

Mid-South Horse Review

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The Essential Fergus the Horse

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Book Review by Nancy Brannon

In October, 2015, Trafalgar Square Books released *The Essential Fergus the Horse*, by Jean Abernethy. Now available is a collection of some of the most popular equine cartoons, probably second or equal to Thelwell. My favorite cartoon, shown below, tells it all and is the theme of what this publication is about, too.

In this book, Abernethy has brought together the back story her early life, of how Fergus the Horse came to be, his early years, the history of his friends and supporting characters, combined with his most popular strips and cartoon moments, some rarely-seen sketches, and brand new comics created exclusively for this book. Guy McLean wrote the foreword. The result is a colorful, illustrated treasury of Fergus cartoons that will entertain anyone with an eye for a horse and a need for a laugh.

Fergus the Horse (*Equus hilarious*) is a comical character created by artist/author Jean Abernethy. He does not represent any particular breed, nor pursue any specific equestrian discipline. Perhaps it's his quality of "every man or woman's horse" that has led to his immense popularity. "When fans write, 'Fergus reminds me of my horse,' I cannot be paid a higher compliment," says Abernethy. While his familiarity may woo us, it is his expressiveness, honesty, charm, and keen sense of humor that wins fans.

In the late 1990s, this little bay horse with four white socks and a blaze was born. "Fergus" has now traveled the world many times over by print, web, and satellite, inspired a line of merchandise featuring his visage. On September 16, 2015 Fergus gained his 300,000th Facebook fan!

"When I learned how to use Facebook in March of 2012," Jean recounts, "I could present Fergus to the whole world, and apparently the 'whole world' really likes this little horse!"

Abernethy watched in mild astonishment as the numbers of fans grew, with likes, shares and comments to a global community of fun-loving horse people. As the Facebook count reached 200,000, and then 250,000, Jean worked earnestly, creating posts and new comics to keep the fans entertained with the humor they have come to love. One Facebook post, published on New Year's Eve 2014, had a post reach of well over a million, according to Facebook statistics.

Find more about Fergus and his creator at these links:
www.facebook.com/FergusTheHorse

www.fergusthehorse.com and www.JeanAbernethy.com

About the author: Jean Abernethy has been producing equestrian-related drawings, horse portraits, and horse cartoons for more than 30 years. She has illustrated several books and instructional articles and created technical how-to drawings and diagrams for instructional purposes. She has also done children's and fantasy illustrations. Her work has taken her coast-to-coast to farms and equestrian events, where she's been involved with a wide variety of horse breeds, sports, and disciplines.

We interviewed Jean about her riding interests and experiences, and she replied: "I had riding lessons (English) in college years ago, and a few lessons since, so I have the basics. I ride for pleasure. Other than playing Mounted Games with a friend 2 summers ago, I have never competed. I am primarily a trail rider. I am much more interested in exploring than competing.

"The past 3 summers I have worked a trail hiding job at South Algonquin Trails, on the edge of Algonquin Provincial Park near Harcourt, Ontario, Canada. We take riders out onto the logging trails in the Park.

"The first summer (2013) I rode the proprietor's horses. The past two summers (2014 & 2015), I've taken my own little mare up there, and she's been my partner for the season. Willow, my only horse, is an AQHA x Arabian, 14.1 hands, 7 years old. She's in the photo with me.

"There are also some parks and conservation areas here in Ontario where I like to ride with friends and family members.

"I ride a western saddle that I built myself. I've put over 450 hours on it with my little horse, sometimes up to a 6 or 7-hour day, and it's never made her sore, and it's never made me sore. So I guess it's a success.

"In the off season I get on her as often as I can, which is never often enough. I may be lining up for a competitive trail ride in the spring. We'll see how much of my time Fergus requires."

