

Monday, July 9, 2018

"Operation Horses and Heroes"

Gerald Paulsen
Founder & President

Susan Parker
Co-Founder & Vice President

Dear Jerry and Susan

I turned 17 in 1971 and enlisted in the Navy. My 20 plus years of service from 1971 to 1992 forever changed my life. I was a troubled young man when I enlisted but the service changed me so much for the better. It was my family and taught me how to be a man and to rely on myself as well as my shipmates.

Searching the internet, a couple months ago I found a group called "Operation Horses and Heroes" and I immediately felt curious and as weird as this sounds "A Family". I sent in my registration and was immediately contacted by Jerry and welcomed into the program. Little did I know that I would be entering a new world along with a very close family.

My wife and I traveled to the 2K Ranch in our motorhome and was welcomed into a family we never knew we had. We were greeted by Jerry and the ranch owners, Dave, Tracy and Rowdy, who showed us where we could set up. Tracy took my wife along to help bring the horses in from pasture, and Rowdy took me on a tour of the ranch, it was like we had known them all our life.

During our 3 days on the ranch, my wife and I both discovered a new world and a new family. The program was amazing, I have never been around horses and had no idea what to do but our new family and especially the owners son, Rowdy showed me the ropes. The program taught us how to rely on friends and family to help us when life gets unbearable, how to ask for help and how to help others. We learned how to work together and to rely on each other like we did in the military. It was amazing being with the horses who just knew that we all needed help in some way and were there for us as we were there for them with grooming and cleaning up. It's so soothing and relaxing talking to the horses it's like they understand and want to help.

Every team building exercise was orchestrated by 2 or more of the most amazing and talented staff who led, pushed and prodded (not the cattle version) us to work together, along with the horses, through hurdles that mimic life and taught us how to heal and to not shy away from asking for help, for friendship, for knowledge or to just talk before life gets unbearable.

I highly recommend the program for all veterans no matter your age or what your service involvement was, it is an experience, and a family, you will go on to remember and help you forever.

Jim "Gunner" Plansky CWO, USN, Ret.
Gaye "Mini Gunner" Plansky
Menominee Michigan