



Of Women & Horses: Essays by Various Horsewomen

GaWaNi PonyBoy

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It seems that almost all little girls in North America love horses and many women have a palpable affection for a horse's majesty, even if they have never raised, trained, been kicked by, or even ridden one themselves. The Native American horsemanship expert, GaWaNi Pony Boy, explores this mystical relationship between women and horses in his coffee-table book, *Of Women & Horses*, that will appeal to the heart as well as the intellect.

GaWaNi Pony Boy weaves his own even-handed commentary through a collection of essays by different horsewomen, by turns agreeing, disagreeing, or expanding on an essay, to create a coherent discussion and set forth different theories of why this special relationship exists. Perhaps women get along so well with horses because women are capable "of developing an extended, intense caring relationship that is devoid of conversation," suggests Dr. Delphi M. Toth, a Lipizzan breeder and neuropsychologist. Or maybe "women are drawn to equestrian pursuits because the horse is the great equalizer," suggests Lisa Kiser, the marketing manager for Equitana USA. The reader journeys through essays ranging from childhood reminiscences, to coming-of-age stories, to poignant discussions by dedicated and decorated horsewomen. The unmistakable conclusion is that these authors' lives were greatly enriched by their associations with horses.

Rich, full-color artwork consisting of photos, drawings, and reproductions of paintings is interspersed with the essays, capturing the range of a horse's emotions—from the excitement of the horse racing at full speed to the gentle and affectionate horse nuzzling a human friend. Some of the photography is enchanting: the tiny girl dwarfed by the hooves of a draft horse or the horse with its tongue outstretched, seemingly trying to lick the knee of another little girl.

This book is not a collection of Milquetoast horse stories. Larger life themes rise from the quiet pastures and well-tended stalls that are described. Lanie Frick, an artist and riding instructor, says in her essay that horses have taught her "how to listen and how to understand...." Patricia M. Doennig, a lifelong horsewoman, says that having a horse as a child taught her the principles of "responsibility, self-confidence, discipline, and patience...."

Anyone whose school-age daughter's bedroom walls are adorned with horse posters, anyone who cares for animals in general, and anyone who goes to bed at night wondering how his or her life could be a little richer will enjoy this book. GaWaNi Pony Boy puts it best, "If any animal has the ability to touch our own souls, I believe the horse is that animal."

CYNTHIA GRILLOT (July / August 2000)

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