



## Honey the Merry Christmas Bull

Born with a great heart and the will to survive, Honey, the big gentle brahma bull, was taken from his mama sold as a day old drop calf at a local auction (Cherry Auction-Fresno). He was bought by a dealer who raised him on a bottle to sell for meat. But Honey was so gentle and such a character that he started playing with him and learned how kind and easy he was to train. He decided to keep him for a while.

As Honey grew he learned tricks and was broke to ride. The first part of his troubled life was spent carrying

sequined riders down parade routes and performing at rodeos and horse shows. He would even run barrel patterns and load in a two horse trailer better than some horses.

He was amazing and breathtaking as he walked along with balloons and streamers tied to his saddle, There was even a big bell tied under his belly that rang loudly with every step. You knew when he was coming! Everyone who ever saw Honey or had the chance to pet him fell in love with the big lumbering giant.

But as the years passed, he became a distant memory as he disappeared and we had lost all track of him. Then several years ago we received a call about a week before Christmas asking if we knew anyone who could save his life. He was going to be slaughtered in a few days.

We asked what had happened and the caller told us that a down-on-his-luck cattle dealer named Shorty had him and was going to sell him to beef packers by the end of the week. We knew Shorty the cattle dealer, but the name was a joke. He was a big loud mouth, hard to get along with (quick to fist fight) fella that cared nothing for the animals he bought and sold.

It was devastating news and a heartbreaking end to the life of a beautiful and very special animal that had become an inspiration to the thousands of people who had come to love him. We wanted to save Honey's life. With little to go on, we started looking for Shorty.

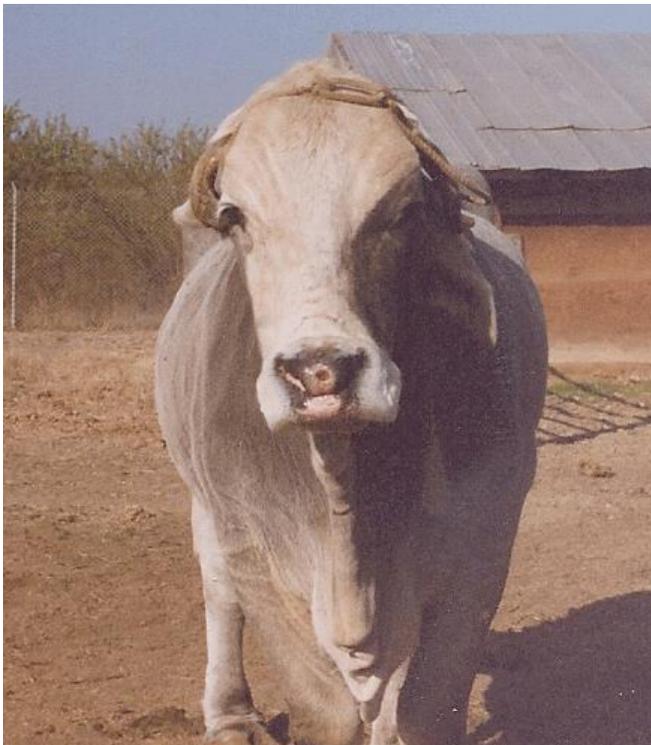
After a lot of calls and detective work we finally found him. Yes, he had Honey, and yes, he was going to sell him to be killed on Saturday. He said the bull was mean and cranky now and he could not handle him. He had tried to sell him as a novelty but Honey would attack his handlers not perform. He really needed the money and figured Honey would bring in at least \$500 because of his size. All he was good for now was baloney. Honey's life was about to end tragically on a slaughterhouse floor and we only had four days to somehow save him. We told Shorty we would pay for Honey by Saturday. There was only one problem. With so many other mouths to feed and winter here, we did not have the extra \$500.

Not many people would save an old unwanted brahma bull. With nowhere to turn, we called a very special lady who listened to Honey's story and what we were trying to do. In her wonderful delightful way and with a big enthusiastic giggle, she asked, "You want to save a what? A brahma bull?" She said she would help.

The next two days passed with no letter. And now, with time running out, we were losing hope of saving him when finally late on Friday afternoon, the mailman brought an envelope with five one hundred dollar bills neatly folded in a card for Honey. She had not forgotten her promise. We hoped Honey was still alive.

We called Shorty. Yes, he still had him but we had to come get him right now. What happened next was a story of unimaginable cruelty, but with a wonderful ending.

One of our directors went to meet Shorty and get Honey. He was also a big burly fellow that could deal with Shorty and handle Honey. What he found was a starved abused bull living in a feces filled livestock trailer. But there was much, much more.



Honey's original owner had become very ill and abusive and had sold him to a man who wanted to try and use him to perform again. Honey wanted no part of it and the new owner was afraid of him so he had kept him tied up by a ring in his nose for the last eight plus years. It was a way of controlling him through pain, but the ring had slowly torn out Honey's septum (the space between his nostrils) until he was free. Every time he had laid down or had gotten up it pulled and tore a little more. He had suffered for all those years.

Without the ring they could not handle him so he was sold to Shorty who was also afraid of him, but knew if he could get a ring back in his nose

he could control him and maybe sell him for a lot of money. So Shorty had taken a hay hook and heated it red hot and had driven it through the top of Honey's nose and stuck a ring in. Honey's face was infected and he was in horrible pain. He was mad and defensive too!

Our director kept quiet about what Shorty had done until Honey was paid for and the two livestock trailers were backed together, the doors opened and Honey was herded into our trailer to come home. **Then there were words!**

Big, injured, starved, and ready to fight, we wondered what we were in for as Honey stepped out of the trailer and into a corral. After he had settled down, one of our volunteers tried to go in and make friends. With his head down and dirt flying, it was the running of the bulls as the volunteer was quickly run out of the corral. Actually rolled under the fence! Thank goodness for the opening under the boards!

Without a cattle chute to safely handle him, we had to somehow get the ring out of his nose and stop the infection and pain. We called our vet. When he arrived, the director who had brought Honey home walked in the corral and quietly put a rope around his neck and reached out and carefully removed the ring. Honey never moved and just stood there with the new love of his life and let the vet treat him.



In a few days, on Christmas Eve, Honey's face and wounds were healing and he was lying near the manger in the stable of his new forever home. He had plenty of food, water, clean bedding, and people that cared. He knew he was safe and he was content.

Many times, the best presents are the ones you give to others from your heart. It was a Christmas that we will never forget. There are not many people who would save a Brahma bull from slaughter, and not many people who would take one on, but Honey owes his life to an incredible gift from a very special lady who saved him that Christmas, and the director who brought him home and stood up for him and stopped the abuse he had endured.

Honey was the Merry Christmas Bull. His new forever mom got the ring that was embedded in his nose and an album of pictures of his life. She says she treasures it, and we know she does as she has a wonderful heart. We treasure her and the great gift she gave to Honey and the incredible journey we were about to go on with a cranky Brahma Bull.