

Stories from the Shed:

Why I don't ride horses

Tvede, Kim (2020)

- **Story-teller's** cultural background: **Danish-Australian**
- **Categories:** Rural, Travel, Unexpected outcomes
- Kim's story shows how a 'townie' ends up in three horse-related incidents that had unexpected outcomes. Sometimes one just has to laugh at what life throws at us and we fortunately usually survive to tell the tale.

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Why I don't ride horses

Kim Tvede

I was born in 1952, and am a Danish-born Australian, migrating to Australia with my family in 1956. We moved to Mount Gravatt where I did my schooling, and then worked over much of Queensland, mostly as a teacher, before retiring in 2015.

While I have lived in both city and rural towns, and enjoyed bushwalking and visiting friends, colleagues and clients on farms and rural properties, essentially I am a 'townie'. While I ride bicycles, and rode motorcycles, one form of riding I have never embraced was horse riding. Competitive and challenge-loving as I am, horse-riding is not one of my favoured activities. Three experiences probably illustrate why.

Snowy trip with mate, David

Around 1971, Military Conscription and Vietnam were pending. As it turned out, with Whitlam coming in to government, we never had to go, our respective date-marbles never even came up, but my mate, David, and I didn't know that, and decided to spend some free-wheeling time and go on a road trip, before possibly facing military discipline on our movements.

We figured we might get our fill of damp jungle landscapes so elected to head for the Snowy Mountains in David's *Morris 850cc*

mini. To this David fitted a roof-camper that could fold out with a canvass tent beside the car, a double-bed on the roof of the car, and a peaked roof over all of that. With our food-stuff and travel gear mostly on the back seat, off we went.



Heading home after a great trip, we went inland and up the Newell Highway. It was so boringly straight and with so little traffic we might have amused ourselves driving in less than approved fashion. Fortunately we did not harm even the wildlife, except, perhaps, some insects that had to keep being cleaned off the windscreen.

Hunting and horses

Coming through Goondiwindi we decided to call in on a sheep grazier family I knew. I had previously stayed on one of their properties, and this time we were offered a place for the night at the home where the family's daughter, Jacqui, was back from Uni for the break. We had my .22LR single-shot rifle with us. They had a perpetual rabbit problem. So with us taking turns at lying on the car-camper on the roof while the other drove, and with Jacqui on the spotlight, we went rabbit hunting. The dogs had a few rabbits that night. I wish I could say they were all clean kills, but no, it fell to Jacqui, after berating us to "*wring their necks,*" to do it herself. We were clearly not country-born and bred.

On a previous visit, I had also been hunting on horse-back with the younger grazier family set. They had a .222 rifle and were after pigs. Now a .222, I know, is a bit light for pigs, in my view, but those country kids were very accurate shooters. However, events transpired that I never actually saw such a shot. It was incumbent on all riders to saddle their own horse. I duly did mine as I followed the actions of my fellow riders.

Off we went. In a back paddock with long grass, gidgee timber and various pest plants like burr, we came upon some pigs. Aim was taken from horseback. Remember these were stock horses, not riding-school trained animals. A shot was fired, an unseen pig came out of the long grass and under the shooter's horse, tusks up trying to disembowel it. The horse bucked to escape the flashing white razors, but that was all I saw.

I am not a horseman. I have never been instructed, and learned most of what I knew about horse-riding from watching western movies starring, usually, John Wayne. At the sound of the shot, my horse bolted at full gallop. I just managed to hang on, and when it seemed the horse was not keen on stopping any time soon, I gradually wheeled it in big circles which gradually got smaller as we continued to run in a decreasing-sized spiral.

The horse stopped. By then my saddle was on the side of the horse and I was riding as if I were an attacking 'Indian' in a 'Western' movie hiding behind my horse for cover. With the horse stopped, I fell off into a big patch of burr. I was cognisant

enough to keep hold of the reins. Covered in burr, and with a puffing horse, I started refitting the saddle, and when tightening the cinch-strap around the torso of the horse, I noticed it take a deep breath and inflate its lungs and hold it. Now I knew why my saddle had slipped in the first place.

