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# A Lady Named Jess

By Robert F. Stowell

Part II

Jessie was a most reliable and easy horse to ride. We soon bought an old army saddle and began to explore the hills, bush whacking through nearly impossible undergrowth in the effort to reach the tops of the low mountains around us. She loved to canter up the long grassy slopes so often found in Northern Vermont. But we had bought a horse in order to begin haying so I began to look for a proper harness. New ones are very costly and the big mail order catalogs stopped offering them about 1958; they only sell parts of a harness now and cater to the requirements of the suburban horse owner. After looking at several used harnesses we decided to buy two sets, thus always having replacements for anything that broke. We discovered in the many miles we travelled that many Vermonters living off the main roads and up in the hills will lean over backwards to tell you the faults of what they are selling. Having a reckless amount of self-reliance, I imagined that once we had the harness it would be a simple matter to put it on Jessie.

There is one simple way to place a harness over a horse's back and there are seventeen hundred ways to get it snarled in a hopeless tangle of straps and buckles and tugs and things we didn't even know the name of. A neighbor finally came over, a man who loved horses and owned a magnificent stallion. He straightened out the heaps of leather on the stable floor, picked it deftly up at the two correct places and neatly slung it over Jessie's back in one easy motion.

"Now," he said, "you will have to adjust it. This harness was being used on a much larger horse and you will have to shorten the tugs and the girth. Have you got a leather punch?" Although we didn't know much, we did have enough sense to collect repair tools as well as buying the harness. After some new holes were punched and straps rivetted, Aurie put on the collar and adjusted the hames — the first time I was properly introduced to these gently curved wooden parts. All this time Aurie was talking to Jessie in a quiet voice. He found that my reins were too short and gave me an extra pair of his.

We went outside to the mowing machine. He clucked gently to her; Jessie pricked up her ears and moved forward to stand in front of the mower. He picked up one shaft and said "Back just a little, Jess," and she moved slowly, taking lady-like steps, back between the shafts. Today I can hitch a horse to a wagon, but I have never achieved the degree of inter-contact of a person who has been brought up working with horses. Jessie weighed only eleven hundred pounds which is on the light side for pulling a mowing machine, even a small one, if it is not in perfect adjustment. I spent hours pouring over the manuals and sharpening section knives, but to keep the machine going smoothly Jessie had to move at a fast walk and I often worried about working her too hard.

Mowing hay on a summer day on a Vermont hillside is just plain satisfying. The four foot swath of grass falls neatly beside and behind you, a kind of waterfall in reverse. There is even a sound of the ocean if the wind is blowing through the grass — and it should be blowing if it is perfect hay-making weather. Perhaps if we had not cut the first year's supply by hand we would not have felt such intense pleasure in our one-horse outfit.

On a blue-gold morning Jessie and I would make one turn around the field and then stop and look out over the range on range of hills to the south. Newly cut hay is the perfume of summer. On a very hot day I would usually get off the mower and kill any horse flies that were bothering her and perhaps give a professional squirt of oil into the gear box. Sailing a small boat on Lake Champlain is good for the soul; skiing on Mt. Mansfield fulfills a longing for physical daring; mowing hay in the Vermont sun is just plain satisfying.

Yet some days nothing went right. Being old, the harness often broke and I would have to stop and spend valuable time fixing it. The mowing machine had one favorite trick of not cutting the first six inches of grass because of "choking." My intention was to leave a neatly mown field, but many days it looked as though some giant had happened along with a great pair of scissors and used them with his eyes shut.

Looking back now, I can see that if we had been farming solely to earn a living, our methods would hardly have worked. Everything was too leisurely. If a perfect day for picnicking came along

## Letters to the Editor

### Elated Over Property

To the Editor:

Finally, after years, I have bought property! For cash! A small lot and house in Brownsville, Tex. What a wonderful feeling has been released within me. A lifelong dream come true.

Every goal we reach poses a new goal — a new problem and challenge. I'll work 6 or 7 months a year for the next five years and the other months I'll take off for visiting friends and my place. I've planted mulberry trees, bananas, peaches, papayas, citrus, and next year want to add more until the lot is full. Later I'll add an acre or two for growing food. I've rented my little place to a Mexican family, to prevent vandalism. Was it a sin to rent out the house? — Herman Banks, Box 344, MSS, New York City

### Free Land

To the Editor:

Free land sounds good, but how can you determine how much land a man needs? Anyone who is living very simply needs only a few acres to provide food, shelter, clothing and fuel. But

how much unused wood lot does he "need"? Enough for fuel only; enough for a selection of different kinds of trees; enough for a peaceful walk in the woods? Or, in a more mechanized state, to keep an iron foundry in charcoal — up to 40 square miles? Industrialization demands vast tracts of land for gross raw materials. It also demands the complication of big organization and big government.

