

Horse Crazy

By Suzy Hopkins

As a little girl Suzy read every horse book in her school library. Her home town librarian in Lexington, Massachusetts set aside every horse book available that Suzy read repeatedly.

She went to horse camp for a month every summer in Casco Bay, Maine. She borrowed and rode every horse she could find near her family home. After she married at the age of 20, she lived in Salem, New Hampshire where the elegant and famous horse-racing track, Rockingham Park is located. She worked as a groom, exercising the horses with a jog cart, grooming as well as applying medicine to the sulky race horses while her husband stayed home with their baby. After they divorced, at the age of 28, she married a man who bought her a horse of her own – her 'horse crazy' dreams had finally come true.

Sadly, a year later she got Multiple Sclerosis. She had to give up snow skiing, playing tennis and dancing. Now all she could still do was ride horses. She became a mounted park ranger at Folsom State Park after her husband got a job in California, moving the family to where life is easier than in New England where Winter lasts six months. She bought her son and daughter a horse. For years, they rode together the miles of remote trails around Folsom Lake. During the summers, for eight years, she taught other horse owners how to break their horses to the saddle themselves after she developed her own eight week curriculum and created a training manual. In addition, she continually taught students to ride and train young horses that she purchased until they were trained enough to be sold.

Eventually, she got a full-time job with the State of California's Department of Corrections. After her divorce, she still trained horses as well as rode as a park ranger. During this time she volunteered at two riding stables that had handicapped children in riding therapy. For eight years, she rode her horse with them and their horses, doing games and gymkana exercises. All the while she had a horse photography business doing horse shows, polo matches, family portraits and stallions for breeding

Ten years later she retired from her state job and wrote a children's' book for girls 9-11 years old about a girl who used a horse as therapy for her wheelchair bound foster sister. It won a bronze medal from the Moonbeam Children's Books Awards.

Periodically, over the 35 years that she worked with horses she had many horse accidents including breaking the top of the femur in her right leg, a broken and dislocated left shoulder, broken ribs, tailbone, jaw, elbow and nose. Suzy's MS got so debilitating at age 60 she was unable to ride again which for this 'horse crazy' girl was like being dead.

Today, she is in the big horse ranch in the sky.