

## FORWARD

This book was the most difficult writing assignment I've ever tackled. In one aspect, it is one of the most beautiful love stories between animals I've ever witnessed. On another, it was the most heart wrenching project, having to relive intimate details of my own life and the challenges of three of my best animal friends, dealing with the emotions that resurfaced after so many years. However, the lessons my "three boys" taught me have been invaluable, and I wish to share with you these incredible teachings.

As animal lovers, and people in general, are becoming acutely aware of the fact that animals have (and share) many of the same emotions that humans experience, it is my goal and my mission to express what I have witnessed as a veterinarian for the past twenty-three years. Animals do grieve. Animals do express joy and happiness. Animals can be jealous, anxious, and fearful. Animals can be extremely entertaining. They can cause us to be impatient and demanding. They can be a great source of comfort us when we are hurting. Animals can be a "mirror" into our own lives, giving us insight into what needs to be improved within us.

In my mind, and in my heart, I believe animals come to us in this earthly plane to be a companion, a guide, a teacher, and/or a protector, depending on our needs. Animals often find us. They will appear at the right place, the right time. All we need to do is be open to their attention and affection. How many times have you heard friends or acquaintances talk about the stray dog or cat that "just showed up"? There are no accidents, no coincidences in life. They appeared for a reason. And oftentimes we are totally unaware of why we were attracted to that particular animal.

None of our horses joined our family because of their blue ribbon show records, their great beauty, or their performance. Neither were the dogs or cats that joined our furry friend club. They were accepted to become part of our family because of their special needs, their affection, and their hearts. It saddens me to no end when an animal is rejected because of their lack of certain bloodlines, some imperfection in their structure, or because they're past their "prime" in the show ring. I remember well a

## *The Infinite Bond*

saying in the movie *Sea Biscuit*. This race horse suffered a potentially career-ending injury during his prime racing period. The recommendation was to put him down. “Tom”, Sea Biscuit’s trainer, adamantly refused, saying “you don’t throw away a whole life just because just because he’s banged up a little”. Sea Biscuit was given his chance to rally, and with careful rehabilitation and therapy, he went on to win one of the biggest events in race horse history. He also served to help his own jockey (Red) heal from a horrible injury when he was told he would never ride again.

The three Arabian geldings you will be introduced to changed my life in so many positive ways. Possessing so many different personalities, these boys were a great source of entertainment, comfort, education, and love. As you read the pages ahead, think of how your special animal companion(s) has touched your life and brought out the best in you. Immerse yourself in the relevance of your animal friend and be full of gratitude for his or her service on this earthly plane.

## CHAPTER ONE PERCEPTIONS

The old, white horse stiffly walked across the front lawn, stopping every few steps to nibble a few blades of tender grass. He chewed slowly, savoring the rich flavor of the late spring vegetation. When he reached the northeast corner of the yard, the old boy halted. Standing squarely on all four feet, he stretched his thin neck forward and gazed out into the distant hayfields. For several minutes, he never moved except to blink. His soft brown eyes had a dreamy appearance, as though he was in another realm.

Dahl Ibn Raghir had never been quieter in his twenty-one years of life. Effects from a chronic, debilitating medical condition had taken a major toll on his body. The gelding, who had been famous for entertaining his human admirers with a multitude of antics and tricks, was reduced to a crippled, frail creature due to complications from Cushing's syndrome. In his prime, Ibn (pronounced "ibben") could unseat an unsuspecting rider by inserting a well-placed buck at a full gallop. Usually, this occurred at an extremely inappropriate time, like at the state fair Rodeo Queen contest as his rider was saluting the crowd. He was extremely intelligent, though this proved to be a curse many times, especially when it came to opening stall doors and gate latches. There was a time when Ibn cleverly lifted a chain from its notch on the gate, letting twenty-four horses out of the pasture. Fortunately, the horses stayed in the front yard of the stable owner's home instead of wandering down the gravel road.

Barbara stared intently at Ibn. She knew in her heart that Ibn's time in his physical realm was limited. She and her husband, Gary, had a heart-wrenching discussion about Ibn's future; they would not subject him to further suffering should he have another major setback in his health. At the present time, Ibn was eating well and his pain was being managed with conventional medications. However, Barbara knew from dealing with many cases of the disease in her veterinary practice that his condition could go south in a heartbeat. As if reading her mind, Ibn slowly turned his neck and looked directly at Barbara and her husband.

## *The Infinite Bond*

She leaned forward over the wooden fence post, and said sadly, “You know, Gary, Ibn doesn’t have a lot of time left.”

Gary looked down at the ground, cleared his throat, and replied, “I know. I sure don’t want to see him suffer. He’s been through enough.” Ibn had been through a multitude of treatments, including surgery, special corrective shoeing, acupuncture, and special diets. However, he continued to suffer frequent bouts of laminitis, a debilitating and painful foot condition associated with the metabolic disorder.

“The saddest thing”, Barbara continued, “is that I don’t believe Ty will last much longer after Ibn passes.” Tysheyn, the Foxs’ twenty-five year old Arabian, and Ibn, had been inseparable buddies for the past twelve years. They wandered the pasture together, stopping in unison to check out an especially flavorful clump of grass, and napped side by side on the soft bed of pine shavings inside their shelter. They had been trailered to a multitude of horse shows and trail rides together over the past decade. Though at times the two geldings acted like two bickering little brothers, nipping incessantly at each other, they were best of friends. If one left sight of the other, there would be frantic whinnying until the other returned.

“You really think so? Ty letting go after Ibn’s gone?” Gary questioned.

“It’s just a feeling I have. They’re so bonded,” Barbara said as tears filled her eyes.

Ty was grazing a few feet away from the couple. Except for a slight sway to his back and a few fuzzy gray hairs on his muzzle, Ty looked good for his age. His dark chestnut-colored haircoat and his exceptionally long, wispy mane glistened in the sunshine. Though Ty was officially “retired” from clinics and shows, Barbara still enjoyed saddling him up for short rides around the farm.

“I sure hope you’re wrong about your ‘feeling,’” Gary responded.

“Me too, hon.” Barbara sighed and reached down to pick up the boys’ lead ropes. Not wanting the two boys to overindulge on the rich bluegrass,

*The Infinite Bond*

she led them back to the pasture.

Stormy, the Fox's third Arabian gelding, trotted up to greet his pasture mates as Barbara swung the corral gate open. The beautiful bay thirteen-year-old nickered as if to say, hey, why do YOU get all the attention? There was some truth to that supposition, though, as Ibn's health issues had required a lot of time and dedication.

Little did anyone know that Stormy would receiving a lot more attention in the near future...