



AROUND



the

FIRE

NEWS FROM CRYSTAL PEAKS YOUTH RANCH

SPRING 2008

THE WOUND

BY KELSIE PATKA

After responding to a call for a potential horse donation, I left the small, tattered ranch feeling nothing but sadness. My heart hurt for this family who didn't have much and for their animals who weren't being cared for. But most of all, I felt haunted

by the image of something I saw that day. Of their half a dozen neglected dogs, there was one frightened dog whose image I couldn't get out of my mind. As days passed it became clear that my heart had been stolen by this skinny, wounded dog with spots.

Estimated at one year of age, she appeared to be an extremely thin damnation/border collie mix with a gapping 2" by 3" draining wound on her neck. I asked the family what had happened to her and they told me that they thought she had been attacked by a bobcat. They said it happened about three weeks prior to my visit and that they didn't have the money to take her to the vet. Instead of medical care, they recounted how they had given her 'shots' and tried to clean the wound by injecting hydrogen peroxide directly into her neck! I cringed with the thought of just how MUCH agony this must have caused the cowering black and white dog.

I just couldn't get the image of this desperate little soul out of my mind and decided that I *had* to do something. After much prayer, Laurie and I went back a few weeks later to rescue a horse and *two* of the dogs (Laurie had decided to rescue an older dog). After we loaded the horse and dogs, we breathed a sigh of relief, waved goodbye and headed down the dirt road and to a better life for all our new passengers.

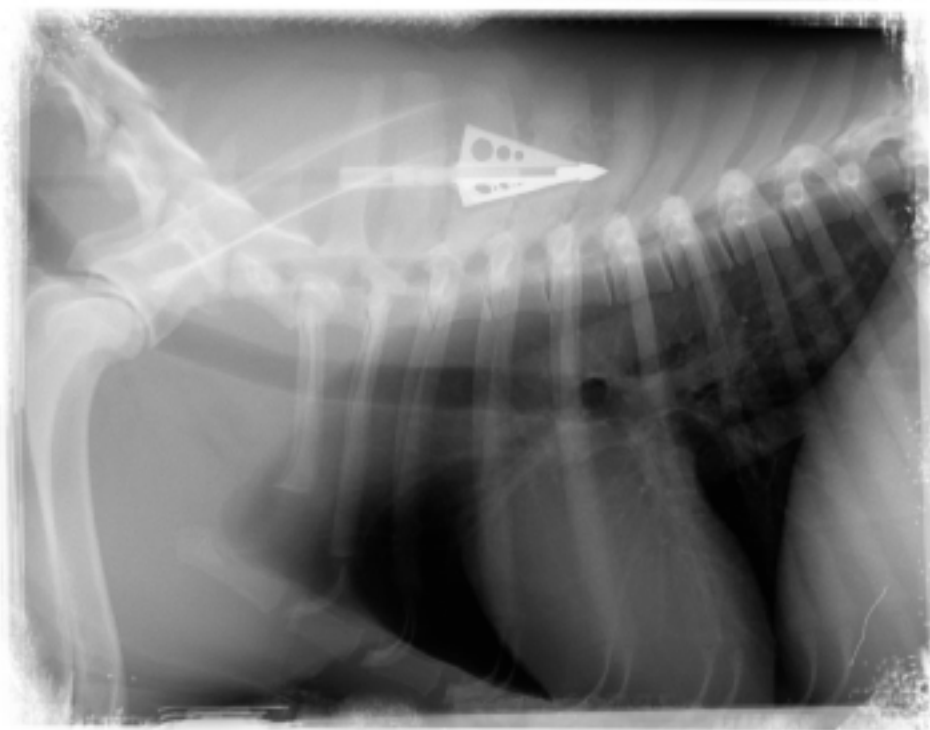
Once on the road, I noticed that my new little dog didn't move much. It seemed that her starvation and injury had weakened her a great deal. Laurie and I did our best to wrap a dish rag around her neck to stem the nauseating flow of bloody puss and serum. Once the horse was safely settled, I took her to the vet immediately.

