

4-H Projects and the Fair

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A frequent question for me has been
“What did you do to entertain yourself
out in the country,
especially during the summer?”
And the most often used word to describe my possible plight was
boring.
That word never entered my mind.

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Our summer days were filled with 4-H.
Meetings, dances, roller skating parties—
But mostly projects:
knitting, sewing, and horses.

Uncle Tanky and his brother Billy
led the Livestock Club;
Margaret Lewis led the Home Economics Club.

I waited and waited,
eager and excited to finally be nine
and old enough to be in 4-H.

For my first-year livestock project
I selected my horse,
a colt at Chet Rose’s.

I chose the white colt
with no other coloring,
But
He grew up a buckskin,
a beautiful golden color
with a dark brown mane
and stockings.

Bub chose the black one.

I named mine *Prince*,
Bub named his *Yogi Berra*.

What an adventure to halter break a colt!
First we chased them in from the horse pasture,
using the pickup to herd them.
We brought in all of our horses.

The colts hung close to their mothers
for protection—Chet lent us the colt’s mother for a while
until they were weaned!
We ran them into the smaller corral,
next to the saddle room,
then the work started.
The horses circled the small corral—

all of us were nervous.

Initially, Dad did the haltering
because it was a war—that colt
wanted no part of this.
He wanted his mama
and
freedom!

Carefully, Dad edged up
and slipped the rope
around Prince's neck,
gaining some control over this spitfire.

After a series of jumps and twists,
the halter went over his ears
and around his nose.
The buckle was hooked, and I was in business.
Cautiously, Dad turned him over to me.
Now I had to grab the lead rope
and hold on for dear life.

But Bub was still waiting!

After a repeat performance
by Dad,
we were both holding
onto our horses—what an experience.

Once the colts settled down,
we brushed and curry combed them
get the dirt and stickers off.
We ran our hands over their bodies,
raised their feet,
made them feel comfortable
with us.

Each day, this episode repeated itself
until it became routine.
Then it was our turn to halter our horses,
and it became old hat.

Many hours were spent just walking around
and around,
and around,
and around in the corral—
teaching Prince to follow.

My only respite in this—singing to Prince.
The laps were long,
so I sang,
and sang,

and sang.

The finale came in September
over Labor Day weekend,
what we had worked so hard for—
the Las Animas County Fair in Trinidad!
This was our family vacation every year—
Five days of fun.

Friends from all over
the county came together
for this annual event.

We 4-H'd—
showed our horses
had my knitting and sewing judged—
we went bowling,
and we danced.

We went to movies,
we attended barbecues and rodeos,
and we danced!

Our Labor Day holiday was
my favorite part of the summer
and marked the end of summer every year.
The five days ended too soon,
but there was always next year!