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Inevitable Dreams

What do you remember from your childhood? I remember an essay I wrote when I was in grade three. It was the classic “what do you want to be when you grow up” essay. I have no idea how it got into the clutches of my family but I distinctly remember their reaction to it. Back then I wanted to grow up and live on a farm. We were city folk. I had never seen a pig up close but I wanted to be Old McDonald with an oink oink here and a moo moo there. My childhood drawing had critters, barns, tractors and poop everywhere. At least I was realistic. My family was not supportive to say the least. At eight years old I was told horror stories about the work involved and how there was no way I would want to do it. Instead, they said I should be a psychologist and help people like my brother who was mentally handicapped. So I did. I grew up and did a Master’s degree in Educational Psychology graduated with Distinction and worked with people with disabilities and mental health issues for about 8 years. I absolutely loved it. I was constantly surrounded with the most warmhearted, angelic people I had ever met. People like my people, who knew a good struggle but never gave up and never knew “bitter.”

Then I met my fiancé. After living in cities our whole lives, he began to chime about living in the country. It was his dream to have an acreage with a slew of animals and barns and tractors for the poop everywhere. His family said he was “crazy.” The first time he mentioned it to his father he said: “Do you know how much work that is? Are you aware that you will never rest again? All it is, is work, work, work. You are in for a rough time.” So we didn’t do it. I wasn’t for it either. I was completely mortified that if we lived in the country, I would turn to dust and blow away. I feared my friends would not go “way out there” to visit me and I was petrified of the work. After all, my father grew up on a farm and he talked a lot about nasty nature. I was convinced it was a bad idea.

Years zoomed by with the speeding cars on our nearby freeway. While sirens screamed all day and night we completely reconstructed our first little house. We painted, sided and roofed it. We built a deck off the back, a step off the front and a whole independent suite in the basement. We couldn’t stop and sat like stringless puppets when one day we realized that there was nothing left to do; we had outworked ourselves. Now what? Maybe we should move to the country. Here we go again.

One day I was sitting at my desk absently staring out the window at the cantankerous neighbor across the street who constantly badgered us about our friends parking in front of her house, and I had a thought. I thought: “Wouldn’t it be cool if I could work with horses to help the people I was already helping?” I was suddenly flooded with visions of children with ponies and youth raising chickens and eyawing donkeys and laughter and healing. It poured in all at once like an open gate to sheep being chased by a Shepherd. Then the world stopped and all was still for a split second until, like a calamity, it thundered home: “I could have a horse!!” I always wanted a horse! My mother wouldn’t let me as a child because she said he would take up too much room in my bed and that was the only place we had to keep him. But if I moved to the country, I could have a horse and I could use it to help people. I was euphoric and dumbfounded and awestruck and I felt I could re-invent the world. My fingers began jamming my keyboard as I searched for horses and helping and lo and behold, there were programs! Mostly in the states but the concept had been around for more than 50 years in lots of countries in the world. Well I wasn’t a genius after all but maybe I wasn’t “crazy” either.

That was the day our world transformed from wailing emergency vehicles to chattering squirrels and cock-a-doodle-dos. We have been living in the just-as-noisy country for ten years now and our time is consumed with as much work, work, work as they said and as much poop as we feared. We have started the first nature-assisted therapy program of its kind in Ardrossan, Alberta and every day I am washed away by the actual events of my first flooding vision. Suffering children and rescued animals are healing each other. We have 35 crazy critters, six of which are horses, and a bed all to myself except for my snoring husband who cuts wood all night, exhausted from our labour of love. We opened the program doors in 2003 and to date, we have served hundreds of families, many of whom had trouble returning to a healing place due to it just not working in the past for them. I am a Registered Psychologist now and we specialize in helping children, youth and adults with organic brain dysfunction and multiple diagnoses. Often

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times many people struggle with healthy communication and are angry and stuck. Working with animals who are excellent non verbal communicators and healthy leaders and teachers provides the motivation for people who are set in their ways, or stuck in their processes, to learn to be different in empowering and positive ways.

I honestly believe that we will never rest again, just like his wise Daddy said. After eons of time and fearful avoidance we took the leap of faith, bounced and jumped over the moon.