Over the following three months, my new 'girl' and I had been to the vet many times trying to figure out why her wound simply *would not* heal. I had two complete examinations, administered three full rounds of antibiotics, applied dozens of hot compresses and thoroughly washed it everyday. Activity was also prescribed to increase her circulation and help flush the injury from the inside out. Although her weight and energy level improved rapidly... her wound did not.

During this time, we became inseparable friends. She went with me everywhere, always running, jumping and playing. Together we went on many hikes and even climbed the Middle Sister (10,047') where there were areas so steep that I had to boost her up over my head onto the next ridge of boulders. She even accompanied me on a week long pack trip with Kim and some of the staff. Yet still, her wound continued to ooze.



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Finally, Kim and I decided to take her into the vet once more. We both knew that at this point the only way to truly clean her wound out... was surgery.

I left her at the vet with the instruction that they would call me with an update. When the tech called... nothing could have prepared me for what I was about to hear! She shared how they took a routine x-ray and as she waited for the image to appear on the screen, what slowly appeared made the hair on her entire body stand up! Out of the blackness, a shadowy image began to emerge... **a three inch steel, triple blade broadhead, a hunting arrow!** It was lodged against her spine. What the next x-ray exposed was even MORE unbelievable. It revealed that a seven inch section of the arrow shaft was

STILL ATTACHED! The entire projectile was **TEN INCHES LONG!** The picture clearly showed that the end had not been broken, but cut. I could hardly believe what I was hearing! Realizing that my little dog had not only survived being shot... but lived with a ten inch arrow in her body for three months!

It is with great joy that I share with you today, my once mortally wounded dog... has fully recovered and is doing great! Because she has become so dear to me, I decided to name her 'Dakota' which means "Friend of all."

Because of her... the Lord has taught me so much.

I have come to realize that often life is not that different from Dakota's story. Each of us know times in this life when

we cannot see the good; only the pain and suffering. We ALL have 'arrows' in our lives that need to be removed. Arrows such as anger, unforgiveness, fear, pride. They 'wound' us from the inside out and if left inside... can end up destroying our lives. Much like Dakota, there is no way that—we alone—can remove them ourselves.

There is only One who can help us. Yet, having an arrow removed is a 'surgery' that we must choose. The Lord is the only physician who can take out our arrows of pain... just as the vet took out Dakota's. It is true, the process will hurt a bit and will take time to heal—but it **WILL** heal. In the long run, if we choose to yield our will and ask the Lord to remove our arrows... He can save our life.



2008 Information Clinics

For those interested in attending one of our Information Clinics, with the vision and dream of creating a similar ministry, we are pleased to inform you that we are still accepting registrations.

Find more information and online registration at: www.crystalpeakseyouthranch.org in our Latest News section.

TJ's Miracle

BY KELSIE PATKA & AMANDA SETTLE



When surveying our herd of horses, there are many sizes, shapes and colors from which to choose a friend for the day. 'Buckshot', a small but sturdy Appaloosa gelding is often chosen because of his fun coloration. Although on this special day, he was chosen because of his kind spirit. For, it was truly this little horse's unique gentleness that captured his young rider's heart. Along with many other disabilities, 'TJ', the rider who chose him... is blind.

TJ is part of a remarkable class of special needs kids from a local public school that venture out to the ranch each week for a few hours of fun. Every time they came this past season, I had the wonderful opportunity of working with TJ. Little did I know when I saddled Buckshot that day, what the Lord had in store for TJ... and for me.

As Buckshot and I made our way up to the arena, I noticed that TJ had gone ahead with his teacher Jeanne and sat down with Amanda, a Crystal Peaks volunteer. As we approached them, I wondered how TJ might respond today. He had been coming for quite some time and each day was completely different. Sometimes TJ would all but ignore Buckshot and other times he wanted to be close so that he could pet him. But this day seemed especially important because it was the last day they would be out for the season.

