

Wildwood Farm CLIPS & CLOPS Oak Harbor

February 2024

YOUR NEIGH-BORHOOD HULLABALOO

CREATED & EDITED BY HEATHER CARDER

LOVE VALLEY, NORTH CAROLINA

The tiny, horse-only Cowboy town

Documentary artist Michaela O'Brien takes us into Love Valley, a tiny cowboy town in Iredell County, NC.

Love Valley, North Carolina. The only town where cars are prohibited, and horses rule the small dirt road they call main street. I just came to check it out. I first saw Love Valley on Visit North Carolina's tourism website under the "quirky" section of "Things to Do." It promised me that I would depart from the ordinary when arriving in this remote town nestled in the foothills of the Brushy Mountains. In its brief description the .2 square mile town was declared a "Cowboy Capital," the only place for cowboys East of the Mississippi. I hoped all ninety-eight residents would prove it to me.

Love Valley was established in 1954 by the late Andy Barker, a successful contractor from Charlotte, North Carolina, who at the age of thirty

uprooted his wife and two children to this remote area of the Piedmont's rolling hills. He had one dream: to build an old Western town, a valley that would embody "a boy's dream and a man's reality." He had dreamt of this idyllic town while serving in the war, writing descriptive dream letters to his mama back in the US of A.

A recreation of pioneer days, only horses and foot traffic are allowed on the dirt Main Street. Flash-front stores and saloons bring to mind a John Wayne movie, but also conjure an eerie ghostliness at quieter times of day. I watched a young couple trot by, bouncing on their Confederate flag saddle blankets past the first structure Andy Barker built: the Love Valley Presbyterian Church, situated slightly aslant at the top of Mitchell Trail. The second building constructed was the Love Valley jail, where men were held to dry out in three barred cells by a pot-bellied stove.

I attended Sunday morning service with approximately fifteen others, all lopsidedly seated in the pews on the

right. I thought there'd be more people after all of those Cowboys for Christ emblems I'd seen around. The Presbyterian service was short and sweet. Instead of lining up for the Body of Christ and sticking our tongues out at a priest, we lined up in a room next-door for some pulled pork BBQ and coleslaw sandwiches. I sat down next to a frail woman, her hands clasped in her lap, ready to be served. "That's Miss Ellenora, and I'm Tonda, Miss Ellenora's daughter. I'm so glad you've joined us." I had heard of Ellenora, the wife of Love Valley's founder. From across the table I watched Tonda dig her plastic fork through the mushy hamburger roll for a bite-sized piece of pork. "Here you go, Mother," she said, as she leaned across the table to feed Ellenora one-handedly. Tonda was in her mid-sixties with short white-blond hair that fell just below her ears.

"Welcome to Love Valley," said Ellenora in a scratchy voice. She held my hand and told me I was beautiful. I held hers and did the same.

Ellenora's skin was a bit wrinkled

Continued on page 11

WHAT'S TRENDING NOW

New Rein Design hopes to improve safety for Equestrians

A new design of safety reins has been launched in a bid to further reduce the risk in equestrian sport. The innovative Free Reins feature a quick-release connector that replaces the traditional rein buckle. When sufficient force is applied, the connector is designed to unclip automatically, allowing the reins to come apart and release the horse or rider. Once activated and the risk has passed, the reins can be reassembled.

Founder of Free Reins Laurie Williams came up with the concept after witnessing a child becoming caught in the reins during a fall.

“From our recent survey in partnership with Dr David Marlin, 61% of riders had experienced a horse catch his reins on an object,” Laurie said. “There is no doubt in my mind there is a need for Free Reins, and I’m so delighted with the product. “It’s really important to me to make riding as safe as possible for both horse and rider without compromising on style and comfort,” Laurie explained.

Manufactured in the UK, the reins are made of high-quality English leather with a soft grip. They are available in three lengths in black or havana leather, while the connector is available in chrome or gold in three sizes, which is relevant to rider weight.



