"And incidentally, I learned how to shoot a rifle and pistol while in the army. And since then I have purchased a Colt pistol and a Sharp rifle with a four-inch extension on the barrel. If necessary, I can kill a person, or an animal, about three-quarters of a mile away; and if there is no wind I can kill an animal or person up to a mile away."

Allen looked at Jim and said, "Jim, I'm sure you'll make a good deputy, and I want to hire you now. I can pay you two hundred dollars a month whether or not we have any law-breaking problems.

"Also, if we have to go out of town on a dangerous problem, I will pay you an additional ten dollars per hour. And I do believe the odds of us having any dangerous problems are very slim, but we might have one occasionally.

"One other thing, if we arrest a man that has a reward on his head, we'll split the reward money.

“Your office hours will be from nine o’clock in the morning to six o’clock in the afternoon. Now are these wages and duties acceptable to you?”

Jim replied, “Yes, they are. When do I start?”

“At nine o’clock tomorrow, if that is okay with you.”

Jim replied, “That will be fine with me, and I’m sure that will be fine with the wife. I will bring my pistol and rifle with me tomorrow, and hope I’ll never need them.”

Allen answered, “I’ll see you in the morning, Jim, and have a good evening.”

“Same to you,” Jim said as he started toward the door, but he was interrupted by Allen.

“Oh, by the way, Jim, if I have an emergence outside of office hours, I’ll give you a call. So what is your number?”

“807-F121” Jim replied. “But I hope you never need it.”

Jim rode back home and told Debra about the job. She was not sure she liked the idea of Jim being a sheriff’s deputy, but Jim assured her that it was not much more dangerous than working on a ranch.

That evening he drove to Juan’s home and told him about his new job. Then he drove to Brad’s home and let him know that he was going to be a deputy sheriff. He assured both of them that his becoming a deputy sheriff would have no effect on their jobs.

Things went well for several weeks; then a serious incident happened. Two men robbed the bank, tied up the banker and his assistant, and then rode to the banker’s home to kidnap the banker’s fourteen year old daughter, Christy.

When they got there they tied up the girl’s mother and gagged her, and one of the bandits said to her, “Wench, if there is any attempt to rescue this girl we will kill her.”

Then the two bandits put Christy on the third horse, tied her hands to the saddle horn; mounted their horses, and rode away leading the horse Christy was riding.

They went directly out of town so they would not be seen kidnapping Christy.

Just a few minutes after they left with Christy, Jim and the Sheriff entered the house with the banker. They quickly removed the gag from the wife’s mouth and removed the rope from around her hands.

She immediately told them what the bandit had said, and then in tears she asked her husband what they were going to do to get their daughter back.

Fighting back tears he said, “Mother, I have no idea what we will do. Sheriff, do you or Jim have any suggestions?”

The sheriff immediately spoke up and said, “I believe the best strategy would be for us to get two fast horses and go the same way I assume they would go if they are headed for Mexico.

“I can take my binoculars and that will enable me to spot them from such a distance behind them that they will never see us.

“We will trail them unseen until dark, and then when they stop for the night we will sneak up on them and arrest them. Of course we will be sure your daughter is in a safe position before we make the arrests.”

The parents talked it over for a few minutes, and then said, “Allen, we know you and Jim are very trustful men, and we know that you two will do everything in your power to prevent any harm from befalling our daughter. So please carry out your plans while we stay here and pray.”

Then Jim and Allen departed and drove to the barn belonging to a fellow who bred race horses, and there they secured the two fastest horses he had.

In about thirty minutes they picked up the trail of the bandits. Then they spurred their horses into a fast gallop. About an hour later they spotted the bandits who were just riding their horses at a walk.

Then Allen said to Jim, “They are in no hurry because they don’t think there will be anyone to follow them because of the threat they had given Mrs. Riley.”

The sheriff kept looking through his binoculars as they rode along, and they kept about a mile distance between them and the bandits.

He handed the binoculars to Jim; he looked through them and verified Andy’s judgment of the distance between them and the bandits.

Then he said, “Andy I believe we should follow the plan you proposed to the Riley’s. It will soon be dark, and then we can sneak in and arrest them.” Andy nodded in agreement.

As soon as it was dark, Jim and Allen got off their horses, and carefully led them up closer to the campfire the bandits had lighted.

Christy was sitting several feet away from the bandits, almost in the darkness. So Allen slipped around close to her and signaled her not to make any noise; Jim moved up closer to the bandits, but was still unseen.