Although TJ had yet to sit on any horse, we all secretly hoped to see him ride.

I led Buckshot right up to TJ and the other leaders. Once TJ realized that the spotted gelding was standing right next to him, he quietly asked, "Can I pet Buckshot?" After a few moments of stroking his friend, gazing ahead at something only he could see, he grinned a little. Apparently, the smile was inspired by what he wished to ask next, "Can I give Buckshot a kiss?" Together we watched in silent wonder as TJ began to come out of his shell. Buckshot stood quiet with his head slightly lowered, offering TJ full access to his muzzle.

As usual, we started with simple games to encourage TJ to engage with his four legged friend. After a couple rounds of 'Duck, Duck, Goose' and singing "B is for BUCKSHOT... he's good enough for meeeeeee," we could see a 'softening' in the boys face, a door was beginning to open. We offered, "If we all go together... would you like to ride Buckshot?" An almost imperceptible nod was his answer. With remarkable courage, TJ was choosing to trust Buckshot to be his eyes.

With a chorus of helping hands guiding him into the saddle, he sat down on Buckshot's steady back. Everyone seemingly held their breath, TJ was



sitting on a horse! Giving him time to process this new accomplishment, no one moved... except TJ... the corners of his mouth began to rise. As we slowly began to move forward, I watched as pure wonder filled his unseeing eyes. After a lap around the arena, a small voice began to fill the space between the five leaders that were assisting. It was TJ... very quietly, he started to sing... to Buckshot.

It had taken weeks of patiently waiting for TJ to become ready to choose to ride. And now he was. Perhaps to some, this wouldn't be much of a miracle... a disabled blind boy choosing to ride a small spotted horse. But to me, it was. The lesson was mine. I watched for an entire season as this special young man build up his courage to finally face his fear and when he did—it was not with tears and anguish—but a smile and a song.

Bear Kelsie and the Crystal Peaks Staff,

Thank you for letting me ride Buckshot and sing to him. He is soft and nice. I like to hear the dogs barking. I like to give Buckshot a kiss and hug.

B is for Buckshot.

TJ



TJ WITH HIS FRIEND, BUCKSHOT

YOUR GREATEST GIFT

BY KIM MEEDER

Hello dear family abroad. Hopefully this New Year has brought you challenges, encouragement and joy. Here at the ranch, we have already been overwhelmingly blessed with all three. Even before we 'officially' open for the next riding season... it has already been a year like no other. It is because of this blessed 'demand' that we seek your help.



As we continue to grow in sheer volume and outreach, it drives home the importance of days such as March 19th. For, it is during this week every year that we gather together as a staff, family and friends for our Annual Pray Day. During this day, we join in a circle of clasped hands and bowed heads and come before the One who makes ALL things possible.

Simultaneously, we encircle the ranch entrance and pray that all who enter will be blessed. We pray over the common yard that all who cross it will come into the presence of the joy of our

Lord. For the tack up area we pray for safety over our horse's hearts and the little hands and feet that will attend to them. For our main barn we ask that the truth and love of our Lord would fill it to the rafters and that all who enter would be immersed in His peace. Over all the grassy areas, we ask that they be given supernatural endurance to facilitate horse's hooves and mouths, water fights, running games and gathering groups. Over the back of each horse we pray that they will be blessed with a strong body and mind which, in turn, be guided by a quiet and loving heart. In years passed, we have all walked around our arena seven times while in silent prayer. During this time we cover every aspect of what this ranch seeks to do... share the hope of our Lord. Once our seventh lap is complete, we all rejoin in the middle for a victorious shout, giving praise in advance for all the answers to come.

This year we ask for your help in giving the ranch your *greatest gift*... prayer. Not long ago the ranch was offered an opportunity to purchase a 150 acre adjoining piece of property (which could mean that we would never have to move the original ranch). This is the beginning of what we believe will become a MASSIVE answer to prayer.



