

MUSTANG BLUE

Run! Run! Run!, That terrible loud noise was deafening! A huge bird swooped outta the sky descending on the sleeping horse herd! Fear and the fleeing instinct sent the herd thundering south through the valley in a blinding roar! Blue was six months old and had been sleeping on the ground near his grazing Mother, when the noise scared him awake, and jumping to his feet fleeing in terror with the rest of the herd! That terrible noisy bird followed closely behind the herd swooping back and forth pushing the herd out onto the plains beyond the canyon sanctuary. Blue was a Tiger Mustang, son of Blue Moon the wild stallion that commanded this wild herd of thirty five mixed mares and foals. His herd had been spotted in this hidden canyon near the famous Hualapai Mountain Range in northern Arizona and the herd was being pushed to a trap where the larger adult animals would be crowded and loaded into waiting trucks for shipment to slaughter yards. During the 1950's this was a common practice that many ranchers favored as it provided better and more abundant feed for their cattle. Many meat supplier companies were using helicopter and small airplane aides to locate and corral the wild Mustangs. Business was good as long as the supply lasted. Horsemeat was favored by a number of nations for food and in the US for Dog Food.

The fear and blinding dust confused the horses and they ran terror stricken away from the noisy bird. Blue ran dodging the larger horses and tried to stay near his Mother, but after four hard miles of running, his young legs were weary and he fell farther and farther behind. Soon, the big Bird had passed him by and he trailed the herd at a distance trying to stay in sight of his Mother. All of the younger foals were scattered out behind, some terribly injured in the drive and most laying down; too tired to walk. Abandoned! All of these young foals would be victims of coyotes and mountain lions, or die miserably of starvation

and thirst. Blue continued on doggedly at a slow tired trot following the distant dust cloud and attempting to smell scent of his Mother in the churned up ground.

Hours later, Blue encountered a small stream and refreshed himself . The trail of the herd reaching into the distance, lured him on. It was nearing dark as he approached the trap. Two riders on horse back were dragging something from the gate. Scared, Blue hung back in the gathering darkness, fear of horseback riders was something all of the wild herd had learned from Blue Moon the herd stallion. There were no other horses in the pens. Trucks had loaded them all out and they were on their way to the Slaughter pens. His Mother was gone! Blue was hidden in the brush when the two riders drug the body of a dead horse into a nearby wash . He watched in fear as the two men loaded up their horses and drove away.

Cautiously walking around the fenced walls of the trap, Blue approached sniffing the dead animal. Oh No! It was the body of Blue Moon, his Father! Anxiously, Blue pawed the dead body, but to no avail. Blue Moon had valiantly fought to the death trying to escape and save his herd. He had broken his back attempting to tear down and jump the walls! Mercifully one of the cowboys had put a bullet in his head ending his suffering. This same cowboy would the next day, ride back along the trail killing the young foals that were suffering and dying. Apparently he did this work to earn a living, but didn't like it! Some of the other wranglers considered his compassion a waste of ammunition.

Blue, in the manner of all wild animals followed his survival instincts. He wandered back in the direction of water and food. The horse trap was terrible and frightening . A place of fear and death! Blue walked back forlornly alone, occasionally nickering in plaintive despair and fear calling for a Mother that he would never see again. Instinctively, he headed in the direction of the only home that he knew; the canyon

in the Hualapai Mountain Range. Some of the other older survivors wandered back also. The group numbered five, an older brown colt and three young fillies. This was all that was left of a once proud and beautiful herd of Spanish Mustangs!

A few weeks passed in lonesome despair ,with all the young horses herding together for comfort. It was all peace and quiet until horseback riders pushed a small herd of cattle into the canyon. The riders immediately dismounted, grabbed rifles, and began to shoot the small group of young Mustangs! Bullets were hitting all around Blue and once again fear took over spooking him out of the canyon. Blue and the other colt were faster runners than the fillies. They escaped to the Leaning Tree Mesa above the Canyon, but the three fillies were killed! Blue and the other colt were now the only remaining survivors of Blue Moon's herd. This was a prime protected canyon and would be great for winter feed for a local ranch herd of selected cattle . Mustangs were considered worthless, wasted good cattle feed, and the range would be better off without them. Blue and his companion had been given the Death Sentence; they were to be shot on sight !

The Leaning Tree Mesa offered a long plateau of mixed rock formation , scrub grass and thick brushy areas. Traveling north to the upper end, Blue and the brown colt encountered a small group of Burros. When they tried to join the herd, a black Jack Burro viciously attacked the two colts inflicting kicks and bites before the two youngsters could run, out distancing the Stallion Jack. There was ample feed and water on the Mesa, but the two colts had to maintain a safe distance and stay constantly on alert for attack. This alertness saved Blue's life when he spotted horsemen in the distance . The Stallion Jack was an old hand at eluding these killer cowboys. At Blue's alarm and snort of fear, the burros disappeared into the brush! Racing for cover in the rocky terrain Blue and the Brown colt were distant targets. Some of the horsemen had quickly dismounted and started shooting. Blue scooted for all he was worth. His terrible fear of the shooting sounds

pushed him far in front of the brown colt and his grey coloring made him difficult to see. The Brown was hit and staggered to a halt ! All the shooting was now directed toward the crippled Brown and he died as a sickening hail of bullets tore into his body!

Blue ran headlong through the rocky Mesa finally stopping on a small knoll below the skyline fearfully watching his back trail. The riders had turned back , riding toward the north end of the Mesa. Blue spent that night and many days thereafter near the south end of the Mesa. His fears kept him alert for any change within his view. The terrible fear and experiences he had lived through turned him into a very nervous and wary wild animal. Some time passed before his herding instinct for safety lured him back to the group of burros. The Stallion Jack chased him away every time he came too close, but his constant vigil for safety alerted ol'Jack of every intruder. Following two weeks of browsing in the close vicinity of the burros, Ol'Jack accepted Blue's presence as long as he didn't get too familiar with the Jennies. Blue soon learned to stay clear of the Jennies and enjoyed the company of the young burros. While with the burros , he learned all the tricks of hiding and standing still in the brush when the killer horsemen rode through the Mesa. His grey coloring and tiger striping on his legs effectively hid him from sight. He was very rarely seen and vanished like a ghost. Within the year, his reputation grew as a mystery horse and when ol' Jack attacked a walking stranded rider after dark and almost killed him, Blue; the ghost horse was blamed.

Two years passed and Blue had taken on the character and disposition of a burro. From a distance he blended in well with the group. He was no longer bolting away when the hated killers showed up and faded into the brush like all of the burros. Occasionally some cowboy would see him alone, standing on a high point watching the searching cowboys . Any move to pull a rifle and Blue would disappear. The cowboys told spooky stories of this mystery killer horse and his

reputation grew until every ranch in the county was on guard against this ghost horse.

Blue was only two years old, but when only seen through binoculars at long range, his reputation as a ghost horse grew. He had the perfect ancient markings of a Tiger Striped Spanish Mustang with a black dorsal stripe down his back and across his shoulders. His markings were very rare in northern Arizona and this characteristic added to the mystery surrounding a ghost like killer horse. Ranchers from up to fifty miles away were blaming Blue for wild stallion raids on their brood mares and any incident that was caused by wild mustang damage. Cattle stampedes and broken fences were all blamed on the mystery ghost killer stallion that lived on Leaning Tree Mesa! It was time to run Blue down and kill him! Ranchers from all around Hualapai Mountain sent armed riders to a round up on Leaning Tree to find and kill the Blue Mustang stallion.

At dawn on the first of October, a group of twelve armed riders came up on the Mesa and fanned out combing the terrain and brush looking for Blue. When shots were fired at some of the running burros, Blue was making tracks for the south end of the Mesa! His alertness had sent him scootin with the first horseman topping the ridge and the sound of shootin brought on that old all consuming fear causing him to run all out for safety. The much slower burros were being slaughtered by the cowboys! This barrage of shooting spurred Blue to greater efforts and he soon outdistanced the coming riders.

Approaching the south end of the mesa, Blue encountered a lone horseman blocking his escape route. A wild animal consumed with fear will try any means possible to escape. Blue was bolder than most. His sire Blue Moon had died attempting to jump an eight foot fence. The steep almost vertical side walls to the canyon below where Blue was born could not be climbed from below and it was almost certain death to attempt going down them! Without hesitation, Blue veered

from the trail and went over the side looking for the freedom and safety of the canyon below.

The horseman blocking his escape was Barlo Kelly owner of the adjacent circle O Cattle Ranch. It was his herd of mixed whiteface prize bulls and rare Texas longhorn cows that now occupied the canyon below. Riding to the edge of the wall , he quickly dismounted pulling his rifle and attempted to shoot Blue as he perilously slid on his haunches and fought his way down that steep canyon wall. Bullets were spanking the ground around Blue and ricocheting in every direction. Fear totally possessed Blue and nothing changed his flight path. His course was set and only a killing bullet or fall would stop him now. Half way to the bottom , Blue tripped and fell, but luck saved him as he rolled and scrambled back to his feet. Barlo was outta shells; he was reloading and then watched in horror as his shooting and the sliding cloud of gravel and dust from Blue's descent stampeded his prize bulls and longhorn herd straight into a ravine and over a twenty foot killing drop to the canyon floor on the east side of the canyon. Over half of his herd would have to be destroyed from injuries suffered in that drop. His prize bulls and selected longhorn herd would be virtually wiped out! A terrible and tremendous carnage and financial loss !

