

The Gift By Peyton Bond

At one point in your life you reach a time where the childhood days start to fade and the changes of adulthood begin. The event that marked my transition to adulthood was an unexpected Christmas present that changed the next nine years of my life; along with this present came responsibility, dedication, love, and compassion which sparked the beginning of my adulthood. This present, a holstein calf, definitely helped me mature and become a young adult. Without the life lessons and responsibilities of this gift, I would not nearly be half the person that I am today.

One frosty Christmas morning I anxiously waited for my parents to wake up. It seemed like hours until I would be able to finally rush downstairs. I was so excited ripping through all the wrapping paper until there were no more boxes left. To my surprise, my parents said there was one more present secretly hidden for my sister and I. Giving us a clue, we sprinted around the house trying to find the next one, until it finally lead us outside into the frigid December air. We looked around and saw nothing but my Dad's truck blocking the driveway. We heard little hoofs clicking on pavement, and two small holstein calves came into sight. I stood in awe looking at our new animals and could not believe that we actually had our own dairy cows. As I sat there glued to my new calf, I decided it was time to give her a name. I was so indecisive, it took about an hour until I settled on the name "Bella". I realized the amount of responsibility that came along with owning Bella and how much went into keeping her healthy. My parents showed me how to properly feed and cleanup after the cows, as well as the importance of giving her attention everyday. Looking back I realize the "gift" of Bella morphed my childhood into my early adulthood.

In the following weeks of nurturing Bella, I trained her to compete in many Dairy Shows. During this time, while gaining experiences in the Dairy industry, I was also a club officer in my

local 4-H club. I learned citizenship, leadership, responsibility and life skills which aided in both my personal and educational life. Over a seven year span, Bella and I created an immense connection through shows we participated in along with well spent quality time. Together, we dominated in showmanship competitions as well as her earning the title of Senior and Grand Champion. At each of her calvings I always yearned for a heifer calf, however there was disappointment of her delivering a bull each time. At the age of seven, already earning many honors at all the shows we participated in, Bella provided twins. I was excited yet let down at the same time, she delivered a bull and a freemartin heifer. A week after she freshened, Bella became very sick. After many attempts during her stay at the large animal hospital, Bella's life came to an end. My heart was completely broken and I felt like nothing could ever replace the bond we had. Struggling to find peace, I was blessed with yet another gift, my cow Paisley had a heifer calf that I named Pixie. I am training her to be as successful in and out of the showing as Bella and I were.

Many of the life experiences I have had through working with Dairy cows has taught me: trophies and ribbons don't last forever but the knowledge gained stays with you throughout the course of your life. Although Bella passed away she still has an impact on my life as a young adult, including how to get through the ups and downs of life. Dairy means: "Real life experience", more than a passion or a hobby, but a way of life that I have had the privilege to experience. The Dairy Industry has impacted my life in such a positive way that without it's beneficial presence I would not be who I am today. Bella as well as the rest of the Dairy Industry has taught me aspects such as, responsibility and dedication, along with respect for others as well as myself. My involvement with Dairy has had an influence on my transition from childhood into early adulthood preparing me for the "Real world" as well as the predicaments it may throw my way.

