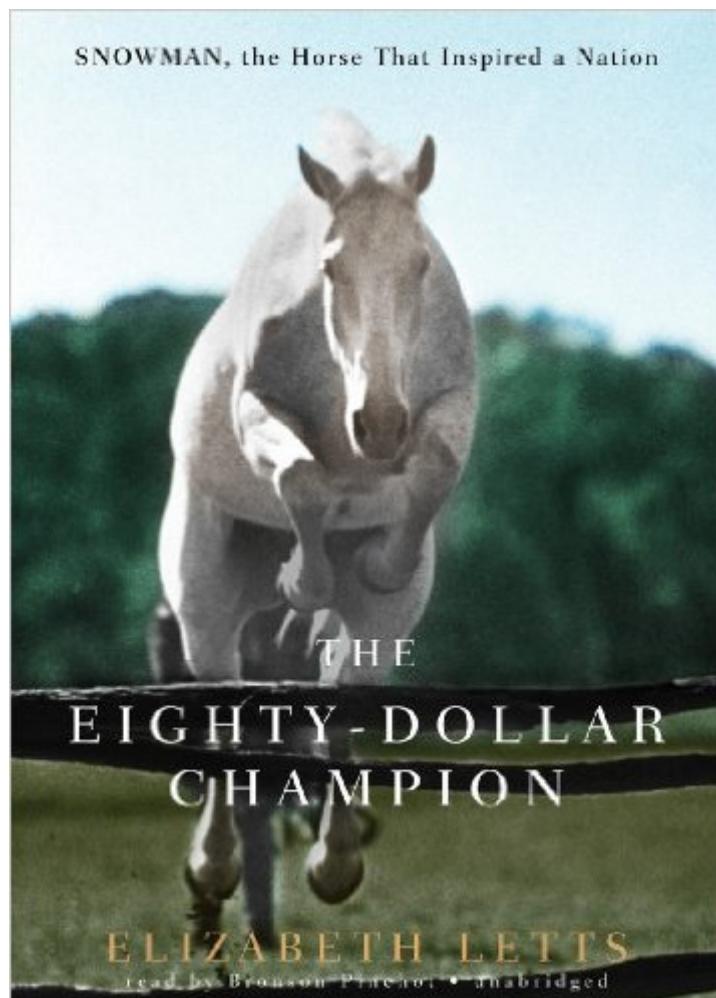


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The Eighty-Dollar Champion: Snowman, The Horse That Inspired A Nation (Library Edition)



Synopsis

An inspiring tale of a horse that beat the odds. Reminiscent of the inspiring, against-the-odds success story that made Seabiscuit a bestseller, The Eighty-Dollar Champion tells the dramatic odyssey of a horse called Snowman that, saved from the slaughterhouse, went on to become America's leading show jumper, winning first prize at Madison Square Garden. Set in the mid- to late 1950s, this book captures the can-do spirit of a Cold War immigrant who believed--and triumphed.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Like the author of this lovely book, I was a horse-crazy little girl and one of the books I remember reading is SNOWMAN by Rutherford Montgomery. Therefore I'm thrilled that Snowman's story is being rescued from the dustbin of children's lit and being told again with greater detail and accuracy. I especially like the way Elizabeth Letts paints a complete picture of Snowman's time. This is history not just a horse story; a portrait of the America that embraced the former plow horse and his immigrant owner, Harry De Leyer, also known as "The Flying Dutchman". This is the stuff of horsemen's dreams: to literally pull a thin and dirty horse off the slaughter truck and train him to become a champion. That is the true story of Snowman. Could any book have a more charming hero? Snowman sparkles in these pages, a quiet gentle giant who gave pony rides to little children and taught timid beginners not to be afraid. He's so loyal that he repeatedly jumps both paddock and pasture fences to return to the man who rescued him from the slaughter truck. Harry De Leyer is a young horseman with a growing family who desperately desires to run his own horse business.

He's looking for that magic horse who can take him to the top. He'd been training a top thoroughbred prospect, Sinjon. In 1957, Harry persuaded the owner of the horse to take him to the National Horse Show in Madison Square Garden. Sinjon, a nervous and hot-blooded animal, exceeded expectations by jumping out of the qualifying rounds to place fourth. That very success was Harry's undoing: he loses the mount he has carefully and lovingly trained to a rider on the U.S. Equestrian Team.

I was a 10 and 11 year old girl in love with horses when my parents agreed to give me lessons. We lived on the south shore of Long Island, about 45 minutes from the de Layer farm, but Harry de Layer was chosen to be my teacher. Snowman, not yet a champion, was one of the horses Mr. de Layer used to teach eager children like me. Mr. de Layer taught me that if I were a gentle, kind rider, I could learn invaluable lessons about courage and accomplishment. Snowman rewarded me with an extraordinary personal experience and an amazing example that, in life, anything is possible if you are willing to try. I was outraged to read a one star review, a personal attack by a local person who says Harry De Layer abused his horses. I absolutely do not believe that and wonder what part jealousy and bigotry may have played to influence the writer of that review and/or his own riding teachers. Mr. de Layer always insisted that his horses be treated well. His message was to learn to trust the horse, trust myself and to find the rhythm between the horse's spirit and my own. I was a tiny girl, Snowman was a very big horse and Mr. de Layer and Snowman taught me not only how to enjoy jumping and showing, but also a great deal about myself and life in general. I am so grateful to have known them both and my life has been richer for it. I am now 65 and have shared this story with my children and grandchildren. Mr. de Layer and Snowman are still teaching my family about the spirit of kindness and courage. I wish I could recommend the book as highly as I do Mr. de Layer. I found it quite shallow and very repetitive. Letts tells us about Snowman and Harry de Layer, but doesn't allow us to get to know them. They are worth getting to know.

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