Blue, had no concern for a shocked and terribly angry Barlo ,or his loss. He slid to the bottom of the wall and scooted south as fast as he could. He had lost a lotta hair from his hock haunches and was bleeding in a number of places, but this burning pain only spurred him on. Freedom and safety was somewhere south and that's where he ran. Barlo would really have a reason to kill him now, but this was unknown to Blue; he traveled on! He had no knowledge that Barlo would hurriedly hire an Indian tracker to follow and kill him.

Two days later, Blue on high alert , saw a rider on the horizon! It was again time to run and he had long ago learned to travel like a burro

taking to cover whenever possible. Beginning the soft four footed easy lope of the Mustang, he could travel all day at this pace. The tracker following was soon to learn that carrying a heavy rider and saddle, his horse was no match for a lone Mustang on a long trip.

Billy Sandwalker was a full bloodied Piute Indian. His early years had been spent living in the mountains and desert. He was a good tracker and an excellent hunter. Barlo had offered two hundred dollars for tracking and killing Blue. Billy was a true horseman and didn't enjoy the prospects of killing a horse, but he needed the job and Blue had a glowing reputation as a destructive killer Stallion that needed to be put down. Billy had little doubt that with a little luck , he could sneak up on Blue within killing range and get the job done . He and his family needed that two hundred badly.

Twice he had studied the horse with his glasses and everything about Blue bothered him. He was too small, young looking and had no thickness of neck like a typical stallion. His hoof prints were also small, but there was nothing small or young about his cunning slyness and Billy got the feeling that Blue always knew how close he and his pack mule were . He stayed outta rifle range and used every available means to keep himself hidden. Four days and Billy was no closer to earning his two hundred. They were approaching the Stockton Hills and Billy knew there were a number of box canyons in these hills that could offer a trap for Blue if he entered the wrong one. Billy watched in amazement as Blue only hesitated at each box canyon and finally entered a brush covered cut through the mountain that was over ten miles long. Blue unknown to Billy, was following the smell on a game trail made by stray wild burros! If the burros avoided the canyon, so did Blue! Bad luck was Billy's lot. It started raining! Goodbye Blue and Goodbye to two hundred dollars. There was no way he could follow the Blue Mustang in the rain. It was time to go home and send Barlo a message of failure.

Billy headed home to his family living across the range in the old Ghost town of Hackberry. Billy had gone north to work on the Circle O Ranch owned by Barlo, but after this incident of killing off a complete Spanish Mustang herd just to get a little feed for his cattle, Billy was sickened that he had been a party to this slaughter. Looking back , he was glad that the Blue Mustang had got away. There was something about the character and wild freedom fighting spirit of the Stallion, that appealed to Billy.

The following day ,Billy arrived in the town of Stockton just north of Kingman. His white pack mule Belle needed new shoes and he stopped in at a local Ranch to get information. A Ferrier Shop was just outside of town and owned by a Marve Duntley. Duntley said, “You an Indian ?” Billy was thinking , “ Here it is again! Some folks cain’t get over the fact that Indians are people like everyone else and just trying to get along!” Billy answered , “Yeah Mister Duntley, but I’m not ashamed of it! I’m full Piute. Name’s Billy Sandwalker. I came down here from up in Nevada on the Reservation six years ago, Been kinda tough getting work over near Hackberry. I just came from the Circle “O” Ranch up north. Worked for Barlo Kelly!’ Duntley said, “I know the man , a hard one to work for! Didn’t mean nothing by the question Billy, but I hire a lot of the Hualapai Boys from the Reservation over east of Stockton. Just thought you might be from there.”

As it turned out , this was a lucky meeting for Billy. Duntley owned a cattle ranch in the foothills and needed someone to run the place and act as a Caretaker. His business in town included a Mercantile Store and Garage. He had little time for his ranch and needed a family to live there and take care of things. Billy saw this as a stroke of good luck as the well on his squatters place in Hackberry had gone dry before he went north and his wife and daughter had to haul water from a neighbor for household needs and livestock. He desperately needed to find a new place to live and a job. Duntley’s offer was a Godsend! He said , “ Mister Duntley, I’d love to take your offer, but I’ll have to get

things together to move my family. Would two weeks be OK?” Duntley was fine with the time frame and much relieved to find someone like Billy with a small family to take over his ranch. A signed agreement was made and Billy was officially hired . Billy was beyond just happy! His wife Ann, would be overjoyed. Things had been rough in Hackberry with every one leaving. There was no school for his little crippled girl April and no work for him. The local Grocery Store had closed years ago and they had to drive into Kingman for supplies when he could get money. A New home closer to town and a job near a school! He was thinking, “ Yeah! Chasing ol’Blue, turned into really good fortune!”

Billy made quick tracks getting back to Hackberry and giving Annie and April the good news. His old Chevy pickup was gonna have to make a few trips over to their new home , but Annie was ready to leave the next day! “ Load her up Billy!” she said , “I can’t leave here soon enough!” She was busy with April, packing clothes and dishes . April was only five years old and had been born with a twisted foot. She couldn’t run and play like other kids, but she was a willing worker and a great help to her Mom. April was excited to leave and maybe get to go to a school with other kids!

The following morning , Billy was up early; tending his few head of horses and calves he was raising. Their first trip was underway by nine o’clock! Stockton, Here we come! Most of their household and furniture was hauled over on their first trip. Billy had not seen the house and it needed a good cleaning ,but Annie was overjoyed! There was a room for April and plenty of running water. They were settled in a clean new home in two days . Billy had gone back and brought over his calves and chickens. He would have to ride and lead his horses as he had no trailer, but this was a small problem compared to the big changes ahead!

Billy was happy! He and Annie jumped into fixing the place up and started mending fences right away. The ranch had a small group of

brood mares , a herd of sixty Hereford cows and a stock bull. Duntley had sold off his entire calf crop and rebred , hoping for a better return the following year . His cows had only produced thirty two calves this season and that was a big loss for the ranch. He said on his first visit, “ Billy, I don’t know what the problem is. Maybe I need a new bull or something. You take a look at things and see if we can make this place pay off. I’m not much of a cattleman , but half a crop ain’t gonna get it! If we can’t do better, I’ll have to sell the place.”

Billy said, “ Marv, I’ve been around cows all my life and worked with livestock since I was four years old. I think the problem is age. I’ll check out these cows teeth and get back to you, but I really think if you’re gonna get a good calf crop, we need to restock with younger heifers. A smaller Bull would help also. This ol’boy you’ve got here is an old mossy horn probably still fertile , but too big and heavy for some of these cows.” Duntley replied, “ Sounds like you know your business. Gimme a reading on how we might come out money wise if we change the operation.” Billy said, “ Let me look around , check the local market and your range . I’ll get back to you as soon as I can.” Duntley left , pleased with his new Ranch Manager, Billy Sandwalker.

In the meantime, Blue had moved west in Ten Mile Canyon when he encountered burros. Some were very colorful pintos like he had never seen , but colors didn’t matter as the wild Mustang herd had included a number of Pintos. Blue was attacked by every Jack Stallion that he encountered and stayed his distance from any gathering of burros. As a result of this treatment, Blue ranged the ten mile canyon from end to end looking for acceptance in a group. Finally he was accepted by a small group of young rogue Jacks that were ever waiting to take over a harem of Jennies. Blue fit in with this group and wandered through the winter months perfectly content to stay with the herd. Waterholes were no problem and food was plentiful. Horseback riders came through the canyon on occasion, but posed no threat and were mostly ignored by the burros. Blue on the other hand vanished into the brush

at first sign of any rider. Soon , his being seen became the local news of riders in the vicinity. A wild Blue Mustang Stallion in Ten Mile Canyon was talked about by all the local cowboys and many plans and attempts were made to capture him. Fortunately, this news never made it to the North and Barlo Kelly. Blue became a regular challenge for all the cowboys around Stockton on the East and Chloride on the West. Hundreds of campfire stories were told of the capture attempts and try as they would, he was too cunning and wily for penning and capture.

Billy and his family had settled in and April was riding the bus to a nearby school. Annie had a nice comfortable home and Billy was happy running the Ranch. Duntley had taken Billy's advice and culled the herd of twenty five older dry cows and sold ol'mossy horn to the Local Chamber of Commerce for a Deep Pit Barbecue at Fair time. He'd picked up thirty new heifers and a young Black Angus Bull. In answer to Duntley's question about the bull, Billy said, "Marve , these heifers are all first calfers and a black Angus Bull will bring smaller calves and much less trouble and loss for the first calving. Next year , we'll get a blooded Whiteface Hereford to sire the herd and selloff the non producers. I'd like to sell this first bunch of calves and invest in thirty more young heifers. We'll keep the Angus for the young cows.' Duntley said , " Billy, I sure hope you're right, that would sure put this place in the black. The sell off and purchase that you just completed brought in over three thousand dollars clear . Looks like we may be in for a really good year if we get a descent calf crop. How's Annie and April doing?"