I am no horseman, but I was covered in prickly burr and a bit cranky with that horse. I raised my knee while holding the strap ready to tighten it, and kneed that horse right in the solar-plexus. As the breath went out, I managed to secure the saddle more tightly than I had back at the homestead. The other riders turned up as I was removing burrs from all sorts of uncomfortable places. I even took them off the horse.

On the return journey, that horse, which had probably known from the moment it met me that I was no horseman, was in a hurry to get home, and rid of me, I guess. Anyway, it started trotting, and then a more moderate gallop than the previous bolt. It started running close to trees and under low-hanging branches. I worked out it was planning on not waiting till we got home to get me off its back. While I was lifting a leg away from a tree or ducking or leaning backwards away from branches at head-height, I didn't really notice much else. Suddenly I hit my nose on its neck. That hurt, and the blood flowed. Then I was suddenly leaning back and could see the horse's hooves behind me, in the air, with tree-tops visible behind them. The damned 'horse-from-hell' was trying to throw me!

My companions finally rode along-side and hemmed the horse in and it calmed down for a reasonable trot home. That experience has left me with a degree of caution around horses. I can pat them, feed them, take care of them, but I seldom get convinced that riding them would be a good idea. That is, until Maxine's and my honeymoon.

A honeymoon horsing-around experience

When we married in 1975, Maxine and I had a stay at the Binnaburra Lodge on Lamington Plateau. It was lovely, even though we found service staff didn't think a *'Do not disturb'* sign on the door meant one might still be in bed and not out on a track somewhere.

One day we were out and had booked into a horse-riding experience. Fronting up, the horsehandler/ guide asked who had experience riding horses. Maxine and I put our hands up. He said, *"Right, you two can have these pair, they're a bit lively and not as docile as the others."*...

"Hmmmm," I thought.



We set off over hill and dale, with open-cleared paddocks and tracks in timbered areas in fairly even proportions and all was

well ... until we got to the top of a high rise, with the vista below of an extended grassy paddock with a few ring-barked fallen trees dotted through it. *“Okay folks, we have gone fairly gently and you are all handling your horses well. Anyone who wants a gallop down the hill, we will all meet at the gate. You can see it there, about six hundred metres away down the slope and up against some timber.”*

Well, this must have been a regular routine for those horses. Without further ado, Maxine and my horses took off at full gallop down the slope. Maxine’s was in front, mine was straining to catch hers. All went well until they ran at one of those large, fallen, ring-barked trees. I thought they were going to jump, so did Maxine. But her horse suddenly came to a complete halt, but not Maxine. A ju-jitsu and judo player, she sailed over the horse, over the log, and landed with a perfect judo break-fall manoeuvre, while my horse veered around the log and stopped close to where Maxine was picking herself out of the long grass. Nothing broken. The others caught us up. We didn’t book into any more rides.

Bush-walking with stock horses

Years later, in the company of Maxine and her teaching partner, Audrey, with her partner, Tony, we were walking through a big horse paddock on the way to the *Lower Portals* on *Barney Gorge* in the border ranges. We were eating apples. A horse approached with an interest in our apples. I gave him some of mine, Maxine gave him some, Audrey gave him some. Tony said

he wasn't sharing his apple with "*some ignorant, pushy horse, just because it asks!*" The horse promptly turned around and kicked backwards, hitting Tony firmly on his buttocks and he flew some distance before collapsing on the ground. He had a perfect imprint of a horse shoe on his skin for weeks.

Funnily enough, Audrey and Tony married, settled on acreage, and took up raising race horses... Go figure. Me, I usually try to limit my admiration for horses while having both of my feet planted firmly on the ground.

1,580 words by Kim Tvede (MGMS member 562).