Then Allen shouted, “Get your hands up or we will blow your heads off,” and Jim shouted, “Get them up over your heads, now!” The bandits realized they did not have a chance of escaping, so they stood up and put their hands high in the air.

Allen held his pistol on the bandits while Jim took the guns from them and shoved them into his belt. He put handcuffs on the outlaws and told them to sit back down on the ground.

He picked up the two bags containing the money the robbers had gotten from the bank, and fastened them to Allen’s saddle.

Then he went over to Christy, lifted her to her feet, hugged her tightly, and said, “It’s all right, honey, you’re safe now.”

She hugged Jim in return and wept with relief for a few minutes. Then she went to Allen, hugged him, and said, “Thank you lawmen for rescuing me. I had feared I

would wind up in Mexico in a house of prostitution, or walking the streets looking for food.”

The two lawmen saddled the horses of the two outlaws, and made them get into the saddles. Then Jim tied their handcuffs to their saddle horns so they could not dismount.

When the thieves were securely fastened to the saddle horns, Jim saddled Christy’s horse and helped her get on it.

It was a moonlight night so the lawmen could see the trail well enough to follow it. So they started back down the trail, holding the reins of the outlaws’ horses; Christy was following close behind on her horse.

They rode for two hours and reached the Riley’s home. Christy’s mother heard them coming and rushed out of the house to greet them.

Christy hurriedly dismounted, ran to her mother who was weeping tears of joy, and saying “Thank you, Lord, thank you, Lord!” Then she thanked the lawmen several times as she shook their hands.

The lawmen thanked her for the prayers for them, turned the horses around, and started for the County jail. Once there, they removed the ropes and handcuffs from the bandits, got them off the horses, and the jailer locked them in individual cells of the jail.

Then Allen got the money off his saddle, handed it to the jailer, and asked him to take it to the bank in the morning.

The jailer then took Allen and Jim to his office and showed them a Wanted Poster. And much to their surprise there was a ten thousand dollar reward for the two bandits. The deputy assured them they would have the money within a week.

When Jim got his five thousand dollar share, he put it in the bank in an interest-drawing account. He was going to build up his available funds just in case there was another slump in the cattle market.

Everything went well for a few weeks, the price of beef went back up, and rain had the pastures growing again; then disaster struck at Jim's home.

Debra was in the back yard watering the trees and flowers when a storm blew in. She was almost finished with the watering so she stayed in the yard just a little longer to finish it; then the downpour began.

A few moments later she finished her watering and started running across the yard; and she stumbled and fell.

Jim and the girls saw her fall and ran outside to help her get up. But as Jim started to pick her up, Debra shouted, “Jim I think my arm and thigh are broken!”

Jim examined her carefully and quickly, and found those two bones were indeed broken. So he and the girls picked her up carefully, carried her into the house, and placed her on her bed.

Jim immediately called the family doctor and told him about Debra's broken bones. He said he would get an ambulance and come out immediately.

When the doctor arrived he examined Debra, and then said, "Jim, I need to take her to the hospital so I can set her bones properly. She will have to stay in the hospital for at least a month before those bones will be rejoined enough for her to be moved back home."

The doctor gave her a shot of a sedative and a narcotic to put her to sleep and relieve the pain. Then they put Debra on a stretcher and moved her to the ambulance.

The doctor examined the stretcher to be sure it was properly fastened to the ambulance floor. Then he said goodbye to Jim, got into the ambulance with the driver, and they drove off.

Jim knew that to keep Debra from worrying about the girls and him, he should get a caregiver as soon as possible; so he went to Anita and asked her for help.

Anita told Jim that her younger sister, Julie, was a caregiver in Lubbock, Texas, and she would contact her about coming to stay with Jim's girls. She said Julie had lost her baby and its father in a flu epidemic last winter, and so far as she knew, she had been a caregiver ever since.

So Anita contacted Julie and asked her if she could come to Forgan and be a caregiver for Jim Bailey, a farmer and rancher who lived just a short distance from town. Julie said she had just recently finished being a caregiver for a family, and she would be glad to be a caregiver for Jim and his family.

Anita then told Jim her sister would be coming to Forgan tomorrow to take the job of being caregiver for the girls.

Then Jim hurried to the hospital and told Debra about Julie's coming up to be a caregiver for the girls. Debra was very pleased with the news, and she told Jim that now she would not be worrying about the girls and him.