Billy answered, "Just great Marve! They love the ranch and April loves the school! It was a great day for us when I met you! You know , I had taken a job to track and kill a Blue Mustang Stallion that caused ol'Barlo Kelly of the Circle O a bunch of trouble up north and lost him in Ten Mile in the rain!" Marve jumped in with, " Damn Billy, every cowboy in town is talking about a Blue Mustang Stallion in Ten Mile! He's gotta be the same one! You might still get a chance to shoot

him!" Billy said , " No , Marve, I don't wanna kill him. I think his reputation is phony. That Mustang can't be more than three at the most. If he's hanging around , I'd like to catch him. Barlo slaughtered the whole herd that he was part of. I'm ashamed to say that I unknowingly helped in that slaughter. I Damn sure don't wanna kill no more horses! If Barlo hears that he's down here in Ten Mile , he'll come looking to kill. I'd like to take a couple of days off and see if I can trap him and bring him here to the Ranch." Marve said, " Go to it Billy , you've sure earned a vacation . Take all the time you need!"

Billy told Ann and April that the Blue Mustang that he had tracked south , was in Ten Mile Canyon and he was gonna try and trap him . April was excited, but Ann was afraid that Billy might get hurt catching Blue if he was the killer everyone up north thought he was. Billy said , " Ann, I spent a week trailing Blue and he 's no killer. He's really just a very smart young colt that I think survived a terrible ordeal and has been the victim of a lot of cowboy imagination. Anyway , I think I know how to trap him , especially with him coming three year old. Like all Stallions , he'll be looking for mares . I'll take Bell to the west pasture and put up a pen back there near that spring in the canyon. If Blue is like any other Stallion that I ever knew he'll come running! I'll have to hide out pretty good because ol'Blue is canny smart and scared wily as a Jackrabbit."

Four long days of back breaking work to build a high walled corral with a triggered gate and Billy staked Belle in the center with the gate wide open. He had used the ol'Indian ankle tether so there was no sign of a rope other than that on the ground. It was necessary to have a well trained mare for this bait capture, but Billy had used it numerous times before catching lone and rogue stallions. It was very effective.

Billy found out soon enough, that Blue's reputation had been well earned. Watching at two hundred yards was too close! Blue caught a movement or reflection from his glasses and left the enclosure in a

bolting cloud of dust! All of Billy's scheming and work was wasted! Damnit! He would have to try something else! Blue wouldn't come near that enclosure now ; even with ten mares!

Billy was pretty sure that Blue had never been roped and probably had little fear of them. He fashioned a breast plate harness and britchen riggin tied to the frame work of a double rigged surcingle. A dead loop was placed on both sides and Billy gave Belle a bucket with a handful of oats near the spring. This would keep her around waiting for more oats. His plan was to feed her there twice a day and hope that Blue in the manner of all colts would approach her from the front snuffing and smelling. This action would place his head, hopefully; in one of the side loops effectively catching him. He turned away and rode off a good quarter of a mile and sat under a tree for the remainder of that day. Blue never showed, but on the morning of the third day , Billy saw a war going on at the spring. Blue was caught in a side loop and desperately trying to get loose. The rope around his neck had tightened to the dead knot to prevent choking and Belle was handling the fighting colt with her superior weight . Billy raced to the fight and rode slowly in. Blue was desperate with fear, throwing his body and attempting to break free! Billy placed a lead rope on Belle and lead her into the high pen he had built. Blue had no choice but to follow fighting and throwing himself backwards. Billy closed the gate and sat his horse idly by, waiting for Blue to quit fighting. Blue was trapped!

Half a dozen wild failing attempts and Blue stood calmly beside Belle. He was like the burros or a mule. Smart enough to know when he was licked. Billy approached on horseback, knowing that Blue would fear him on foot. Talking low and slow , Billy was able to pin Blue close to Belle and slip a strong rope halter over his head and attach it's lead rope to Belle's rigging. It was time now to release the side loop and let Blue experience the halter! Billy found that his thinking was correct, Blue was no older killer stallion and he was safe to get near without the fear of being struck or bitten! It was time to begin Blue's education

as a useful horse. Billy worked with him until dark ,all the time tethered to Belle. Blue soon learned that Billy wouldn't hurt him and with the aid of a docile Belle mule , Blue settled down quickly. The following day , Billy led Belle tethered to Blue back to the ranch.

Ann and April fell in love with this Tiger Striped Grey Mustang. April ran to pet him, dragging her bad foot and Billy yelled, “ No honey ! Stay Back! Blue is a wild animal and he could hurt you bad!” April said, “ But Dad , he likes me , I can see it in his eyes!” “No! “, said Billy, “keep clear of him! He's like a wild animal and will fight anything to get free! Give him a few days and you can feed him!” Very reluctantly , April backed away from Blue , but Billy noted that the Mustang wasn't afraid of April and seemed to follow her with his eyes, but it could have been the bright yellow dress she was wearing. He said to Ann, “ Honey, I've got to get him fixed right away! I can't afford to have a stallion around here. Those blooded mares of Duntley's will really get ol'Blue all worked up to the point of breaking out and I know he doesn't want a bunch of scrubby Mustang foals outta them. I'll get in town tomorrow and get Murray, the Vet out here and we'll do a job on Blue while April is at school.” Ann said, “Hon, you're right of course! It's too bad you have to castrate him. He seems awful quiet and gentle.” Billy said, “ Yeah , but you let him get around those mares of Duntley's and you'll have a different story! He's burro quiet now and I'd like to keep him that way!” Ann shook her head , but she knew that it had to be done.

Murray was good and knew his business, but when April came in from school, she was heart broken. Blue was laying down and looked terribly sick !Rushing in the house she said, “ Mom, Mom! Blue is sick! He's laying down and won't get up!” Ann replied, “ No Honey , Blue had to have a little operation and we had the Horse Doctor out earlier. Blue is just hurting right now, but Honey he'll be OK in a few days!” April rushed back outside and ten minutes later both Ann and Billy were horrified with fear to see April in the pen with Blue struggling to carry a bucket of water to where he was laying down. She had already

brought him a hand full of choice hay. They watched in amazement as Blue took a small drink and allowed April to touch his neck, lightly petting and talking to him. Ann said, “ April, Honey come on outta the pen now . Blue will be just fine!” She couldn’t hide the concern and fear in her voice. Billy said , “ Annie , I think we can forget the concern. Blue looks like he enjoys the attention. Look at his ears , he’s listening to everything she’s saying; besides I think he’s way too sore to move much or hurt April. Murray had no knock out medicine today and we had to do the job the old way. Blue gave up his fight earlier today and now I think he’s a completely changed animal. We were as easy and as fast as we could be, but its always a strong handling and totally breaking experience for a young horse when he has to submit to human control and the pain of castration. April will be good for ol’Blue. ”

This was the beginning of a major change in Blue. April nursed him every day and soon he waited at the fence for her when she came running from the School Bus. She insisted on feeding Blue every morning and night, brushing him and cleaning his pen . Blue followed April like a dog everywhere she went. It was obvious to Ann and Billy, that Blue was April’s horse, her companion and best friend. Soon April was wanting to ride him and Billy told her, “ Honey I need to train him for you. He may not want you on his back.” April surprised her Dad when she said, “But Dad , I sit on his back every day when I brush him. He loves it!.” Billy was shocked! Sure enough, April sat on Blue’s back and brushed him squirming around and laying down to brush him every where she could reach! Blue seemed to enjoy this attention and curled his lips in pleasure. Billy couldn’t believe it , but there sat his wonderful six year old daughter completely in control of a wild Mustang and loving every minute of it! Billy said, “Honey when did you start sitting on his back?” April said, “ Right after he got well! I was brushing him when he stood up and I was laying across his back. He didn’t mind at all! Dad , he loves me and I love him!”

It was difficult for Ann and Billy to accept the bond that had developed between April and Blue. Her whole life revolved around this Blue Mustang and all of her spare time was spent talking to and taking care of him. Ann and Billy got a lot of enjoyment out of listening to April trying to explain her school lessons to Blue. As time passed and April spent all of her time with him; Blue became a pest to some degree. A normal gate latch or slide bar wouldn't hold him and Billy devised a double ring latch that he couldn't play with and release. The little horse and April took to training big time and in short order, April was riding out with her Dad to check cattle and do ranch errands. Her bad foot was no problem at all when she was horseback and Billy had Trained Blue to kneel and settle down to the ground so April could easily get in the saddle. April loved that position for Blue, because she could set on the ground by his head talking to him. Blue didn't mind at all especially since he got most of April's lunch and Corn chips during the conversation!

Many of the cowboys from both Kingman and Chloride had heard of the capture of the famous Blue Mustang stallion and came to the Ranch to see this mystery horse first hand. They were all shocked to find a small six year old girl riding the famous Stallion. Billy and Ann had to secretly laugh at their amazement, because Blue had been just a Cowboy campfire generated Wild killer stallion that was in truth just a lonely scared colt that had survived the slaughter of his whole family. News of his capture and taming by a six year old girl was big news in the Kingman Community. Barlo Kelly of the Circle O, Heard of the capture and came south to execute the Blue Mustang Stallion that had cost him thousands of dollars in losses to his Ranch!

