

TENNISON

“OPPORTUNITY”

A new year is a time to look back and a time to look to the future. Those of you have followed *Western Mule Magazine* through the years and have read where I have put pen to paper, know by now with a new year comes the pep talk about finding time to ride.

This year will be no different. Also no different as in years past, I struggle once again with what I'm going to write. I do so want to inspire you. Because of that I pondered this pep talk in my head for days. It drives Neta nuts I think, for several times during those days while pacing the floors or staring out the window Neta asked, "What are you doing?" Notice She didn't ask what I was thinking. I'm pretty sure I broke her of that this fall when she asked what I was thinking while in the cafe eating a fish sandwich. My answers to such questions are normally, "Oh, nothing honey." I can't tell you why things come out of me like they do, when they will, or why one day and not the next. That day when asked I told her, "I'm thinking how I would run the concession stand at the football games." All heck broke loose; a commotion erupted from her that had everyone in the place gawking at us. She went to choking on her sandwich; my mind raced back to how to perform the Hind Lick Maneuver that I read of in *Western Mule*. (See Knee Slapper *Western Mule Magazine* June 2009). Thankfully she got over it and it was confirmed what I suspected all along, "My wife can't handle the truth."

Back to a serious note; I did seriously ponder for days what was going to write here. I too have trouble finding time to ride and with some degree of an underlying motive, I feel if I can fix you, maybe I can fix me too and my own struggle for time.

I woke recently on a Friday morning and made this statement to my wife first thing when my eyes opened, "This day is mine!" What prompted this statement, that could very well have been selfishness or certainly interpreted as selfishness, came from what happened the day before. I had told Neta, I had to ride a mule I was taking out on Saturday. I just needed to see if this mule might need a tune-up or something. I'm saying, "I don't go on blind dates." Starting

very early that morning, it was a struggle to get through the office to the barn to feed and it got worse as the day went on. By the time it come dark, I had not ridden that mule I had to ride and I was as flustered as a rabbit without his hopper. I vented that frustration way into the evening. So Neta knew very well what I spoke of when my eyes opened that Friday morning.

Friday after feeding the mules, feeding myself and before I got out the door to throw on a saddle, I was on the phone three times. I want you to stop and read this part here real thoroughly, I want you to get it. The day before, I was on the phone most all day. Yes, it was the reason I didn't get on that mule that day... Folks, the day *Western Mule Magazine's* phone ain't ringin' is the day I'm done, finished. So please call, call a lot and call often. I prayed seventeen years ago it would come to this and I pray daily that the phones don't stop, the email is full and I have mail at the post office. You see it's nothing bad happening here; it's answered prayer... Yeah... Ya oughta' watch what you pray for, especially if you've got to ride a mule that day.

I did finally get on the mule and in an hour I learned I had nothing to fix, all was well and I was as refreshed as if I had been on a ten-day walk-about by mule back in the wilderness.

It doesn't take much time to receive what these wonderful mules we own can give our lives. There's a peace that comes with mules, an escape, a chance to think differently, a chance to simply think, yet these mules are so complex. As complex as they are, my mules don't mind that I'm just a simple man. They like me like I am.

Many of you, I know have followed a boy's life for a year now diagnosed with a rare form of brain cancer. Dozer is his name. From the time I first learned of my friend Dozer's condition to this minute I've had him and his family on my heart. Many of you have too, I know this by the emails we've received, phone calls and conversations with Bill and Gina and I'm sure many have had him on their heart, that no one has heard from. It gives me goose bumps to think of the outpouring from mule folks

that have come to this boy and his family.

I have followed as a family received news fit for no family, to hearing this family's joy when they received great news, news of a miracle, "Dozer's cancer free."

I have marveled at how this family has handled it all. The Garrett family has not held still for a minute; when I'm certain standing still would be easier. As a matter of fact this family has been going so fast, covering so much ground, bringing so much activity into their lives, I've threatened to make the phone call advising them to slow it down. I'm then reminded Who's got 'em by the hand. They don't need a phone call from me.

Let our hearts tell us what they need and when we're given the opportunity we need to act on it and always pray that the Garrett family has an opportunity to spend another day with their Boy.

We need to pray for an OPPORTUNITY for ourselves as well and when the opportunity comes, pray for a willingness to step through the door onto our mule and take in these things mules can deliver to us personally, a peace, a joy, an escape, and a relationship --- Yes, even a healing.

I want to thank you for what you have done for my friend Dozer and his family. I know for a fact you have helped this family on a roller coaster of a ride in 2010. This fight ain't over. If you haven't got involved in this miracle, you're missing an opportunity. An opportunity to be a blessing to a child and you're missing an opportunity for a blessing yourself and for your family. It would not surprise me if there were not one reading this that has not been of some support to Dozer and his family in some way. But if by chance you missed an opportunity, don't miss it again. And, don't miss an opportunity to ride those mules and might you have the willingness to climb on. It'll make you think different and act different; do it every chance you get.

Happy New Year!

Take a deep seat, sit back and enjoy *Western Mule Magazine*. Your comments are always welcome.

May God Bless.