The next day Anita come over and told Jim that when Julie arrived, she would bring her over to meet him and the girls.

So about two o'clock that day she brought Julie over to Jim's home and knocked on the door. Jim went to the door, greeted them, and introduced himself to Julie.

Then he ushered the ladies into the living room and found the three girls sitting on the couch waiting for them.

Jim introduced Julie to each of the girls and told them she would be their caregiver from now on.

Then Jim picked up Julie's suitcase and said, "Julie, if you will follow me, I will carry your suitcase upstairs to your room." She said "Thank you," and followed him to her room.

CHAPTER 18

Julie was an excellent caregiver and also a very good housekeeper. Two of the girls took an instant liking to her, but Beulah was a little slow in coming around; but Julie treated all the girls with love and affection. Jim was very pleased with her, so he paid her an unusually high wage.

Two months passed and Debra had come home, but she couldn't walk without crutches. So Jim kept Julie employed to continue being a housekeeper as well as a caretaker for the girls.

In another month Debra was able to walk with a slight limp; but Julie was such a good caregiver and housekeeper that Debra and Jim decided to keep her for an indefinite length of time; and that was alright with Julie.

The ranch was doing well, thanks to frequent rains. So Jim resigned as a deputy, but Andy told him to keep his badge so he could be sworn in and go back to work if the sheriff called him; and one day Allen called him.

Two bandits had escaped from a jail in North Kansas and according to cell mates they were headed for Mexico on horseback.

Allen had received a poster which indicated they might come through Beaver as it was on the route that had been used years ago for cattle drives.

So Allen and Jim visited the merchants in town and told them to be on the lookout for the two escapes that probably would be coming through Beaver in about six to eight days.

Seven days later Allen got a call from the man who owned a corral where Jim and Allen boarded their horses.

"Allen," he said, "I just traded some young horses to a couple of men who were poorly dressed, had heavy beards, and had the look of hardened criminals."

Alan thanked the corral owner for the information, and then the phone rang again.

It was from a grocery owner who said that two men who looked suspicious had just bought several kinds of groceries, including some that needed to be used in forty eight hours or they would spoil.

Allen called Jim and told him the situation, and asked him if he could come to his office immediately. Jim said he would be there in about fifteen minutes.

When he arrived Allen told him the content of the two conversations concerning the bandits. And as a result they concluded the bandits were planning to stay in the neighborhood for more than just one night. They also figured the bandits would stay in one of the abandoned houses that were near Beaver and close to the old cattle trail on which they were traveling.

So they drove down to the corral where their horses were being kept, saddled them and rode out of town. In just a few minutes they found the old trail they were looking for, and they cautiously started going down it. They figured the bandits

would choose a recently abandoned home as a place to stay in a day or two as it would be a much better place than the forest.

They rode up fairly close to a house that apparently had been recently vacated. The houses on either side of it had light showing through the shades, so they figured they were still occupied.

But the house between the two looked to be vacant, but in reasonably good condition. And as there were two horses tied to a tree behind that house, they made the correct assumption that the bandits were in it.

So they dismounted from their horses and tied them to a tree that was a little distance from the house.

Then Allen softly spoke to Jim and said, "Jim, if you will go to the back of the house, I'll go to the front. I'll give you time to get oriented, and then I will holler for the bandits to come out with their hands up.

"Of course, I don't expect them to, so I will fire three bullets into the front door, then go up and kick it in.

"They probably don't have any pistols, and I expect they will run out the back door as soon as I shoot through the front door. So Jim, be ready to shoot them when they come running out."

Allen went around to the front of the house and called to the bandits to come out. They didn't, so he fired three bullets into the front door and then rushed up to it and kicked it in.

The bandits ran out the back door and Jim hollered, "Get your hands up!" But the bandits ignored him; so Jim quickly fired two shots and the bandits fell to the ground, and laid there motionless.

Allen came walking around the house and saw Jim standing by the bandits; so he walked over to him, and asked, "Are they dead, Jim?"

Jim said, "As far as I can tell, they are. So what do we do now, Allen?"

Before Allen could answer, one of the bandits pulled a derringer out of his coat pocket and fired at Jim, hitting him in the left side of his chest. Then Allen shot the bandit again, and this time he died instantly.

Jim dropped to the ground from his wound, and blood began rapidly coming out from it.

