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The Horseman's Protégé

With seventy years separating them, this cowboy and his young friend are drawn together by an inspired flair for horses and mules and an abiding respect for one another. By Marjorie Haun

Ked Somerville

Kedric "Ked" Somerville's ranching roots go way back in southern Utah history. He was born in 1936 and raised on his large family ranch that covered some of the prettiest acreage in San Juan County. His dad was a partner in the Scrup-Somerville Cattle Company and when Ked was a young man they ran cows on the Spring Creek part of the operation. Traversing the slopes of mountain ranges, slickrock arroyos, and vast stretches of sagebrush and pinion country, the S&S Cattle Co. ran up to 10,000 head at a time.

While a tender adolescent, Ked struck up a friendship with Zina "Marleen" Rasmussen, a girl also born in 1936. Her family were wheat farmers and owned a place near Peter's Point, north of Monticello. Although his home was some 10 miles away, Ked would look out towards the Rasmussen farm and think of that sweet Marleen. Whenever he could find a suitable excuse, he would ride the 10 miles to drop in on her and her family.

"There were so many deer in the hay fields," Ked says, "so one time I shot a doe and gutted her out right there in the field and sacked up the carcass and tied her on behind my saddle." He continues with a smile, "Then I

took that deer to Marleen's dad, kind of like a token of trade...a buckskin for your daughter."

At 21 he married Marleen, and they both attended Brigham Young University for a year.

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They decided then to start a ranch of their own. Ked was serious-minded and determined to put out the best cattle he could.

Ked and Marleen raised a girl, Tracy, born in 1957, and a boy, Kody, born in 1959. For 40 years, Ked ranched and raised his own line of registered Simmental cattle. Although never more than 50 to 60 head, his little herd had premium DNA. Ked's reputation was such

that he had cattlemen purchasing bulls from his ads in the Utah Farm Bureau newspaper, sight unseen. While he was breeding and selling his bulls, Marleen watched over the farm operation. Ked says: "We were irrigating and growing hay, and Marleen was right in the middle of all that. When I needed help she was there."

In April of 2011 Marleen was diagnosed with lung cancer. "The doctor gave her all the alternatives for treatment," Ked says, "but she just didn't want to go through all that." After five months, Marleen passed away on Sept. 1, 2011.

With the loss of Marleen, Ked sold his cows to a family in Spanish Fork who had been building their herd from his own Simmental stock. He describes the transaction: "They came down to get some heifers and when they got here they looked over the fence and said, 'How about your herd?' and I said, 'Okay, let's make a deal over this gate right here, right now,' fore I change my mind."

It was a provident moment for Ked. "These folks loved my cows and, in fact, now they have one of the best Simmental bull sales in the state." And as providence would have it, before Marleen left his side, Ked met Boden

Carpenter, who was just five at the time. Boden would come, not to fill a void, but to create a new space in Ked's heart, and bring a different kind of love into his life.

Bode Carpenter

Boden "Bode" Carpenter was born in 2006 and as a newborn was adopted in Detroit, Mich., and taken by his new parents to their home in Kearns, Utah. The story goes that his parents thought they would be adopting a girl, but what they got was a boy with unbounded giddy-up and enormous nerve.

Bode's family was not content in Kearns so they moved south to Monticello to be close to his grandparents. "One day," Bode says, "I was sitting watching TV and I was bored, so my grandpa said, 'C'mon, I'm going to take you down to Ked's.'" Bode asked, "Who's Ked?" and Grandpa said, "Never mind, just get in the truck." That day, little Bode's life changed forever.

Ked happened to be an old friend of Bode's granddad. Though he had sold his cows, Ked kept his horses and a couple of Tennessee Walker-cross mules; a molly named Kick and a 17-hand john named Honk. "When we got to Ked's I saw Honk and I petted his nose and that was it," Bode says. "I just never left. I kept coming back and coming back."

A Rare Friendship

Bode's important training has been at Ked's hand, and his affinity for the corrals and the horses has resulted in a lot of daring-do. When he was seven, Bode rode on Kick along with Ked up to Peter's Point. "I didn't know what I was doing. I had no clue, and there was this big ledge the mules had to jump up onto, and the mule took a big old hop and it scared me so much I just wanted to get off and walk home."

Ked adds: "I had no idea what was going through his mind. I just looked back and he was still in the saddle so I kept on going."

For his baptism at eight years of age, Bode was given a Shetland-quarter horse mare named Ruby, and he's now in the process of breaking his own palomino colt.

Bode's hardest lessons, however, have been on the range, cowboying for the J-Bar Ranch near Mexican Hat. At 83, Ked still hires out as a cowboy, and Bode is his sidekick. According to Ked, together they put on between 1,000 and 2,000 miles a year pushing cows and trail riding, primarily on the backs of Honk and Kick. With unwavering trust Bode is always at Ked's side, learning not by verbal instruction, but by careful, daily observation. Growing tall and strong and

with hands bigger than most men's, Bode never shies away from challenges, and has become adept at roping, even while standing on Kick's saddle.

Ked smiles and says: "He's just an acrobat. He ain't broke anything yet."

A gifted and creative horseman, Bode is unlike other young men his age. But more important than his innate passion for horses is the exceptional quality of his heart. Ked says: "He's not like any other boy I know. He's so courteous. When we go to town he's always looking for a lady so he can open the door for her. Or if we're at the post office and someone drops something, he'll pick it up for them. It's just built into him, you know. I've learned a lot about how to be a decent person from Bode."

Ked and Bode, though generations apart, are cut from the same resilient and colorful cloth. To Ked, his time spent with Bode is an investment in the future of a fine young man. To Bode, Ked is a fountain of knowledge, a patient mentor, and a jovial partner. With a rare friendship that transcends age and the mundane limits of life, Ked and Bode exemplify the adage, "The best thing for the inside of a man is the outside of a horse." ■



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Literally learning the ropes at age seven, Bode urges Kick through a mud hole on the range. ► Each year Ked and Bode hire out to the J-Bar Ranch to move cows through the Utah desert. ► On his Monticello farm, Ked talks horses and life with Bode. ► Bode practices roping on Ked's home-crafted steer.