

KING, OUR PONY

by **Charles W. Sweet**
“Poppa”



Called “Timer” by his parents


Written especially for my grandsons,
Daniel and Trevor Sweet
and dedicated to my parents, Almon and Mary E. Sweet,
my brothers Louis and Eugene, and
my sisters Lillian and Beatrice.

1997



Riding King when we lived in Madison Center, Michigan,
I was about 11 years old in Sixth Grade..

KING, OUR PONY

 **W**hen I was a little boy, I lived on a farm with my Mother and Dad, my two brothers and two sisters. We milked cows for butter and milk, and raised chickens. We had teams of big horses which helped plow the fields.



One day, when I was a very young boy, a pony came to the farm. My older brother Louis said that he was a Christmas present for all of us. Our pony was named King. He was a Shetland pony and weighed about 215 pounds. Not very big. His coat was light brown with a dark brown mane. Shetland ponies are known for their gentleness and for being good with children.


King was very gentle.



Rolling on the ground is a sign that your pony is feeling especially happy and comfortable.



My sisters and brothers with me in the middle, about 1927-28.
Left to right: Beatrice, Eugene, Charles, Lillian, Louis.

 **L**illian, my sister Bea and my brother Gene all played with and rode King. I did too.

Usually we rode King bareback, without a saddle. Since he was small, the saddle was too heavy for him. We could jump on his back from the ground. Before we grew too big, sometimes we rode him two at a time. Lots of times we rode him with just a rope tied around his neck to guide him.

He did not like a bridle, which had an iron bit in his mouth.

We kids took good care of King. He liked to eat oats and lots of hay which we grew on the farm. He usually slept standing up. I guess lots of horses do that. In the fall and winter he had his own stall in the barn.




BRIDLES



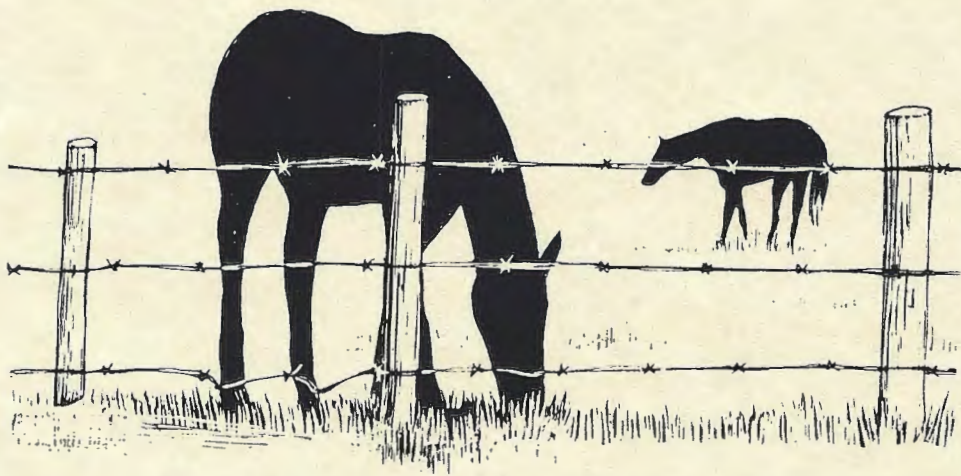
The work horses came inside then too.
We always had regular horses, but we never rode them for fun. They were for work and pulled big wagons or farm machinery.

We had one team named Andy and Min. In the winter they would walk around the barnyard for exercise.



 **D**ad gave King some horse medicine one time when he got sick. Then he got well. I do not know what the medicine was but it sure smelled stinky!

King was a fun horse. We kids were always playing around him. We would take a horse blanket and fix one end to a fence, and the other end around King. That made shade for us so we could drink lemonade. We always gave King some lemonade in a pail.



He always like bananas, but they had to be peeled first. Apples had to be cut up before he ate them out of our hands.



My brother Gene with hat, age 5, and me, with play glasses, age 6, in Adrian, Michigan where I went to Kindergarten and First Grade.



In the wintertime, we would fix up a rope harness and pull the sled behind him. He never went very fast, but the rides were fun.