Allen was trying to stop the bleeding when a neighbor who had heard the shots came over to see the reason for the gunfire.

Immediately Allen said to the man, "Please run into your house and call the police station, give them your home address, and phone number. Then tell them to send an ambulance and doctor immediately, because there is a badly wounded deputy sheriff lying on the ground next door."

The man ran into his house, called the number, and gave the deputy his name and address, and then he told him, "There is a badly wounded deputy sheriff next

door!” The deputy who had answered the phone said, “We will have an ambulance and doctor there in less than five minutes.”

In the meantime Allen was trying desperately, but unsuccessfully, to stop the flow of blood from Jim's wound.

The ambulance arrived in less than five minutes with a doctor on board. They loaded Jim into the ambulance and sped away for the hospital with the doctor attempting to stop the flow of blood.

When they arrived, they rushed Jim to the operating room where they were prepared to take care of the wound.

Then Allen thanked the man who had called for the ambulance and the doctor. He mounted his horse, and started for the corral, leading Jim's horse. When he got there he turned the horses over to the owner, jumped into his car, and headed for the hospital.

When he arrived he went straight to the information desk and asked about Jim's condition. He was told that Jim was in the emergency surgery room, and they didn't yet know what his condition was.

Allen then went to the phone, called Debra, and related the complete story to her. She thanked him and hung up the phone. Then she quickly told Julie that Jim had been shot and she was going to the hospital to see him. Fortunately, she was now able to drive as she no longer needed crutches.

Upon arrival at the hospital, Debra asked the nurse at the information desk what Jim's condition was. The nurse told her they didn't know yet as he was still in the Emergency Room.

The nurse told her to take a chair there in the information room, and she would keep her informed about Jim's condition.

About thirty minutes later the nurse reported to Debra that the doctor had been able to stop the bleeding, and Jim was out of danger; but not yet conscious.

She then told Debra they were moving Jim to a private room, number twenty three, and she could go into the room as long as she was careful not to awaken him.

So she went into Jim's room, moved a reclining chair up close to his bed, and spent the night there.

She continued staying with Jim for two days. And the second morning he opened his eyes, looked at her with a weak smile, and said, “Debra, how long have you been here?”

She gave him a loving smile, and said, “I have been here the two days you have been here, darling, and I plan to stay here until you are ready to go home. But don't you worry; Julie is perfectly able to take care of the children.”

CHAPTER 19

Three days later Jim was still very weak but well enough to go home; so Debra loaded him into the car and drove home.

The youngsters were so glad to see Daddy that Julie had to restrain them a little to keep them from overdoing the homecoming.

Jim made a rapid recovery and was soon able to do light chores to keep from going loony from boredom.

During the recovery process he began noticing how much he had been taking Debra for granted, and never giving her any loving attention. So he made himself a promise to show her that he really did love her; and he began giving her hugs and kisses and telling her how much he loved her.

He was amazed at how much his love for her was growing day by day. The more love he showed her, the faster his love for her grew. And one day he realized there was a new bond of love between them, and it was growing stronger with each day. So by the time Jim regained his strength, his love for Debra was stronger than it was when they got married; and to Jim's delight so was her love for him. Then he asked Debra if she would like to go on another "first" honeymoon.

She was very thrilled by the invitation. Then she gave him a big hug and a lingering kiss, and said, "Darling I'll have our suitcases packed in twenty minutes, and then I will be ready for us to go. So while I am packing the suitcases why don't you go tell Julie and the kids our plans?"

Jim rushed out, located Julie and the girls, and told them of their plans to take another honeymoon. The girls had a mixed emotion about the affair. They wanted their mother and father to have another honeymoon, but they just didn't want them to be gone too long.

As Jim put the suitcases in the trunk of the car, he told Julie to take good care of the girls; and he told the girls to be good and help Julie with the work around the house.

Finally, as he hugged them all he promised to call and give them their cabin phone number.

Debra told the kids and Julie goodbye with a hug, climbed into the car by Jim, and waved as they drove away.

Their trip was more exciting than the one they had taken fifteen years earlier, and the intensity of love between them now was greater than it had been fifteen years ago. And the more they talked about their new love, the stronger it became.

They arrived in Ruidoso in the afternoon, rented a furnished cabin in the more isolated part of the town, and moved their luggage inside.

Then Jim kept his promise and called home. Julie answered the phone, and after they had talked a minute or so, Jim gave Julie the phone number of their cabin.

