



Cowboys and Crushes by Betty Sharp

I have some Yankee visitors coming this summer and I was thinking about what Hill Country events would be fun for their children. I looked up the Cowboys on Main in Bandera. They look pretty sharp in their photos and have lots of activities and skits. Even in 2016 a lot of children are fascinated by the Wild West, both the history (true or not) and the TV show by that name. Every Saturday countless stations nationwide run the westerns my generation grew up with---Cisco Kid, Lone Ranger, Bonanza, Wagon Train, even Roy Rogers and Dale Evans episodes. When I heard the Dixie Chicks' song "Dale Evans Made a Cowgirl Out of Me" in the late 1980's, they were singing about my childhood. So I understood when my friend's child asked me if she could meet Little Joe. Yes, she knows he isn't real but she can dream, can't she?



My first "cowboy crush" at 11 was dark haired Pernell Roberts who played Adam Cartwright, Little Joe's older brother, on Bonanza. Like my young friend now, my girlfriends then were crazy about Little Joe, but to this day I have never liked a cowboy who has a prettier hairdo than me. I admired cute Hoss a lot, especially since he was gentle with horses, but Adam was mysterious and gorgeous. He was a cowboy who played the guitar, recited Shakespeare and read books. My dream man! I will admit these perfectly coiffed TV cowboys---oh gosh who didn't love Clint Eastwood as Rowdy on Rawhide---didn't prepare me for life around real cowboys when I moved to Texas. I'll tell you this---when a cowboy removes his sweaty hat after a few hours of vaccinating cattle in a dirty corral his hairdo

doesn't bear any resemblance at all to Little Joe's. But I came to love them anyway.*

I'm hopeful some of the staged fights and skits we see in the Hill Country will have Annie Oakley types mixing it up with the guys. Even when a little girl, I was annoyed by the shows that had the woman standing helplessly off to the side while her man was fighting a bad guy. "Pick up the frying pan and smack him one," I often yelled. I plan to introduce my young friend to Gale Davis' 1950s Annie Oakley. It is great fun to see Annie stand up in the saddle on her galloping horse shooting at the villains. I have to tell you, though, in one of my favorite Roy Rogers shows, Dale tries to help Roy who is losing the fight. Dale picks up a chair and swings it at the bad guy, but Roy pops up just at the wrong moment and Dale smacks Roy over the head instead.

I want children to enjoy these old tv shows, as well as see live action western events and what better place than Cowboys on Main in Bandera. Just for the fun of it. Just for the creativity of it. They can read the real history at another point in their lives. I just hope the children don't ask me to explain why Roy and Dale ride around on Trigger and Buttermilk, but Pat gets to drive around in Nellybelle, a 1946 Jeep. Not to mention that all the bad guys Roy and Dale chase ride slower nondescript bay horses, so apparently the bandits weren't smart enough to steal enough money to buy a motorized vehicle to outrun Trigger and Buttermilk. Go figure.

*And before I rile anybody up, let me say that no actor cowboy---absolutely no one---was more fantastic than Yul Brynner walking down the street in *The Magnificent Seven*. And, yes, I now know that Pernell wore a toupee! So who cares? A gorgeous head of hair isn't everything in a cowboy.