



THE COWBOY WHO RODE OUT HUNGER

Story and photos by James Robertson

A COWBOY RIDES down Highway 31 through Athens. His majestic steeds bring curious looks as they stroll past the Henderson County courthouse. Later on, calls flood in to the local media as people witness something you don't see much in today's world, horses tied up in front of a local business. This isn't the old west. This is Athens, Texas.

Inside Applebee's sits a stranger wearing western attire, complete with dusty cowboy boots, an old worn in cowboy hat, and a trench coat that nearly reaches the floor. He talks softly to a local sitting at the bar as he enjoys a nice hot meal after this stretch of his long journey.

The mystery of who this man was or why he was in Athens Texas began to quickly unravel. Today, a lot of local folks know the tale of Doc Mishler, the "longrider for Jesus."

Doc set out from his home in Montana in 2012 on a mission to travel across country and end in Washington D.C. where he would bring the message of childhood hunger to the United States Congress. Upon completing that leg of his journey Doc continues to travel, spreading the message that there are children starving in this world that need our help.

"It can be done!" exclaimed Doc, a finger pointed my way as if to say the mission begins with me. "But certainly not without some changes. It is not the way that is lacking. It is the will. The more you understand about basic causes of hungry children in the world today, the more you cannot avoid the conclusion that God has given man and woman and the earth the capacity to conquer and control it!"



Referencing the book of Matthew, Mishler continues, "If we have the capacity to relieve suffering and save lives, and we do, but refuse to use it, that will undoubtedly be part of our judgment!"

Following his ride through Athens in December, Doc continued on his way up through Murchison. No one knew at this point he was now on a mission of a much more personal nature. Privately in his head he was thinking of his son he had not seen in years and the grandson he had never met. But he didn't yet make those plans known to those he came in contact with because his primary mission of spreading the message of childhood hunger burned passionately in his mind.

As he rode into Murchison a cold rain approached Henderson County forcing the cowboy into Chick's BBQ restaurant. The owners and locals had already caught wind of the story of this traveling cowboy and asked him if he needed a place to stay. He humbly obliged as himself and his two horses were graciously given quarter for the evening from the freezing rain.

It was here, in the Templin home, that locals learned about Doc's intended journey to Florida and the call to get him there by Christmas exploded across Henderson County. The call was quickly answered by those who heard it.

Marlaena and Ben Bevans, owners of Bevans Family Farm in Brownsboro, knew that Doc would not make it to Florida in time for Christmas if he journeyed there on horseback. So they loaded up the truck with Doc and his horses and set out for Florida just hours after the call was made to get him some help.

After a few setbacks with Florida state regulations and equine health inspections they crossed the Florida state line.

In the end Doc spent Christmas with his son and family. He plans on staying in Florida until February and the weather begins to warm a little. From there, it's more than likely back to the mission at hand.

There are a lot of pieces to the story that is Doc Mishler and his mission of riding across the country spreading the message of ending childhood hunger. A lot of hands played a part in returning the blessing he brought to Henderson County. His kindness gave us hope and his words gave us wisdom.

This may not be the last time Athens will get a glimpse of the cowboy who rode out hunger.

