



# AROUND *the* FIRE

NEWS FROM CRYSTAL PEAKS YOUTH RANCH

WINTER 2006

## *The Remnant*

BY KIM MEEDER

By the time hurricane Katrina made landfall, it had strengthened into a category five storm. With sustained winds speeds of 150 mph, virtually everything in its path was in grave danger. As the waters started to rise in southern Louisiana and Mississippi, those who were not able to move their livestock out of harms way... simply opened the gates and prayed.

The aftermath of the storm revealed that most of these animals did not survive... most. But, there was a remnant... there is *always* a remnant. Of all the livestock that swam for their lives, a few found grace within the storm. A few found high ground. It was upon this high ground that they stood... and waited for help to come. Some horses stood in chest deep water, others in knee deep

mud, while still others huddled hopelessly trapped in the tangled masses of blow down debris.

It was in such a place, where the great forests succumbed entirely to the merciless wind... that mercy was found. Three survivors were discovered deep within the broken prison of shattered trees. To the rescue team's surprise, they learned of two mules and a solitary horse. How they endured without crushing injuries beneath the fallen trees was a miracle in itself. They had been standing, waiting... for three weeks. It was instantly apparent that they survived by eating the bark off all the trees they could

reach. Scrambling for what little food sources were available, the two mules had nearly killed the lone horse. The three survivors were so deeply enmeshed in the broken jumble of horizontal trees that they had to be extricated with chainsaws.

So his journey began. In mid November, a beautiful black gelding with high hind white socks and a bald face stepped off the transport trailer and into a new life at our ranch. He was striking in every way, but what caught my attention was some-



thing that I have never seen before. There, on his front legs, surrounding both knees were very jagged 'stripes' of white. The same 'lightning bolts' of white also emanated out from under his belly as well. I couldn't help but look at him with complete wonder and think... "You carry the 'marks' of your ordeal on your very hide... and you are incredibly unique and immensely more beautiful because of it."


"Lord... am I more beautiful because of the suffering in my life? Have I chosen for it to make me bitter... or better? Do I wear my own 'markings' as scars... or beauty marks that indicate to all where *Your* healing hands have been? Have I truly allowed my ordinary life to be extraordinarily changed by *Your* refining fire? Have I come through the 'Katrina's' in this life better, stronger with more understanding, love, forgiveness and beauty than I had before?... Lord, truly the journey belongs to you... but my attitude about it belongs to me... help me to wear it as beautifully as this black horse."

*Continued on page 3*



# FINALLY HOME

BY TROY MEEDER



has been. What a year of 'firsts.' Each and every day has been full of the challenges, intensity and goodness of carrying the leadership of a growing work. While joining the staff for my first official meeting on the ranch, completely tongue and cheek, I jokingly announced "Look out everyone! The hammer has come home." They all laughed and then one of the girls said with a smile, "Heck, not just the hammer... *but the whole tool box!*" As we all bowed in prayer, asking the Creator of life to bless the day, I felt like the most blessed 'tool box' in the world. Who am I that God would bless so

She moves quietly... almost without a cue. Her movement and posture reflect complete trust, complete respect. Horse and trainer communicating with the softest of movements and the subtlest of cues. I have waited all my life for her.

I can remember as a kid how I dreamed of having a black horse. I'm certain we all can identify with the strong emotions we felt the first time we saw the movie "Black Stallion." Now... she is here.

It is early morning. The crisp Central Oregon air whispers that fall is coming. The leaves on our Aspen and Maple trees are starting to reveal the glory of the upcoming change of season. What an incredible joy it is to be in the round pen working with Eclipse, my young mare. As the sun slowly brightens the sky, I am reminded what a gift every new day is. Very soon our incredible staff will be arriving to continue their training in the round pen. It has been my great joy to watch each of them take steps in becoming better 'horsemen.' They have all been attentive, eager students.

These past several months have been life changing. For ten years I have had the pleasure of supporting Crystal Peaks from afar. Now, thanks to the generosity and prayers of so many, I have come home. What a season it

deeply as to allow me the gift of being a part of His work? Yet, even though this old 'tool box' is rusty, broken and inadequate, it is because of who Christ is IN me that I step forward in faith knowing I am secure in His grace. I look back over this past year with gratitude, joy and peace. I look forward with anticipation as to what lies just around the corner.

