

The life of a hardy cowgirl

Cesaltina da Cunha, Sommersby Ranch, Rosetta May 24, 2012 11:19 am

The feature on Allie Gordon (27 April, pg 58) is an inspiring story of a woman who has returned to her roots to follow her heart and live her passion.



This brings me to a passion which has been the driving force in my life – those great pioneering women of the old West – the cowgirls! These were gutsy, tough, hardworking, honest women who could drive cattle across states, tame wild horses, ride the open plains at full gallop, and work the land.

They did the same chores as men, took care of their families, and had babies too. They were great role models and an inspiration to women everywhere. They lived well into old age by staying strong and fit, and they were women with wisdom beyond their years.

They wouldn't allow something like childbirth or old age to w them down, and they lived life with unbridled passion. Always waiting to see what the next day would bring, they never let boredom into their lives. Cowgirls showed women everywhere how to keep their dreams alive and how to fight for freedom from the confinements of a stifling society.

I grew up as an armchair cowgirl watching every western movie with my dad. Finally at 50, I've started out, proof that it's never too late, and I am having the time of my life. I have learned much about being a farmhand, how to raise orphan calves, contain alien vegetation, mend a broken fence and handle a PHD which incidentally does not imply I keep my intellectual husband under my control – it means I know how to use a 'post hole digger.'

A drive into town is always eventful as I often have to contend with friendly banter such as 'where did you leave your horse, missy?' Or better still, 'do you carry a gun?' I walk away with a smile knowing that at least I do 'walk the talk,' and it is evident that a cowgirl is as foreign in our country as elephants are in New York. It is wrong to think the pioneering era is past.

These iconic women, whether in Wyoming or the Karoo, are still out there today battling as they always have against Mother Nature, cruel market prices, and governments which are scarcely aware of their existence. These women cope with a spirit of self-reliance and with a deep love of their land and their way of life. I salute Allie Gordon and pay tribute to the beauty and the spirit of every pioneering woman.

