

THE MILK COW FROM HELL

by Leo A. Giacometto

As a kid I grew up; not at the end of the world, but from a vantage point where you could see it. My childhood in Alzada brings back many a fond memory of the trials and tribulations of a boy just trying to live long enough to get old.

Yes, today's youth do have a lot of problems to deal with. Things that in the metropolitan area of Alzada, we weren't bothered with. I was very sheltered when it came to drugs, crime, and drive by shootings. But, I did have to deal with violence, and I mean violence, with a capital E for Elsie.

You see, Elsie was a six-year-old milk cow from hell.

Some may laugh and think this a joke. But still, fifteen years after her demise, I still shudder at the sight of a milk pail.

In my life I have walked the streets of New York. I have been in the U.S. Army, served as a U.S. Marshal and have had my butt kicked a few times. But nothing, and I mean nothing, can compare to the brutality that ole bovie could dish out.

I can remember when I was about seven, watching my father sittin' on a stool, just a pullin' that milk out of ole Elsie. She sure gave alot of milk but she never wanted to be scratched or petted, just milked. It kind of seemed she felt that was her job.

Once in awhile, if Dad wasn't in a hurry, he would have me sit down and milk until I got tired. This was generally right after I got done squirting milk all over the dozen cats that came around

every day.

From the start, each time I would do a little milking , I remember her swatting me with her tail. Then Dad, in his 55 gallon barrel voice, would holler and she would stop.

Life is a little funny because, as I got older, so did Elsie. So by the time I was ten years old, she was starting to get a little cantankerous, and this is where the real story started.

By now, at the age of young manhood, and weighing in at a whopping eighty pounds, I was nominated to be the head milking machine. Elsie, like anyone who has been in the same job for many years, started to get a little bored with her milk cow job.

So, gradually she started out trying to put a little excitement into her work station. For example, half way through milking, she would pick up her foot and gently set it in the middle of the pail.

This may seem like an accident to you, but not when it happened everyday for a week. The hollering I gave that cow was nothing compared to the one I got back at the house for not bringing home much milk.

Well, I learned how to deal with her on this one. I started taking two buckets and I would empty it three or four times a milkin'. That worked real good the first week. She would still get the bucket once in awhile, but at least back at the house I wasn't catching too much hell.

It seemed as though she found my actions a little offensive; sort of like she had been outsmarted. That's when she upped the ante. I was still taking two pails, but now, instead of just

stepping in the bucket, she would wind up and kick that bucket clear across the barn. Now you see, these were no ordinary buckets. They were genuine, authentic, metal milk pails. So I was still getting enough milk to the house, but the buckets weren't faring to well. Therefore, my parental counseling began again.

So I had to improvise again. I started taking one milk pail and a one-gallon plastic ice cream bucket. Then, when I would get beat at the game of kick the bucket, it wasn't that bad. This game went on for a couple of months. I would milk and empty my bucket and at least once a day she would kick that bucket off the roof. But she seemed to notice that I wasn't getting as frustrated as I had in the past.

I really believe that this is when she turned mean. She set out to destroy my credibility as a milk hand.

That next week she started out with guerilla warfare tactics. First, the old kick the bucket routine, then a tail to the face and then a step into me. Then I would fall over and she'd kick the milk all over me. Up to this point I had been frustrated with her but the only fear I really had was that of the questions from Mom and Dad.

Now I was starting to think of my physical well being. The next week was when the full assault started. She used a full round house right kick. It caught me right in the midsection and let me tell you, that ole cow had some power! The wreck probably wouldn't have been so bad, but I had a good hold on a couple of her tits when she hit me. My legs and body went flying but I didn't let go. I ended up doing a full backward cartwheel, with a twist. I landed

right on my head, on top of the milk pail, which was on the stool and ended up in the gutter. Now I'm not talking about a rain gutter with a few leaves stuck in it. I'm talking about the kind that is full of the residue by-product from the raw materials that are used to make milk. Besides the pain, this was not a pretty picture.

That night I came into the house in only my underwear, packing one empty milk pail and a busted up ice cream bucket. I was also wearing a life size hickey on my waist. Dad said I must have just pinched her tit wrong.

So the next day I got physical and put a set of hobbles on her. Now that isn't as easy as it sounds. You see, you have to get pretty close to put on hobbles on and by now she meant business. I sort of felt like I was in a batting cage with the pitching machine on! Hooves were a flyin'! First the left, then the right. And I was dodging pretty good till she double clutched one and caught me with a right cross and slammed me into the calf pen. As I bounced off the calf pen she nailed me with a left and then back to the old familiar gutter I went.

Now, I hated to admit it, but I had been beat. I crawled out, turned the calf in, and threw some manure in the bucket so I could say she kicked it over. That wasn't even the worst of it. I had to give my brother fifty cents later that night, just so he wouldn't tell Mon and Dad about the welts on my chest.

That night I had mad cow dreams and woke up exhausted from the war. But, as I went to the milking station that morning, I was determined to succeed.

As Elsie walked into the barn she saw that look in my eye; sort of like a coyote looks at a lamb. Just as soon as I got her head locked in the station, I went to work. I got down Dad's rope and started tying. I had one leg tied up. The other leg tied over and another rope tied to her tail. And just to be safe, I had a fourth rope around her waist to keep her from falling on me.

Then I started milking. That old cow bellered the whole way through the milking and she was never the same again.

I would go through that same routine everyday. It was like her will to live was gone and she realized she had been beaten. She started drying up and everyday there would be less and less milk. Finally, Dad sold her. He said she just must be getting old.

But I knew different, and sure as hell wasn't going to say anything.