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Helping You Create Abundance In Your Relationships, Finances, Health, Career, and Spiritual Life

Call of the HORSE

Open up to find your inner strength

by Kwami E. Nyamidie

"I waited 40 years for my birthday present," Constance Funk said in our phone interview.

"I asked my parents to give me a horse when I turned seven. They gave me a bicycle with a bell instead."

The fall she turned 47, author Constance Funk went to Provence, southern France, with her parents Kathleen and Glen Bartlett and her brother Craig Bartlett. Connie, as she's fondly called, had a young French horse ride tour guide. His name was Damien.

At home in the Pacific Northwest, Connie's 11-year-old son, Evan, and his father, Gary, had gotten her a special birthday gift: a horse with a "lightning-shaped scar down her face" called Chasta. They acquired her from a young horseman whose name was also Damien.

Chasta wasn't Connie's first horse. Rather, Chasta satisfied Connie's childhood desire to be heard.

For thousands of years, horses have tickled the human imagination, arousing our fantasies in countless movies, myths, and novels. It's no wonder many girls growing up dream of owning their own ponies.

When this early wish was dashed, Connie began to live her life, not as she wanted, but as others thought best for her. She learned to not speak her mind, to not express her true feelings, and to not rock the boat. This patterned behavior would color every aspect of her life, including her marriage.

"On the outside everything looked great. But I was emotionally numb, until Chasta came into my life."

Our ancestors exploited horses as instruments of power, used them on their farms and for transportation and branded them beasts of burden. Connie would learn to see them with new eyes.

The author from Skagit Valley's Woodylane Farm would discover that horses aren't just creatures of instinct; they also have feelings, intelligence and consciousness.

Case in point. Connie had the scare of her life the first night she attempted to ride her new equestrian

friend because the gift horse sensed her conflicted emotional state.

"Taking me on a wild ride that terrified us both, crashing through the woods, off the trail, flying over everything on our path, Chasta ignited the eruption of the volcano within me that had been boiling beneath the surface for years. When the rocketship finally landed and I realized that we had survived, our combined six legs, shaking with near paralyzing fear, took us home, on the ground."

Connie has written about the transformation Chasta triggered that fateful autumn night and what following "the path of the horse" brought her in two books so far. In "Beauty from Brokenness," published last year, the 53-year-old author describes her healing journey. In "Holy as Thou," her second book which comes out this summer, the Seattle-born former dental hygienist celebrates variations on the Chasta theme with more stories about her return to finding love within and around her.

Stormy May, a horse trainer who sold her ranch and left her career in search of a better way in which humans can relate to horses, wrote the foreword to Connie's second book which she

describes as "'a small thing done with great love.'" Drawing parallels with James Herriot's "All Creatures Great and Small" series, May notes that Connie has "the gift of being able to see the miracles in such every day occurrences as the birth of baby ducks and the challenges of owning a horse who always seems to be one step ahead of her."

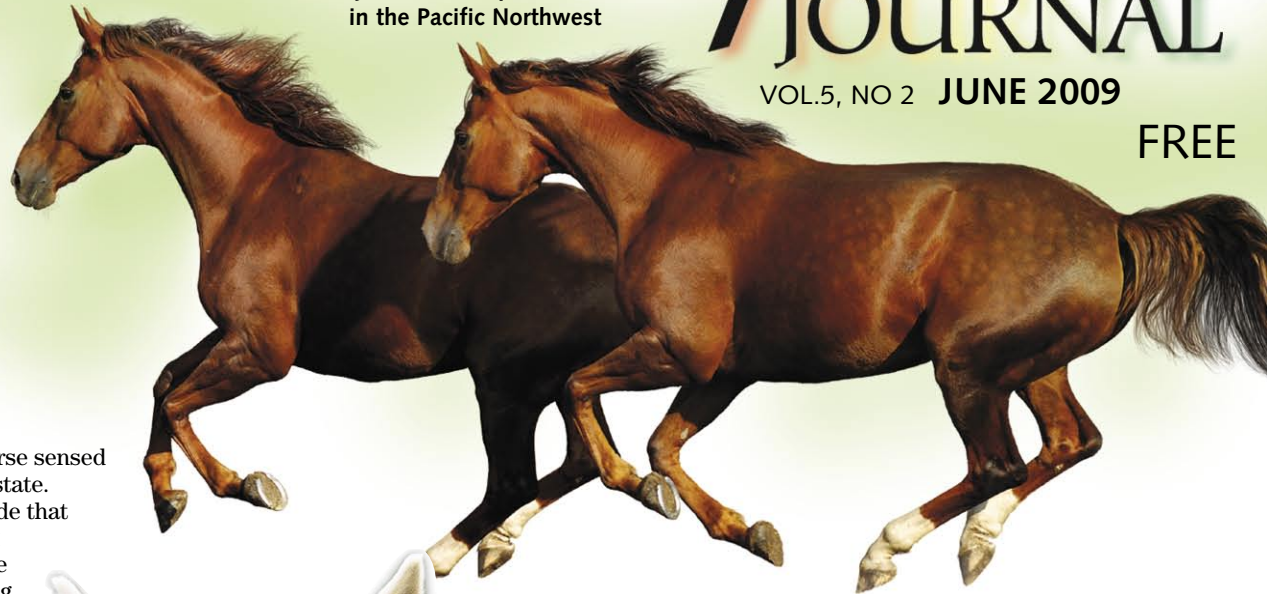
May shows her own journey in the newly released documentary

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Connie Funk, here with her horse, Chasta, says that horses have been waiting for thousands of years for us to hear their call to reveal to us a new dimension of wisdom, insight and wholeness.

movie "The Path of the Horse," featuring visionary horsemen and women who have shaped Connie's ideas as well, including Linda Kohanov, the Danish horseman Klaus Ferdinand Hempfling, the Colorado cowboy Mark Rashid and the horsewoman from California, Carolyn Resnick.

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Practical ways to apply horse wisdom to live more fully and authentically:

- Use/feel emotions as information without judgement; decide how to respond, then go back to grazing, back to enjoyment, to life.
- Do/feel/be whatever you are doing fully. If it is running, add a kick and a buck for flourish and stretch out your spine. If it is sleeping, trust that your herd members are watching out for possible predators and konk out. If it is grooming your partner, connect deeply and be grateful for their companionship. Live in the present moment always.
- Remember that living life "for the good of the herd" is living the golden rule.
- Respect your elders, both male and female; they have much life experience and have a great deal to teach you if you observe and listen.
- By the same token, watch the young ones among you as they romp and play games with each other without the need for anything but space and know that joy is available to you whenever you choose; allow your inner colt or filly to come out and play.

Connie's recommendation for connecting with a horse up close and personal if you do not have your own is to volunteer at a horse rescue facility or a therapeutic riding program for disabled and at risk children where there is a great need. You will have the joy of being around these noble animals and helping both humans and equines. Two wonderful Northwest examples are, People Helping Horses and Animals as Natural Therapy.