The Free Reins safety system has undergone extensive testing at an advanced manufacturing research centre in Wales.

Dr David Marlin, Equine Scientist said: “Safety is incredibly important, and we support innovation and science-backed products. This appears to be a well-designed product that we hope will decrease injury risk for both horses and riders.”

Elite showjumping coach Mark McCourt said: “Over the years, I’ve seen a lot of riders fall and keep hold of the reins or pull off the bridle. It’s really important that we have safety devices, such as Free Reins, which will help prevent accidents.”

The reins are available at freereins.co.uk, priced from £159.99, and will be available at retailers in the near future.



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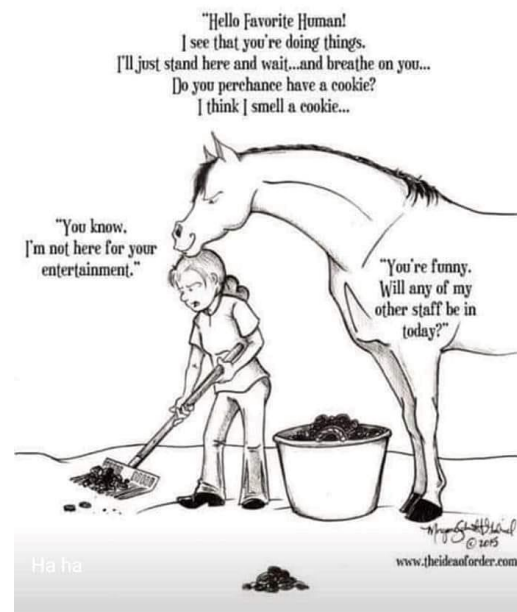
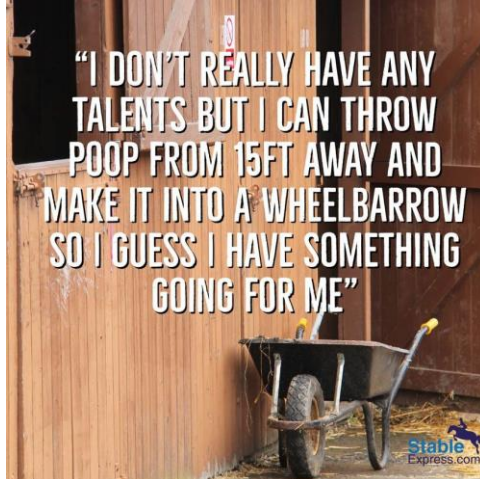
New Items for February



“
When your husband doesn't worry about you talking to other guys...
 He worries about you talking to Phyllis on Facebook marketplace about a free donkey, a random goat, and some chickens that need rehomed.
 ”
 @borninthebarn



♥ Beware of Valentines Day Scams! I ordered my husband expensive golf gear and they sent me a new saddle! 😞😏



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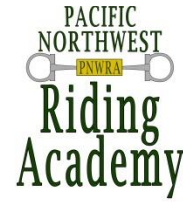
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WILDWOOD FARM HAS IT ALL!



“Ride with me and I will teach you what you need, for I am gentle and humble, and it’s here that you will find rest for your soul.”

-Matthew 11:29



“In Riding a horse, we borrow freedom.”

-Helen Thompson



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PACIFIC NORTHWEST
RIDING ACADEMY

A Letter to My Significant Other: Why I Choose to Put Our Children in Riding Lessons

by DeAnn Sloan, March 10, 2020

To my significant other:

I know I have my own horse and access to beginner friendly ponies on which our children could learn to ride without paying additional money each month and I know you must be thinking, "But we have horses that we're already paying for. Why are we paying for the kids to ride other people's horses?"

I see your confusion and frustration. But here's the thing — there are so many reasons why.

