

YOU'RE GETTING MY GOAT!

(Written by Marvelyn Reuer)

When we moved to the farm near Wetaskiwin, Alberta, in 1980, we were in the business of raising Quarter Horses. Since I'm not really a horse lover Ken did all the necessary work and training involved.

I decided that since he was working with the horses, I'd like to have a pet goat, more my size and style. Upon discussing it with Ken he immediately said NO! Now Ken doesn't always mean NO when he says it. In fact no matter what I ask him he always says NO! I learned early on in our marriage that NO can mean yes, maybe or no. This was definitely a no-no, so I started working on him to convince him a goat would be a good investment. I explained that if we got a milking doe, I would milk it morning and night, we could separate the milk, have cream and butter on the table and buy a little calf or pig to feed the separated milk to, then have our own meat in the fall (all this from only one goat??)! I even got some goat milk from a friend and had it compare it to cow's milk to see the difference....I could tell this was working on him. Since he no longer had the time to go big-game hunting he could now butcher our own meat and make his famous home-made sausage again. 'We' decided that I could have a goat!!

One evening we hooked up the horse trailer and away we went to pick up our goat. I didn't realize how small a goat was as I was used to cows and hadn't even see a real goat up close. I picked out the goat that I wanted and her name was Jennifer. Now to show you just how much Ken had mellowed, he said, 'we may as well get two of them as one would be lonesome'! I let him pick out the second one which was named Abigail and we put the two small animals into the horse trailer. I could tell that the people we bought the goats from were trying to keep from laughing at us inexperienced goat farmers! We could have brought a large box along and hauled them in the back of the truck as this horse trailer almost hid them from our sight.

The first thing I learned about goats is that they had only two spigots instead of four like a cow, and that they had to be on a stand in order to milk them. So Ken built me a milking stand, hooked up the cream separator, bought a little calf and we were in the goat business.

While I was enjoying my new found 'hobby', Ken was busy building some sheds for them. We had a three board fence that we were going to keep the goats in. The second thing we learned about goats is that a board fence will not keep goats in!! They crawled over, under and in-between to get in and out as they pleased. They stripped our newly planted tree's up as far as they could reach, cleaned out the garden, and came up on the patio and into the house whenever the doors weren't closed tight. In general they were a nuisance! Once when Ken was up on the barn roof doing some work, Jennifer knocked the ladder over so he couldn't get down and he had to stay there until I got home from work.

She ate the chalk-line Ken was using as a level and would grab any tools that were lying on the ground and take off across the field with them. It seemed Ken was always chasing her for something or other and there sure was a lot of yelling going on! One time we were roofing the pig barn and the pail holding the nails seemed to be going down rather fast. We both thought the other one was using a lot of nails when we happened to notice Jennifer was chewing loudly behind us. Upon examining her mouth we found it to be full of nails. She had eaten almost a half of an ice-cream pail of roofing nails! We had to get her to swallow a magnet to get all the nails to go into one of her five stomach's!

She loved to be petted as then she could get into your pockets and eat

anything you may have in there! Ken finally discovered that goats hate water so everytime she'd pester him he'd dunk her head in the water trough. That worked as long as he was on ground level close to water but if he was on a ladder or roof she'd get even by grabbing some of his tools and taking off across the field.

Abigail meanwhile was watching and learning.....

We finally fenced off a section of fence with reinforced chicken wire and boards which kept them in.

By this time Ken was enjoying the cream and butter so we got several more goats. Thank goodness there was only one 'Jennifer' which he threatened to sell every second day! We had only milking doe's so we rented a buck and had our girls bred. Five months later we had 12 little kids which we bottle fed. Then we put them in a kid-proof fence and as I thought they needed something to amuse them, while Ken was away.....I went to an auto wrecking yard and bought an old car for them. I got the car for nothing but it cost me \$15.00 to have it hauled home and \$150.00 to have the fence reinforced.....but those kids loved to jump on that car! It never dawned on me that if they ever got out of the fence and spotted a vehicle on the yard they would think...just another toy!! Well that's another story!

I had two little kids that were my special pets and when I'd walk to get the mail which was a mile down the road, I'd have two goat kids, five cats and two dogs following me. The neighbors got a laugh out of that! We couldn't keep all the kids so we sold the bucks for meat and kept the doe's for milking. We were now milking sixteen goats, feeding more calves so that in three years we had enough heifer calves to start our own range herd.

We were now in the range cow business and decided to get out of the goat business as it really tied us to the farm having to milk goats twice a day. Our goat farming lasted only about three years but it was an experience we're not likely to forget and some of the most 'fun' times, well for me anyway!

Walking in Gods will

This is another one of my memoirs, to read more, go to <http://burningbushcrusades.com/> and click on memoirs.

Bro. Ken