

Winter reading list

These horsey reads are sure to keep you entertained while snuggling by the fire.

BY ANNA SOCHOCKY

Oh, the weather outside is frightful, but inside it's so delightful because tea and horse books can keep you warm this holiday season. If you're on the hunt for the perfect gift for horsewomen in your life or want to assuage your own hunger for a horse book, these three books should be on your list.

THE YEAR OF THE HORSES: A MEMOIR

Shadowed by a virulent eating disorder, her brother's life-threatening illness, and her parents' divorce, author Courtney Maum leads a privileged but unsatisfying life. Years of therapy managed to unwind only part of Maum's source of trauma, however.

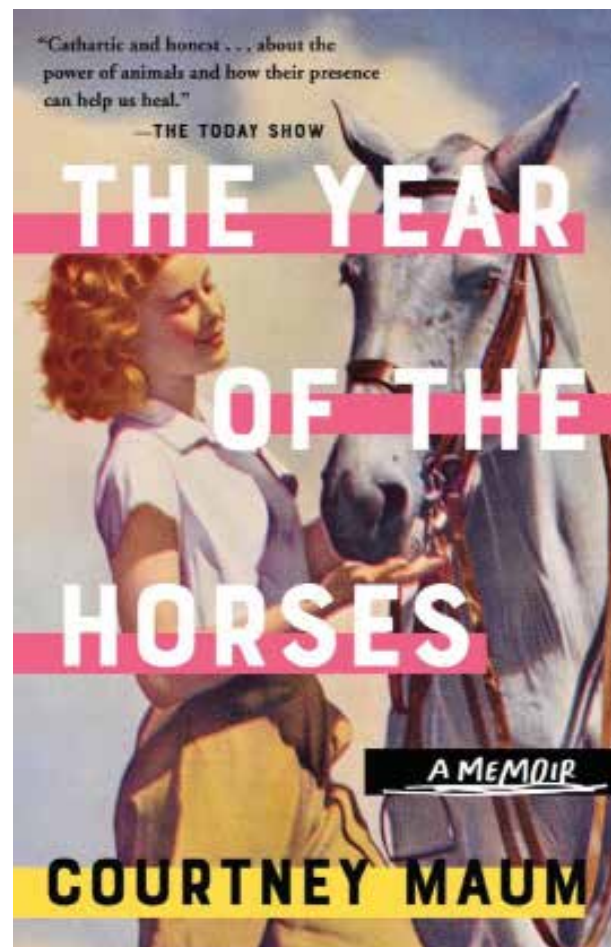
Readers of Maum's book, *The Year of the Horses: A Memoir*, perceive the solution to the author's travails long before she sees the forest for the trees on the back of a horse.

Maum refers to horses as "stealth therapy," a form of interaction long recognized as a salve for depression, anxiety, stress and trauma. Returning to her love of horses, Maum uncovers a source of healing to a point but struggles to shed her veil of perfectionism and competitiveness rooted in her privileged upbringing.

In the beginning, a return to horses serves as an escape. Maum's demons follow. Dressage lessons serve as a mirror to her obsession with perfection, and soon Maum starts chasing half-baked solutions to her physical shortcomings she alone can see.

Her daughter, Nina, becomes a sponge for Maum's neurosis, playing second fiddle to her computer and cell phone. Tensions with her husband reach a boiling point. Maum unexpectedly finds a solution in the high-octane chaos of the polo field.

Uncoordinated and more than a little fearful of the speed and contagious passion of the game, Maum's first lessons hit the skids. Her rigidity on the horse and in her body unsettled the horses she rode. Not until accepting the sage advice when her trainer said,

