

Dave the Reluctant Cowboy
by Jules de Jongh
Season 2 Episode11

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: What a lovely surprise! You've come just in time to hear from my neighbour Jules. She'll be bringing us a story any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: Who could that be? Hello, who is it?

Jules: Hello Nanny Bea, it's your neighbour Jules with a story.

Nanny Bea: Yes of course it is, come in dear, we were expecting you.

Jules: Hello Nanny Bea. As you were hankering for some cowboy action last week, I brought you a tale of a cowboy full of spit and vinegar.

Nanny Bea: What a combination!

Jules: That he is, would you like to hear a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please

Jules: Okay then, Dave the Reluctant Cowboy, adapted for radio

Dave didn't start out as a cowboy, he started out as just a boy. A boy from the plains of Indiana. He didn't even use the name Dave. He preferred to be called David but the cows didn't listen.

David was full of, now what did his mother say...oh yes, David was full of spit and vinegar. Apparently he was sweet as pie as a baby but with each year he grew in height, and his ornery grew alongside him. One day his mother sent him down to the barber shop with the change he'd made from delivering papers on his round. 'Go and get your haircut and make your way straight back home, understand?' asked his mother. 'Yes Ma'am,' David said and he meant it. When he arrived at the New Street Barbers, there was a line heading out the door. David saw his neighbor Hank and normally wouldn't dare to approach him given he was an older boy with a reputation for brawling, but David had to find out what all the fuss was about. 'The fuss is that young Albertson boy. He's gettin' one of those raccoon skin cap haircuts!' said Hank. 'Like Davy Crocket, the king of the wild frontier?' asked David. Yes

indeed it was just like Davy Crocket's cap spiky around the edges with a long racoon tail hanging down one side. David asked if he'd be getting the same, but Hank replied, 'Not on your life, my mom'd skin me alive if I came home looking like that.' David didn't listen to the answer, he was so taken away at the thought of having your hair cut to look like you were wearing a hat, even when you wouldn't, especially when you couldn't. He could see it now, sitting there in Miss Tingly's class as she told him to take off his cap. 'Why I can't do that Miss Tingly. This may look like a coon skin cap but it's actually my hair!' Then Miss Tingly would be so impressed, she'd dedicate the rest of the day to telling stories of Davy Crocket instead of teaching David things he already knew.

'There once was a man, who started as poor as a peanut, he worked his way from servant to soldier. He was a cowboy as a child and a mighty bear hunter as a man. His last fight was at the Alamo and he's always remembered as the king of the wild frontier.'

When David woke from his day dream, he found himself next in line. 'What'll be today young man?' said the barber, as if he'd have to ask, the coonskin cap of course.

David walked back from the barber shop a good foot taller from all that pride. He nodded to those he passed, each quite taken with his hair cut. Then up the back porch and into the kitchen he strode, victorious. He didn't say a word but just stood there posing, waiting for his mother to turn around. She was making up this week's meatloaf so, took her time turning around. But when she did, 'Huh!' she was shocked, and not in a good way. 'Spit and vinegar,' she thought as she marched him straight back to the barbers and boy did she have a thing or two to say to the barber. She'd ignored the line, only of one or two gentlemen now and pushed David in front. She was fuming, 'How could you, how could you?' but she didn't say a word. The barber just apologized and shaved off the racoon tail, shaved off the spiky edges until all that was left was the nearly bare skin in the middle. Bare as it bald not as in the furry beast. And winter was approaching.

One November day as the sun started to sink into the distance David had a hankering for something sweet now his Halloween candy was gone. But he was inspired so David took his sheet off his bed and with his pocket knife. He cut two small holes. So small surely mother wouldn't notice. Then he plonked it on his head and grabbed his lunch bag. He made his way door to door, knocking then saying to any who answered, 'Trick or treat.' This caused a great deal of confusion as Halloween was several days past but David was persistent saying, 'We were away for Halloween so I missed out.' Some of the doors promptly shut, others though either believed him or were impressed by his ingenuity so they rustled around in their cupboards and reappeared with all sorts, a slice of cake, a couple apples, even an entire blueberry pie. Mother did not notice his bag full of goodies as he ate them on his way home but she most certainly noticed the holes in his sheets. 'Spit and vinegar!' she said as she mended them.

Not long after, when the ground was tilled but frozen solid, David and his friend were hankering for snow. They'd been waiting all month and not a flake had fallen. 'Who needs snow?' David decided and then proceeded to tell his friend his latest scheme. With his old horse pulling their new sled, the boys could fly across the empty field at the end of the road, like cowboys across the open plain. Brilliant! They wasted no time and were soon fastening the sled to the horses saddle, 'Tie it firmly, ' instructed David, 'we don't want it to come off!'

