



on the trail with...

GREG KESLER

By Siri Stevens

Greg Kesler comes from four generations of ranchers in the same valley of Utah he now calls home. "I grew up ranching and left home when I was 13 and went to work for a big cattle operation that raised thoroughbreds. By the time I got old enough to start my own deal I realized that ranching wasn't going to work. I bought a truck and went in the oil field, and that turned into a big company."

Greg developed the use of a chemical, magnesium chloride used for dust control and de-icing. He sold that company seven years ago. "During that whole thing my passion was horses and cattle so I ranched in a small way all during that. I was always making calf horses and was blessed to be all over the west with the mining part of my business."

After his jobs were finished, Greg would travel to whoever he thought had the best horses in the country. "They thought I was a stranger stopping in to watch. I'd pick their brains about training methods, and any wisdom they were willing to share; even though I was raised as steeped in the horse industry as most of them. I soon found that I never learned anything from anyone if I acted like I

knew much."

Every good calf horse he sold, he threw the registration papers in a drawer.


One day he bought a brand new desk and found that stack of papers. "I started looking through these papers and I realized there was a whole lot of the same bloodlines in the horses I was selling.

"I thought there might be something to this bloodline stuff. I had a guy named Jack Dixon from Texas who had a large band of mares and I'd bought a lot of colts from him. I'd call him needing ten geldings and he'd send them out, most of them still studs and not halter broke. He moved from Texas to Arkansas and decided to get rid of his band. He asked me if I would take ten of his mares. I didn't want too, but he persuaded me. - I always prided myself in not having mares."

Jack wanted to preserve bloodlines from his band for his grandson; that was 20 years ago.

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Greg started roping calves when he was 26, even though he



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was raised on a ranch. He took the time to go one day a week to learn how to rope. He'd roped on a ranch all his life, but not anything competitive. "I was very frustrated by it all," he said. "I was praying one morning and had the designs of a roping machine come to my mind. I designed what I named a horse saver which I patented. It was the first training device in the rodeo industry. We started marketing those. Roy Cooper was the guy at the time and he endorsed it. I started the Rodeo Champion Rope Company with a mail order business and we sold those horse savers along with a full line of high end rodeo equipment."

He has determined over the years what the perfect team roping horse is...height between 15 to 15.2 hands; pretty – most buyers today demand they are pretty. "We are in a day and age where a lot of cowboys are working guys – doctors, business owners. The kind of horses they demand need to be gentle. No more buck in them. And yet they have to be very athletic. If they have modern running blood in their papers I won't even look at them; they aren't quarter horses, they are thoroughbreds. That doesn't make them bad, it just means they are bred to RUN and not to be soft, supple, and submissive; traits that most ropers want in today's horses."

Greg appreciates the descendants of Jewel's Leo Bars, just to name one. "Those horses will have cow and stop and run."

We think the lines of Joe Hancock horses when crossed up right make very good using horses. He was a riding horse they ponied running horses on. It soon became apparent that he could out run anything on the track yet his colts had cow sense and could gather up and stop.

Driftwood bred horses are the same way.

The great ones are freaks of nature ...they just show up. We the breeder, have to breed for consistency. I'm riding my three and



Truck spreading magnesium chloride for dust control



Greg Kesler with his kids, Landon, Lindsay, Quinn, Hailey, Nicole and Camille in 2004. Photos courtesy of Greg Kesler

four year olds right now. For me to feel successful I've got to have every colt that I get on be nice ... not great ... but nice."

Greg culls ten to twelve mares a year from his herd of 50 brood mares. He buys 2-3 stud prospects every year. "As soon as I see traits I don't like, they become geldings. As long as I have a saddle on, I can tie my studs to a rail between 2 mares at any roping and they will stand there like a gelding."

Greg can't watch a horse and tell what they have for ability. "I don't have that. I can't sing or dance, but I can ride a horse around for ten minutes and tell you what they're going to be. I can't always tell their brain, but I can tell what they have."

Every time Greg culls a colt, even if it's for color, his mamma goes to. The horses he sells every year at the famous Double Dollar Sale are mostly 4 or 5 years old.

