

## WinkWorld November 2008

### **Prairie Pedagogy, Our Boy Bailey, Part 2**

Last month, we started the story of Bailey with a picture of him and his classmates on their first day of school. As many of you guessed, yes, it is a one-room schoolhouse, and the kids really do ride their horses to school on the first day.

[Bailey heading to school](#)

[Bailey and Classmates](#)

This month we'll continue the story of Bailey, as his mom, Missy, tells the story of his life this year, as he begins school. First, I want you to know that Missy is the teacher in the one-room school.

As much as we hate to admit it, Bailey is kind of a 'town kid,' even though he always wears Wranglers, cowboy hat, boots, and even spurs and chaps. He loves to listen to rodeo stories from Daddy. We take him out to the country as much as we can, but it's not the same as growing up on the ranch. He spent the first few years of life in daycare and preschools, and his friends are mostly 'town kids,' too.

So, when I started teaching this fall in the little one-room school house near Hereford, we worried because we knew the students rode horses to school the first day. We were nervous about what Bailey would think or do when he learned about riding a horse to his first day of kindergarten.

Bailey has had to deal with a lot this past year: moving to the country; mom starting a new teaching job at a little one-room school house; a new baby brother, Everett; and most significantly, a year of cancer treatments for his other little brother, Cooper. Surgeries, chemo, and constant trips back and forth to Minneapolis have turned Bailey's world upside down. He carries a heavy load on his little shoulders, as the older brother.

As the first day of school approached, Bailey remained resistant to riding a horse to school. Dad could not be there, as he was in the hospital for Cooper's chemo treatment; and I had to welcome the other students to school. Finally, it came down to Bailey making the decision for himself: Would he or wouldn't he ride a horse to school?

"No," he told us for three days in a row.

"I don't want to ride a bucking horse," he told us on the fourth day.

"Where are they going to ride them?" he asked on the fifth day.

"From their homes to the school," we explained.

"No, mommy, they can't! I don't want my kids to get hurt!" This puzzled me, but I couldn't figure out why he thought they would be hurt.

"They won't get hurt," I told him, "They know how to ride horses and their moms and dads are coming with them."

"But where are they going to ride them?" he asked again.

"Well," I said, "they will ride through the pastures between home and school."

"Oh!" he laughed. "That will be okay. We can't ride horses on the roads, or we would get hit by cars!" Bailey had a logical reason why he didn't want to ride!

When the first day of school came, Bailey said, "Mom, will you hold my lunch?! I'm gonna ride a horse." He rode with head held high for pictures, with a look-at-me-I'm-a-cowboy-grin

on his face.

Throughout the day, Bailey kept asking me, if it was time to ride again, as all of the kids go to a neighbors for cookies after school. By the time, I arrived to pick him up, he was alone in the saddle on Ace.

Nevermind that it was the first day of school - for him it was his first day as a real cowboy.

I appreciate that this young family, struggling with such a battle against cancer, has agreed to let us tag along with Bailey, so we can see what this young cowboy has to teach us.

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### **Prairie Pedagogy, Obama, Wink, and the Blizzard**

I arrived home to the South Dakota ranch just in time to see Barak Obama win the presidential election and Dean Wink win the SD legislator election. Or, as Dawn Wink mused: Wink and Obama, a clean sweep.

As soon as the election was over, the wind started to howl and the blizzard hit. We have had no power since: no power; no water; no landline; no cell; and, of course, no Internet. It is now Day 5. I am teaching an online class, and fortunately, the teacher credential candidates have carried through with their assignments, in spite of the fact that I have not been able to provide feedback. I've been wearing my ski pants in the house to try to stay warm. I have not showered since last Monday when I left CA, but I have given into washing my hair in cold water. The meat in our freezers is now all buried in snowbanks, and I use the back porch for milk and perishables, which, indeed, they are!

Wink, the new legislator, spends hours of each day and night out in the dreadful cold to try to keep horses, cows, and calves alive and the trucks and tractors operating. However, for one glorious hour each a.m. and each p.m., he brings the tractor near the electrical box. When the tractor is running, the PTO behind it turns round and round, and he can operate the generator with this power, which then provides a bit of electricity to the house. During this hour, I run to fill buckets, pots, and pans with washing water and cleaning drinking water. In addition, I run to the computer and make a bit of connection to the world, as I listen to loud Christmas music.

This *WinkWorld* is truly coming to you from a tractor-powered computer. You can't make up this stuff.

I go to bed early (5:30 p.m. being my personal best) with a good book. I have finally become a ~flashlight kid~ and we know the research says that flashlight kids will have high levels of literacy.

<http://www.sdkrashen.com/articles/comicbook/index.html>

Addendum: The power came back on after 6 days.