"What is to come?" I wondered, as Eclipse moved to the far end of the round pen. The early morning sun makes her black coat shine like a polished stone. Her eyes reflect complete peace and contentment. As I stop her with the gentlest of cues, she turns and faces me. Drawing her in to my side with just the turn of my shoulder and lowering of my eyes, she comes close. I am deeply moved by the moment. Horse and rider, friend to friend, partners for life. I wonder if this is how our Heavenly Father feels when He draws us in... and we choose to come to Him, submitted and full of peace.

All my life I have waited for her.

All my life He has waited for me.

In this incredible place,  
during this incredible  
moment, I know that  
I have come home.



## Some Thoughts from the Staff...

*There is something about having Troy here that makes it feel like no matter how crazy things become, everything is going to be alright. He carries with him this remarkable gentleness matched with a rare strength of character. It is truly a marvelous gift to have him finally here able to freely share with his whole heart and being.* ~ Kimberly Otero

*Welcome home, Troy. You are so needed around here.*

~ Kari Wesley

*I love having Troy around because I am able to have a father figure close by when mine is so far away.*

~ Lindsay Gries

*It is such a blessing to have Troy here each day. He is a teacher, mentor, father-figure and awesome boss... I just can't imagine this place without him!*

~ Laurie Sacher

*This ranch and ministry are made better by having Troy home. How thankful I am to have this godly example leading side by side with Kim in where the Lord has called them.*

~ Julie Love

*Having Troy on the ranch has been amazing. We all appreciate his humble and Godly leadership. We love you Troy!*

~ Brittany Pinkey

REMNANT, continued from page 1

Just being around this amazing gelding reminds me that when the floods rise in my heart, I get to choose to sink or swim. I get to choose to search, like my life depended on it, for the high ground. I get to choose between my washed up viewpoint... or a glimmer of God's perspective. His eyes are never on the storm... but my response to the storm. Will I focus on the pain... or the rainbow of truth cast from the pain?

Today, our 'Remnant' is a constant reminder to everyone who comes to our little ranch that what's impossible with man... IS possible with God! He is so full of life and exuberance. He seems to have complete understanding that his life was spared for a purpose and that everyday hereafter is just like him... special and unique... just waiting to be filled with an anthem of thanksgiving.

# With Open Hands

BY REBECCA JOHNSON

She was long-legged and fiery red with an elegantly sculpted head and a white blaze racing down her face. Her spirit matched her color, and I fell in love with her from the beginning. Prairie nearly died just weeks into her arrival at the ranch. But she was taken to the edge of life to save someone standing on the brink of death, and the brilliant little Arab became even more firmly lodged in my heart. I dreamed of riding her up in the mountains where the sky is so blue and so close you can almost reach out and touch it. I knew she'd love it up there. I never imagined she would be taken away. It was a little thing – a microscopic injury, nearly impossible to self-inflict and even harder to cure. The day I knew she was going to die, I stood by her side and told her about the majestic mountains that she would never get to climb. Her death came at a time in my life when my world was falling to pieces. The fairytale castle I knew was going up in flames around me, and now my precious Prairie was gone as well.

Months passed. What faith I had thought was so steadfastly mine I was now fighting desperately not to lose. Until the night I was gently reminded of something small, but great... hope. Like a dream that you hold in your hand, palm open, and the wind comes and blows your dream away – but don't ever close your hand and don't ever stop dreaming. I prayed for a very special thing that night. I asked for a horse, a companion to work with and learn with and play with.

A dream.

Two weeks later the ranch was contacted by a local woman who had a middle-age Arabian gelding. She had owned him for years and adored him to pieces, but was concerned that he was getting restless now that her son had moved away and he had no one to play with. Were we interested? Yes! As we approached the paddock, I saw curious chestnut ears swivel towards us.

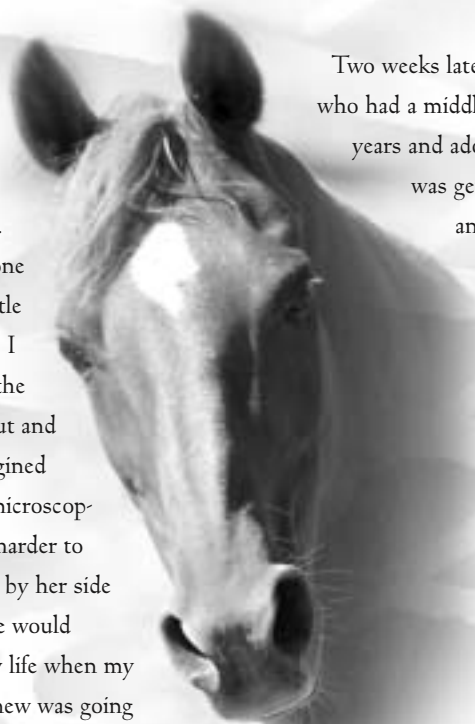
There was a broken diamond on his forehead like a precious stone that had been cut into... but not destroyed, not abandoned.

