

# Northern



Over the years I have learned that life is a journey. Not always a fairytale journey, but often times a journey that will test my physical and mental strengths to their limits. Or at least what at that time in my life I perceived to be my limits. I am given choices on this journey. One is to run and hide into the mountains that fill my back yard, to disappear from the world below and escape into the vastness that these mountains hold. The other is square up my shoulders and face the journey. I have found a combination of both these options has helped me to find peace in this journey called life.

I have been blessed through my life. My mother and fathers unconditional love towards their only child has allowed me to grow into

the human that I am and of course the constant variable through all my years, my equine teachers and friends. Their honesty and trust is the ultimate test to what lies within our souls.

The older I become the more I realize how incredible these creatures are, their ability to read our every emotion, to tolerate our human

clumsiness in their perfectly balanced and subtle world. Their forgiveness towards us as we perceive ourselves as the herd leader with more knowledge and understanding than they may have, when in reality it is they who are the leaders the teachers the wise ones.

I have spent my 44 years of life on the same 2 acres in Anchorage Alaska. School studies remained a challenge to me. College material I would never become. But my fathers love for baking was in my blood so rather than endure another semester of failing grades at our local college I decided to wear the white apron of my father's trade and learn to make a living with my hands.

That was 1982. For 20 years I worked side by side with my father.



# xposure

by Frieda Koper

I watched and learned. As his health grew weak I became the sole pastry chef in our small family shop. In January of 2003 he left my mother and I to continue on without him. My father's passing would be one of those journey challenges. We had no choice but to continue on. We owned a small store. Wealth was not something we had. For the first time in our life I decided I needed to sell my horse and concentrate on my future. So I did.

When the love of the horse is what runs through your blood you can not simply live without horses. You may be able to exist, but you can not live. You can not feel life without the smell of a horse to bury your face deep into their neck and inhale the pure pleasure of their magnificent being.

My dream had been to own a Friesian. My parents had emigrated from the Netherlands in the 1950's. The Friesian was in my blood.

A dear friend had given me the name of Genevieve de Montremare. She told me this lady bred spectacular Friesians. On Oct 13, 2003 I had my first correspondence with Genevieve de Montremare. How could I have known the journey that one email would send me on? How could I have ever imagined the highest highs and the lowest lows one simple email would create?

An email that asked about a colt on her list named How Glory Goes, born 22 May 2002. The word exceptional was written behind his name. I asked why he was exceptional. She told me he had the look of an eagle. The blood lines of greatness. She explained the song that she had named him after. That the word Glory was meant to refer to the afterlife we will all encounter some day.

I am not a religious human, but I believe in spirit, in faith and in the powers that be. I knew this boy was to be mine. She wrote that she would save him for me until the barn where building was complete. August of 2004 seemed like an eternity away but on the 10<sup>th</sup> of that month this magical boy unloaded onto the tarmac and into my life.

How do you explain to anyone who has never experienced the reality that a horse can be your soul? That he can feel everything you feel and you can feel his every thought. How can you explain that you inhale joy because of his breath and that you live because of his presence. How can you explain that the pure honor of being his keeper is all you ask from this horse. Should you never have the freedom of riding upon his back you would still be fulfilled, for purely being in his company fills your every desire. That was my life for 2



magical years.

In the summer of 2006 my mother was diagnosed with cancer again. This time an extremely aggressive type of breast cancer that forms as a rash on the outside of our skin. We had never heard of such a cancer but a quick Google search gave us more terrifying information than our brains could absorb. PonyPone (somehow he morphed into this name) was 4 and I had started playing with him under saddle, but my time and energy would now be focused on my mom and the store. PonyPone understood. He remained my rock. The one I could turn to (besides my wonderful husband Cam) and tell all my fears. The one I could bury my face into and cry.

Genevieve and I remained extremely close through these years. My friendship with her another gift PonyPone had given me.

In August of 2006, Genevieve loaded a 5 year old 1/2 Friesian 1/2 Lippizan onto a FedEx airplane in California and sent him to my family. His name was MusicMan. He was out of her World Champion stallion Melle311 and her personal riding mare MaraMusica. He was not doing well in the heat and she thought Alaska would be an ideal climate for him. Would I please sell him for her?

September 22, 2006 my world began turning darker shades of gray. My PonyPone became ill. October 6, 2006 my world turned black. That Friday my mom would have surgery to rid her body of this horror called

cancer. That day my PonyPone died during the same hour my mom was in surgery. I received the call while sitting in her room.

