

# After 9 years the trail (and pen) beckoned

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*It wasn't that I had a yen to be back in the saddle again, Nor was it a driving ambition it was a story for the Stampede edition*

Well, I did it again. I got back in the saddle after nine years.

The afternoon was glorious, just right for a trail ride. The sun shone and there was a light breeze as we — six Stampede Queen contestants, family, friends, followers and me, foolhardy Angela Stubbs who had only ridden a horse once before — set to mount our trusty steeds at the Lehr Ranch.

"Where's the fork-lift truck," I asked Ken Lehr, trail boss.

He just grinned.

"No front end loader?"

"Nope. You'll be all right," he said soothingly. "We'll give you a hand."

After a mini-lesson on steering (reining), I settled myself in the saddle, straightened my back, uttered a prayer that I would neither fall off nor break a nail, then headed off after the rest of the gang.

Ken told me my mount had no name, he was just known as one of the Cook's horses. He was gentle, but he loved to trot. When he did that, everything that could jiggle, did. He must have felt the ensuing seismic tremors each time, but it didn't stop him from doing it — again and again and again.

It was a good job I didn't take a camera with me. I'd have ended up with two black eyes, a broken nose and dents in my chin

to say nothing of what would have happened to my ample bosom from which it would have bounced.

We headed across a field, along the river bank, through waist-high grass and trees.

When we came to a small clearing I looked up at the cliffs, thinking, thank goodness we're turning round here.

Silly me.

The only way to go was up — WAY UP.

Well, I thought, I don't have any choice. Never mind that British stiff upper lip, I'm a Canadian citizen now and living in cowboy country, so go with the flow.

Oh boy, what a climb. I managed to hang on by the skin of my teeth and when we reached a plateau I smugly sat there saying to myself, that wasn't so bad after all.

I drank in the view. It took my breath away. The peace and quiet, the river glinting in the late afternoon sun, cattle grazing and the myriad of greens all under a bright blue sky.

My peaceful thoughts came to an abrupt end when I realized we were only half-way up the cliffs.

Again I made it, but what goes up must come down. And going down such a steep incline for the first time would have been fun if my dear old horse hadn't decided he'd like to hustle his flanks a little. My foot slipped out of the stirrup and I clung on for dear life.

Oh, heck, I thought, I'm going to fall off. Shoot, never mind the ignominy of falling off, what if I broke a nail!

As luck would have it, I ended up back in the saddle, foot safely ensconced in the stirrup thanks to Shelley Chomistek.



**Heading out on the trail after nine years out of the saddle, Angela Stubbs was hot to trot. But as she soon found out, there's more to riding than just sitting in a saddle.**

She's such a nice kid, it's no wonder she ended up as Miss Rodeo Canada in 1984.

Just as I'd re-established my equilibrium, we ascended again. Topping the rise I breathed a sigh of relief. I'm at the top and the only way down to the ranch is by the road — NO PROBLEM!

All that jogging must have rattled my brains. Down the road, no way. Down the coulee was more like it.

I survived once again.

By this time my legs were becoming a little sore to say nothing of my assets. But ever onward.

On the home stretch nameless decided he wanted to be up front and nobody was going to get in his way. If I said 'coming through' once I said it half a dozen times and each time I had to pull back on the reins to stop him from trotting.

I could feel his energy building and I knew what was in store.

He wanted to head for home at a gallop.

Over my aching body was he going to do that.

I was firm, I was determined and I won!

We headed into the yard slowly and thankfully I steered him through the gate where two riders were waiting. One was Ken Lehr. "If you haven't ridden for some time you may go weak at the knees so get down slowly," he warned.

I hauled my right leg over the saddle, got it on terra firma and felt it give way.

I steadied myself, but my left foot got stuck in the stirrup and I slid unceremoniously toward the ground.

Thank goodness Ken caught me, but bless his heart he must have arms like an orangutan now.

I could hardly make it to the gate, my legs felt like jello and to add insult to

injury I couldn't stop laughing at the sight I must have made.

I thought, to heck with it, maybe I look drunk as a skunk, but who cares. I had thoroughly enjoyed myself.