The oldest child and I, we're like oil and water when it comes to teaching and learning. No matter what I tell her, she has an argument for why what I am saying is wrong. It doesn't matter if we're talking about riding, basketball, volleyball, math homework or second grade spelling words. No matter what I say or how I say it, she will find a reason not to do as I've instructed. Although I love her strong will and I know it will serve her well, right now, it makes me want to pull out my hair. Or, at the very least, walk away and let things play out until she realizes that I might be saying something worthwhile (I might be waiting a while).

I have infinitely more patience for other people's children than I do my own (feel free to judge, but I can't be alone in this). I guarantee a trainer will have more patience with our children than I do. They will learn in an environment where they can make mistakes and thrive, not one where they feel pressure from their overbearing mother.

I'm still working on my own riding (like, really working on it) and I really want our children to learn to ride correctly. I've spent most of my adult riding career trying to undo the habits I developed while galloping whatever nag I could talk someone into letting me swing my leg over. It's so much harder to learn to ride well when you've built bad habits and understand that the ground hurts.

In just one lesson, I see our children take strides they would never take with me. I see their grit come out and I see their willingness to take risks. I am too familiar — they don't push through with me. Teachers, coaches and trainers, they bring out these characteristics in our children.

Our children will learn more about tacking up horses and doing for themselves from an earlier point in their riding careers than they would with me. I have a tendency to get the horses ready just to get it done so that we can move along. In that process, our children miss out on a valuable learning opportunity. In their lessons, they learn to do all the things necessary to prepare a horse to ride as a matter of course. They don't get spared the work because their mother has a schedule to keep. This work is good for them. It teaches them responsibility and instills confidence.

Lessons give our children the chance to try out different types of riding than those to which I can easily expose them. I ride almost exclusively western, but our children are getting lessons from a multi-disciplinary coach. They will be more versatile than I am, and they will have a chance to discover what best suits them.

Our children's love of horses and riding — or lack thereof — will not be tied to spending time with me. They will not have to make the choice between time with their mother and doing something else. They can choose to stop lessons without worrying that it will affect our relationship (or so I hope).

Although this may seem selfish, there is also the contributing factor that my time at the barn is, well, my time. Sometimes it's hard to get up the motivation to schlep a child — or three — out to the barn to ride the pony. When I do choose to that, I know that my own horse won't get ridden and may not even be groomed. Some days I am willing to sacrifice that time so that the children can ride, but other days I want to spend time with my horse, work on my riding or do any of the number of things that cannot be done while I am wrangling my small herd of children.

Finally, lessons are just downright good for the kids. Between the sense of responsibility, the sense of partnership that develops between horse and rider and the barn friends they will make, this is not something our children should miss.

Nutrition Corner

Equine Nutritional Deficiencies: Hair Analysis Vs Bloodwork.

Bloodwork such as a basic complete blood count (CBC) can tell you quite a lot about your horse's overall well-being. However, it's not as effective for determining whether your horse has nutrient deficiencies. Minerals such as calcium are very tightly controlled by the body to maintain blood levels within a relatively small range. This means blood levels of calcium might appear normal when, in reality, body stores are low. In this instance, your horse would be mobilizing calcium from bone stores to maintain blood levels. When interpreting this result, you might think the diet is meeting your horse's calcium requirements when it's not.

Iron is another mineral that blood levels do not accurately reflect. A more complex set of blood analysis is needed to look at ferritin and transferrin (two types of blood proteins) levels, which give better indications of the body's iron stores and free iron.

You can use bloodwork to evaluate vitamin E levels, which I highly recommended for horses with limited access to fresh pasture. Bloodwork can also be used to assess selenium levels. Remember, however, that bloodwork only shows you the status of that mineral in the moment in which the blood was drawn. Some mineral levels vary quite dramatically with work and time since eating, making interpretation and identification of excesses or deficiencies more difficult.