The property has irrigation, a hay field, pond, spectacular views, room for trail rides and is also several tax lots, meaning that we could potentially build facilities for our staff, volunteers and guests to stay. Over all, this would mean a far greater reach in being able to serve those in need. We have full awareness that this decision will have local to global ramifications. Yet, above our excitement, we wish to 'wait' on the Lord, on His best direction for us, on His financial provision and His guidance in all the areas a decision of this magnitude will present.

We ask that you, our ranch family, join us in prayer over the ranch that, above ALL, we would listen to HIS voice alone and that HE would be honored in ALL that we do.

Thank you Dear Friends.



VOICE OF THE MASTER

BY LAURIE SACHER

When Kelsie and I first brought our rescued dogs home, it was immediately clear that all was not well with their health. 'Mia', the name I chose for my new charge, was thin and scraggly. After numerous vet trips and tests, she was finally diagnosed with diabetes. I had no idea a dog could have diabetes! Nonetheless, I found myself buying special dog food and giving her insulin injections twice a day. Gratefully, after a few weeks she finally began to stabilize and gain some weight. As she has gotten healthier, I have found that Mia loves to



explore, loves to play, loves to sniff, loves to eat... just like any other dog. But she is not like any other dog... Mia is almost entirely blind.

Cataracts began to develop in both eyes... within a few days she had lost almost all of her vision. It was very hard for me to see this sweet dog 'suffer'. But, Mia is amazing... like most animals—and children—she is resilient. Even as she bumps into things and trips over obstacles in her suddenly dark world... her tail never stops wagging. Her cheerful spirit has never broken. Instead, she eagerly picks up the voice commands I give to help her navigate. Words such as "wait," "step," "careful," "stay."

One day while visiting friends, I noticed that their young son was paying special attention to Mia. In her excitement,

she did not hear my warning to "STEP!" and crashed into some stairs. With all the wisdom of a child, he said, "She's was just like us and God. If we listen to God's voice, He will guide us away from danger and direct our steps. If we choose to ignore His voice, we will get hurt." I smiled. God uses 'all creation' to speak to us. In this case, He used my blind dog to give a simple lesson about hearing *and following* His voice.

When I first brought Mia home, she could still see. I changed her name that day. She had a new life and a new name. But she didn't know her new name or my voice. She didn't know that she could trust me or that I wanted the best for her or that I already loved her. The first time we went to the park to play, I let her off her leash to see how she would respond. I watched as she looked at me for a moment when I called her name... then ran away.

I thought about God's voice in my life and was reminded of John 10:27, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me." I was deflated as my dog, who didn't know my voice, ran away from me. I thought of what that must do to the Lord's heart when I don't take the time to know His voice and when I choose to run in the other direction. He is a good Master – actually he is the *best* Master.



He has proven that He is completely trustworthy and I am learning to know and follow His voice.

As I begin to recognize His voice more, I realize I still have a choice... to obey or to go my own way. When Mia does not follow my voice she crashes into things, gets bumps, scratches and bloody noses. When we don't follow the Lord's voice we can be hurt physically, but usually the bumps, scratches and bloody noses happen in our hearts. Every time I look at my dog—every time she listens faithfully and obeys and every time she charges headlong into danger—I am reminded that my trustworthy Master is always speaking to me. His plans are to protect me—not to harm me (Jeremiah 29:11). Yet, it is still my choice to *choose* to listen to Him.

At the end of the day, Mia rests at my feet. She breathes deep, contented sighs as she drifts off to sleep. By resting a paw on my foot, she can feel when I rise up and... she follows me. I don't even have to say a word. She has become so used to following me closely that even when I'm not speaking... she has learned to follow.

My soul is encouraged to know the Lord in this same, dependant way. I desire to be close to my Master, to rest at His feet and to move when He moves... even in those times when He doesn't seem to be speaking. My life has changed since I have—following my dog's example—purposed in my heart to take the time to sit still and know His presence... and follow the voice of *my* Master.