Back at the ranch I received some good-natured teasing and a lot of 'wait 'til tomorrow'.

Of course I was given plenty of advice.

"Just take a hot bath when you get home," said Jane Faure, horsemanship judge.

"Put Epsom salts in it," said another lady.

"Drink dill pickle juice," said Bert Niwa. Drink dill pickle juice?

"Yes. Drink half to a whole cup of juice then take a hot bath," he said. "You'll be fine in the morning."

"I don't know if you're serious or not," I responded.

But he insisted on more than one occasion that he was. However, the twinkle in his eyes belied the words on his lips.

I thought, if I'm going to get pickled it will be with the juice of the grape, not the juice of the dill.

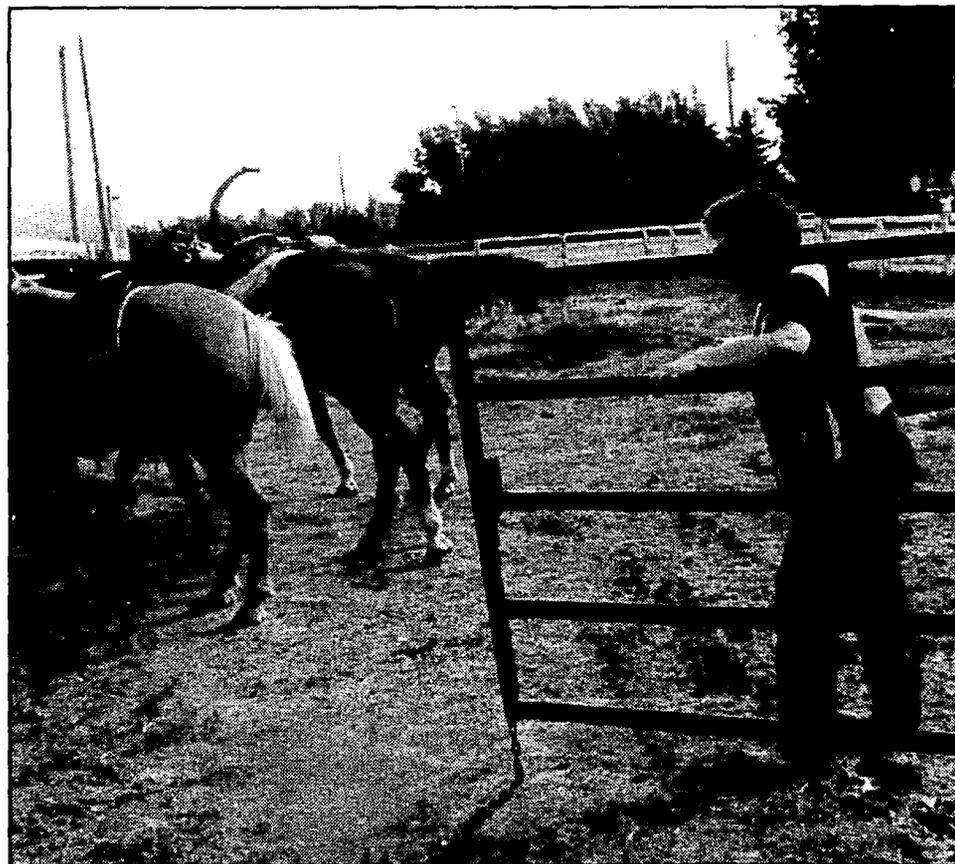
I also got an offer to massage my sore points and to rub saddle soap into my saddle sores. I declined gracefully and decided to take Jane Faure's advice.

Next morning all was fine except for two small pressure points on my posterior and one on each knee.

Not bad for only the second time around. I'd had a ball. And miracles of miracles — I didn't break a nail!

I have no regrets, but . . .

*If I ever should get a real yen to get back in the saddle again, Someone else can have the mission of writing a story for Stampede edition.*



**The end, so to speak, came soon enough and writer Stubbs headed off for a rest as the horses relaxed after a job well done. It was an experience she enjoyed but she's not likely to do it again too soon.**