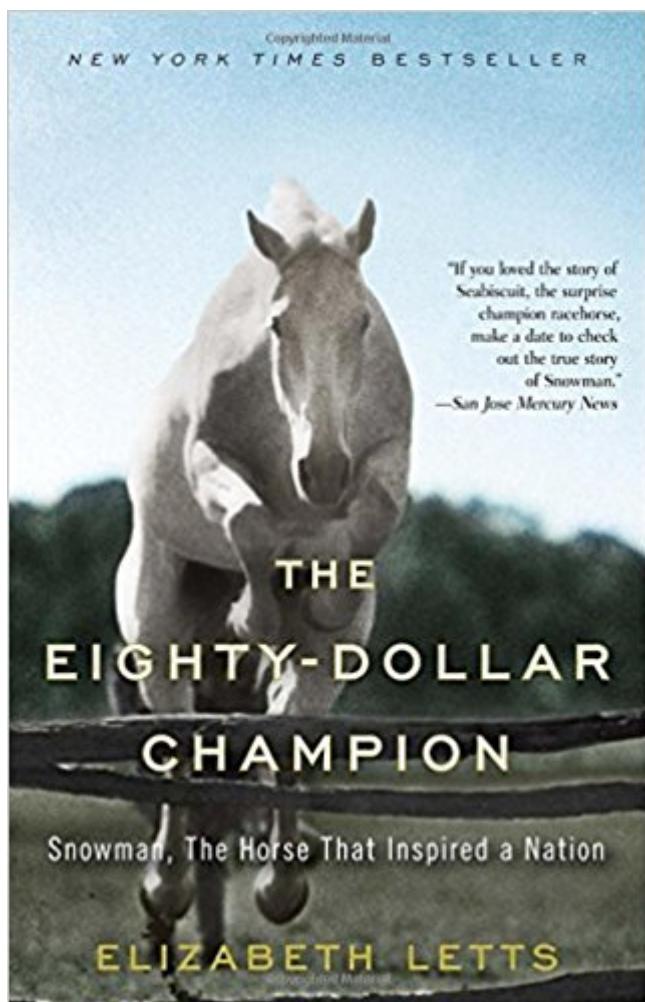


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# The Eighty-Dollar Champion: Snowman, The Horse That Inspired A Nation



## Synopsis

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER  Harry de Leyer first saw the horse he would name Snowman on a truck bound for the slaughterhouse. The recent Dutch immigrant recognized the spark in the eye of the beaten-up nag and bought him for eighty dollars. On Harry's modest farm on Long Island, he ultimately taught Snowman how to fly. Here is the dramatic and inspiring rise to stardom of an unlikely duo. One show at a time, against extraordinary odds and some of the most expensive thoroughbreds alive, the pair climbed to the very top of the sport of show jumping. Their story captured the heart of Cold War-era America—a story of unstoppable hope, inconceivable dreams, and the chance to have it all. They were the longest of all longshots—and their win was the stuff of legend.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A Letter from Author Elizabeth Letts

A writer is always on the lookout for a good story, but the first time I saw a striking old photograph, I didn't realize that I had stumbled across a tale so extraordinary that it had the power to change lives. The old black and white photo showed a horse and rider team in the midst of a crazy feat--jumping right over the back of another horse. What stopped me in my tracks was the expression on the jumping horse's face. Even in the vintage picture I could see that the horse had absolute trust in the man who was asking him to make such a tricky leap. I wondered why. Unable to forget the photograph, armed only with the rider's name, I tracked down an address, not sure if I would find him there, or even if he

was still alive. Just a few days after I mailed him a letter, my telephone rang and a voice on the other end said, "Hallo, this is Harry de Leyer." The man in the photograph, now in his eighties, was on the phone. The first time we spoke, Harry told me a story that gave me butterflies in my stomach and made my palms sweat--that's how badly I wanted to write about what he'd said to me and share it with the world. Walter Farley, author of *The Black Stallion*, was once asked why horse stories were so popular. His answer was this: "When the books have been read and reread, it boils down to the horse, his human companion, and what goes on between them." The story of Harry and Snowman, is at its essence, a love story. A man, a horse, and a lucky encounter on a bleak winter day that led to a second chance for both of them. Together, they shared a dream so big that only their combined courage and heart could get them to their destination. That moment, when the pair of them stood under the spotlights of Madison Square Garden and listened to the thunder of the crowd, was simply unforgettable--the kind of triumph that ripples forward through time. I heard it coming across a crackling phone line, the first time Harry de Leyer told me about Snowman. Read the book, and I'm sure you will hear it too. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"[A] classic American dream story, with a down-on-its-luck horse galloping in for good measure." USA Today: "This is a wonderful book" joyous, heartfelt, and an eloquent reminder that hope can be found in the unlikeliest of places. Most of all, it's a moving testament to the incredible things that can grow from the bond between animals and humans. Gwen Cooper, author of *Homer*, says Odysseus [Elizabeth Letts] details the intricacies of the show world beautifully, [but it's] the relationship between the people in [Harry's] life and this remarkable, humble horse that will captivate the reader. The Star-Ledger: "The story is thrilling. . . . Letts' taut, detailed writing vividly recounts the excitement of the shows; the heights these underdogs climbed; the world of the Eisenhower fifties; and what Snowman and Harry meant to the everyday people they inspired. Shelf Awareness: "If the true stories of horses Secretariat or Seabiscuit kept you spellbound, then consider leaving the racetrack setting to learn about the equestrian world's shock in 1958 when an eighty-dollar plow horse arrived to compete in its top show." Fayetteville Observer: "Written in evocative, skilled prose that rings true to the tenor of postwar America . . . Letts deftly calibrates the emotion and suspense that are an indelible part of this tale." BookPage