Part of the Double Dollar is the Internship program. "They are up at 6 am every morning for scripture study and breakfast. After that they help on the ranch. Everything we do is focused on making roping horses. We work the two and three year olds when we do ranch work and we rope on the four year olds every day. The interns this year are 19-20. I've had them as old as 38."

Prospective interns send a video and Greg watches them ride. "I ask what they have for goals and then I get on my knees to try and get insight as to if or how I could be of help to them. We've had interns come for 19 years now. It's not about training horses it's about training young men. They have to go to church every Sunday, use clean language and lifestyle, while riding and roping more in a year than they would normally in ten. It's about teaching

them to be classy individuals. It's about paying back somehow."

Greg has six kids - Camille, Landon, Nicole, Lindsay, Quinn, and Hailey.

Greg is hoping to go backwards in the future. "Until Quinn came along, I took four horses a year and trained them. I wouldn't let anyone touch them until I was done. I would sell them, but I wouldn't give them up until they were done to my satisfaction. I took a lot of pride in that. I would personally like to evolve back to that program and leave the volume training up to Quinn and the next generation."

Greg has led a very full life.

"I have been where I had nothing and gone to where I couldn't spend it all and back again. Many people think if they have money they will be happy. I have found that money isn't what makes you happy. If you don't have goals and dreams that make you excited to get up early every morning and work hard to achieve them, you will never be truly happy".

"I never learned anything from anyone if I acted like I know anything." Greg Kesler



Above: 2009 Double Dollar Sale

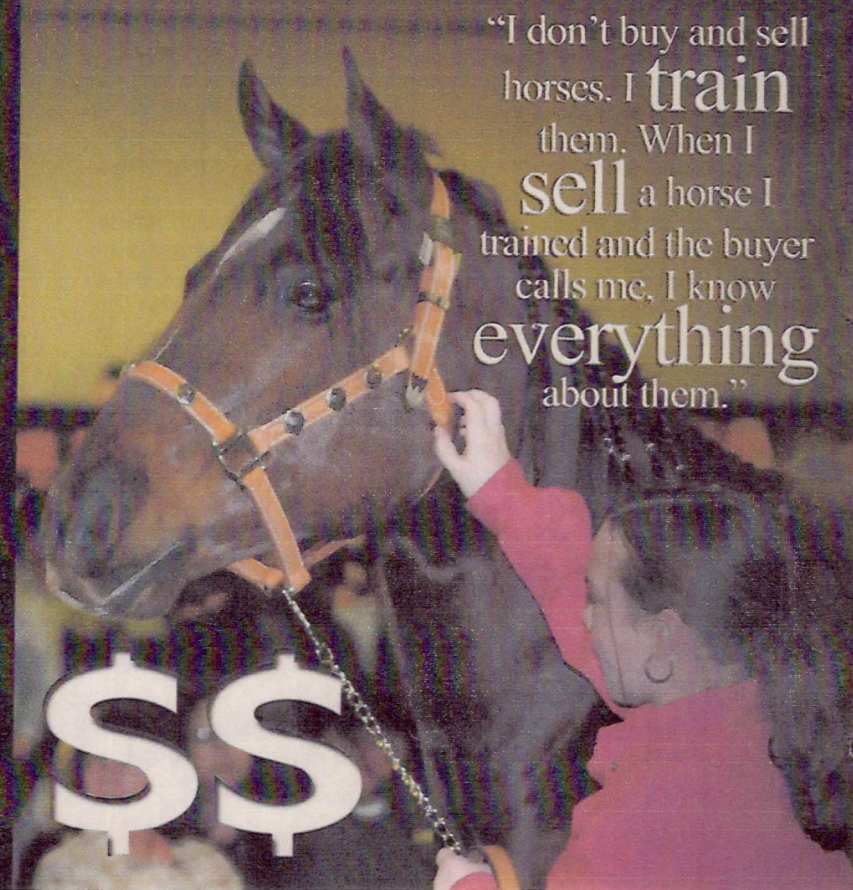
Below: Diesel, high selling horse at 2009 Double Dollar Sale (\$41,500) with Hailey Kesler. Photo by Siri Stevens



1960 Christmas morning, Greg with his first horse, Chris



Greg heading on one of his great horses. Photo by Allen Photography



"I don't buy and sell horses. I train them. When I sell a horse I trained and the buyer calls me, I know everything about them."