Jim then asked Julie how the girls were doing, and she assured him that they were being very helpful and well behaved—but they were already missing their mom and dad.

Jim told her to give the girls a hug for him and Debra, and that they would be coming home soon.

The next day they spent a lot of time just driving around and viewing the beautiful scenery around Ruidoso. Then they went back to their cottage, and just talked and made love. And it was very apparent that their love for each other was not diminishing, but was growing. (And it continued to grow as long as they were on this earth.)

On their third day there they drove to Mocha Histories which was a small town just a few miles north of Ruidoso. It was named Mocha Histories because a lot of interesting history had been made there.

Billy the Kid had escaped from the town's jail, and had killed the sheriff while doing so. He was later captured, killed, and buried in that town.

There were also a lot of historic items to see. But after about five hours of walking and viewing, they decided to go back to Ruidoso and get some Mexican food for dinner.

The restaurant where they ate was totally Mexican in food and décor, and both were outstanding. After they had finished their food they drove back to their cottage; and being very tired, they went to bed early.

The next morning they decided to go back home as they were already getting homesick for their precious children.

They got back to their ranch early in the evening, and spent it telling their loved ones about what they had seen while on their honeymoon.

The next morning Jim went back to his usual work and Debra spent her time housekeeping and loving the children; then a tragic accident happened.

Beulah was playing outside and was bitten by a rattlesnake. She shook it loose and ran into the house, crying and holding her bitten hand.

Debra immediately put Beulah's hand into her mouth and sucked out some of the venom. Then she put her on a bed with her bitten hand hanging off the side.

She hugged her and tried to get her calmed down so the remaining venom would be slower in getting spread through her body.

Then Julia appeared, and Debra immediately sent her to the kitchen to make an anti-venom drink for Beulah. In just a few minutes Julia brought it to Debra.

She gave the drink to Beulah who was about to pass out; but she did manage to drink the mixture before she became unconscious.

Debra knew that it would be at least three hours or more before the anti-venom would begin to work. She also knew that there would be a fever along with the rest of the symptoms.

So she went to the kitchen, filled a bowl with cool water, and put a wash cloth in it.

She returned to the bedroom and put her hand on Beulah's head. It was very warm, so Debra placed the cool, moist wash cloth on it. Then she sat down beside her and continued to cool her feverish head.

Jim came to the house for supper and saw the rattlesnake lying next to the flower bed. It began to crawl away so Jim grabbed it by its tail, whirled it around, and smashed its head against the doorstep.

Then he dropped it and ran into the house calling for Debra. She heard him and answered; and he immediately rushed into the bedroom.

When he saw Debra seated on the bed bathing Beulah's head he anxiously asked, "What is the matter with Beulah?"

"Oh Jim, she was bitten by a rattlesnake and I have given her some anti-venom medicine, but it hasn't gone to work yet. I have been praying and keeping her head as cool as I can; and I believe the Lord is going to heal her."

Jim said, "Bless you Debra, you are indeed an angel." Then he stooped over the bed and hugged his little daughter who was still unconscious.

During the night Julia and Jim took turns at keeping a cool, moist wash cloth on Beulah's head; and finally the medicine took effect and the fever broke; so they went to bed.

Early the next morning Debra got up, checked Beulah, and found her free of any effects of the snake bite—except she was a little weak and very hungry. So Debra fixed her a good breakfast of biscuits and gravy, along with ham and scrambled eggs.

As soon as she had eaten, Beulah got up from the table and went over to Debra. She hugged her and said, "Mother, I love you and I thank you and Julie, and Daddy, for saving my life." Then she went outside to play with her sisters; and Debra went into the kitchen and prayed a prayer of thanksgiving with tears of gratitude.

A few hours later Jim came out of the bedroom and was surprised to learn Beulah was outside playing with her sisters. So he went outside, hugged Beulah tightly, and said, "Sweetie, I am so glad you are all well."

Then Beulah answered, "Daddy, I love you, and mother, and Julie for keeping me alive; and now I feel just fine." Then she went back to playing with her sisters.

A few days later Julie got a phone call from Anita. She told Julie that her mother was very sick and she should go home to Lubbock, if possible.

Julie told Jim and Debra about the phone call, and asked if she could go home.

Jim told her now that he and Debra were both well, she was really not needed any longer. So he thanked her for her excellent care of the family and handed her a two thousand dollar bonus.

