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Sensuality, Spirituality and Commonsense Living

Straight from the Horse's Mouth

By Margo Hamilton

Photos courtesy of Frank Bell

A mother's death forever changes the heart of her son, and sorrow and suffering instill amazing insight into a boy, who as man now shares with the world. Frank Bell was 6 years old when his mother's life ended, leaving him the third born son in a tribe of four brothers. "When my mom died, my dad and two older brothers didn't know how to nurture or develop a bond of relationship with me. Our Cocker Spaniel, Missy, however, sensed my emotional needs through her constant presence and unconditional love," claims this man now dubbed the Horse Whisperer.

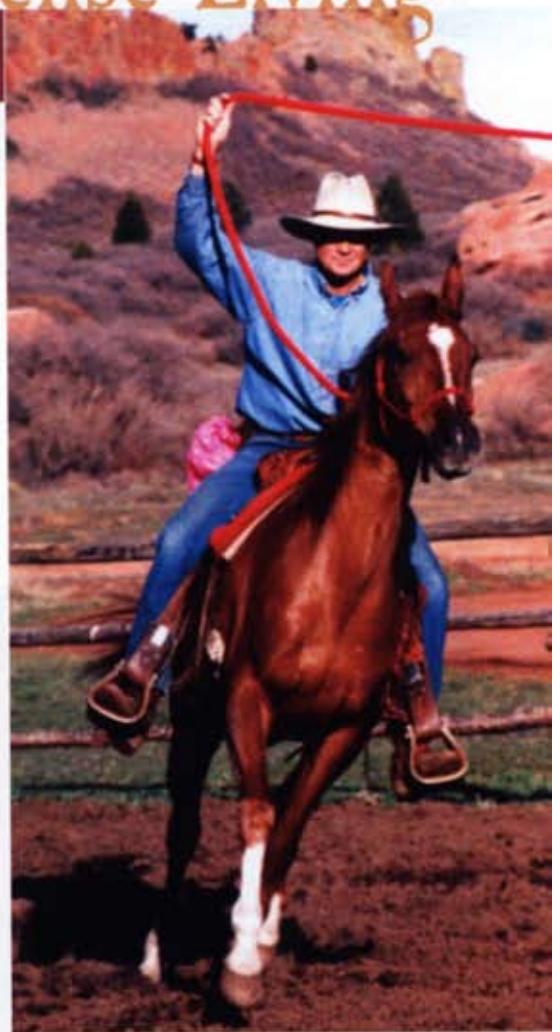
Wounded hearts harden, and as a youngster Frank was no stranger to rebellion, but a field of prized racehorses peaked his senses and stirred his soul. "I was obsessed with dogs as a child, and Missy taught me the importance of touch and how that leads to trust," says Frank of his boyhood days when he longed for his mother's love. "Missy imparted a gift that enabled me to befriend the fieriest of canines. I was drawn to that field of horses as a child, exhilarated by their smell and overwhelmed by their presence. I knew the gift I had to befriend dogs would become a natural progression to horses."

That field of dreams filled with horses was a slumbering catalyst that would catapult Frank into worldwide fame. Lessons of love, trust and touch imparted to him through canines and equines empowered him to become one of the world's most respected horse trainers. Frank has developed a significant horse-handling revolution, that if embraced by humans, would instill

insight and security into all of our relationships with two and four-legged creatures, and deepen our emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

When Frank found the woman he would marry, fate forged a new life that led him unexpectedly down a bridle path. "I was 35 at the time, and my wife and I were living in Montana. Neither one of us knew anything about horses, so we borrowed horses to learn from, and it was then my wife requested a horse for her wedding gift. I presented her with a striking flea-bitten gray with a black mane named Lakota Breeze," recalls Frank.

The couple, now paired with horses but still possessing little (if any) horse sense, took to the trail at an electrifying pace, and within two strides Frank's wife was thrown. "We didn't know anything about groundwork safety, or how to warm our horses up," claims Frank, whose wife tossed her interest in horses as soon as she hit the ground. Frank's prized steed, Lakota Breeze, challenged him plenty. "Now we had a couple of backyard horses, which made little sense," says a man who knows that the heart and the soul of a horse are not satisfied with a sedentary life. Frank decided to share with Lakota the lessons learned from his childhood canine companion Missy. Time, touch and patience became the synergist that turned human and equine from foes to friends. This foundation became the formula for Frank's well-publicized and highly-regarded 7 Step Safety System program (7SSS), which emphasizes safety first and foremost between horse and rider. Frank discovered that tender touches and soft-spoken words instill trust in a horse, creating a relationship and developing a bond. A new career path unfolded for this once home-res-



toration expert and fly-fishing competitor.

