

Dressage Today

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spite the seriousness of some situations and all the responsibilities, you must enjoy the journey!

Book Review

The Smart Woman's Guide to Midlife Horses: Find Meaning, Magic and Mastery in the Second Half of Life

By Melinda Folse

Softcover, 322 pages. Published by Trafalgar Square Books. Available at HorseBooksEtc.com or by calling (800) 952-5813.

Reviewed by Mary Daniels

If you are reading this review in this magazine, chances are you are thinking to yourself: Why would I read this book if I am already up to my ears

in horses and have been forever? I sort of felt that way when I began flipping through the pages. But I quickly became pulled into the text without getting the least bit bored, mainly because there is so much content that transcends the midlife passage and is applicable to so many other stages of life.

At midlife, which of us has not been deterred at some point from our dressage dreams by demands of education, marriage, divorce, jobs won and lost, change of location, illness, finances, family dictates and more? When the way clears again, we feel the urge to get back in. Reality is dynamic and these days nothing stands still, so when you do want to reenter the pursuit of dreams again, you may not find the place where you left off still waiting for you.

Besides being an attractive book and

well-organized for the huge amount of information compiled, this guide is engagingly written with a lively sense of humor and charm by Folse (who also coauthored of the bestseller *Lessons Well Learned with Clinton Anderson*). I don't know where else you might find such a practical resource guide and bibliography of books for finding your soul's calling.

Everything plausible is covered from equine-related therapies, health and fitness for you and your four-legged partner to how to find the right trainer in the discipline of your dreams, and how to find the discipline that is right for you from reining to dressage. Plus, there is advice on learning to trailer, fitting a dressage saddle and even using an animal communicator to find out what's bugging your horse.

The text is right-on and appealing because the 45-year-old author comes from the place she writes about with complete honesty about her own struggles to recapture her childhood love of horses. She does not shy from telling the errors she made and what she learned from trying to resolve them. She likens her horse to a devilishly handsome guy who is unable to commit. At the end, it looks as though she's finally come to a winning crossroad, but I won't give that secret away. With the kind of maturity that comes from having lived a few decades, she writes about better ways to ease back into horses through lessons, attending clinics and shows and leasing.

Chapter 12, "Plateaus and ruts—and FEAR—Oh My!" offers useful tools for conquering fears. Another chapter tells what to look for if your dream is to keep

your horses at home. In this same chapter on good horsekeeping, Folse writes that after you have bought the place for its barns and fields, don't forget that you still need somewhere to park your own bones. She observes, too, that the houses of horsekeepers can slip a little, with tack hanging in the bathroom and bridles on the dining tables, but you can eat off the floor in the barn. If pursuing your horse dreams seems daunting after reading this, Folse says not to worry. We just have to take the first step. 🐾



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