How could my body absorb the joy of my mother's successful surgery and at the same time process this paralyzing pain of losing my PonyPone? How could I go on when the physical pain was greater than anything I had endured in my life? My heart felt literally broken. Breathing was an effort. WHY? Why was this happening to me? And then the answer came.

Why not?

PonyPone had come to me as an angel. He had completed his duty here on earth and now it was time for him to move on to another family who was in need of a miracle. My mom would once again become healthy. And a gray boy was

standing in my barn awaiting me. He needed me as much as I would learn I needed him. Little did I know the next journey that awaited me would be as marvelous a journey as the one I had traveled with PonyPone. Completely different, but a journey that dreams are made of...

PonyPone had been my Master. He knew all. I was merely his keeper for 2 short years. I soon learned that MusicMan was my Grasshopper (yes from the old television series KungFu). We had so much to learn from each other, trust being the most important of them all.

Grasshopper had no trust in me and I no trust in him. My feeble human attempts at "friendship" were met with rears of fear. The only thing we







could agree on was to go on walks. Side by side walking and talking. Miles upon miles. The fall months turned to winter. We learned to navigate thigh deep snow, tall snow berms and treacherous ice.

By January of 2007 a relation was starting to emerge - still a rocky relation at times but a relation none the least. By now this human was becoming a bit more horse savvy, thanks to the readings of Mark Rashid and his student and friend Kathleen Lindley. I had begun to listen to the Grasshopper...to watch how he reacted to everything. I learned to make progress on the time schedule of the horse not the human. Slowly. I learned to think like a horse, to view the world and its surroundings through the eye of the horse.

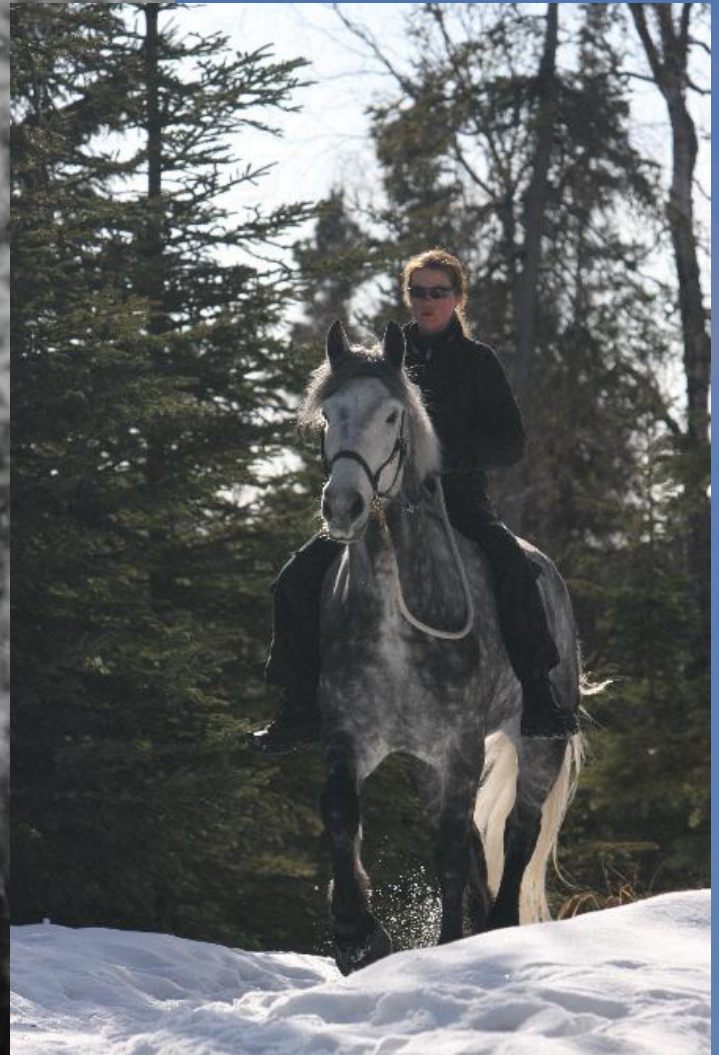
I put aside my desires as a "dressage" rider to become a human my horse could trust. By late winter I was allowed to climb aboard, as long as I could find a tree stump tall enough for a quick scurry onto this



tall dapple. I learned that deep snow banks were a natural tool for slowing down large forward horses as they leap through the air. My hat went off to the airs above the ground of a well breed Lippizan!

