

Down By The Berry Patch



"Keep the Horses Home"

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May 2007

"Keep your horses home while we are gone, Mike. We are tired of them eating the bark off the trees and making deep hoof prints and ruts in the yard." That was the last minute instructions to Mike and Janice on Sunday night as we left for the week down in Essexville where we worked. It seemed that Mike's horses got out of their corral much too often and made their way to our 80 acres across from Mike's forty.

Then on Friday, it was back up to Rose City. As we turned into our drive, I could see the deep hoof prints in the soft gravel of the driveway. I could see hoof prints in the lawn.

I started to fume and let my husband know that, "This has to stop". I wondered what we would do about it. I knew it would be necessary to talk with Mike again. And I felt I was not over reacting.

Then I stepped into the house and in the middle of the table was our camera — and a note. The note read, "Mom, don't get angry about the hoof prints until you get this film developed, please." I certainly wondered what that was all about.

Reprinted from *Down by the Berry Patch*

<http://berrypatch.info/judy/010.html>

Last updated on 25 July 2014

Photo Caption: Lorain Berg with Mike and Janice's horses.

When Mike came over, I asked about it and all I got was a sheepish grin and again he told me to develop the film in the camera. He said that must be done before we discussed the horse situation.

Well, the film was developed and was I surprised when I looked at the pictures. Out around the salt block were a half a dozen cows--the neighbors cows from about a mile away. It seemed that not only the horses liked our place. So did the cows.

The tough part of this story is that the cows kept coming back to our place. Lorain chased or herded them home too many times and complained to the owners. He finally told them, "One more time at our place and there will be one less cow coming home — and steak on our table".

Their fence was finally fixed and we never saw the cows at our place again. But the owners of the cows did bring us some beef when they butchered.

And regarding the horses, the story goes on after almost 20 years. It still seems that the horses get out and come to our place or run down the road where we have to chase after them when the "kids" go away.

When Mike, Janice, and Alex were in Alaska for two months during the summer of 2006, their four horses (Jake, Bobby, Pepper, and Dodger) were out time after time. The neighbors from as far as a mile and a half away would call and say the horses were at their place.

Lorain knew little about harnessing the horses and nothing about riding them. Usually, if you could lead one horse, the others would follow. The problem was, how do you get the lead horse. Lorain took a piece of twine and a bucket of corn. He put the twine around the head of the lead horse and jiggled the corn for the horse to follow.

Just picture this parade going down Beechwood and Oyster Road. First was Lorain walking and jiggling the bucket of corn; next were the other three horses all in a line following them; next I was driving the car down the center of the road so no one could pass and disrupt the horses (and I had not driven a car in the past two years because of my cancer situation); and finally we were followed by a dump truck that was making its morning rounds. This parade went down over a mile of hills on Beechwood Road. Then it was a quarter of a mile down Oyster Road--always with Lorain and his jiggling container of corn in the lead and the dump truck bringing up the rear.

When we got to our driveway, the horses turned to our property instead of across the road to Mike's. Finally, the dump truck driver turned in the fish farm drive, got out of his truck, and came to help Lorain. The horses were finally back in the corral--and it was now 7:30 A.M. What a way to start a day!

This was better than the times when Lorain would go after the horses in the middle of the night about two or three A.M. Oh, how we hated those phone calls saying, "Mike's horses just passed through our yard." Many times, it would take hours to find them. We would always notify the police in case the horses were on the road. We would worry that a driver would hit one of the horses and either the horse or driver would be hurt.

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This is just a way of life at Michriste. And we love the memories it creates.

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