Sheriff Jim Wilder met Barlo in Kingman and escorted him to the Duntley Ranch. Barlo was impatient and quickly pressed Wilder to get him out there so he could see this horse that had cost him most of his prize Hereford Bulls and all of his valuable line bred Longhorn Cows. Wilder was proud of the fact that he knew little April, the crippled girl

that had tamed the famous Stallion! He had no idea what Barlo had in mind. Arriving at the Ranch, Barlo grabbed his deer rifle and upon seeing Blue, he jacked a shell into the chamber and was ready to kill Blue , when a sharp ladies voice said, “ Mister , you pull that trigger and I’m pullin mine!” Ann was standing in the doorway with a Double barreled shotgun pointed straight at Barlo’s belt buckle! Ann had grabbed Billy’s varmint shotgun setting behind the kitchen door when she saw what Barlo intended! Sheriff Jim Wilder yelled , “ Hold it Barlo! You can’t come in here and kill somebody’s horse! What the hell do you think you’re doin? Put up that rifle! Miss Ann, back off with that shotgun! Damnit Barlo! What the hell, you’re crazy Man, think what you’re doin, Look at that woman , she’s shakin like a leaf! You’ll get us both killed!” Wilder quickly took the rifle from Barlo’s hands saying , “ Please Mrs Sandwalker , put the shotgun up! No one is gonna shoot your horse!” Barlo was terribly upset and cursing. Practically yelling at the Sheriff, he said, “ Damnit Sheriff, that worthless piece of crap cost me over twenty thousand dollars and I’m gonna kill the son-of –a bitch! Gimme back my rifle!” “No! “, answered Wilder, “ Barlo you calm down . This lady has every right to shoot you if you threaten her livestock! There ain’t a court in this state that wouldn’t support her! Stealing or killing someone’s horses used to be a hanging offence! No , you don’t get this rifle back ! Settle down now before the little lady runs us off the place!” Barlo was livid with anger!

“ Damnit !” he said , “ Woman , what will you take for this scrub? I’ll buy the horse Sheriff and then shoot the damn thing! Here, Lady, Here’s two hundred dollars! That’s twice what this crow baits worth!” Shaking her head in angry refusal, Ann said, “ Mister, this horse belong to my daughter and he’s not for sale at any price! Sheriff I want you to take this man off this Ranch now, before my husband gets in and finds out he wants to shoot Blue! He upsets real easy and I don’t want any trouble!” Wilder said , “ Come on Barlo, lets get outta here. Mrs Sandwalker is right ! You’re not welcome and the horse is not for sale!

We're Trespassing!" Barlo realized he was beat. Angrily ,he spun around and climbed into the Sheriff's car! Wilder said , "Barlo, that Mustang sure didn't look like the killer horse we all heard about. What makes you think it's the same animal?" Barlo said , " I'd recognize that owl headed Tiger Striped Son-of-a-bitch in a herd of a thousand. He's the same horse all right! Cutting him mighta settled him down , but I wanna see the worthless bastard dead! I'll never rest easy knowing he's still alive! I can still see that beautiful herd of mine stampeding into destruction and this worthless son-of-a-bitch gaily galloping off in the distance!"

Wilder shook his head saying, " Maybe I can't blame you Barlo for feeling so strong about it , but you just can't go shooting someone else's horse, no more than they can shoot yours! You best just forget it . If this Blue Mustang breaks out and starts to make any trouble , I'll personally shoot him for you! Does that help any?" Barlo was not satisfied , but realized this was the best he was gonna get. He said, " Jim , you're right I guess, but it's a hard pill to swallow!, I'd feel a lot better if I could put a bullet in his damn head! When we get back to Kingman drop me at the Train Depot, I gotta get on home. This trip has really been a total waste!"

Billy, upon hearing the story of Barlo's visit, drove into Kingman to confront Barlo. Stopping at the Sheriff's Office he discovered that Barlo had already caught a train north. Sheriff Jim said, " Billy, I can't blame you for being upset! Barlo acted like a crazy man! It was touch and go for a minute there . Ann was gonna blow us both away if we hurt that Blue Mustang! I don't know what's wrong with the man. Blue seemed like a pretty quiet and gentle horse to me! What's with Barlo and his hatred for this animal?" Billy answered, " Barlo slaughtered the whole herd of Mustangs that lived in that Canyon below Leaning Tree Mesa and Blue was the lone survivor. Cowboy campfire stories made a Mystery horse outta Blue and pretty soon he was credited with every misfortune in the whole County. Barlo's guilty conscious makes him

want to get rid of any reminder of that horse murdering slaughter that he committed. Blue in trying to escape started a stampede that killed a bunch of Barlo's prize stock, so Barlo's hatred was directed at this so called killer! Blue's no killer, he's more like a burro in disposition and smarter than any horse I've ever owned. April is six years old rides him all over the Ranch and Blue follows her like a dog every where. He even walks into our living room right behind April when she leaves the door open! Yeah, Sheriff, Blue's a real killer horse all right. Ann and I both would kill for him! That's the kind of killer horse he is! We love the horse! He's just like a burro, docile as a lamb and will attack any animal that gets in his corral at night. I've found pieces of rattlesnakes that Blue stomped to death." Jim said, "I'm glad you told me this story. I think we've seen the last of Barlo for awhile, but if he should come back , I'll tend to him! You know , the Mexicans talk about Tiger Mustangs that were highly thought of down Texas way. Blue sounds like a throwback to those animals . They were highly prized by all of the Texas Cowboys back fifty years ago. My Dad used to tell stories of them and their attachment to their owners. All kinds of stories that I never believed, but Blue sounds like the horses of those tales!" Billy said his Thanks and left. Sheriff Jim , shook his head and took a deep breath, remembering the shaking hands of Ann holding that double barreled shotgun , fully cocked and pointing in his and Barlo's direction! Only a hairs breath away from being blown away; he had pause to wonder. " Is this job really worth it?"

April had no knowledge of Barlo's visit and Ann didn't want to upset her. Billy returned to find his two ladies engaged in trying to fit a buggy harness on Blue. Ol'Blue stood quietly while the fitting was taking place . Billy stood back and asked , " Ann Hon, What's goin on? Why are you trying to put a buggy harness on Blue?" April answered, " Dad , all of the girls in my class want to ride him and I don't want them to. If we can get him to pull the old farm wagon, I can give them all a ride and not have to worry how they would treat him. I've seen a lot of

riders using a quirt and big spurs. You don't need those with Blue! " Billy said, " Hon that's a great idea , but Marc has a light wagon at the Ferrier Shop, that will be more suitable for Blue. I'll take the truck in and tow it home. We'll have to train him some because the wagon behind will scare him at first. April said , " It's Ok Dad, I'll tell Blue not to be scared! He listens to me you know!" Billy nodded to Ann saying, "Yes Honey, I know that he does , but the wagon will make an awful lot of noise and it might even scare you! We'll hook him behind the pickup and that way he'll follow on a lead rope with him pulling the wagon and getting used to the weight and the noise."

Two days later Billy said to Annie, " Hon, Maybe April does talk to Blue. I've never seen a horse take so quickly to pulling a wagon! He just seemed to take it as a natural thing to do. I'll admit that I still hook Belle next to him to sorta give Blue comfort, but mainly to give me comfort and assure me that I don't have to deal with a scared run-a-way colt! We're gonna drive the two into town every chance we get. I'm not ready to trust April to driving Blue with a bunch of noisy school kids riding the wagon!"

A few weeks later and April was driving Blue to school with some of her girlfriends. It seemed a natural thing to do. The teachers were all counting on April to be a part of their Christmas parade. Annie and April were very proud of Blue's Christmas parade manners and Billy was thinking, " Poor ol'Blue, wearing phony reindeer horns and pulling Santa Clause, with April dressed as an Elf doing the driving. I'll bet he'll have to be in every parade in Kingman. Who would have ever imagined such a thing for a Tiger Striped Blue Mustang Killer Stallion!"

Unfortunately, unknown to Billy and anyone else, two rough looking strangers were watching the Christmas Parade and making plans for Blue of their own! The larger of the two was Jeremy Holland, ex lumberjack turned gold miner and the other a heavily bearded ex-

convict presently carrying the name Boone Collins. These were two unsavory characters from a gold mine near Winslow a couple hundred or so miles from Kingman. They were in town to buy mules or small horses to pull oar carts underground. A Number of mines were still in operation using animals to draw the carts. Gasoline engines were too dangerous because of the carbon monoxide and the oar carts could be easily handled by a mule or light horse. Much to their dismay, draft mules and horses were very hard to find. Blue was the first they'd seen since coming to Kingman. A number of mules were for sale, but none were trained for draft work! Blue was the best they had seen anywhere, but it was obvious to even their low character; that this horse was a pet of the little girl and would never be for sale! This was not and had never been a problem for these two! Stealing was their answer to most problems and they were pulling a stock trailer. All this pair needed was an opportunity! It was easy to get directions to and location of Billy's place!