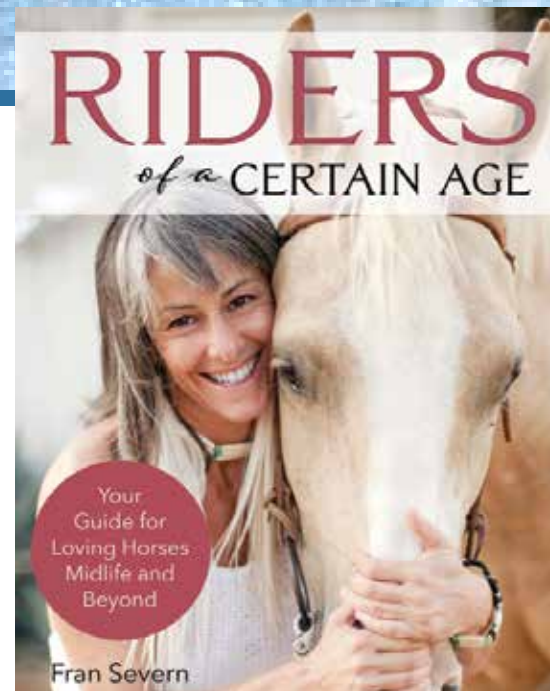


\$21.82 (hardcover); amazon.com

"These horses have blood. You have to be more open," did Maum's impenetrable walls start to crumble.

Maum weaves an honest and searing path through the detritus of her past to emerge ready to embrace her life, warts and all.

Published by Tin House, 2022



\$24.95 (paperback); horseandriderbooks.com

RIDERS OF A CERTAIN AGE

As the author, Fran Severn, surmises, "I am a rider of a certain age. I am 56 years old, but I am still my barn's youngest rider and horse owner. Too old to be called 'kiddo' and not young enough to jump 4-foot fences."

Fran Severn's book, *Riders of a Certain Age: Your Guide for Loving Horses Midlife and Beyond* resonates with wisdom, humor, frankness, and common sense.

Severn covers every possible question nascent, middle-aged horse owners ask. How do I evaluate the credentials and teaching style of an instructor? What riding gear do I need to purchase and why? What do I do if I find myself in a barn that feels more like a junior high hallway than a stable (pun intended) environment?

As a member of the maligned Generation X, I cheered reading a book that spoke in the language of not only older horsewomen but also newcomers to life's middle years like me.

Generation X is noted for being self-sufficient and practical. Just the facts, please. Severn understands. Menopause challenges? Check. Vision or respiratory changes? Double-check! Insurance for you and the horse—including the kind when you can't make decisions? Check, check, check. Answering and evaluating these questions feeds into the type of horse you might buy, where to board your treasure, and most importantly, how to pay for expenses far beyond purchase, boarding, and lessons, Severn writes.

Reading like a practical manual or a conversation with a wise aunt, Severn lays out the reality of owning a horse and returning to the saddle after a long hiatus. The book is a gem for riders of any age.

Published by Trafalgar Square Books, 2022

HEART HORSES: A WOMAN'S JOURNEY

Brew a cup of tea, wrap yourself in a cozy blanket, and open Debra Parkhurst's book, *Heart Horses: A Woman's Journey*. Gentle and comforting, moving, and at times surprising, Parkhurst offers the reader a window into her three horses, Hannah, Legacy and Hy.

Standardbred Hannah blossoms under Parkhurst's care when the simple acts of grooming and bathing draw the horse out of her shell. Legacy, Parkhurst's Morgan, asserts her bossy side with Hannah after arriving home, but is full of her own surprises when she turns up pregnant.

Legacy's prodigy, Hy, was born a handful, chewing up lead lines and unlocking pasture gates. An intellectual and infectious challenge to Parkhurst, Hy's antics bring a smile to the reader's face.

Heart Horses: A Woman's Journey



A Memoir by D.L. Parkhurst

\$19.95 (paperback); amazon.com

As with any horse story, pain and loss visit Parkhurst's barn. Yet Parkhurst brings her three beloved horses into the present by recounting 60 years of her horse life. Parkhurst can still recall her mare Hannah's smell; her organic storytelling breathes honesty and love for her horses.

Traveling from northern Virginia to the eastern edges of Oklahoma, readers confront the complexities of building a farm fit for horses, explore the country life through the eyes of transplanted humans, and finish the book refreshed and eager to breathe in the scent of their horses, no matter the weather.

Published independently by D.L. Parkhurst, 2021 ■

ANNA SOCHOCKY is a writer, instructor and rider based in Santa Fe, N.M. Visit her online at equi-libris.com.