

Grandfather's Wish



Chapter One by Kay Hively

Patches of snow were still on the hilltops, but the first signs of spring had come to the plains. Cool mornings gave way as the sun rose higher and higher over the great valley. Miguel Sanchez was happy that warm weather had returned.

Nearly every day Miguel and his father took their sheep out to graze, but each day there was less grass for the animals. As the winter season grew longer, they had to range farther and farther away from home to pasture the sheep.

Standing in the doorway of his family's house, Miguel could see shades of green coming to the hillsides. Soon he would be able to take his sheep high into the foothills to look for new green pastures. It would be good to leave the valley. When they went into the hills, Miguel and his father sometimes camped out with their sheep. They took bedrolls and enough food to last for a few days.

Miguel was glad his father's ranch was at the foot of the hills. That meant they didn't have to go away from home for a long time. Staying in the hills overnight was fun, but Miguel was always glad to come home and sleep in his own bed.

Many of the big California ranchers sent their sheep into the hills for the entire summer. When those ranchers or their shepherds left the valley and went into the hills, they took wagons or tents to live in all summer.

Except in an emergency, those shepherds and sheep did not come down to the valley all summer long. Sometimes they did not see another human for two or three months. But when the cold winds of winter returned, the shepherds moved back into the valleys with their wagons, their sheep and their dogs.

Classroom Extensions Things to Think About and Do -

- A. Look up the definition of:
1. adobe 2. ewe 3. ram 4. graze 5. Navajo
- B. What is a flock? How many animals are needed to be considered a flock?

STANDARDS - CA1; CA2, G1:2; G1:9; M2

Next Week: Chapter Two - Out to Pasture

Miguel was glad he did not have to be away from home all summer.

As he stood looking up at the hills, Miguel heard his mother call him to breakfast. Miguel was always ready to eat. His mother said that 11-year-old boys never had enough food. Not only was Miguel hungry, he was eager to go out to the little barn. The ewe that his grandfather had given him was due to give birth any time.

Miguel's father predicted she would have twins. Miguel could hardly wait for the lambs to arrive. Someday he wanted to have his own flock and his own ranch.



Before he died two months ago, Miguel's grandfather had given him the ewe.

He told Miguel to take care of her and to protect the breed.

While other ranchers were cross breeding their sheep, Miguel's grandfather kept his flock pure. He didn't want his purebred Navajo sheep to be crossbred with another breed, because he liked the wool from the Navajos best.

Miguel wanted his own flock to be pure like his grandfather's had been.

Even though he was very young, Miguel thought about his future. He was determined to start his own flock. The ewe that had been his grandfather's last gift would be the mother of his herd. He was counting on her.

Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri. Produced in partnership with this newspaper and the Missouri Press Foundation with support from Verizon Foundation. Copyright 2002.