

Joe Wolter Helps Suburban Cowgirl Wan-a-be

By: Marcia T.
From: Willow Brook Farms, Pennsylvania

About the Author: Unlike the riders she envies, the author was not born on the back of a horse. Her adventures began when I, I mean, when she turned forty. I trained (inside) a show barn, worked my horse (indoors) and showed (mostly indoors) for the first five years. Well, enough of the four walls. This self-proclaimed “Queen of the Indoor” wants to get outside. You see, she, I mean I, really want to be a cowgirl.

Last year I showed up at Willow Brook Farms in Catasauqua, Pennsylvania, for a horsemanship and cow-working clinic with Joe Wolter of the famous 6666’s Ranch in Texas. I had my new 4-year old buckskin quarter horse with the most beautiful topaz eyes—“Buzz.” Buzz settled in nicely at Willow Brook and I looked forward to getting started. You see Buzz had this one little problem. When scared or spooked he did a 180 and bolted. He was consistent in this behavior. I just knew cow-working would be good for his mind—a diversion like cow-working would help get him through this.

Horsemanship went really well. We stayed indoors (my ~~home turf~~) **for the first** day and the morning of the second day. Then it was time to roundup ~~the cows for the~~ start of the cow-working clinic. We all rode with Joe out the barn door and off **to the cow** fields. I could feel Buzz getting up, or coming up or whatever you want to call it. **You** see Buzz had never seen a cow before much less a herd of them running—running towards him.

You probably guessed it. Yep, Buzz did a 180 and took off with me. Fortunately, I had mastered the one rein stop—aka, the emergency brake—taught earlier in Joe's clinic. You see in case of an emergency, I found that if you take hold of one rein and pull the nose until it touches the butt of your horse (especially one with beautiful topaz eyes) you'll brake for almost three seconds—enough time to get off.

Everyone agreed that Buzz's behavior was just a fluke and that once we got into the roundpen with our one cow for our working session, everything would come together. I watched as, one-by-one, my classmates successfully worked their cows. You see it was probably the thundering herd that did Buzz in, right?

So now it's my turn. I enter the pen and Buzz and I are ready to face-off with our cow. You see I'm sure it was just a little cow, but Buzz sees something hideous and more horrible than flapping blue tarps. 180 and run. 180 and run. 180 and run. How many 180's can this poor woman handle? 180 and run. 180 and run. (I think this is when my husband shows up to see his cowgirl wan-a-be with her new little horse that she had to have because of, you know, the beautiful topaz eyes.)

I was unable to help Buzz (he wore me out) but Joe successfully got Buzz to face his fear of cow. This gentle cowboy has such a way with horses. Joe and Buzz made quite a picture driving the herd out at sunset. But enough about Joe. What about me? Was this the end of my cow-working adventures?

I read with great excitement that Joe Wolter was returning to Willow Brook Farms this summer for another cow-working clinic. You see I have this new quarter horse mare with a beautiful white mane and tail—"Savanna." She understands me and knows how important it is to be able to work a cow, to be able to ride with the herd, to prove to my husband that I've chosen my new horse well.

I know the suspense is killing you. In short, I'm a cowgirl. Well, a suburban cowgirl. Thanks to cowboys like Joe Wolter and the good folks at Willow Brook Farms who have the heart and patience to work with cowgirl wan-a-bees I'm now able to open and close gates from horseback, move the herd, single out a cow and have tried team penning.

I hope Joe returns to Willow Brook next year. I'll be there. You see having fun with her horse is all that this cowgirl really wants.