

PAWS,
CLAWS &
HOOVES:

FOOTPRINTS ON OUR LIVES

*The Writers, Illustrators
Editors and Publishers*



of

Missouri Writers, Ink,

2016



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our world. Missouri Writers, Ink, was started in 2011 by four writers interested in sharing their work, their ideas, and their lives.

In five short years we have grown to include other writers, illustrators, editors and publishers. Our members come from a 100-mile radius and meet monthly in Rolla, Missouri at the Rolla Library.

This is our second anthology and after much discussion, we settled on the topic of animals. So sit back and be ready to smile or maybe shed a tear with these heartwarming tales of those we've loved – with tails. .

How can we live on earth without being touched by our fellow creatures? You might be surprised by some of the stories and creatures in these pages. But we bet they will remind you of animals and pets you've known.

After all, love is love... whether you're on walking on two feet, scratchin' around with two claws, galloping on four hooves or padding on paws! Enjoy!

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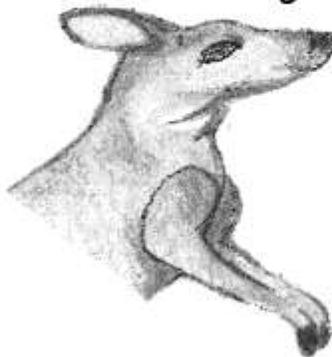
This book is dedicated to:



Animal lovers, readers and writers...

And of course,

The animals who give us our stories!



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These are excerpts from most of the stories and poems found in the Missouri Writers, Ink, anthology: Paws, Claws, & Hooves: Footprints on Our Lives.

Missy Is Special

E. Louise Baker

My husband's office employees gave our family a very special Christmas gift! The gift was wrapped in fur! Yes, the gift was a cute little black toy poodle.

This dog was really little and at 6 weeks of age, she could stand under the 'toe space' of the kitchen cupboards.

My Crow

Joellyn Becker

According to Native Americans, there are specific attributes of animals which have meaning and messages about life. This is a story about my experience.

While I have had several pets in my lifetime, the animal with the most impact and not a pet per se is a crow I fondly refer to as "my crow." The first time I recall hearing my crow, I had stepped outside of my employment to take a break. The stillness was broken by a crow's caw. I had never noticed it before. The crisp sound resonated to my very core – much like a familiar song that brings about an emotional response. At the time, I heard other crow's caw, but they were not the same as the seemingly deliberate caw of my crow.

Our Furry Companion Shane

Carlena Biggs

It was in the spring when he came to us – all scrawny and so thin he looked like he would blow away in a breeze. No matter what we did, he would not leave. We took out an ad in the paper, put a notice on the local radio station, tacked posters on bulletin boards around town...and waited for someone to call. No one ever did, and even when we tried to give him away, no one wanted him.

We thought, because he was already so big, that he was almost grown. However, to our surprise, he was not even half grown! We named him Shane and he grew...and grew and grew! He could stand on his hind legs higher than our heads. I am five foot three and a half flat footed. On all fours his head hit my rib cage and he could have knocked us down with a swipe of his huge tail.

Wallabies

Nora Jean Broleman

My husband Jack and I were both retired and had purchased a farm in St. James, Missouri. We were comfortable in our retirement, but being together 24 hours a day was a strain, like just getting married and the honeymoon was over. So we decided to buy and raise some sort of exotic animal.

We went to Grant's Farm in St. Louis and visited with our friend Vernell. She showed us several animals that she took care of at the farm, but none of them seemed right for us. So, after sitting on her couch, she began suggesting different exotics. When she mentioned Kangaroos and Wallabies, we asked her for more information on them.

First of all she said, "They do not make good pets for most people, but I think they would work for you."

"Don't explain why you think so," I said laughing. "Just tell us more about them."

"Well, first of all," she continued, "Their personality is similar to a deer. When bottle raising a wallaby from infancy and provided with lots of TLC, they are capable of returning human affection to a degree astounding to most people. However, they can also become aggressive and cause severe injuries. I think you can handle that."

Unexpected Friend

Jodi Elder

Prominently perched on a pear tree
Above the front porch peak, so diligently and faithfully she spent
Each evening with me.
Rarely did she have much to say, but she
Listened as I'd speak.

Chief's Decision

Karen GoatKeeper

Inconsiderate. Thoughtless. A total lack of respect. That's what I call it. After all, I'm an important member of this family. My opinion should matter. But no one asked me or cared what I thought about it.

That left me trying to make the best of a bad situation.

I think the whole thing started last fall. A new monster arrived. Cars come and go here, but this one was different. For one thing, it didn't look like any of the others.

Cars have this shape to them. Low in the front and back and high in the middle. They have doors on the sides that open and close like the doors in the house. They have this sound to them too. They roar, especially when they go fast, which isn't often by the house because of the sharp turn around the front yard.