I see the problem in terms of industrialization. It's a problem I can rectify right now by using hand tools. As for money, it's still quite easy to barter in the country. We needn't wait around for several centuries for an unsure reformation of "our system." It's "their" system; not mine. I doubt that any good can ever be accomplished by "society"; it is the individual who must correct himself in any case. — R. L. J. Fahey, Oxford, N. Y.

### Community Based on Love

To the Editor:

Living in "community" is not easy. It must be based on love. One must know how to "love" or accept one's self before one can love another. One cannot al-

we would pack our lunch behind us. It is not hard to become a cooper, of uncut hay behind us. Usually the mowing job, including farming. I would give Jessie a long drink of water. I take off her harness in the cool stable before placing a coffee can full of oats before her. We often turned the hay by hand, enjoying the long wooden rakes that balance so nicely. If there was a large field of hay cut, I hitched Jennie to the rake and she delighted in dancing across the field no matter how full the windrows. Our dog always begged to come along when we were raking, and he sorted out the mice that were stirred up. Jessie's high spirits when raking could be wearing — there was no time to day dream and this led to one of the silliest things I ever did on the farm.

There is a granite ledge in one of the fields which I always intended to avoid but one day Jessie high stepped over it and one of the metal wheels struck the ledge sharply, giving it a bad twist. Without thinking, I decided to try to roll this large (five foot) wheel over to the neighbor's house where it could be welded. On the same hill where the lack of "hold backs" allowed the democrat to get out of control, I lost my hold on the wheel. Terrified that a car might be coming, I ran after the big wheel which was gathering speed as it careened down the hill. At the foot of the hill is a brook just where the road levels out and here the wheel struck a stone, bounced high into the air and plunged into the brook. My relief that no car had been coming up the hill was such that I sat down and laughed like an idiot. After tugging the wheel back on the road, I walked it sedately over to Ray's where he whacked it back into true, brazed the ends of the spokes to the rim and was hurt when I asked "How much do I owe you?" "Now what do you think a neighbor is for?" he asked.

(to be continued)

low himself to meet another until he is sure his action, his decision, his words or his idea of justice is based on love and not on his own frustration, self-interest or simple anger.

Suppose someone in our community "shirks" or does not do what seems his share of the work. If we honestly know our feeling for that person is pure unselfish love, we can trust our selves to judge how to secure or insist on his adding to the work, taking his place, etc. But he is always justified in challenging the honesty of our love. It is necessary for him to be trying to learn, too. If he is one who has chosen community deliberately because he wants to learn to live with his fellows and to love, then he will be trying to learn how to add his own 100% share of work.

If he is not thus committed, and we are unable to meet his need — for time, teaching and growing up — then we must admit to him that we are failing in our ability to love and then ask him to leave — not because he is bad but because our degree of knowledge of human relating is not adequate to the task he presents to us. Maybe when he later grows up (the world will give him time and teaching which we could not) he will turn again to us, perhaps without shame.

This is why it seems that Communities should be begun by people dedicated to the task of actually learning how to love unselfishly, deeply, without a thought of return, and knowing it is a painful process.

People deliberately open to searching in this way can gradually find out how to include those able to try but not very adept.

### Responsibility and Consequences

We cannot shield anyone from consequences. We may shield them from one kind of pain, only to give them another. Young people today have been shielded from labor and responsibility; this has exposed them to despair and terrible loss of direction. But many of us in our generation were given too great a responsibility and that meant anger, resentment and hate. We were not shielded from responsibility, but were shielded from self-direction. We had "direction" imposed by well-meaning parents. Maybe we can find a middle course and help youngsters find their own direction and responsibility free from hate and anger. It is so difficult to know; we can only watch and wait, try to love and see how people find their own meanings through and with our relating.

We must all learn to love; then there is no basic injustice. We are not unjust to those we truly love. Those who know how to live within love are not unjust. The flaw in community will be closed when every person tries to search out and practice how to grow up so he can love. For those who love, land is owned as tribal territory and guarded for all members as sedulously as it is for

one's own self. We cannot really think of economics today in terms of love because we never experienced such a community. The New Community will be based on love. This is not "religion"; this is faith in each other. — Frances Crary, Box 403, Lakeport, Calif.

### Reads Paper Thoroughly

To the Editor:

Green Revolution is so much more active and mentally stimulating than most magazines. I like the letters from many readers. It has the first new idea I've run across in a long time — free land.

