

# The Happiest Day

By Jamie Buckingham

According to my friend Ollie Swenson, who also lives in the country, the second happiest day in his life was the day someone gave him a goat.

The happiest day was the day the goat ran away.

Ollie went on to explain how his goat—the very first day he had it—climbed the fence and ate every one of his wife's expensive shrubs, including nine hanging baskets on the patio (rope and all). The goat finished that off by devouring all the imported tulips from Holland and, without even a burp, ate one of his wife's eelskin shoes.

The next day the goat butted Ollie's mother-in-law head first into the compost pile and then totally destroyed his neighbor's garden. Two days later the neighbor called to apologize. It seems the goat—quite by accident—had gotten mixed up with two cows the neighbor was taking to the market. The goat wound up at the slaughterhouse and no one could figure out how a thing like that could have happened. Ollie said it was a time for rejoicing throughout the kingdom.

Well, I don't know much about goats, but I can tell you about pigs and cows. And about horses that eat sand and have to be flushed out. Now that's quite an experience.

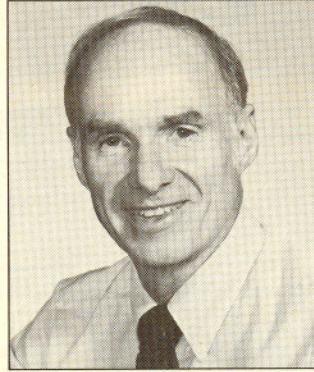
Mickey Evans, who runs an alcoholic rehab center on a large ranch, gave me a 34-year-old horse one time. One morning I walked out to the pasture behind our house to lean on a fence post, watch the sunrise and pray in tongues. I glanced out into the pasture and saw the horse lying on his side, looking like the Goodyear blimp. I mean he was so filled with gas he was about to float. I called the big animal vet. He arrived within the hour.

"He's sanded," the vet said. By that he meant the horse was too stupid to know the difference between grass and dirt, and had eaten at least a bucket of sand. The effect was the same as pouring dirt down your sink—it had clogged his innards.

We finally got the horse on his feet, which was no easy feat. The vet told me to hold the horse's head. He then withdrew a 25-foot rubber hose from his satchel and stuck it in the horse's nose. It was hard to believe. I watched, dumbfounded, as he pushed all 25 feet past his stomach into his intestines. When all but 12 inches had disappeared, he took a large kitchen funnel and stuck it in the exposed end of the hose. He then produced a gallon jug of mineral oil. I couldn't believe it. He emptied the entire gallon into the hose. All this time the horse just stood there, looking stupid.

"That ought to fix him up," the vet said, as he began reeling in the hose from the horse's nose.

I was feeling a bit nauseated. Thinking he could get along without me, I walked around behind the horse. Just then I heard the vet scream, "Don't go back there!"



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It was too late. What happened next is too awful to describe. The effect, though, was that of standing in front of a sandblast hose. The huge explosion of gas, oil, sand and "other materials" knocked me into the barbed wire fence and left me smelling... it was pretty bad.

"I told you that would fix him up," the vet grinned.

It not only fixed him, it fixed me too. The next day, still picking strange-looking things out of my ears, I decided it was time to donate the horse to the church. But, on second thought, I called Mickey Evans and told him to come after the horse. The only thing that saved the horse's life was the thought of having to dig a hole big enough to bury him.

That, aside from the day I gave our two cows to Mickey, was the happiest day of my life.

Well, maybe the second happiest day. The happiest day was the day I gave the boat away.

You see, the problem is in owning something you have no business owning. No landlubber needs a boat—especially the kind that has a large engine which always quits running two miles offshore. So I had decided to give the boat to God—broken engine, rotted canvas and all.

There was a lot of thunder and lightning that afternoon. Jackie says it was because God knew the boat had a hole in it. Several holes, in fact. I'd tried three times before to give it to God. Each time He refused. I finally left it in the church parking lot with a note saying I'd stop by later for my tax receipt.

Jackie said that wouldn't work since God saw me put it there. She said all that thunder and lightning came when He saw the battery was dead, the trailer rusted and the prop bent.

When He realized it was going to cost more to fix it up than it was worth, He came looking for me with thunder and lightning. Fortunately, I was preaching in Atlanta and He couldn't locate me. In fact it's hard for God to find most preachers in Atlanta.

Jackie warned me that God was going to get me back. "Not so," I argued, quoting 2 Corinthians 9:7. "'God loves a cheerful giver.' No one has ever been more cheerful about a gift than I am about this one."

"Just the same," she said, "the first time He has to paddle that thing home after the engine won't start, He'll come after you."

I laughed it off and gratefully accepted my tax receipt from the church. It seems the boat was worth a lot more than I realized.

Then yesterday Mickey called. He's bringing me a pet pig. His wife won't let him keep it in the house anymore. He said God told him to give it to me. I haven't told Jackie. She'll see it as God's way of getting even for the boat. Me? I'm still trying to figure out how to get a pig in the offering plate. ■