Hair analysis is not as variable; however, it is also not a current picture. Results from analyzing hair samples create a picture of what was happening over the past several months, which may not be representative of the current diet. You can send hair samples to a wide variety of labs, but each facility will have its own set of normal ranges, which can complicate interpretation. Additionally, many places that offer hair analyses are also selling supplements, which might be considered a conflict of interest. Contamination of hair samples, especially with dirt, is fairly common and can impact results. If submitting hair for analysis, be sure to follow the lab's instructions for collecting a sample carefully.

Because bloodwork might not accurately reflect deficiencies and hair testing is a look at history rather than current events, the best way to evaluate whether nutritional deficiencies exist is to look at the diet. The only way you can increase or decrease your horse's nutrient levels, such as minerals, is through diet changes—making sure it meets all his needs and is properly balanced.

WILDWOOD FARM AND TRIPLE CROWN FEEDS.

Our partnership with Triple Crown began in 2014 through a promotion with the USEF encouraging farm members to compare their current feeding programs with Triple Crown products. We have found the TC products to be superior to other products primarily because of the EquiMix technology and the research support of a leading-edge team including independent representatives of Equine Universities, Medical clinics and top level riders and trainers

Meet SEMPRELEGATO

In March of 2007 Decolores, a thoroughbred mare that Wildwood Farm purchased in 2004, foaled a handsome grey colt that we named Virgil.

Virgil's sire was the imported Hanoverian stallion Welt Hit Star, a premium dark bay gelding that was just beginning his Grand Prix show career on the East Coast.

Decolores – his dam – was a thicker, big-boned thoroughbred mare that was raced lightly, but proved to be a little too heavy for real speed. She was a fantastic brood mare, however, and her foals turned out to be imposing, athletic horses.

Virgil was a bit of a challenge from the beginning, preferring to charge the handlers when they came into his stall for any reason, and it was not an uncommon sight to find one of us using his mother as a shield against his attacks. Although he did grow out of this behavior eventually, he always remained what



We considered "thick-headed" well into his 2nd year.

Although a challenge to train, Virgil was easy on the eyes, a lovely dapple grey with a handsome, chiseled head and powerful conformation. When he was three Quinton DesFountain did his initial training (his nickname was Jughead), and when he was four, we sent him for his appraisal jumping training with Lee Dennie, a hunter/jumper trainer on the mainland. Although he showed ability in the hunters, his real calling was the jumpers as he was a bit of a rough-edged competitor, clearing the jumps with ease but missing style and elegance points.

Virgil was purchased by an amateur jumper rider at the age of five and proved to be quite a competitor in the A-circuit, finding his way to Thermal and eventually ending up in a show barn in the Bay area.

Horses in the Media Trivia Questions

How many **famous horses** can you think of right now? It probably isn't very many, but in truth, there have been hundreds, if not thousands, of **horses to be worthy of the spotlight** over time.

From **TV stars** to world **record breakers** and **military heroes** to **scientific phenomena**, horses in the media will reveal some truly remarkable horses.

1: What is the name of the 'smartest horse in the world'? This horse could read, write, do arithmetic, count money, and even recite Bible passages!

2: Who famously owned a horse named Bucephalus?

3: Name the horse that George Washington rode during the surrender of the British.

4: Name the children's classic novel, written by Anna Sewell, about a good-looking horse.

5: What is the most money ever paid for a draught horse?

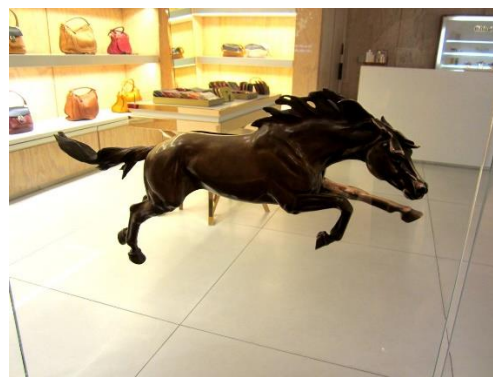
6: What is the name of the only horse to have won 3 Grand National races?