But what's wrong with paying interest on money? Money is a certain amount of one's time and personal property. If one can be paid for his time and property, why shouldn't he be paid for use of money? [Money is time, but it is payment for time already spent. If the holder of money doesn't want to use it, why should he be paid a second time? Indeed, why shouldn't he pay "storage charge" for it to one who uses it, and agrees to pay back the full amount, but no more?—Editor]

I agree with Wendal Thomas that land should be held in common as a community heritage, but I can't see why "Community building is the most important thing in the world" when you can't have community without the individuals in it. And if the individual isn't "an independent private human mind and body," what in the world is it?

Louis Potter's dialogue in the same issue was great. It's not often I can read an article or letter and get the over-joyed "This guy is RIGHT" reaction I got with him. . . .

As a female reader of Bud Plumb's question, I don't see why marriage should be a stumbling block. I hope some day to have a homestead and almost certainly will live on it alone. Now we have electricity and engines to do much of the work, and buses and U. S. mail. About the only reason for marriage would be companionship. Question: why not just have a few likeminded friends join you? True, they might move out later, but you take this chance with marriage.

I was pleased with the Ferdi Knoess item in the August issue, and pleased that you give some thought to peace. I never would have expected it, that's for sure. [For 25 years we've seen the green revolution as part of the peace movement. We know that destructiveness is the outcome of unloved life, and our green revolution is a sub-culture that substitutes creative, satisfying living, and thus is a safety-valve against wholesale destruction. We also promote and practice ethical libertarian economic institutions to eliminate the economic roots of war. Send 25c for our illustrated "Economics of Peace" and a sheet on "The Green Revolution, A Part of the Peace Movement."—MJL]

The dialog between Esther Landau and John Seymour was very thought-provoking, which I

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## Old Yeast Recipe

Yeast is a great thing in domestic management. I have once before published a recipe for making yeast cakes. I will do it again here. In Long Island they make yeast cakes. A parcel of these cakes is made once a year. That is often enough. And when you bake, you take one of these cakes (or more, according to the bulk of the batch), and with them raise your bread. The very best bread I ever ate in my life was lightened with these cakes.

The materials for a good batch of cakes are as follows: 3 ounces of good fresh hops; 3½ pounds of Rye Flour; 7 pounds of Indian Corn Meal; and one Gallon of Water. Rub the hops so as to separate them. Put them into the water, which is to be boiling at the time. Boil half an hour and strain through a fine sieve into an earthen vessel. While liquor is hot, put in the Rye-Flour; stirring the liquor well, and quickly, as the Rye-Flour goes into it. The day after, when it is working, put in the Indian Meal, stirring it well as it goes in. Before the Indian Meal is all in, the mess will be very stiff; and it will, in fact, be dough, very much of the consistency that bread dough is made of. Take this dough; knead well, as you would for pie-crust, to the thickness of about a third of an inch after rolling with rolling pin. When you have it (or part of it at a time) rolled out, cut it up into cakes with a tumbler glass turned upside down. Take a clean board and put the cakes to dry in the sun. Turn them every day; let them receive no wet, and they will become as hard as ship biscuit. In use break the cakes and soak in hot water over night so they will dissolve. Then use them in setting your sponge as in ordinary bread making.

[The above is from *Cottage Economy* by Wm. Cobbett, Kensington, England, July 18, 1821. Sent in by T. Skinner.]

like. Very few are willing to think for themselves nowadays. I'm more on her side I suppose. But I must say a lot of people want machines so badly that they become slaves to them. I have car-hopped for four years, and the customer-is-always-right philosophy in business makes one feel like a slave at times. . . . Conceded, Detroit-style factories aren't good for people, but we can't condemn all small scale and properly run factories.

"Flight From The City" and "What Does Homesteading Mean For us?" are interesting and helpful. And where is the September issue? — Musetta Giles, 1506 S. Main, Bellefontaine, Ohio 43311

### Vietnam! Vietnam!

To the Editor:

The first time I looked at Vietnam! Vietnam! I burst into tears; I broke down and sobbed. It was the same with *The Children of Vietnam*. Even now tears come sometimes when I look at those pictures or think of Vietnam.

When we are very deeply moved, it hurts; pain motivates us to act, and to persist, in spite of discouragement.

The above books are very disturbing. I think that people should be more disturbed, so that they will do more to stop this war and also eliminate the causes of war.—Marion Wilhelm, 97-28 130th St., Richmond Hill, N. Y.

(continued on page 3)