

ROWDY GIRL SANCTUARY

AN INTERVIEW WITH RENEE KING-SONNEN
BY ANNE CASPARSSON

Renee King-Sonnen was a real estate agent when she got remarried in 2010 to the cattle rancher Tommy in Texas. She had no intention at first to move to the farm, but she did and that changed eventually their whole life.

“For a few years I was confused. I had my loyalties as a rancher's wife. But at the same time I started to question what we were doing. I remember the first time I watched the baby calves loaded up in the red trailer to be hauled off to the sale barn - I was not prepared for the devastated emotions when the mother cows started crying for their babies, and calves were locked into a trailer, betrayed,” She says.

Some years passed by. But in 2014, everything changed. It all started with a couple of calves that needed to be bottle fed. Renee did the bottle feeding and had soon taken the baby calves to her heart and fell in love.

“One calf, Bobo died, but the other became my own child emotionally. She was called Rowdy Girl and began to open up the world to me. She showed me how cows were and their kindness, softness, gentleness, and value. Cows are so wise. I went vegan and felt that I did not want to send any animals to slaughter anymore,” she says. “Rowdy Girl fed me spiritually and I understood things I never knew before. I started to question things and challenge my husband in the work we were doing, sending animals to slaughterhouses.”

But some tough years followed and Renee and her husband were almost heading for divorce. Eventually Renee bought the cattle from him, thanks to fundraising. Today she is running the Rowdy Girl Sanctuary together with her husband Tommy as a happy vegan couple who are inspiring other ranchers to consider their lifestyle. Ranchers and their wives contact Renee often for counsel when they begin to have ethical moments around the cows they have always sent to slaughter.



She and her husband are an inspiration for others that are ready to make the transition away from animal agriculture.

"I am a very spiritual person and after being vegan I know that the real truth is in my heart and soul. We are programmed in our society to normalize violence of farm animals, almost as if it is sacred. But it is so wrong. The animals are not sacrificing themselves for us. No, it is murder."

She talks about her awakening through Rowdy Girl as her education.

"Rowdy Girl is a very wise old soul. Cows are the most sacred animals on our planet – in touch with our mother, the earth, and should be free. The fact that any religion promotes the eating of animals is a crime," she says.

She believes that humanity has so much potential, but that we have lost track and normalized animal cruelty.

"But animals are not meant to be our slaves or commodities. Animals are here with us, not for us. Humanity made that choice and we have kept that programming. Now it is time to find the frequency and tune in to who these animals really are. Once we let the message in, there is no turning back. It is about saving ourselves as well. Because how can you live with yourself once you know who you are eating?"

Grace and Randy

Recently the Rowdy Girl Sanctuary received Grace and her calf Randy. Grace was also a bottle fed cow that the rancher's wife cared a lot for. Renee is well known among farmers and ranchers and often gets calls for advice and support. That has made Renee a Rancher advocate, as well as an animal rights activist.

"I can very much understand their situation. Often they have had the ranch for generations and it is not easy to give it up. So I listen both as a rancher and as an animal rights activist. I always ask them "How do you feel? And how do you feel sending the animals to auction?" And what happens every time is that they cry. This question is taboo among ranchers, but I can ask the hard questions because I know exactly how they feel."

Renee knows that she is challenging a strong tradition and culture, in her work as a leader for the movement.

"My motivation is to show ranchers that there is another way to make a livelihood then killing or using animals. I want to educate towards different choices that lead not only to a better world for animals, but for a better climate and better legislations for helping farmers to be able to transit to a more sustainable and cruelty free agriculture."

At the moment they have launched a new project where they are seeking to connect the plant based industry with farmers, which they can see a big demand for. They also have global RAP meetings on Zoom regularly, to connect people from all over the world in the work towards a more animal friendly and vegan agriculture.

"My message to the world is that it is time to really evaluate who we actually are - as humans. It is time to change and become who we are really meant to be as spiritual beings. We are here to be stewards for the earth and the animals, the trees and the environment that we all share. Not to destroy it for profit."

Interview: Anne Casparsson



If you want to contribute to Rowdy Girl Sanctuary and the important work Renee and Tommy does, you can become a member. Read more about them on Facebook or Instagram for further information. You can also get involved as a sponsor and join the Rap summit which is a global event.