7: Disney's Cinderella owned a horse called what?

8: Al Jabal, a purebred Arab, is the oldest horse to have won a horse race. How old was he?

1. Jim Key 2. Alexander the Great 3. Nelson 4. Black Beauty 5. \$112,500 in 2003 6. Red Rum 7. Major 8. 19

MOST FABULOUS EQUINE DOOR HANDLES!



The Skin of Little Sorrel

Lexington, Virginia

The hide of Stonewall Jackson's equine sidekick is on display not far from where the ashes of his bones are buried.



WHILE THERE ARE A NUMBER of famous wartime animals stuffed up and displayed around the American expanse, possibly one of the most famous is Little Sorrel, Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson's Civil War nag whose hollowed out skin has been filled up and put on display just yards from the rest of his remains.

Originally named "Fancy," the horse began his military career on the Union side. But in 1861, he and a number of other Union horses landed in Confederate hands when Southern forces at Harper's Ferry overtook their transport train.

The Confederate general bought two horses, one for himself and the other for his wife. He named them "Big Sorrel" and "Little Sorrel." But Jackson soon decided, in a Homer-buys-Marge-a-bowling-ball-esque move, that he would keep the smaller beast for himself. The animal was no great prize, known for being skinnier and smaller than the average horse. However, size and beauty do not always matter—Jackson appreciated his horse for its remarkable endurance and supposed intelligence. He rode Little Sorrel for the duration of the war, right up until he was fatally shot whilst astride the nag.

After Jackson's death, Little Sorrel was paraded around for a bit under the care of Mrs. Jackson, enjoying his fame as much as a horse can reasonably be expected to enjoy human adoration. Eventually he was moved to the campus of the Virginia Military Institute where he grazed until he passed away in 1886 at the ripe age of 36 in human years.

The late Sorrel's body was given to a taxidermist who worked partially for money and partially for an agreed amount of the famous horse's bones, which he eventually gave to a museum in Pittsburgh. Little Sorrel's hide was stuffed and mounted in a simulacrum of life which can still be seen on display in the VMI Museum. However, the story does not end there.

Much later in 1997, a group of Daughters of the Confederacy, aghast at the thought of a Confederate animal's bones being so far from its heroic (if, by this point a bit tatty) skin, successfully lobbied to have the bones returned to VMI, where they could be spiritually reunited with their former flesh blanket. In honor of the horse's service and legacy, they burnt Little Sorrel's reclaimed skeleton to ashes and buried the remains in front of the "Stonewall" Jackson statue near the parade grounds.

The Charolais



Fig. 61. — Groupe trop horizontale (Jument Charentaise).

The Charolais or Charollais is an extinct breed of warmblood horse from the Charolais, the country lying around the town of Charolles, now in the Saône-et-Loire département of Burgundy, in eastern central France. Like other French warmbloods, it was the result of crossing local agricultural horses with the Thoroughbred, and was known by the name of the region without ever having a specific stud-book. And, like other French warmbloods including the Angevin, the Charentais, the Cheval Limousin and the Vendéen, it was fused with the Anglo-Normand in 1958 in order to create the national warmblood stud-book, the Selle français.

It was originally used as a multi-purpose horse for riding, driving, and agriculture. During the late 19th century, additional Thoroughbred blood was added and a new type emerged that was principally used as a light cavalry mount. It was also used for dressage and show jumping.

The original ancestors of the Charolais include the Cheval Bourguignon (Burgundy Horse), which developed from horses bred in the Burgundy region in the Middle Ages. Although small, Burgundy horses were known for their endurance and robustness. They were used for riding and agriculture, and as coach horses. This type, combined with other blood, developed into the Charolais, which belonged to a group of French breeds called *demi-sang* or "half-bloods" – crosses between native breeds and Thoroughbreds. Some 19th- and early 20th-century sources claim that Arabian blood was also added from horses captured from the Saracens after the Battle of Poitiers.