WINTER'S PERSPECTIVE

BY ANNE-NICOLE WALTERS



The winter season at the ranch seems quiet. Around us, even nature is still and empty. Sounds are muffled by layers of snow, the trees stand stark, stripped of their leaves. Together, it's a bit deceptive however. While the outside looks quiet, if you were to peek inside the office you'd see 'wheels' still spinning as we churn through massive amounts of office work in preparation for the upcoming season. Weekly, you can catch a glimpse of different groups crowded into the barn for various events, tucked away against the cold.

One of those events was decorating for the Christmas Parade. In December we spent hours preparing to clothe our horses and participating families in Christmas colors for the local parade. We carefully crafted costumes and a special statement to be read by the announcers during the parade. This statement was our opportunity to share with thousands of spectators how all the amazing redemption that happens through Crystal Peaks... has come through the love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We were excited to share how Christmas is about His presence on

earth, and all the gifts He brings.

On the day of the parade, our 'team' transformed into a brilliant representation of the parade theme: 'Christmas Dreams.' We dressed eight horses to look like the greatest Christmas dreams fulfilled: hope, joy, peace, mercy, forgiveness, love, freedom and Jesus. As we walked the parade route a sense of joy and true purpose filled my heart. Right up until I realized that what the announcers were reading to the crowd was their own version of our ranch's work. After our careful preparation to share the 'right' Christmas message, my heart fell at this seemingly missed opportunity. Yet, beyond the 'skipped' message, the day was sweet and concluded with many cold but happy horses, families and staff.

The following week I received an exciting phone call from Kim. She shared how all of our hard work at preparing our horses had earned a write up in our local newspaper. And alongside pictures of our parade entry, the caption included our original message of Jesus—the best Christmas dream come true.' Our effort to share the message of our Lord with

thousands had been multiplied, through the newspaper distribution, to be shared with *TENS of thousands*.

As December turned into January, we again had an opportunity to step off the ranch and into our community. We have chosen to help support an amazingly resilient woman who is single-handedly caring for an enormous family ranch. It was our delight to gather as many hands of assistance as we could to help shoulder her massive load.

After an hours drive out into the wilds of the eastern desert, we arrived under wind driven freezing rain. I was so proud of our team, although mostly kids, they never once complained. Instead, I watched in awe as they made it their personal mission to accomplish three days of work in one afternoon! Little kids tore around





rebuilding, sorting, cleaning, and organizing. When all was said and done, HERCULEAN amounts of lumber, scrap metal, fencing materials and enough equipment to run a 2400 acre ranch had been restacked, cleaned and organized. Our friend pulled me aside and later confided, "A group came to my property a while back and prayed with me that God would send 'His hands and feet' to help... how does it feel to be an answer to prayer?"

Also, during the deep cold of winter, we began to take our girls SAGE (Seeking After God Entirely) group into one of our local towns and volunteer at an organization that serves the homeless. Again, I have been blessed over backward at watching these girls work like a hive of happy bees to make a difference for those in need.

It's true; winter has clearly been the dominant visual scene on the ranch, the barren, empty branches of the trees

offering the most striking evidence. For them, the dormant season is



difficult, yet it's part of their process of living. The same goes for us. While seasons in our life can seem 'dark, cold and unproductive'... if we seek it... just like the trees, out of our 'dormant stillness' we too can also flourish and sprout into an unexpected blessing.



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

Please use my donation for:

- Where it is needed most
- Endowment Fund
- For the children
- For the horses
- Ranch Equipment
- Staff education
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Our current wish list is also available at our website

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New DVD Promo Video

The message of Crystal Peaks is simple: What was once broken, abused, and neglected, can be transformed into something beautiful and whole. This transformation is only found through the hope we discover in Christ.

Today we are happy to announce that this message is going out in a new way. We have just put out our first-ever professionally produced DVD about our ministry. Yet, more importantly, it is about the hope and healing that is found in Christ alone. It would be our joy to send you the preliminary release! If you are interested, please fill out and mail this voucher or submit an online DVD request through our website in the Latest News section.



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