

My Favorite Horse Book of All Time

By Bob Goddard, *Equine Humorist*

Every so often a humor book comes along that makes me want to tell everybody I know about it. Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* had this effect. Later, it was the work of outdoor humorist Pat McManus. And more recently, I've been tooting the horn for J. Maarten Troost. But the latest is a horse book. Of all things.

My current *cause celebre* is *The Chronicles of the \$700 Pony* (Half Halt Press, 2006) by new author Ellen Broadhurst. The book was recommended by my horse-crazy daughter, Jamie. "Check out the reviews on Amazon, Dad, I think it's something you might like," she said.

I found the book tucked in my mail box the following Friday. The cover illustration featured a blonde woman with a pony tail standing next to a pony with a blonde tail. The woman was wearing cute cowgirl roping pajamas. Two chickens and a pair of wee children were also present.

I tossed the book on the dining room table and made a mental note to look at it. You know, sometime. And then maybe give it to one of my horsey friends.

The next morning while brushing past the table to pour myself a cup of coffee, I caught the book out of the corner of my eye. I picked it up and looked at the back cover. "This book is laugh out loud funny! And completely true!" Half Halt Press, Inc. assured me.

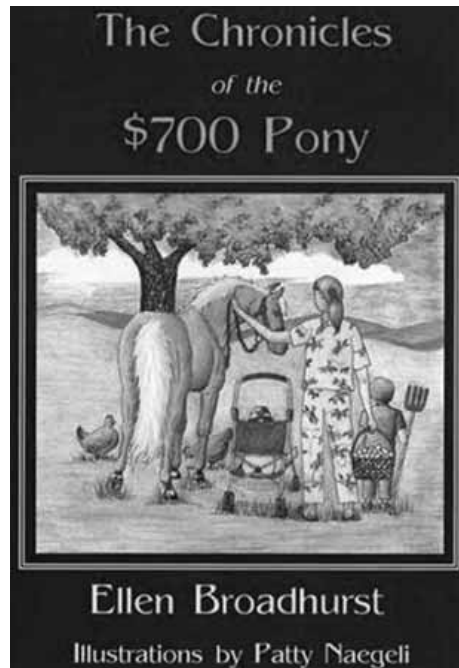
I'm kind of partial to things that are completely true. So I set my morning paper down and began looking at the book. Say goodbye to Saturday...

The Chronicles of the 700 Minute Reader

8:06 a.m. I'm sipping on my morning coffee and reading the first few pages of the *\$700 Pony*. The writing is good. Very good. Clever and witty, like Erma Bombeck. "Dave Barryesque", but with a point. This upsets me to no end, because it's the kind of book I would like to write but haven't got around to yet. Ellen Broadhurst has beaten me to the punch.

8:08 a.m. Despite my envy, I begin to laugh out loud. Just like the people at Half Halt Press, Inc. said I would. Jessie, our dog, barks at me.

8:15 a.m. The Author buys the pony from a seller named Bob (no relation) because she likes the price (\$700) and loves the pony's blonde tail. Her goal is to train the unbroken pony and sell her for a nice profit. I doubt this will happen. The pony has an appetite



for human flesh.

8:17 a.m. I can already tell this book is something special. I laugh a little too hard and spill a few drops of coffee on my favorite article of clothing, my Texas Football at Austin T-shirt. I find myself reading passages to my wife Jenny.

9:15 a.m. I'm up to Chapter 4: "The \$700 Pony is Diagnosed with Social Anxiety Disorder." My Texas Football at Austin T-shirt is a mess. Cranberry juice and peanut butter have been added to the growing collection of stains. Jenny wants me to go with her to the grocery store, but I don't have time for that sort of thing. I'm reading the part where the \$700 Pony and The Author confront a gang of hyper-aggressive New Jersey Rouge Deer. "You gotta read this book, Jen!"

"I don't think that will be necessary any more, Bob," she replies. She gives me a demanding list of chores: "Change your shirt and take Jessie out."

10:21 a.m. I'm devouring Chapter 6. The \$700 Pony is introduced to the "Golden Pathway" (The Author is making progress). And I'm introduced to the most useful French word since *oui*. The word is *merde* (look it up).

11:49 a.m. Jessie is getting adamant about making that business trip to the backyard. If I don't attend to her, I'll be dealing with a little *merde* on my living room floor (no need to look it up now, right?). Okay, fine. But I'm taking the book with me.

11:52 a.m. I head for our yard swing and read the part about the atrocious trace clip while

Jessie examines the bushes and patrols the fence line.

Time Unknown (I haven't worn a watch in fifteen years): I look up from Chapter 9: "We Interrupt The Regularly Scheduled Program to Bring You A Primer on Equine Sports" and there's my neighbor, Jeff, standing in front of me. He has Jessie with him. "Found her in my garage, Bob." I read him the part where The Author attempts to explain equestrian sports to people who only know horses as "big smelly things that eat grass." Jeff walks away and I read a couple of paragraphs to Jessie instead. She licks my hand, and then does the same to the front cover of the book. Apparently Jessie likes the work of cover illustrator Patty Naegeli.

1:15 p.m. The bond between The Author and the \$700 Pony grows. Jenny comes home from the grocery store and turns on college football. I settle into my recliner to engage in a little afternoon multi-tasking: football, hilarious book, Indian Pale Ale.

1:20 p.m. Problem: Indian Pale Ale is a great beer going down. It's less pleasant when it comes back out through your nose.

Cause: The scene where The Author and the \$700 Pony witness a knock-down, drag-out fist fight between a Boisterous Woman and the Boisterous Woman's miniature horse at a horse show.

Collateral Damage: No one will ever be able to read page 113 of my copy ever again. And my left nostril hurts like hell. And my Texas Football at Austin T-shirt has another spot on it.

1:21 p.m. Jenny gently takes what's left of my Indian Pale Ale in her right hand and my dripping \$700 Pony book in her left. She raises the bottle and says "You can have this..." then raises the book, "...or this."

1:21:05 p.m. Not both. *Merde*.

1:21:07 p.m. I point to the book. It's mine. I want it.

1:30 - 4:00 p.m. I spend the afternoon sharing sections of the book with Jenny and drowning out Brent Musburger. I'm sent from the room.

6:10 p.m. I'm being denied my supper. "You're going to choke, Bob." Man, you get a little asparagus and mash potatoes on your shirt and people start judging you.

7:46 p.m. I finish the book. My sides ache. I feel



woozy. I'm hungry and my clothes are a mess.

Jamie was right. In fact, *The Chronicles of the \$700 Pony* is my favorite horse book of all time. It is so well done and so downright funny that it's hard to believe this is The Author's first effort. I'm convinced that non-horsepeople will appreciate it and real horsepeople will adore it. Check it out at www.sevenhundreddollarpony.com

Ellen Broadhurst owes me a shirt. And I refuse to forgive this debt until she writes another book.

Bob Goddard is a freelance writer from
Ravenna, MI.

He is currently finishing a
new book:

*Horse Crazy!, A Tongue-in-Cheek Guide to
Parents of Horse Crazy Kids*

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