The following morning , Boone and Holland drove to Billy's place and asked direction of Annie as to the Ten Mile Canyon turn off from Stockton Hill Road. Annie didn't like their looks and talked to them through the screen door. She noted their interest in looking over everything and she told Billy, later, " I didn't like their looks and they made me nervous. I was glad to have that shotgun handy!" Billy dismissed the visit as nothing to worry about. Christmas was just a few days away and he was happy to see the excitement in April's face and knowing that this would be the best Christmas they ever had! He and Annie had saved every dime to buy April a brand new shiny saddle and matching bridal for Blue. Billy and Ann wished above all things that they could afford to get an operation for April's foot, but it was way outta their ability to earn enough money for the operation! They looked with joy and anticipation for Christmas day when April would get her Christmas present and put it on Blue! The pure pleasure and enjoyment for their daughter would be their own Christmas present!

“ My God! No! No! No!, He couldn’t believe it ! Christmas Day! And Blue is Gone! He’s been stolen! Thieves hit his Ranch on Christmas Eve and led Blue to a waiting trailer , loaded him in and drove away!”Billie saw the tracks and Ann had already called the Sheriff. April was destroyed. She couldn’t quit crying! She was worried about her best friend and how he was being treated. Billy cradled her in his arms trying to assure her that they would get Blue back. The Sheriff had already put out an alarm. When Wilder arrived, Ann told him of the two hard looking men that had stopped asking for directions. Following her story Wilder said, “ Annie you’re probably right. They were here to get the layout so they could sneak in here and steal your horse! I’ve put out a Police Bulletin with a description of your horse. He should be easy to locate! There’s not another one in the country that looks like him; trouble is , we have no idea which way they went or where they were from!” Billy said, “ Jim , if I find them you may not ever see them again!” Jim replied, “ I know you’re upset Billy, but please let us handle it! No need for you to get in trouble over a couple of thieves! Annie , see that he stay’s home will you?” At Annie’s nod, Jim said, “ We’re gonna check the local Motels and bars. See if we can turn up anything matching Annie’s description. Billy, we’ll keep you posted!”

Billy said after the Sheriff left, “ Ann, Hon, I wish there was something I could do. I’m mad as hell, but I don’t have any idea where to go to look for Blue! We’re stuck until the Sheriff finds something, If he does and that looks like a big If right now! Look at little April out there looking for her lost friend and worried about how he’s being treated. I thought this was gonna be a wonderful Christmas. Damn!”

Ann shook her head watching Billy go out to April and sitting down to wrap his arms around her. “Yes!” she was thinking, “ Today was gonna be a wonderful and happy event for all of us, but now it may turn out to be something we’d rather forget!” Ann walked out to the shed and brought out the rake and shovel saying to Billy and April, “ We better get Blue’s pen cleaned up for when he comes back.” April said , ‘

Mommy you're right, Blue would be pleased to come home to a clean bed!" Billy got up nodding to Ann and took the shovel from her hand. It was always necessary to move on. Ann was right!

Every morning , when April jumped outta bed , the first thing she did was lookout the window to Blue's corral . Unfortunately, Blue was gone! The sheriff had no clues at all. There was no report of anyone seeing or speaking to the two men described by Ann. As time went on, Billy and Ann tried to interest April in another pet; a puppy maybe? April had so enjoyed Blue and the fact that her bad foot was no problem riding Blue that she was not interested in a dog. She had never been able to run and play like other kids. Trying to hike or run with a dog would only remind her of her problem.

It was early February, when Ann noticed that April was drawing a picture of a horse. It wasn't the best of art work , but the colors were right for Blue . Ann said, "April, that does look a little like Blue. I know that you miss him badly, but the Police are still looking and maybe the State Marshall can find him!" April said " Mom, Blue is very lonely and it's dark. Sometimes I think he's afraid!" Ann said, "Honey, you might be right, but he may also be out in a beautiful pasture. What makes you think he's in the dark and afraid?" April said, 'I Don't know Mom , I just feel bad for him. Especially at night. I dream about him sometimes and I can't help crying!" Ann said, " Yes , Honey, I know! When I was a little girl, my dog died and I cried for him. You have to be strong and be here for Blue when he comes home! Where do you want to put his picture that you drew?" April said , " I'll just hang it on the wall by the desk. I've got two others over there ." Ann looked , and sure enough , April had drawn two others, about the same as the one she had just finished.

Blue was busy working down in a goldmine. Boone and Holland had hauled him to a remote low grade gold mine north of Winslow Arizona. Once there , Blue was dropped to the ground and hogtied. He was then

strapped in a large sling and lowered down three hundred feet to the area being mined. Once there, the flickering lamps and darkness scared him , but he was released and led to a stall where a mule was stabled. He was given hay and water. Blue was lonely, scared and confused, but being the docile horse that he was, the thieves had made a good steal. He was just what they needed! Blue made the best of his circumstances. He settled in to become an oar cart horse. He had no knowledge of the fact that most of the dray animals that were taken down in the mines to work usually died there or went blind working and living in darkness. His memory of the wonderful little girl that loved him would eventually fade to a distant remembrance!

Blue was afraid of the dark wet tunnels, but soon fit in with the mule that was doing all of the pulling until he arrived. Three oar cars were tied together and Blue was led pulling these empty cars into a long shaft where workers, mostly young Indians; loaded the cars. Blue was then led to the other end and pulled the loaded cars back to the Main Frame Hoist. Once dumped, he once again pulled the empties back to in the drift where the oar was being dug. This operation went on all day and Blue could be expected to haul up to fifteen tons a day. Soon all of the young Indians petted and spoke to Blue, sometimes bringing him a treat. He was well liked by everyone.

Occasionally , the scary rumbling in the mountain terrorized Blue and the mule. They, like all animals; could feel the faint ground movement that predicted earthquakes. Unknown to Boone and Holland, Blue's stall seeped water from the side wall and it was impossible for him to lay down without getting wet. Blue was a Mustang with high walled hooves normally hard enough to enable him to travel hundreds of miles without shoes. The constant wet conditions caused the growth of fungus in his heels Soon it was extremely painful for Blue to even walk. Holland came to investigate the complaints from the young Indians about Blue's lameness. Passing it off as nothing , he used a whip on Blue to force him to pull the loaded cars . Blue fell under the

punishment and the Indians set up a howl of complaint. Blue couldn't walk without considerable pain and lay down at any opportunity.

Boone showed up saying, "Holland, you idiot, something is wrong with this horse! He can't stand up! I think he's sick! Let's get him to the Mainframe and get him outta here before he dies on us! You know how superstitious these Indians are. They'll everyone quit on us like that last bunch did when one of those Mules died! Get that Damn horse outta here!"

Blue was dragged to the Main Frame strapped up to the hoist and winched to the top. Boone said to Holland, "Go get the truck and trailer. Take this worthless thing to that old shaft over by Needle Canyon and dump him in. That'll get rid of the body and nobody can connect us with a stolen horse." Two of the Indian workers overheard their conversation, looked at each other knowingly; and went back to work. Blue was left hanging in the strapping while Holland went to get the truck. Blue, of course: with the resigned disposition of a burro hung placidly in the rigging unaware that he was in any danger. Once again, he was to be killed!

Holland was not in any hurry and casually took his time walking down to the Mine Office . Ol' Joshlin Waters was the Main Frame operator and had no idea that Holland wanted to leave the horse in the Rigging. He swung the boom over and lowered Blue to the ground . The horse was free to scramble out once his feet hit the ground, he had not been hogtied. Blue's feet were terribly sore , but he moved quickly away from the noisy, smelly, and scary diesel Main Frame motor! The welcoming brushy hillside had been his home for the first years of his life and Blue headed down the hill to their safety. His feet were sore, but the freedom and release from that scary darkness spurred him on. When Holland returned, Blue was nowhere to be seen. Holland asked Joslin about the horse and Joslin said, "He went off down the hill! I

didn't know you wanted to keep him in the rigging! He'll probably be standing around here in the morning, you'll never find him now ! It'll be pitch black here in another ten minutes!" Holland said, " If he shows up throw a rope on him and I'll take care of him tomorrow!"

Blue had no intention of hanging around! Like all wild animals , his homing instincts pointed him home. Being of Spanish Wild Mustang decent, his bonding to April and his homing desire were stronger than other horses. His progress wasn't too fast with sore feet, but never the less, he was a good mile away from the mineshaft come daylight.

Sunrise found Blue grazing for a short time and resuming his movement west. Fortunately there were few fences blocking his way and daily, his westward progress continued. Also, the fungus foot problem was being healed by the dry Arizona terrain . Some things were in his favor, and his feet healed rapidly. A week of travel and Blue was beginning to make good time. Unfortunately; he had been seen by cowboys from the Double Bar "L" ranch On the south side of the Town of Flagstaff. The spring Rodeo Season was coming up and Sam Knowlins, Owner of the Bar "L", was in a side business as a Rodeo Stock Contractor. His boys reported seeing a wild Mustang traveling across the south pasture. Laws were written to be broken and the fact that Wild Mustangs were supposedly protected in some states from Rodeo abuse, was not a concern for Sam. He had many times in the past ,picked up some of his best bucking horses from Wild Horse herds. In Sam's mind, there really wasn't anything wrong with that practice ! He fed his livestock well and sold them to the slaughter houses if they wouldn't work out! It was a win, win situation for him. Mustangs were cheap as unbroken stock and perfectly suitable for Rodeo's! He immediately sent riders to capture this stray Mustang!