She packed her clothes, and then called Anita and said she was ready to go to Beaver to catch the bus. Anita was there in just a few minutes.

Then Julie hugged the girls and Jim and Debra, thanked them, and then got into the car with Anita. As they drove away she got tears in her eyes—and so did all the Baileys

Time went by and the girls became able and willing to help their mother with her many tasks, such as sweeping the floors and drying the dishes.

They did these things and more without complaining because Debra would sing little songs for them, and tell them stories about her life on the farm and ranch of their grandfather, Mr. Starkey.

And thanks to the Lord it began to rain again, and the grass greened up and began to grow rapidly. And in a few months Jim was again able to take some steers to the auction.

The price for beef had increased significantly. And Jim was very thankful that he now had a significant amount of money to put into his bank account for use in case of another depression.

CHAPTER 20

Then one day Jim told Debra that he was going to buy her a pistol and teach her how to shoot it. He made good his word, and the next day he went to Beaver and bought a pistol, complete with holster and ammunition.

He put a target on a tree in the back yard and started giving her lessons. She was a very good student, and in just a few days she was a real sharp-shooter. Jim was very proud of her, but she gave the credit to him because he was such a good teacher.

Jim put a hook on the wall near the front door and hung the holster with a loaded gun in it. He replaced the front door with a heavy door with a small glass window in it so she could see whoever was on the porch. Then he cautioned her to always take the pistol in her hand before she opened the door to a stranger.

Things went well for a couple of months, and then Jim got a call from Allen. "Jim, we just had a holdup in your bank by two thugs. Can you come and help me go after them?" It didn't take Jim but a second to realize his money was in that bank! So he replied, "I'm on my way."

Then he quickly told Debra about the bank theft, and that he and Allen were going after the thieves. He kissed her goodbye, grabbed his pistol and rifle, and hurried out the door and climbed into his car.

When he got to the sheriff's office he saw two horses standing in front of it. He rushed inside and said, "I'm ready to go if you are!"

Allen had both of his guns and was reaching for his hat as Jim was coming in. He then started for the door and said in a "hurry-up" voice, "Okay, Jim, let's go after those thieving bastards!"

They rushed out the door, climbed into the saddles, and headed out of town racing like the devil was after them.

When they got to the city limits they slowed their horses to a fast walk and went along the edge of the trees, looking for tracks of the bandits' horses.

They had not gone very far until they spotted tracks of two horses on an old cattle trail that went through the woods and on to South Texas. The tracks were distinct enough the men could see them at a gallop; so they galloped along watching ahead.

Finally, Allen stopped and said, "Jim, I know there is a loop in this trail that the drovers used to get their cattle to water. So why don't we just keep going straight ahead, cutting across the loop, and we may be able to get ahead of the bandits."

Jim thought that was a good idea, so they urged the horses into a fast gallop. They soon came to the road where the loop ended and found no tracks; so they were sure they had actually gotten ahead of the bandits.

They tied their horses back into the trees and brush where they couldn't be seen from the road. Then they went back closer to the road and hid in some tall grass with their pistols cocked.

About ten minutes later they heard talking, and then they spotted the bandits approaching. When they got about twenty feet away, the lawmen jumped out in front of them and Allen shouted, "Get your hands up over your heads or we'll blow your brains out!"

Then instead of obeying the sheriff, they spurred their horses and ran straight at Jim and Allen. As they jumped out of the path of the rushing horses, they fired at the two thieves.

Unfortunately, they missed the bandits as they raced by, so they dropped their pistols and grabbed their rifles. They turned toward the escaping bandits and each fired a shot while they were still in rifle range. The shots found their marks and the bandits fell out of their saddles.

Then Jim and the sheriff ran up to where the bandits were lying in the grass, and checked their wounds. The bandits were not conscious and their wounds were not fatal. So Allen handcuffed the two bandits and left Jim watching them.

Then he went down the road to where the bandits' horses were standing. He took their reins, led them back to Jim, and handed the reins to him. Then he doctored the bandits' wounds enough to stop the bleeding.

In a few minutes the bandits regained consciousness and started complaining about their wounds.

"You should be glad you aren't dead," Jim said, "and you'd better shut up your bitching or I'll shut it up for you." This sounded so definitely serious that the bandits quit their complaining and kept their mouths shut.

A few minutes later Allen boosted the bandits onto their saddles, took the money bags off their horses, and put them on his horse.