By late spring I had advance to climbing aboard with a saddle. Up until then I had preferred the freedom of bareback. Sliding off quickly should things deteriorate quickly was much easier for me. I learned that a low limbed spruce tree draping gently on his ears was the perfect ploy to keep his front feet on the ground just long





**enough for me to mount and reassure him that life was okay with this human above his head.**

**By riding the trails for hours on end we built a partnership. This grey with the coat that resembled a winters storming sky had learned that I would dismount and walk bravely by his side if the same rock we had passed many times before was now today a terrifying creature.**

**I could not smell the scents of the animals that perhaps had passed our way only moments before, but I knew he could. He learned that I would trust his instinct when he would**



suddenly stop and listen, for I had learned that his sense of smell and hearing was far superior to my human senses. I learned he would never steer us wrong.

He learned that we shared the trails with moose, black and brown bears along with an array of other creatures that mother nature had put on this earth and that as a prey animal it was his duty to be aware of what predator may await us around the next bend. And I marveled that at 10 below zero I could ride for hours upon this steed and not grow cold. The heat from his body kept me warm and safe.

By summer the local arena was looking a bit less like a huge flat area for him to terrify me in and more like a swimming pool. If I clung close to the rail, I could turn

him toward it and stop his energy. So we stayed close to the rail. It was my safety net.

In time I would walk 5 feet from the rail then 10 feet. Eventually I gathered the nerve to trot in the arena and even a canter was in our future. Slowly I began to realize the talent I had under me. Even more so the depth of his man's soul. I also learned with this boy's natural talent and energy I had to work hard to keep my obsessive desire to "train" at bay. This horse would need time to come into his own.

As the months passed, Trust was what our relation developed into. He trusted me to listen to his fears, to his concerns about the unknown. I learned to trust him. Trust that he is

wise. We have become a partnership in the true sense.

After the loss of PonyPone I told my husband no more Friesians. I would never be able to bare the loss of another. But he knows me too well. He said if anyone could love again it would be me. So we bought a beautiful young colt named Valentino. This journey called life has the ability to truly test a family. 2 months later before we had the chance to bring him home our beloved colt died.

I knew at that moment that I

would never own another Friesian. Grasshopper was my life. I was at peace with this. But as winter turned to the spring of 2007 I had a dream that maybe just maybe I should dare one more time. I contacted the

lady we had bought Valentino from. I wrote to her that should the winds of change allow a full brother to our Valentino to be born that perhaps he should be ours. She wrote saying she would pray for a colt.

As early May came and went and the mare had still not foaled I realized that this colt was truly meant to be. I wrote to my friend that a colt would be born on 22 May 2007. The same date as my PonyPone had arrived 5 years earlier. I wrote that his name would be Yoddha. It means Warrior in the ancient language of Sanskrit. Truthfully though, I just adored the wise Jedi Warrior in Star Wars. At 2:30am on 22 May a strong healthy colt was born. He now too lives with us in Alaska. A journey in his own





right he is.

The circle is now complete but the journey is far from over. Each day brings new challenges, how to achieve a deeper level of softness, how to become another level closer to the human my horses want to be with. My barn is full of boys that each brings his own story. But each story is intertwined with a young lady named Genevieve de Montremare and a beautiful black Friesian named PonyPone.

My barn is called "pony's place". The letters are all in lower case to emphasize the simplicity yet the depth of these words. The barn symbol is that of a black raven and a white raven flying in perfect harmony.

The brass plaque as you approach the front door reads "peace to all who enter here" The note that hangs inside is written in the font of jester to emphasize the ravens that share my world and it reads...

"our barn was built for ponypone. in my heart and soul it will always be "pony's place".

the raven. the bird i respect and cherish above all else.

the black raven, the carefree spirit they are. the good they find in every thing. the humor they can find on the darkest days. the wisdom of the many souls they carry. and of course my ponypone.

the white raven. the spirit of pony. it is always here. i can feel him every moment of everyday. it represents pony leaving and making sure i was okay because the grasshopper was here. he knew with the grasshopper here i would survive. even though



many a days and nights i did not believe i would.

and of course it represents the grey love that now allows me to ride upon his back. to kiss his nose and to bury my face deep into his neck and inhale the pure pleasure of the horse.

my grasshopper. my savior."

Peace from the North  
Frieda  
Alaska, USA