The Charolais breed was small, and most closely physically resembled the Morvan horse, another now-extinct French type. The breed had a short head with small ears and a short, strong neck attached low on the shoulder. The body was short and rounded, with a broad croup and strong legs. They were generally considered to be small and inelegant. They were strong, robust, and hardy, the last of these traits especially so before the breeding changes of the 19th century and were known for their pulling power.

The Charolais was appreciated for its gaits and endurance and it was known for its ability as a cavalry horse, in 1933 was called a perfect war horse. For sports it was considered to be a better galloper than the Anglo-Norman horse, another French breed, which was a benefit in jumping competitions, and had a lofty, powerful gait for Dressage competitions, especially once the Thoroughbred blood was infused in the early 1900s.

This breed disappeared in the 1950s to make way for the regulated and legitimate French warmblood horse, the Selle Français.

Cont'd from page 1

but had a healthy olive complexion and glow, and her hair—a beautiful silver and white—was soft, thick, and smooth. I later learned she served in the Navy Women's Reserve during WWII as a cryptography specialist, decoding messages to and from top Naval officers. At 94 years old, she now suffered from advanced Alzheimer's and had trouble deciphering simple communication, but she was ready to resurrect nostalgia from the Valley's early days. I went with them to Tonda's house on the outskirts of town, where Ellenora also lived.

"Now, who lives here?" Ellenora asked as we crossed the threshold. "You do, Mother. We were only gone for an hour or so. You live here now. I take care of you." In some ways, Tonda seemed more weathered than her mother. We walked past an old photo of Andy Barker, handsome and suave on his high horse. As Ellenora would later assure me, he was very good-looking. Next to her father's portrait were images of Tonda as a graceful cowgirl adorned with prizes, from the age of seven through her early twenties. She was a beautiful young lady, naturally blonde with a pointed chin and bright white teeth. Her father's spitting image.

As her mother's health and mind slid further and further into limbo, Tonda moved back to her home in Love Valley, which had slipped into disrepair. Ellenora spoke to me in spits and spats about Love Valley, and Tonda served as a translator of memory. The heyday of this tiny town was from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s. During this time the love was thriving. Ellenora told me that's why Andy named it Love Valley: "He said, 'I'm gonna name this town Love Valley because I love people.' And that's exactly what we did." Mr. and Mrs. Barker looked the part of a classic American couple in high-waisted blue jeans and plaid shirts. At first they marketed the town as a sort of resort dude ranch, where families could kick up their feet for the weekend, enjoy the outdoors, and ride horses. In 1954, they started building houses and inviting families, members of neighboring towns, and good buddies to relocate. More and more people started coming, and the Love Valley church began congregating outdoors to accommodate all the Westerners in North Carolina.

Newcomers started a local newspaper called The Smoke Signal. They opened successful shops—tack and otherwise. And even Belk opened a small department store to sell riding clothes. Joe Ponder, who opened a leather shop, set Guinness world records for having the strongest teeth—bending steel rods, pulling railroad cars and trucks, smashing cement blocks, lifting women and donkeys, firing machine guns, and once attempting the Death Slide, where he zip-lined fifty feet, holding on by only his teeth, but fell, crushing both of his ankles. Lots of famous people visited; French, Japanese, and Pakistani ambassadors slept over, and President Lyndon B. Johnson once stood waving from a horse-drawn wagon on Main Street.

The area has been in recovery since 1970, when the Allman Brothers came for the Love Valley Rock Festival and brought 150,000 fans or more to the village of 72 people. Tonda convinced her Daddy to let them come. She'd been working in the music scene, and he'd seen the hippies on TV. They were all about love, and they just needed a place to stay. As it's told, the hippies ruined the town, sold drugs and got reckless, left it a mess. A decent number of "longhairs" stayed behind after the festival, bearded and braless. The community was furious, the town's image was going the way of the freak. The hippies fought with the local cowboys, then the outlaws came in toting guns and buying the pot that was growing in Love Valley's fields. Andy Barker ran for governor on the Democratic ticket and lost.