Blue was easy to catch. He had passed over a down section of fence on the east and here he was a good two miles from that opening. The

south fence herded him into a cattle pen when the riders showed up and he had no fear of the cowboys, He stood placidly while Wayne Miller, the top hand for Bar "L", walked up to him and placed a halter over his head! Wayne recognized immediately that Blue was no wild animal. He was a Gelding and obviously well trained. Wayne told Sam, later at the Ranch " Sam, He's Not a wild Mustang. He's! really a very quiet and well trained horse. He belongs to someone, but he has no brand!" Sam said, "Look Wayne , I need twelve bucking horses for that Little Britches Rodeo coming up in Ash Fork. If he has no brand, then make a bucking horse outta him! They don't have to buck much for the kids. He's colorful and will fill my contract! If he don't work out , Hell, he's a Damn Mustang; sell him to the killers!" Wayne said, " We'll do the best we can, but I'd sure hate to send him to the killers!" Sam erupted with, " Damn it Wayne, Have you got three hundred dollars to waste on him?" At Wayne's negative head shake, Sam said, " At eight to nine hundred pounds Wayne, that's an easy few hundred. If he bucks well enough , he'll earn his keep! If not, he'll help on the feed bill! "

Wayne left shaking his head, knowing that in Sam's world there was no sense of compassion for a horse. It was strictly business! He called out for Joe English a young cowboy to follow him to the bucking arena. It was just a one chute bucking corral for training broncos to come outta the chute without falling. They never turned out a wild horse with a rider for it's first ride. A wild horse's fear will cause it to try anything , even throwing itself over backwards. A Contractor had to be careful. Wayne knew that Blue was plenty safe enough, too safe; for a bucking horse. Saying to Joe, " Hit him hard with your spurs on his first jump and work him bad. I'm gonna use a rope for a bucking strap in the flanks. He's really a colorful little horse. Would look great in a Rodeo! We need to get a dozen good jumps outta him!" Joe said , " No problem Wayne, these spurs are sharp! They'll do the job! Let me have him!" Wayne pulled the bucking strap tightening it in Blue's tender flanks as the gate handler swung open the gate!" Blue was shocked

and surprised leaping high in the air at the sudden pain and ducking his head at the sharp jab of spurs in the shoulders. He made three jumps before he sullied adopting the burro attitude of submission! Joe tried desperately to keep him jumping, but no dice ! Blue knew when he'd had enough, pain was a trigger for quitting the jumping! A regular horse would keep fighting , but a mule or burro is always smart enough to know when to quit. Blue was not interested in bucking any further! Once again, Blue was loaded into the chute and Sam came over to help with this second attempt. He insisted on using a tack strap in the flanks and an electric cattle prod on the rump as Blue was turned out! One good jump and that was it! Blue was no Bucking horse! Sam was furious saying , “ Get that Damn Jughead outta here Wayne,! He's worse than a milk cow!”

Wayne was terribly disappointed! He had hoped and prayed that Blue would do a creditable job! He had no desire to see the little horse head for the killers, but he had no way to come up with three hundred dollars! Sadly he led Blue to the outside corral where a half a dozen other horses waited for the Slaughter House Horse van! The Van would load up at daybreak and once again Blue had been given the death sentence!

Blue had other ideas! He had been scared and hurt by these cowboys and now had a fear of them when they came close to him! He moved to the far side of the other horses still hurting in the flanks from the tack strap and his shoulders burning from the sharp spur scrapes! The handlers had omitted to feed these horses at Sam's orders, because; “why waste the hay?”, he said . “They're all gonna be killed the next day!” Blue was hungry and wandered the fence looking for hay. Upon coming to the gate , a slide bar offered no problem for him . Within a minute he was out and the other horses followed him . Mister Sam Knowins lost seven horses that night , Thanks to a Pesky Blue Mustang that Little April had made into a gate opening loving Pet!

The following morning , Blue was making good time westward toward Ash Fork , but not to be part of a Rodeo! It was cold in the mountains and Blue was headed for warmer country. His escape from the Goldmine had happened during a welcome warm lull from the normal winter weather and his progress had been good, but storms were normal for this time of year! Blue was in no hurry , but a westward pulling instinct plus his dog like attachment to April keened his desire for travel. Moving into a down slope toward a creek where he smelled water, Blue scented wood smoke and this familiar scent of home and April lured him in that direction . Blue had no knowledge of his location, but a dirt road in the bottom of the canyon followed a creek which led to the Beaver Creek Ranger Station of Ash fork.

On this particular day, the station was manned by a new Recruit, eighteen year old Davy Madison. Davy had recently been accepted for Ranger duty and had been given an easy training assignment at the Beaver Creek Station. His communications equipment was in good working condition and his only duty was to man the Station for three days at a time . Normal duties were to help hunters and visitors to the area, but the hunting season was over and few visitors came to Beaver Creek in the middle of winter. Davy was completely shocked when Blue came walking to the Station and browsing around the little grass turning green in the roadway. Davy was more shocked when Blue allowed him to pet his neck. Davy was not a learned horse person, He had ridden some and loved horses. It was a shock to see one here in the canyon, but he had seen many Mustangs running or grazing in herds, further down on the desert, near Kingman. He had been instructed to be very cautious around them and never to feed any of the wild animals. Blue seemed so friendly though, it was impossible to stay away. Davy brought out some of his corn chips to feed Blue. He also took his belt off and putting it around Blue's neck , jumped up on his back; riding him around the Station yard. Man this was great! A

horse of his own maybe! No, he had to be realistic; he had no place or way to keep a horse!

Blue is an addict for corn chips! These were number one in April's list of goodies and treats for him. Davy had just made a friend for life! Blue was gonna hang around. Here was good food and shelter in the canyon and unknown to Davy, Blue's wild instincts warned him that a storm was coming in. Blue, in the manner of all wild creatures, would move to a protected location during bad weather. That afternoon snow started blowing in from the north and Blue moved to the downwind side of the Ranger Station. Davy watched from his desk and radioed the Happy Jack and Tonto Stations of conditions. He also notified them that a horse had showed up to keep him company. He received lots of questions about Blue and lots of advice. Most of it to stay away from the horse. It was probably wild and dangerous.

The storm increased in intensity blowing flower like snow up in drifts in the roadway. Davy, raised in low desert country; had never experienced this kind of weather and was getting scared of being in the canyon by himself! His last communications with fellow Rangers indicated that snow was piling up to blizzard conditions. Stay inside and stay warm. Power lines were icing up and power outages were common every where.

Boom! A loud crash and a huge White Ash tree had come crashing down across the road to the station! His Lights went out! The Radio wouldn't work and there never had been any telephone service. He was stranded ! There was no way to get the Ranger Wagoneer past the tree ! Davy experienced his first feelings of panic fear. The snow kept piling up ! What if he were buried here in the snow ? He would die! As the storm intensity increased , so did Davy's fear. Another large White Ash fell and this spurred Davy to action. Quickly donning a heavy coat and hat , he grabbed a rope and went out to Blue. There was no saddle available and no bridle. Davy was able to fashion a halter of sorts to fit

Blue's head. Quickly turning Blue, he rode him around the fallen tree and down the road to safety! That's what he thought!

Once on the road ,Davy soon became aware that he couldn't see a thing. He had no idea where the creek bed was or if Blue was taking him further into danger. Civilization and safety were on the road after you left the canyon, but which way was that? Fear and apprehension took over! Soon, Davy was crying in frustration! He was turning Blue around in circles! He couldn't see a thing! Finally saying to himself, "Davy that was the dumbest thing you have ever done! Slow down and think! If you don't get hold of yourself ,you're gonna die out here!' Davy was praying and crying when he remembered what his Grandfather had told him. " The Blizzards in Northern Wyoming are real killers. They come on sudden! When you're out there moving livestock and one comes down on you, you give your horse his head, lay over his neck and hold on. Your horse knows the way home. It'll also help if you pray a little!" Davy was afraid that Blue might head for his owner's home, wherever that was! Little did Davy know that the Ranger Station was nearby shelter and food for Blue and besides it was directly in his pathway towards Kingman. Blue headed for that lee side of the Ranger Station he had just left. Horses really aren't as dumb as some people think!

A much relieved and very thankful Davy recognized where he was when Blue stopped walking. He went in immediately bringing out his full bag of corn chips for Blue. He fired up a warm stove and lit the storm lantern for light . Walking outside he found, Blue was contently munching Corn Chips while the snow accumulated on his back. His long winter hair kept him comfortable and dry. Davy was concerned for Blue getting cold ,but there was no place to house or a tarp like blanket to cover him . Davy's thinking was, " Blue was a horse and fully accustomed to outside weather." He settled in for the night thankful and grateful that his own ignorance didn't get him killed. "Thanks to a stray Mustang, he might live to see another day!"

