

My Take: Get Back On Your Pony

Written by Jane Alexander, Editor-In-Chief
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Watching wave upon wave of terrible economics news roll in over the past few weeks has had me thinking back to the Christmas when Santa Claus left two weary-looking Shetland ponies for my brothers and me. I had just turned nine, and money was pretty tight for my South Texas farm family. Santa, though, was a consummate bargain hunter. He cut a deal with an even more cash-strapped carnival operation that was wintering near our home on the Mexican border and managed to deliver on every child's dream—or so we thought.

Bless their insolent little hearts, unlike some big, sleek, even-tempered horses that had roamed our place in better times, these creatures were short, scraggly and downright mean. Having escaped bleak lives in which they were expected to shuffle endlessly around in circles with exuberant, often ill-behaved brats on their backs, they had no intention of pursuing the same goals as the four hopeful and excited little heathens that came with their new digs.

We kids could easily picture ourselves riding like the wind across the fields behind the house—the ponies couldn't. It was a point they made abundantly clear by constantly snorting, stomping, snapping, biting and kicking at us. Even worse, every time we managed to get up on their backs, they would immediately begin bucking and twisting and throw us right off. Things certainly weren't going as planned. After a few painful hours on Christmas Day, we all were ready to give up.

Our bruised behinds and even-more bruised egos, however, didn't elicit much sympathy from our folks. It didn't matter how loudly we wailed or carried on, "Get back on your pony and ride," was all they would say to each of us, over and over. "Right now!"

And we did, of course. We had to. In fact, by early spring, when the carnival—along with our ponies—headed north for its annual swing through the Midwest, each of us had become quite

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proficient at hanging on and guiding our stubby little steeds in directions that they might not actually have chosen for themselves. In retrospect, though, I don't think anybody in the family really missed the Shetlands after they left. They were, after all, very obstinate critters.

On the other hand, my brothers and I did learn some valuable lessons from this episode—lessons that have served us well any time a situation or event in our lives has "thrown" us. The most important of these is that no matter how scared, how tired or how hurt you are, you can't stay down. Whatever it takes, you have to get right back on whatever "pony" bucked you off, hang on as tight as you can and ride wherever you really want to go. Which brings me back to the worsening global recession...

More individuals, institutions and industries than we can count have been thrown violently by or from something in the past year. Today, as I write this column, hardworking people and companies all over America are **STILL** waiting for the House and Senate to pass a compromise economic stimulus package. While this "pony" may not be as perfect as some might like, it could be just enough to spark the type of hope and confidence that will help put workers and businesses across all sectors back in the saddle again. With their energy, enthusiasm and ability to innovate, you can bet that they'll get our economy where it truly needs to be. All they need is the pony. **MT**