Numerous Western films used the town's Main Street as a backdrop—classic Westerns, spaghetti Westerns, zombie Westerns. The 1990s were excessively intoxicated, and Love Valley's bad reputation was spiraling out of control, shifting from the Cowboy Capital to the Drunk Capital. Roughneck gangs got in fights all the time and motorcycle ride-ins overtook the pleasantries of the horse-drawn buggy. After the economy crashed in 2008, matters got worse. Most residents were either retired, on disability, or unemployed.

I returned to Love Valley in my cowgirl boots, promptly stepping in horse shit. There was a Chili Cook-Off I was told I just had to see. But I missed the chili, or at least I didn't see it. When I got there, they'd just started to auction off cuts of meat and pecan pies to raise money for Hospice care when it started to rain. I called up Tonda to see how she was doing, curious about what she and Mother might be up to. "You know, I was thinking of you," she said. "I want to show you something. If you're through with that chili, why don't you meet me across from the gift shop." Of course I'd meet her.

WILDWOOD FARM Clips & Clops Newsletter

2326 Happy Valley Rd
Oak Harbor WA 98277

I waited for her on a covered wooden sidewalk outside a saloon-house made of rough-hewn timber. When Tonda arrived, she greeted me kindly and hastily made her way to the front door, which opened to an unbelievable site. "This is Miss Ellenora's old house, where she lived until I came back to help her." At the top of the front door was a painting of Andy Barker in a cowboy hat and scarf. A poster of John Wayne was plastered to a rusting fridge. The rest of the room was shelved, floor to ceiling, with a variety of papers and boxes. "I can't bring Mother here because she'll be confused and upset." She pulled down a box of negatives from the shelf, and I was amazed: they contained Ellenora's documentation of Love Valley, organized and categorized with her lovely scrawl. Tonda left me alone for five or more hours that afternoon to rove through the past in a sea of photo albums, 4 x 5 negatives, 8 and 16mm film reels, and stacks of scrapbooks.

I held the negatives up to the light and saw beautiful rodeo queens in dresses and immaculate cowboys standing tall. Groups cooked around campfires with guitars in hand, and friends circled around to join. The experiment looked to be going well—in fact, it looked ideal. The scrapbooks were full of newspaper clippings, which told the story of Andy's heroic effort to realize the myth of the Old West. He was described as having unlimited confidence, with a personality well suited for boosterism. He asserted that his love for horses, people, and guns led him to begin this adventure in Iredell County.

I knew from Tonda that there were very few people in Love Valley who had been there from the beginning, and so very few there today know the story well. I stumbled into a drawer of old film reels. One was called "Old Town Scenes," another "Miscellaneous Horses." I unhooked the lid, took out the film, and smelled the pungent scent of vinegar. The chemical reaction of natural change was underway, the emulsion was slipping. I could save these images. I had faith in the Western failure, in Ellenora and Andy's outsized patriotic dream. Love Valley offered the freedom to be a hero, self-reliant, rugged, and the Barkers' vision was no gimmick.

When Tonda returned hours later, she found me on the floor surrounded by dozens of boxes I'd sorted through. I told her I should head home, but I did not want to part with Love Valley yet. I asked her, sheepishly, if it would be possible for me to bring some of these home to work on scanning and digitizing. She sent me off with a handful of boxed negatives, scrapbooks, and film reels. I made my way to my car hurriedly, nervous that anything would happen to these materials in the rain, though I triple-bagged them. As I pulled away from Love Valley, it was dark and the eyes of horses along the hitching rail reflected my headlights. Stray but well-fed dogs waddled on their way to see me out. On the radio I heard "(Ghost) Riders in the Sky" by Riders in the Sky. "Yippie yi ooh," they crooned. "Yippie yi yay." And the rolling hills parted.