That night , the storm was gone and by morning a light foggy haze covered the Beaver Creek Valley. Upon looking outside for Blue ; he was gone! A set of prints in the snow headed west down the valley! Ol'Blue had gone looking for something to eat. Had Davy followed into the surrounding trees , he would have found Blue eating Bark and low hanging tender limbs from the young Aspen and other surrounding trees. Davy was afraid to venture outside! One lesson in the snow was enough. He was safe in the Station and that's where he was gonna stay until rescue arrived. He finally realized that the other Rangers would be concerned when he didn't come up on the radio and would come looking. Blue, without concern for Davy; browsed his way on westward outta Beaver Creek canyon and down toward warmer country!

In the meantime, over two months had gone by with no word of Blue or any clue as to whom had stolen him or where he might be! Billy and Ann had given up hope for ever seeing the Mustang again. April , though; still jumped to the window every morning hoping her Blue would be there. She never seemed to give up hope and said her prayers for his safety every night. Billy and Ann, only shook their heads in despair, Billy said, “ Ann , Hon, I've taken April out on ol'Belle a number of times to help with the cows, but she's lost interest since Blue was stolen. I know she loves the baby calves and we'll soon have a bunch! I'm certain there'll be a few that need a little nursing and maybe she'll take'em over.’ Ann said, “ She'll love it and you're right Billy, that'll get her mind off Blue maybe. You know she's drawn a dozen pictures of him since he's been gone.” Billy said , “ No, I know you mentioned it . I'll have to go ask her to show me her work. Is it any good?” Ann kinda shrugged her shoulders.

That evening after dinner, Billy followed April to her room to see her drawings. Billie was not impressed with April's artistic talents, but complimented her on her efforts. One thing struck him as very strange. All of her pictures included railroad tracks and a bright drawing of

sunlight . He asked April, “ Hon, your drawings of Blue are the right colors and some of them are better than others, but why do you have rail road tracks and a bright sun in all of your pictures?” April said, “ Dad, That is not a sun picture!, It’s a light , from something else! I don’t know what it is, It’s just there!” Billie said , “ What about the railroad tracks? Why are they in every picture?” April said, “ Dad , they’re just there too. In my dreams!” Billie shook his head and said, “ April, Hon, with your faith in Blue , I’m hoping we get him back soon! Pretty quick,though, we’ll have some baby calves that I’ll need you to help me with feeding them! Do you think you could do that? “ April jumped up excitedly saying , “ Dad , I love baby calves! When will we get some? They’re a lot of fun! I’d love to help feed them!” Billy replied, “ Should be almost any day now. I look for the cows to began dropping next week.” Billie left an excited little girl he was hoping that maybe would start getting interested in another pet and forget the Blue Mustang they more than likely would never see again.

Billy went back to Ann and said, “ I think April will be OK. She’s still worried about Blue, but she’s excited about the calves. There is one thing bothering me though. She’s having dreams and visions of Blue! She say’s that all of her dreams include railroad tracks and a bright light.She keeps adding those to her drawings. I get no meaning from that at all.” Ann said, “ Probably just a fantasy or something she likes putting in the pictures.” Billy said , “ I don’t know! Remember April is half Indian and us Indians have strong beliefs that sometimes border on the supernatural. Remember , I told you that when I was just a teenage boy I was given tiswin tea as part of becoming a man ceremony and it caused me to have strange dreams and visions of fighting wild animals, running horses, pretty young girls, strange lands and bodies of water that stretched into the sunset. The most amazing vision I had was of a girl with the bright sunlight directly behind her head so bright that I could never see her face. Over the years, this vision came back time after time, after time!

At twenty two years , I left my family in Nevada and came south taking a cowboy job over near Prescott Arizona. It was there on the shore of the Verde River, in the town of Cottonwood that I saw a girl early one morning with the sunlight directly behind her head, so bright that I could not see her face. That girl was you Ann!”

Ann said, “ I guess it could mean something, but what I have no idea! I’ll give the Sheriff a call on our new telephone and see if there’s been any word of Blue”. Calling later that evening , Jim informed her that they had no word of Blue, but they had a possible lead on individuals that may have stolen him. Jim said, “ Don’t get your hopes up, but a Truck with stock trailer stopped at the Aztec Motel in Seligman, Arizona on Christmas day. I thought I’d call around the motels down the road a-ways and see if I might get lucky? I did! We were unable to get a description of the individuals , but we have names and a license number. Would you happen to know a Jeremy Holland or a Boone Collins?” At Ann’s negative, Jim said, “We’re checking them out right now. They gave an address of Winslow and I’m in touch with the Sheriff over there . We should hear something in a day or so and I’ll give you a call.” Ann thanked him and said to Billy, whom had been listening, “ We best not get our hopes up and don’t say anything to April. This could be a wild goose chase!”

A week later they received a call. It was Sheriff Wilder who said, “ Billy, we have the guys that stole your horse. Sheriff Payton over in Winslow investigated Collins and Holland. Found out they owned and operated the Red Rooster Gold mine just north of Winslow. Last year they were involved in a murder investigation involving the disappearance of Jimmy Moon, a young Indian worker in their Gold Mine. Moon had started a strong worker, work stoppage; protest for better wages and working conditions. He disappeared! Holland and Collins were suspected of foul play, but no evidence or body was found. Sheriff Payton spoke to two Indian boys working the mine that put him on to the possible location of Jimmy’s body. They overheard

Holland being told by Collins to throw the body of a lame horse into a mine shaft in Needle Canyon. It turns out that the lame horse had the rare coloring and identity of your horse. They had stolen your horse to work in the mine. Evidently , the horse became lame and they wanted to hide the body! This lead took Sheriff Payton to the shaft in Needle Canyon and there he found the remains of Jimmy Moon! Holland and Collins have been arrested and awaiting trial for murder! Your Blue Mustang horse got away before he could be killed. I'm sorry , Billy, but he has not been seen since. We'll keep our Bulletin out, but he's probably gonna join a wild herd somewhere and we'll probably never see him again!" Billy thanked him and related the story to Ann. Ann said , " Billy, it's really spooky! Those railroad tracks and the bright lights! The gold Mine!" Billy said, " I told you April's half Indian and she has no idea that it's supernatural to have visions! It's only us adults that think it's crazy!" Ann said, " I give up! April still thinks Blue is gonna come home! I'm not gonna be surprised at anything!"

Blue was making good time, his feet were fully healed and there was plenty of feed for a Mustang. Three days from the Beaver Creek Ranger Station, Blue was approaching Chino Wash where a small stream provided water to all the local animals. Three wild horses were watering there when Blue arrived. A small and runty young stallion with his harem of two mares challenged Blue, charging him and slamming the ground with a front foot as he blasted out a whinnying challenge! Blue, though bigger and older; in the nature of all geldings confronted by a herd stallion or other dominate horse stuck his tongue out licking his lips. This is the common sign of submission in a horse. The stallion , once again slammed his foot against the ground, arched his neck , spun around and kicked at Blue with both feet! Blue was smart enough to move back and avoid the Stallion's show of command! Any other threat or abuse and Blue would have moved away, but the herding instinct and desire for herding safety is very strong in horses. Blue hung around and followed the small group when they left.

The Stallion took his small brood up to the top of a long bench for grazing. This bench ran parallel to the small creek . Blue had been raised in mountain lion country and instinctively avoided trees or rocky bluffs that would provide attack hiding for the big cats. Unfortunately, this bench and Chino Creek ended in Lion Canyon. There was a good reason it was named Lion Canyon! Blue got too close to the mares and was thoroughly reprimanded for his error. The stallion attacked biting and kicking. Reeling from the vicious attack , Blue, quickly moved outta his range. This very possibly, saved his life. A large Mountain lion , hiding on a low bluff; attacked like a striking rattlesnake! The Stallion, was busy threatening Blue and missed seeing the lion until too late!, A mountain lion is much faster than a horse for a short distance and the young stallion paid the full price for his error. The lion sprang to his back and inflicted a killing bite to the back of his neck! Blue, bolted to the safety of open meadows above the bench! The two mares followed. Blue was not a stallion, but the two mares followed his lead. He headed west, lured instinctively toward his home corral and little April, his master.

Dr. Charles Whitney was Director o St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona. Recently he had learned that his youngest daughter Delores Harding, living in Kingman with her husband was facing a difficult breach birth and the Kingman facility was not equipped with the latest ultra sound equipments and training to handle this difficult birth. The baby was due any day and Dr. Whitney had grabbed a quick train north to assist the staff as he was considered the best in his field when it came to ultra sound analysis and caesarian section deliveries. It was uncommon for a Father to provide medical services for a family member, but in this case , Medical Protocol was going to be ignored!