He came to the ranch a week later, and I gave him the name Sullivan. I want to take him to the mountains where the sky is so blue and so close you can almost reach out and touch it. Sullivan is my proof that brokenness is not the end of God's story. Every time I see him I remember that it's okay to hold all your dreams in hands that are open to the wind... Because there is a God, I will still dream.

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And now?... God is calling me onward. I do not know what adventure He has in store for me next, but I dare not stay here and miss the journey. The ranch will always hold a special place in my heart... and I will be taking a part of it with me. Thanks to the enormous hearts of some very precious people, Sullivan gets to come with me as I take this next step. As I go home for the holidays and seek out whatever it is God has planned for me down the road, Sullivan will be there as a constant, happy reminder of the faithfulness of my God. I am blessed beyond measure.

*"For the Lord is good, and His love endures forever."*



# SAGE

## *Seeking After God Entirely*

BY JULIE LOVE

Growing up in this world can be difficult. Around every bend and turn, the distracting noises of so many things are calling for attention and hearts. During an age when adolescents are trying to figure out who they are and who they wish to become, the overwhelming racket and commotion of life that surrounds them can almost drown a young woman in confusion of what is truly important.

It was during this same time in my own life that I was able to be a part of a small group of teenage girls who were facing some of the same age-related issues as myself. Through the love and guidance of an older mentor, who continually pointed me towards the truth of Christ, I was able to avoid many of the pitfalls and painful consequences of poor choices that fought for my attention. As I look back, I realize what a provision from God that community was for me.

I now have the distinct privilege of being that mentor in the life of some of the girls here at the ranch. As our riding season is quiet this time of year, the Truth emanating from this place is not. Many of our staff members have joined together to form a safe haven for teenage girls called SAGE – Seeking After God Entirely.

Once a week, we gather around the wood stove in the barn for a time of teaching, worship, and small groups of prayer with these precious girls. It is an opportunity to encourage and support one another, share struggles and questions, and offer friendship and prayer. I am so grateful to pour back what was given to me.

*Yes! I would like to help Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch fulfill their mission*

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# Boots From Heaven

BY KIM MEEDER

For all of those who have sent gifts of boots to the ranch, here is an update that I hope will warm your heart. After the boots were thoroughly offered to ranch kids, we decided to take your generosity one step farther. As part of a fledgling relationship with a local food bank and in an effort to help reach 'the least of these,' we sent the boots to sit on the food bank floor... and just see what the Good Lord would do. Every pair was offered for free to anyone who was in need. Within each set of boots was also placed a card from the ranch inviting the new owner to please come and visit.

In less than two weeks, every pair of boots walked out of the food bank toward a new ministry of caring for families in need... all SIXTY pairs!

One of my friends from the food bank related to me how a small boy pulled off his

tattered shoes and slipped on a nearly new pair of little cowboy boots. He proudly went to EVERYONE in the store and, while pointing at his boots, proclaimed, "Look! I'm a *real* cowboy now!" Another young father came in to pick up a food box for his family and immediately noticed the row of boots on the floor. He kept asking my friend, "They're free? Just... free?" When she answered in the affirmative, he nearly broke with relief. He began sharing with her how he would be working outdoors this winter... and didn't have any shoes that would keep his feet warm... until now. He left the store with food for his family, warm boots for his feet and a smile on his face.

Several of these new families have already started coming to the ranch... because of your

gift of boots. All have come up the hill with an expression of wide eyed wonder that seems to question, "All this is free too?!" It has been such a sweet gift for all of us here at the ranch to get to know and welcome these new families as part of our own. We recognize with deep gratitude that we might not have ever known them... had it not been for you... and your boots from heaven.

*P.S. If you have surplus warm boots and clothing... a loving home awaits them, either in your community or in ours. Again, thank you my Friends.*



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