This is an oldie-goldie book I would have missed but for a perceptive friend on Goodreads who recommended it. Normally I studiously avoid "feel good" books and all those featuring individuals who triumph over all sorts of adversities--too cynical in my old age, I suppose. But an inspiring horse story? Well, that's completely different. This book is really a three-star read because it misfires on many levels. There is far too much telling rather than showing, which puts both Harry de Leyer and Snowman both at an emotional distance from the reader. There is too much pedantic narration, which reduces much of the book to a text-like read. And there is certainly more repetition than the writing laws allow. I do believe the author wanted to do justice to her subject, which was well-researched on many levels, but for me, she lacks the flair and intuitive depth to bring a man and his horse to life. Thus at best the book is mildly entertaining, but I regret the fact it missed its amazing potential. That being said, if you are a rider, if you've competed in the show ring, jumped over large and scary fences, foxhunted, or competed in three-day events, then all the excruciating details about fences, tack, bandages, rules, riding venues, faults, and so forth will absolutely delight you. It was a wonderful return to my not-so-misspent youth--OK, I was in my thirties--and summoned a slight twinge in every bone I'd broken over a double oxer or failure to clear a ditch filled with water. My goodness, what fun! If you have that sort of background, you can easily overlook the book's faults and enjoy it as I did.

What an inspiring story of courage, faith, love, and dedication! A wonderful glimpse into the life of an immigrant, his dedication and determination to build a new life in a new country, and the love and companionship between a man, his horse, his family, and a national inspiration!

OUTSTANDING!!! THE BEST PART IS THAT THIS IS A TRUE STORY. STUNNINGLY WRITTEN. UPLIFTING, HEARTWARMING, EMOTIONALLY MOVING. I GOT A LITTLE BOGGED DOWN IN SOME OF THE "DETAILS" AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BOOK, BUT THEY TRULY SAVE YOU THE STAGING FOR UNDERSTANDING HOW TRULY UNBELIEVABLE AND WONDERFUL SNOWMAN'S STORY IS. IF A PLOW HORSE CAN BE BORN WITH A HEART WITH WINGS, THINK OF WHAT WE COULD DO.

The right horseman, the right horse, and the karma for them to meet at the right time. This is a fun read. One of the most thought provoking thoughts in the book comes when the author points out that if you were to see a couple of really talented show jumping horses turned out with some ordinary mounts, it's not possible to tell which horses are the talented jumpers or the usual hacks

just by looking at them. Actually, this champion had marks on his shoulders and neck from the heavy collar used while pulling a plow.

An enjoyable read involving the two underdogs, the horse headed to the slaughterhouse and the Dutch immigrant struggling to forge his way in his adopted country who buys him. The honest, hard work of this skilled horseman impacted the lives not only of the students he taught, those living in the area, and those in the in the elite world of jumping, but also give encouragement to the average man on the street. By reading, one can feel the changes taking place in American society after WWII as the elite world of jumping becomes accessible to the the populace as they identify and cheer for this unlikely champion. It reminds us that the outward appearance is secondary to the heart of the creature.

Love horses.... Love Snowman. Love the writer Elizabeth Letts and the research and spirit she gave to the book. One feels as if you're right there with Snowman.... as he's found on the butcher's truck, then as a school horse, then sold down the road... and his yearning to be back with the man who was his "master" and the big family. Took me back to all the horses I've had and the relationships with them. Their desire to do the best they can do. I read this book after *The Perfect Horse* which is about saving the Austrian Lipizzaner and Arab horses during World War II. Again Ms. Letts was a diligent author, getting to the real background of the subject. Enjoy both reads!!!

If you like true stories this one is for you. If you are an animal lover this one is even a better one. To think that one man and a horse could accomplish all of this in both of their life times. I had tears in my eyes in the end because the true devotion to one another is all that most animals (horses, dogs and cats) could ever ask for and get. Truly a great true story. And, it was on my FREE list, even better.

A tale of survival and success....the Horse just happened to be almost broken down to the point it was on a truck going to the knackers. Along came a man needing a horse He could afford.....spending all his cash on an animal in a truck, whose eyes still showed a spark for life, while the others had already given up. Great story about man and beast and a union only love could make.....Loved this true story.

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