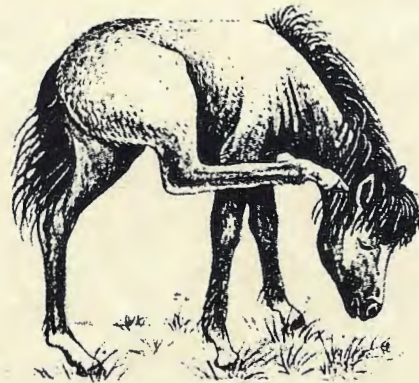
There were about 30 cats that lived in the barn, too. Sometimes stray dogs came to live at the farm also.

In the summertime King was in the pasture with the other horses, He could eat all the grass he wanted.


Sometimes we would tie a long rope around his neck. We'd tie the other end to a stake in the yard. He ate the grass in a big circle. Then we didn't have to mow the lawn!



Giving King a bath was lots of fun. We had pails of water. We didn't have a hose. We would scrub his coat and his feet with brushes. His tail and mane were combed with a "curry" comb. He always liked to have a bath. He would stand still without anyone holding his halter or bridle.

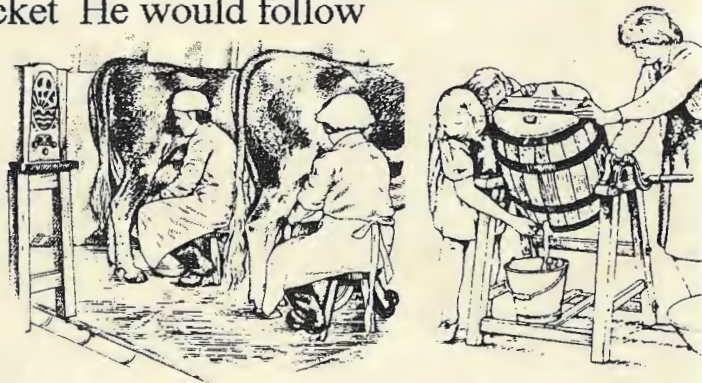



This is how a pony scratches behind the ear.

 **H**e liked to go to the pasture and help bring in the cows when it was milking time.



If the kids were too heavy, he would not move even though we tugged and pushed, however if you had sugar cubes in your pocket and gave him some, that always helped. In fact, it seemed like he could smell the sugar cubes in your pocket. He would follow you until you gave him some. He thought they were all for him.

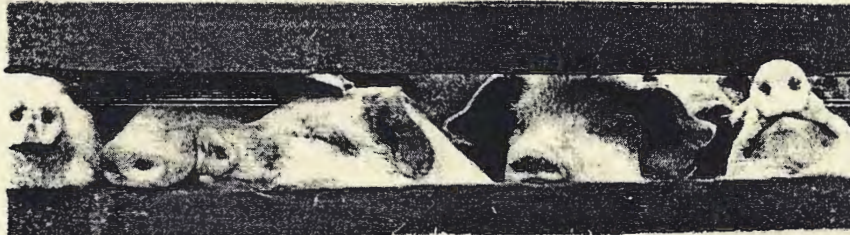
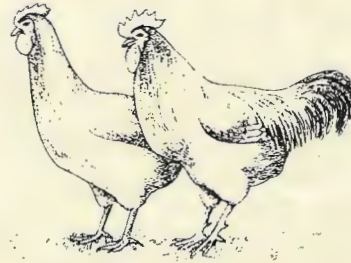


 I went to 4th, 5th, and 6th grades at a one room country school called Madison Center. We would leave our books at school because we never had any home work. After school was for doing chores.


I would fill the wood box in the kitchen next to the wood stove where Mother cooked and the potbellied stove in the dining room.



I would help Mother collect the eggs that the chickens had laid all over the yard. Some of the eggs we sold, and the rest we ate. We fed the chickens corn that we grew on the farm. Every Sunday we had chicken for dinner. We raised pigs and guinea hens to eat too.





 This picture is a one room country school house called Whig School. It is three miles west of Adrian, Michigan on Beecher Road.

I attended second grade here in 1930. We rode King to school and tied him to fences to wait for us.

This picture was taken about 1977, the school no longer used and deserted.



We used to ride King to school. It was only about a mile away, so the walk was quite easy. On cool frosty mornings in October and November, he would kick up with his hind legs if you rode way back near them, and try to throw you off. One time the teacher saw us doing that and we couldn't bring him to school anymore in the late fall.

