

Mother and the Bobcat

By Lona Tankersley Burkhart

My mother was an animal lover. She loved every inhabitant of the spread. Each ol' hen had a name and a personality to her, just like a good cowman knows his cows, she knew and loved her chickens. Aside from the fact we lived sixty miles from town and they were the necessary providers of our egg supply. We always had trouble with coyotes, and once in a while a bobcat or a desert fox would raid the chicken pens, so mother had persuaded Dad to cover the chicken pen top with chick wire, so she could shut them up at night. Dad was gone often, trading cows, and during this time I was the cowboss, cowboy, choreboy and everything else needed. One of the things Mother was always prone to do, was to run out to see what was bothering the chickens, without taking a gun, or if it was night, a lantern or light. It was always me who ran back after the shotgun or whatever.

One night the chickens started to make a furious racket and the dogs were barking and we made a flying trip to rescue the flock. Mom ran in the chicken pen and then yelled at me to go get the gun, there was a bobcat in there. Now, thinks me, we don't want to lose him, so I locked the chicken house gate. From the outside. With Mother and the bobcat inside.

By this time the bobcat had lost his taste for chicken and was trying to find the hole he'd made to get in through, but he was pretty excited and forgot where it was. He was jumping up and hitting the wire and bouncing off like a ball, when I got back with the gun. Mother was still in the middle of the pen, and she was also wanting out pretty badly. The bobcat finally found his hole, and then proceeded to run in a big wooden box that the mother dog used to have her pups in. Moms old Stumpy dog (who never did have a brain) ran inside the box with the bobcat. That box did a war dance around the yard before Stumpy shot out like a streak. I finally shot the bobcat, but I think it was unnecessary. He probably would have never returned. He had killed a whole bunch of chickens, and we spent the rest of the night dressing them. My Mother, till the day she died, never did see any humor in the situation, and never did forgive me for locking her in with the bobcat.