So he thought. Once they sat in the sled and spurred on the horse, they thought differently but couldn't do a thing about it. The horse being named Thunder should've raised warning bells. Thunder, thundered across the frozen field trying to shake loose the sled in tow, as David and his friend were banged and bounced and bashed against the rough ground, each lump of soil as hard as a rock. The only thing worse than being on this perilous sled was falling off it, so they held on tight until Thunder reached the end of the field. David and the pieces of his new sled tried to sneak home but did not succeed. 'David Martin you are full of spit and vinegar!' she shouted but instead of scolding him further, she went straight to the phone and called Uncle Bill.

Uncle Bill had a farm, a ranch really, where they bred and broke horses, hundreds of them. They were always looking for help, especially the young kind who were light on the horses back and light as they were thrown to the ground. David could stay with him over the holidays and get some of that spit and vinegar rode out of him. At this point I must tell you that David quite liked horses, they were fast and strong. He didn't have one of his own so the idea of being on the ranch surrounded by them was thrilling, he could be a real cowboy like the young Davy Crocket. Hardly a punishment in his eyes, that was his opinion before working on the ranch, not so much after.

Uncle Bill had horses, wild ones that needed to be tamed and trained. The easiest way to do that, he thought was to stick a young lad on top of them. They'd protest at first but soon they'd grow accustomed to having someone riding them and actually find pleasure in the work they would do.

The ranch was full of cowboys, cowpokes and cowhands, not many cows actually but all of them called the boy Dave the soon to be reluctant cowboy. Uncle Bill explained to the boy how to throw on a harness in a hurry, how to fit a saddle in a flash, how to mount a stead with great speed. Dave practiced his skills on Sunshine and Rosie, two of the older horses in the stable. They were so patient and kind. They'd stand still and watch out for Dave's feet and put up with his fumbblings.

Finally Uncle Bill was confident Dave's skills were honed. Over in the corral were two 'spirited' horses as the cowboys called them, Jet and Blitz, both black as night each with a white streak, one on Jet's nose, the other on Blitz's forehead. Other than that, you could hardly tell them apart. Dave entered the corral and walked in their direction, harness in one hand, saddle in the other. Jet and Blitz split in two galloping around him and snorting. 'This isn't how Sunshine and Rosie do it' thought Dave. Uncle Bill was looking on, 'Get a going Dave, pick one and get to it!' Dave picked Jet, she was on his right but every step Dave took closer to her, she darted in the other direction. Dave dropped the saddle so he could chase after her. He'd run left, she'd turn right, back and forth, round and round until Jet got bored and stopped long enough for Dave to throw on a harness in a hurry. Jet was not impressed, she reared up on two legs, neighing and shaking her head. Dave didn't move. Eventually Jet settled. 'Now's your chance Dave,' shouted Uncle Bill. 'My chance to get trampled,' thought Dave but he bravely pressed on. Jet wouldn't look at him directly but knew exactly where to kick, where to stomp and where to nip him when he turned away. After what felt like a hundred attempts Dave managed to fit a saddle on in a flash. Jet spun around bucking as she went. Dave jumped up onto the fence, hoping she'd miss him. Yet again she wore herself out. Dave looked to Uncle Bill who gave him the nod and he mounted the stead at

great speed. This might seem like a victory but the fun had only just begun. Jet found another burst of energy and bucked violently. Dave clung on for a good 9 or 10...seconds before being flung to the ground. Uncle Bill scooped him up and took him off to lunch. 'Well Dave that's a start.' It was a start indeed, the start of Dave's passionate dislike for all things cowboy. The days that followed were full of different horses and different battles but they all squeezed that spit and vinegar out of Dave and made him the man he is today, the reluctant cowboy.

The end.

Nanny Bea: Thank you Jules. You know this is not the first time I've heard this tale, in fact I named my cottage after the reluctant cowboy. Back in 1958 I was part of a women's basketball league and we made our way to Indiana as it happens. Oh how they love their basketball. That's when I met young David as he prefers to be called.

Jules: Do you still keep in touch?

Nanny Bea: But of course! He gave up being a cowboy but turned his hand to gold mining and space craft building.

Jules: Do you think he'll be listening?

Nanny Bea: Most certainly, he finds your stories simply riveting.

Jules: Well he can hear another one next week when I return for more Tales and Tea.

Thomas: Go to NannyBea.com

Jules: Go there to find out about all our episodes. Tales & Tea is written for you, so please do let us know what you think. You can like or follow us on iTunes or Spotify. And get in touch if you'd like to be on the show.

[Be on the Show jingle]

Mr Announcer: This has been a Toad in the Hole production for NannyBea.com.