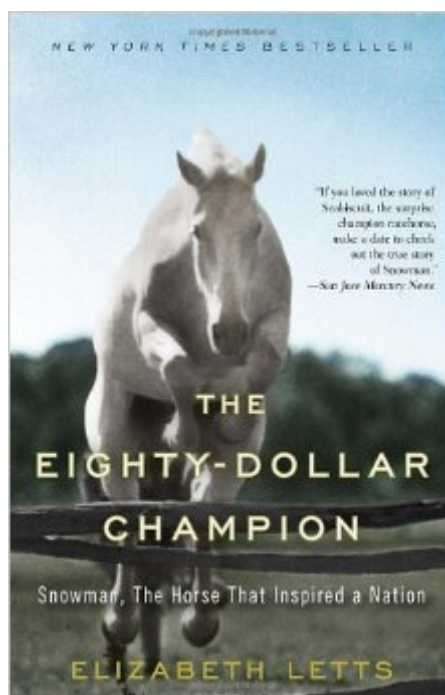


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# The Eighty-Dollar Champion: Snowman, The Horse That Inspired A Nation



## Synopsis

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER <sup>Â</sup> Harry de Leyer first saw the horse he would name Snowman on a truck bound for the slaughterhouse. The recent Dutch immigrant recognized the spark in the eye of the beaten-up nag and bought him for eighty dollars. On Harry's <sup>TM</sup>s modest farm on Long Island, he ultimately taught Snowman how to fly. Here is the dramatic and inspiring rise to stardom of an unlikely duo. One show at a time, against extraordinary odds and some of the most expensive thoroughbreds alive, the pair climbed to the very top of the sport of show jumping. Their story captured the heart of Cold War <sup>Â</sup> "era America <sup>Â</sup> "a story of unstoppable hope, inconceivable dreams, and the chance to have it all. They were the longest of all longshots <sup>Â</sup> "and their win was the stuff of legend.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Like the author of this lovely book, I was a horse-crazy little girl and one of the books I remember reading is SNOWMAN by Rutherford Montgomery. Therefore I'm thrilled that Snowman's story is being rescued from the dustbin of children's lit and being told again with greater detail and accuracy. I especially like the way Elizabeth Letts paints a complete picture of Snowman's time. This is history not just a horse story; a portrait of the America that embraced the former plow horse and his immigrant owner, Harry De Leyer, also known as "The Flying Dutchman". This is the stuff of horsemen's dreams: to literally pull a thin and dirty horse off the slaughter truck and train him to become a champion. That is the true story of Snowman. Could any book have a more charming hero? Snowman sparkles in these pages, a quiet gentle giant who gave pony rides to little children

and taught timid beginners not to be afraid. He's so loyal that he repeatedly jumps both paddock and pasture fences to return to the man who rescued him from the slaughter truck. Harry De Leyer is a young horseman with a growing family who desperately desires to run his own horse business. He's looking for that magic horse who can take him to the top. He'd been training a top thoroughbred prospect, Sinjon. In 1957, Harry persuaded the owner of the horse to take him to the National Horse Show in Madison Square Garden. Sinjon, a nervous and hot-blooded animal, exceeded expectations by jumping out of the qualifying rounds to place fourth. That very success was Harry's undoing: he loses the mount he has carefully and lovingly trained to a rider on the U.S. Equestrian Team. He goes home to take another look at the horse he rescued off the slaughterhouse truck, the horse that came home dragging a tire which had been supposed to anchor him down and a piece of the fence that had been supposed to contain him. Harry knew that Snowman could jump; he just didn't understand why the horse was so clumsy in the ring. Snowman routinely tripped over poles on the ground and knocked over low cross rails. Harry had been trying to train him to jump for over a year. The breakthrough came when one day Harry rode out into the ring. The jumps had already been set high for another horse. Finishing his warmup, Harry pointed his former plow horse at the high jumps...and the rest is history! If I have a criticism, it is that the author has left out and glossed over some of the story about the humans. For example, she doesn't explain why Harry De Leyer and his first wife get divorced. However, I'm not sure she's wrong to leave that out. When it comes to Snowman, she has ferreted out many charming facts and features of his personality. When you are telling a story about a horse with a heart of gold is it necessary to explain every imperfection in the people around him? Horse people will love this book. Snowman in his lovable essence will remind them of that favorite, special horse of their own. Folks who love animals in general will love this story. If you are in search of inspiration, look no further! This is a book for the entire family.

I was a 10 and 11 year old girl in love with horses when my parents agreed to give me lessons. We lived on the south shore of Long Island, about 45 minutes from the de Leyer farm, but Harry de Leyer was chosen to be my teacher. Snowman, not yet a champion, was one of the horses Mr. de Leyer used to teach eager children like me. Mr. de Leyer taught me that if I were a gentle, kind rider, I could learn invaluable lessons about courage and accomplishment. Snowman rewarded me with an extraordinary personal experience and an amazing example that, in life, anything is possible if you are willing to try. I was outraged to read a one star review, a personal attack by a local person who says Harry De Leyer abused his horses. I absolutely do not believe that and wonder what part jealousy and bigotry may have played to influence the writer of that review and/or his own riding

teachers. Mr. de Layer always insisted that his horses be treated well. His message was to learn to trust the horse, trust myself and to find the rhythm between the horse's spirit and my own. I was a tiny girl, Snowman was a very big horse and Mr. de Layer and Snowman taught me not only how to enjoy jumping and showing, but also a great deal about myself and life in general. I am so grateful to have known them both and my life has been richer for it. I am now 65 and have shared this story with my children and grandchildren. Mr. de Layer and Snowman are still teaching my family about the spirit of kindness and courage. I wish I could recommend the book as highly as I do Mr. de Layer. I found it quite shallow and very repetitive. Letts tells us about Snowman and Harry de Layer, but doesn't allow us to get to know them. They are worth getting to know. Her emphasis, over and over, is on the "fleabitten" horse, "immigrant small farmer," and an overblown emphasis on class distinctions. These points may have some validity, but Harry and Snowman are both so very much more than that. In my opinion, Harry de Layer and Snowman are still waiting for the book they deserve.

I really have to hand it to the author here! She really had me going when she wrote about the competitions in this book, they were SO exciting! The book was beautifully, done, and on so many levels! The horse's owner, Harry, had lived through wartime with the Nazi occupation, which colored (rightly so) many of his thoughts and feelings about things. This book tells of him taking a huge chance on this horse that was bound for the knacker's yard. \$80 was a good bit of money back then, for someone in his economic position. But his instinct won out, and he purchased the horse, and took him home. He was used as a lesson horse to teach riding, until they pretty much accidentally found out what a jumper he was. The story is just beautifully told by the author all the way through. There are lots of things to learn throughout the book about immigrants coming to this country and working hard at what they knew best, in order to finally make good. There are lots of different bits of information about many different things; different lifestyles, details about a girl's school, as well as lots of information on the horse jumping circuits. This is one of those books that teaches you lots of information, but in such a fun and exciting way that you don't realize you are actually learning (which is my favorite way to do it)! This book is interesting, entertaining and exciting. I highly recommend it, and am really glad I found this book and read it. A great, heartwarming read. Wonderful horse, wonderful man and wonderful story!

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