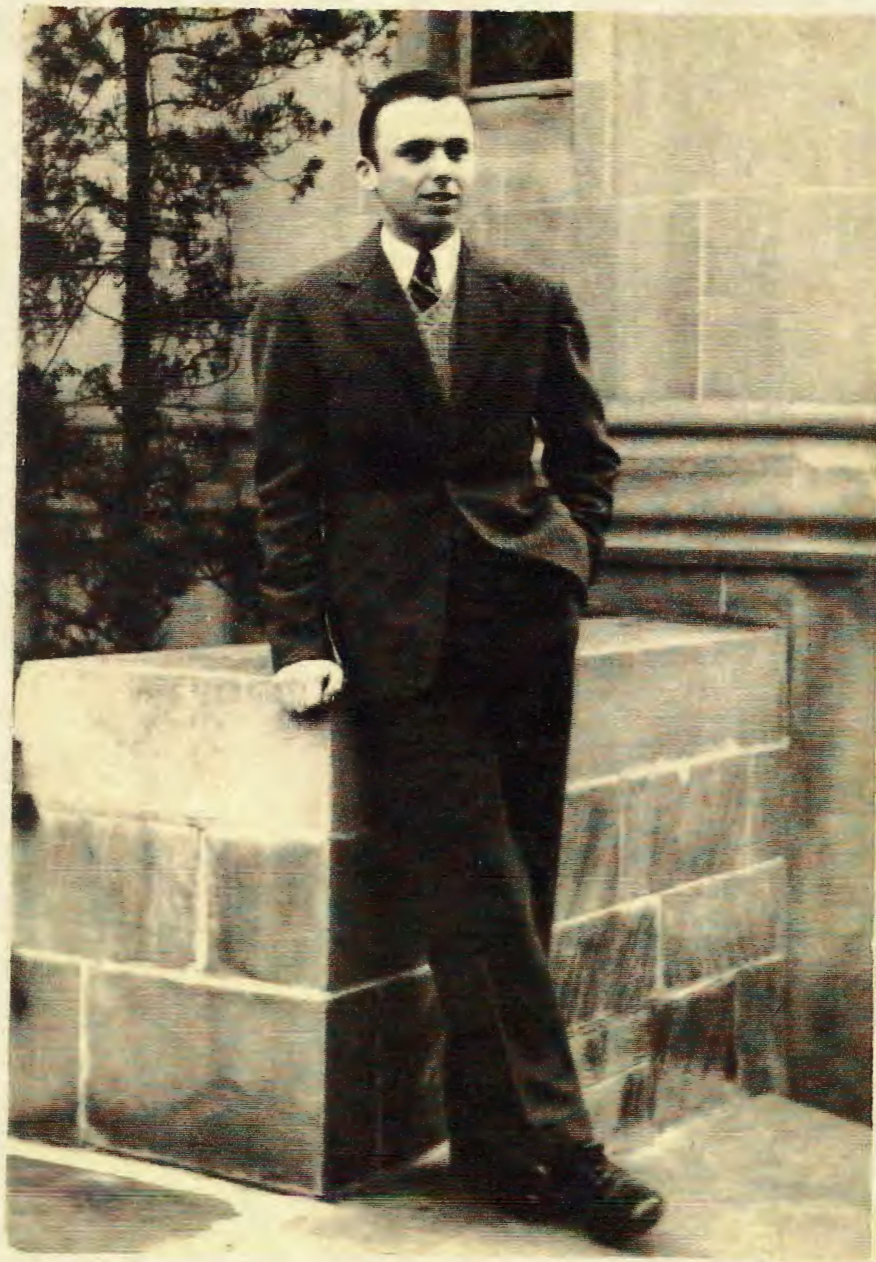
Mostly I remember riding King when I was five years old through about thirteen years old, not only riding him but looking after him, feeding him, and giving him the best care that was possible.




When I was fourteen we retired King to a life of ease. He had his own barndoor to come in and go out as he pleased. He always had water and feed when he wanted it. He could wander around twenty acres of stream, pasture and woods.







Here I am as an 18 year old Freshman
at Michigan State College, East Lansing, Michigan.

 **W**hen I was nineteen, I came home from college for Christmas. My Dad told me that King had died in the woods on a hillside. He had not come in a night to feed so my Dad went looking for him. My Dad dug a burial place near the spot where he fell. He placed his bridle on crossed branches above in a tree over the grave.

King had a good life. In human terms he lived to be over one hundred years old. He always brought much happiness to our whole family.