Then Jim and Allen took hold of the reins of the bandits' horses, mounted their horses, and started leading the bandits on their horses back toward Beaver, which was about five miles away.

When they got to Beaver they rode directly to the bank, and Allen gave the money back to the bank owner. He was very pleased, and said, "Thank you, Allen and Jim, for bringing back the money. And as a reward I'm going to deposit one-thousand dollars into your accounts.

Then he continued, "I don't know what we would have done if you fellows hadn't recovered the money. I just know there would have been a lot of customers quickly flat broke, and my cashers would have been out of a job."

Allen then went back outside and told Jim the good news about the thousand-dollar reward money the bank owner had put into their accounts.

Jim laughed and said, "Well, Allen, I guess crime does pay—somebody."

They took the outlaws by the hospital and got their wounds properly treated, and then took them to the jailhouse.

When they got them behind bars, the deputy in charge of the jail said, “Do you fellows want the reward money now or later?”

Jim and the sheriff looked surprised and Jim said, “We didn’t know there was a reward; but whatever money there is in the reward, we would like to have it now—if it’s not too much trouble.”

So the accountant got out a form, filled it in, and handed it to Jim. Then he said, “Take this to the County Treasure’s office next door and they will give you five-thousand dollars each.”

They thanked the accountant, went next door, got their reward money, and thanked the lady. Then they got on their horses and rode back to the corral.

Allen said, “Jim, we have had a long day, so let’s go home and get a little rest before supper.” They got into the sheriff’s car and drove back to his office to get Jim’s car.

Jim got out of the car, and said, “Good bye, Allen, and thanks for a very thrilling and profitable day.” And then he said with a laugh, “Now Allen, don’t spend all of that money on your way home!” Then he climbed into his car and headed for home.

When he got there he got out of the car and hurried to the house. And just for fun, he knocked on the door like a visitor would, and then waited for someone to come to see who did the knocking; it was Debra who came to the door.

She looked out the glass in the door with her gun in her hand. When she saw who it was, she dropped the gun, jerked the door open, and grabbed Jim with a very tight and loving hug. Then she said, “Thank you Lord, for getting my husband home safely!” About that time the children appeared on the scene, surrounded their dad, and smothered him with hugs and kisses.

When the children went back to their Monopoly playing, Debra took Jim into the living room, and asked him to tell her the whole story. He first told her about the venture, and then he surprised her with the receipts for the reward money and the thousand dollars from the bank.

“I had the reward money put in a separate account to be used to make sure the children get a good education;” Debra was very pleased with his decision.

CHAPTER 21

One morning Jim got a big surprise. Juan came to him and said he was quitting and moving to Forgan. He said he had been working there on weekends and making good money hauling merchandise around inside the town.

Jim had mixed emotions, but wasn't really sorry to see Juan go because he had become a little on the lazy side, and his work was not up to par.

As soon as Juan moved out, Brad, who was now married, moved in the vacated home. Jim decided that he did not need to find an unmarried replacement for Brad, so he leased out the house Brad had lived in.

Brad was a good worker and also a good manager.

After Brad had managed the farm and ranch for a month without Jim's help, Jim was satisfied that he could quite efficiently manage the farm and ranch alone.

So the next morning Jim went out to where Brad was working and told him he was elevating him into the position of complete management of the ranch. He also told him that he was increasing his wages by thirty percent; Brad was very grateful and told Jim so.

A few minutes later Jim suddenly realized that now he could retire. So he hurried back to the house to tell Debra.

"Debra, beloved, I have just made a deal with Brad that has enabled me to retire; I'm as free as a bird."

She was not surprised and said, "Jim, my beloved, I am glad you finally decided to retire. In fact, for some time I have been having some thoughts about it.

"All three of our girls are about to finish college, and the way they have been dating the same fellows for a considerable time it won't be long before we have some 'sons' in our family. And I believe we have had enough relationship with the boys that we can be comfortable, and convinced, that each of them will make a son-in-law that we can be proud of."

Well, Debra was right about the three boys; each of them married one of their daughters. And in just a few years the Bradley's had six little darlings to spoil.

Jim continued to like retirement, and he and Debra stayed on the ranch and enjoyed a life of leisure. The only traveling they did was to go to visit the daughters and their families. Fortunately all three of those families lived within a hundred miles.

The years passed by and finally the Lord called Jim and Debra home. Thus ends the story of Jim Bradley, the Roving Cowboy, and his beloved wife.