"Word spread about my experience with Lakota, and people lined up requesting that I work with their unmanageable horses," claims Frank of his humble start to an illustrious career. Approached to give a public display of his tender touch technique, Frank agreed, on one condition: "I insisted that all moneys be given to charity, and we donated every penny of the \$4,500 raised on May 3, 1997 to a therapeutic riding group." The progression of Frank's horse training profession came naturally, as if the hand

at your service

of God granted the time, the place and the moniker that would give him credence. "*The Horse Whisperer* was the number one book at that particular time. The man who created the brochures for my first public presentation borrowed the name, which drew a crowd of 250 to that event," Frank says, still in awe, perhaps, of the befitting name that dons his website at www.horsewhisperer.com, or of his amazing career that followed.

The law of reciprocity rests heavy on Frank's heart, and he lives his life to make the world a better place. "I called the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association in Denver and told them what a success the event was and extended myself to do the same for them," Frank reflects, and with that, his career was blessed, as thousands of people have flocked to his presentations and seminars — those who have horses, and those who don't—to hear firsthand

from an authentic Horse Whisperer.

Prisoners at the Colorado State Penitentiary in Pueblo and at-risk kids at Emily Griffith School of Opportunity in Colorado Springs have benefited from Frank's knowledge. "I took a rescued mustang from the BLM program to the penitentiary for the prisoners to break, and gifted the horse, once trained, to the kids at Emily Griffith School of Opportunity. I wanted the at-risk kids to think about the inmates behind bars who trained their horse. Maybe it would turn their behavior around ... like the once wild, renegade mustang," asserts Frank. "I've seen horses heal humans, but mustangs are unpredictable and backslide fast. If you don't know what you're doing with them, you lose a lot of ground fast. Wild horses need a lot of understanding." The mustang might not have been the horse of choice to safely carry kids, but the mes-

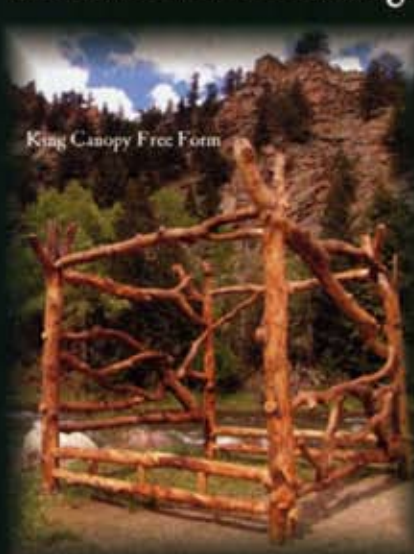
sage is strong and powerful. Tenderness, touch and intimacy need to be continually practiced in all relationships to ensure that they thrive.

"Abused horses, like abused people, don't trust," Frank explains. "They don't give their all until someone takes them and helps them heal. So many of us grow up in a dysfunctional world and camouflage our pain. Animals are straightforward. They gain confidence only through trust, and trust has to be earned. It takes time, it takes patience and it takes the right kind of touch to create a lasting bond."

Many a girl is stricken with horse fever, which remains incurable for a lifetime. Frank notes that 90 percent of his seminar participants are women. "I sense that women who attend my clinics do so on the surface to work with their horses, but I believe they're also looking for self-esteem and self-confidence. Abusiveness has run over them, leaving their lives out of control. To control a 1,000-pound animal gives them emotional and mental benefits. I can see when someone's lacking confidence, and I try to handle them in the same way I would nurture a horse. It works if the rider's sensitive to the needs of their horse," says Frank, who knows firsthand that rigidity does not a relationship make. "We're stewards in how we treat one another, our animals and our environment. Animals and the environment can teach us how to respect life in the most amazing ways. I was an angry and difficult kid, but horses helped me dissipate the anger. They helped me focus and they each taught patience, wisdom and forgiveness. All horses are essentially wild, but they allow us to use them in riot control settings, to prance them around in shows, or haul them and stall them in tightly confined spaces ... because they trust us. Horses teach us that it's all about giving. They are connected spiritually to the true essence of our Creator, being steadfast and wise. Horses force us out of ourselves to focus on them, getting us in tune with life and the true meaning of giving."

Words to shout, from the mouth and heart of Frank Bell, Horse Whisperer. ●

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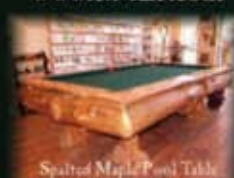


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