

We Found “Normal” *...and it was so good!...*

By Kat Rowoldt

It's amazing how a beautiful day, 74 degrees, gentle cool breeze, a bunch of cowboys, freshly plowed dirt, and chutes full of young bulls can help you forget about social distancing, coronavirus, and wearing face masks. Notice his hat flying away – the shadow shows it too!



For about three hours Saturday, John and I returned to what life once was. We were greeted at check-in with hand sanitizer, there were signs and instructions about social distancing, and you could even hear some folks cracking a virus joke or two. But...put a preacher on the microphone singing some country gospel songs, have another preacher come to the mic to give the boys a message about Jesus before they mount those beasts, and be sitting in the stands around an arena at a Cowboy Church in the hill country and the worries of today seem to melt away and people began to act “normal” again.



This was a first for us. Being so close to the chutes allowed us to see firsthand what is actually involved in preparing the bull, the rider mounting, the cowboy working the leather strapping, other cowboys holding the bull's tail, turning its head toward the gate, the “safety” man (as I thought of him each time he grabbed a rider) lifting the rider off the critter when it started bucking in the chute, and so many others all carrying out their assignments. Lots of work for hopefully nine seconds of adrenalin rush and prize money. Only two young men would hear the nine second whistle while still on the bull that afternoon.

A few of these young men were having some of their first experiences in doing this. They were on very young bulls. I can't imagine the guts it must take to sit on a bull who wants to buck you off and whose back legs can send you flying. I discovered a few of those bulls would even try jumping and climbing out of the chutes. Every man at his post, including the arena clowns, had such an important position to carry out in this truly TEAM sport where only one man gets the

glory. Some of the support team was so far back pushing the animals forward they did not even get to enjoy the action, but without them, there would not have been a bull in a chute to buck.



The judges, the emcee, the spectators all cheered on each rider. Needless to say, every ride, because of the bull, was very different. The bulls all had their own names and were building their bucking history. The bull riders were doing the same. Many of them had traveled for miles just for the ride. One of the winners hailed from San Benito, Texas which is four and a half hours away. They came from all across Texas.

Saturday was a healthy day. The medical experts are talking about the need for people to get out and get some Vitamin D, we need to build herd immunity, and how getting dirty helps build up our immune system. I'll add to that the need to be "social" again and interact with other humans, to laugh, to breathe fresh air, and just to be seen again by others. God did not create us to be isolated and alone, but to interact and support one another like family. It felt so good.



So, if you get a chance to get out and do something “healthy,” don’t hesitate. You don’t have to be the one who mounts the bull, opens the chute, or pushes the beasts into the chutes. You can simply enjoy the sport of being a spectator to one of many events. Even the craziest of sports need a few spectators to cheer them on.

As we left there and headed home, we found a restaurant with dine-in open. Once again, we were back into the world of face masks, social distancing, and hand sanitizer. Our three hours of freedom was so worth the trip. It was good medicine for the soul, the spirit, and the body. I’m sporting a nice sunburn on the back of my neck, but great memories I’ll never forget which I can revisit as often as I’d like.

I pray Americans will push to restore our freedoms and begin to socialize together once again, because we do need one another more than we realize. Even a hug or two or three. I hope you’ll find a way to go visit “normal” real soon. It’s the best of places.

Until next time...

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