The Fast Santa Fe Passenger Express went north by way of Flagstaff to Kingman. Dr. Whiney was assured that he would be in Kingman in 6 hrs. Desert rains had flooded most of the highways north and low

visibility was keeping all small aircraft grounded . The rail road was still in operation and seemed the only transportation means available. Dr. Whitney counted himself lucky to get a seat . Upon leaving Flagstaff, the Railroad attendant told all passengers that they had received word that the railroad was blocked by debris just west of the old town of Valentine. Crews were out and cleaning the roadway, but all passengers were offered Hotel accommodations overnight in Flagstaff, if they desired . There was no estimate of when the road would be cleared! Those wishing to continue on would have to remain on-board until the roadway was cleared safe for travel. Dr, Whitney was terribly concerned. His daughter desperately needed his help and he had no choice but to stay on the train and hope that the roadway would soon be cleared. Coming into the old Ghost town of Valentine, the Attendant said, “ Sorry folks , but the road is not clear, the Hualapia Wash is still flooding bringing down tons of debris. We can’t risk crossing until we can inspect the Railway. Buses are being brought out from Williams to transport passengers to local Motels.” Dr. Whitney said, “Sir! Look here! Is there any way I can get to Kingman? Man it could be a case of life or death! I desperately need to get there ! I’m a Doctor and I have to get to Kingman!” The Attendant replied, “ Doctor, There’s a two mile stretch in front of us filled with debris and muddy water. There’s no way to cross that wash! The train from Kingman is parked on the siding on the other side. They’re in the same boat we’re in! Buses are being sent from Kingman to take the passengers back to Kingman Hotels! “ Whitney said, “ I’m gonna get out and have a look see myself! Damn it, I have to get to Kingman!” The Attendant said, “ Please Doctor , look if you must , but please get back in your seat, we’re bringing the buses in and doing the best we can!” Whitney waved a hand saying , “Ok, Ok ! I’ll be right back!”

Stepping down beside the roadway, Whitney noted a number of things. The wash was a raging torrent as the Attendant had said. Desert brush and debris rode the top of the current as far as he could see. Crews

were out on the track a hundred yards in front of the train,. clearing the light desert brush that had piled up. He could see the rails running off into the distance to the far side of the wash. The railroad itself was elevated and appeared to be outta the water. The roadway had not been washed away, but there was no way of knowing what damage had been done to the railroad bed until the water went down. Whitney was thinking, “ Damn! That could be days!”

Whitney noted one other thing! There were three horses standing by the railroad bed on the edge of the churning water. They were obviously afraid to venture into the raging stream. Whitney couldn't believe his eyes! One of the horses was one of the legendary Tiger Striped Spanish Mustangs! He couldn't believe it! Back in Brownsville Texas where he was born and raised , the Tiger Mustang was the most highly prized of all horses. You were considered a king if you were lucky enough to own one! Whitney walked closer to the horses trying to get a close up look at this rare Tiger Mustang! The two mares nervously moved back when Whitney approached. Blue, was not afraid , but threw his head up as if questioning the approach of this man! Whitney, in the manner of all horsemen; attempted to quiet the horses fear with a low guttural soothing voice repeating a meaningless low nothing word. Blue recognized the same tone that Billy used! He actually walked towards Whitney!

Whitney immediately recognized that Blue was a Gelding and obviously a tame horse. His mind was racing and he attempted something that he swore later on that he was crazy to try. To him , from his cowboy days in Texas, a Tiger Striped Spanish Mustang was far more than a horse! He was a Miracle on Four Legs! Without any regard for his own safety, he pulled his belt off and placed it around Blue's neck. Then walking him up the embankment , he swung up on Blue's back and headed out between the tracks for the other side! Blue walked on the rail road ties without a miss! After all he had a couple of months walking on rail ties in a Gold Mine! The two mares

followed at a little distance but came on any way. The working crew moved down out of their way and waved at Whitney as he passed “ Wishing Him Luck!”

Half way across, the rails were almost underwater. It was scary for Whitney and he was worried that he may have made a terrible mistake! Any misstep and he would be thrown into the rushing stream! A Number of areas were elevated trestles now loaded with debris and possible wash outs. Blue , knew better and moved carefully across the two miles of wash ! Whitney watched with apprehension, holding his breath; as Blue navigated many areas where he swore that the ground was washed away under the ties and only the railroad spikes held them up! He may have been wrong, because two days later train traffic resumed. Nevertheless it was an heroic accomplishment for the Blue Mustang and a heart stopping journey for Doctor Whitney!

Arriving on the far shore , Whitney quickly dismounted hugging Blue and earnestly thanking him for the safe crossing. Whitney was crying with joy and relief! As much as he would have loved to keep this Blue mustang, he had to pull his belt and let him go! Whitney grabbed the first Bus he could, heading back to Kingman! Thanks to a stray Tiger Striped Blue Mustang, he would be in time to help deliver his new Grandson!

Four days later . April arose from bed practically screaming! Billy and Ann ran quickly to her room, only to see her running outside in her pajamas to the corral! There stood Blue , calmly munching the fresh hay that April had kept changing and bringing for him. The big surprise was; there were two Mustang Mares in the pen also! Billy, couldn't believe what he was seeing, but quickly followed April and closed the gate effectively trapping the two mares! There was no way to describe the joy and happiness in the face of little April! Her best friend had come home and she couldn't be happier! Ann could only shake her

head in disbelief! There was no way such a thing could ever happen but here it was!

April refused to go to school that day! She was too excited and happy! “Blue was home!” All three stayed out by the corral way passed breakfast time. Ann and Billy were amazed at this miracle return of Blue. April was joyously happy, but took his coming home as something she was expecting! Ann was finally able to tare herself away and convince April to come in for breakfast saying, “ April, Hon, come on in the house, you can watch Blue from there! Get some clothes on! Those PJ’s are filthy with mud and horsehair! You can go back out as soon as you eat something and yes, you can skip school today!” April, in her happiness would just as soon skip school for the rest of the year!

Billy selected another pen for the two mares. They were of the same build and conformation as Blue; plainly Spanish Mustangs. Later he said to Ann, ‘I was a little worried because of the low fences and trying to hold wild horses, but both of these mares are heavy in foal. Unless they get terribly frightened, I think they’ll settle in just fine! I put Belle in with them. She’ll provide a little quieting comfort for them. It’s a real mystery to me , how Blue traveled cross country a good two hundred miles and doesn’t have a scratch on him from his adventures. He seems in really good condition! Where he picked up the two mares, we’ll never know, but as a gelding; they followed him from a feeling of herd safety . Being heavily pregnant, they would follow any lead animal and remain close to avoid predators when they foal. So I guess we have two more horses and you know April will be thrilled to have a couple of foals to spoil! Look at those two baby calves! They follow her around like Blue did.”

Ann asked, “Billy, do you suppose those two mares came from that herd up around Grande Springs? That’s over near Williams and remember the Horse Killers went in there capturing most of that herd

before we left Hackberry. They sure look like some of those from up there. Blue would have had to come through that country on his way here.” Billy said, “ Could be! They’re Spanish Mustangs and probably related to Blue. It’ll be interesting to see what they foal!” Ann said, “ It doesn’t matter what they foal, April will love them! Look at her , she’s just as dirty as she can get brushing Blue and he loves it!” Billy replied, “ So does she!”

Two days later , April’s teachers and half the school kids came bringing treats to see Blue, and welcome him home. April was thrilled and so was Ann! Billy , though poured cold water on their celebration , when he said,” I’m sorry, but no more treats and Corn Chips for Blue! He’ll colic and too much of that good stuff could hurt him bad! April, Honey, put your new saddle on him and give him a half hour light workout, but no running!” April was delighted to show off her new saddle and especially let Blue wear it! Billy said to Ann, “ Hon, Blue could easily get sick from too much of these treats and if he colic’s , he could die! A light work out and no water for awhile and he should be OK! We’ve got to explain this to April so these kids quit feeding him!” Ann said, “ Billy, she’s so excited and happy that all of her friends came to see Blue. We’ll talk to her later. I’ll see that he gets no more goodies!” Billy was looking at all the empty bags, thinking, “ Damn ! It may be too late!”

Sure enough; Blue was sick! Rolling in the Corral! Billy was not happy! All that candy and rich nitrate loaded food! Literally Billy was thinking , “ Blue had eaten enough to kill a horse! I can’t let that happen!” Blue had a terrible belly ache and was rolling in the corral to try and relieve the pain! Billy knew the only remedy was a few hours of walking. Blue wanted to lay down! Billy hated to force the horse or mistreat him in anyway, but this time it was necessary or Blue would surely twist an intestine rolling and this would kill him! Billy asked Ann to keep April in the house, because she wouldn’t understand the urgent necessity for mistreating him a little by forcing him to walk. There was a steep

sided ditch back of the barn and Billy forced Blue to go in and out of that ditch. Over and over Blue went up and down those sidewalls, stretching his stomach with each crossing. After almost two hours Billy stopped the torture, and let Blue rest a bit. He showed no interest in rolling. The belly ache was leaving! Billy had won! Blue was gonna be OK! Blue walked over to Billy trying to rub his head against Billy's back. Billy said, " No Blue! No more treats for you. I'll let you have a little sip of water and that's all until morning . I'm tired of walking !" Blue was naturally ungrateful, he was expecting another treat! Billy was thinking, " Blue don't understand ! But then he is only a horse!"