Koda (My Friend)

Loretta Gorrell

My 11-year-old granddaughter jumped out of bed on a lazy summer day in 1998. Lizzy was so excited; her mother and grandmother were going to a horse auction in the little town of St. James, MO. She was finally getting a horse! She had outgrown her pony and was ready for a big horse, so she could ride with her Uncle Dave and his horse, Rebel. Life was good!

Lizzy sat quietly in her seat as each horse was brought in. Her mom or grandma would ask her, "What about this one?"

"No," she would answer, "I will know him, when I see him."

It was getting close to the end of the sale, and there were only a few horses left to sell. Lizzy sat quietly, waiting for the perfect horse. Her mother was getting worried, they might not find a horse for Lizzy today.

The auctioneer pounded his gavel. Everyone watched as a small horse with four white feet and a blaze running down his face walked into the ring.

"Okay, folks, here is a horse that anyone could ride," the auctioneer announced. Lizz jumped up. "That's him, That's the horse I want!"

Where Eagles Fly

Judith Huntley

There was a brisk ocean breeze gusting along the shoreline when I arrived in Homer, Alaska, in the fall of 2009. My plan was to spend the winter months photographing eagles on the long finger of land stretching out into the Kachemak Bay called the Homer Spit. I quickly decided to unload my belongings from my car into the small, log cabin that I would call home for the next few months.

Gazing out the picture window, I could see the Spit with a beautiful backdrop of jagged mountain peaks which were beginning to show the first signs of winter snows. I marveled at the majestic sight, as I thought about my feathered friends that would be arriving soon. I'd heard the tale of eagles migrating to the Homer Spit every winter to feed on the plentiful fish that were available. They would then move on to another location in the spring, most likely to their original nests, so they could lay their eggs and a new generation of eagles would be born. The eagles would be arriving in Alaska soon.

Some Missouri Dogs: Jim the Wonder Dog

Ross Malone

They say that the average dog can understand about 100 words. We've all seen things that certain dogs can do that are impressive but the most impressive dog ever was known as Jim the Wonder Dog.

Jim lived in Marshall, Missouri, back in 1925. He was more than just a really smart animal. We've all see those but Jim was something special. Listen to some of the feats that Jim could routinely perform. When hunting he knew which fields had birds in them

and which ones did not. Samuel Van Arsdale, Jim's owner, just let Jim choose the fields for hunting and he said he was never disappointed.

You probably know that dogs are color blind. They can only see black and white and shades of gray. But Jim was different.

Armadillos in My Yard

Lenore Marken

We have lived on our property for a year and a half. It's only five acres, but it's our little farm in north central Texas. When we first moved here I was totally surprised by the abundance of wildlife in the area. We've seen many different species of birds, frogs, toads, snakes, fox squirrels, raccoons, skunks, and even an occasional deer. But no, I mean "NO" armadillos!

I was told there were armadillos everywhere in this part of Texas! I heard people complaining about the mess armadillos made of their yards and landscaping. My horse's veterinarian told me he saw them all the time as he traveled from farm to farm. The park technician at the Fort Worth Wildlife Refuge told me that I wouldn't see armadillos in the winter because they hibernated, but in the summer they should be out and about, literally everywhere. Did I mention it's been a year and half and I haven't seen an armadillo!

"Hey, Dad!"

Judith K. Moore

"Hey, Dad! Wait for me!"

"Come along, Son You have to keep putting one leg after the other and stay low. Don't allow your claw to get too high or you'll find yourself swept away and have to start all over. It's much easier to go slow and low."

"But, Dad, I'm so tired. Is there any other way to cross the great expanse?"

"Sorry, son, but this is all I know. We've done this for as long as I can remember. Why, I remember following my dad on the same journey when I was your age. It doesn't get any better and there are no shortcuts. Just dig in and keep low. Oh, and remember to stay to the outside edge of the water flow or you will find yourself in trouble."

The little one edged his way closer to the outer edge of the water flow. "What happens if I don't stay near the edge? I'm used to swimming near the deep end of the water. I don't like it as well, but I know how to navigate the deep, still waters. I know to stay away from the deep, flowing current. So what happens if I get too far from the edge?"

Charlie

Theresa Payne

Hi, my name is Charlie and this is my story.

I was born on Valentine's Day, 2008, and got to go home to my new family just six weeks later.

The man brought me to school on the day I was to go home to my new family and he put me down in the hallway outside my new mom's classroom. She heard something and said, "Come in," but, when no one walked in the room, she looked over and saw me. I knew I had her heart right at that moment. Thankfully, I was adopted into a very loving family with a human mom, dad, two sisters, and a brother.

My human family also had another furry child; named Dixie, and she is an Australian Shepherd. I am a black Labrador retriever. Growing up as a part of this human family has been a joy. Sitting on my dad's lap, while he watches television in the evening, is always the best part of my day. Walking with me and Dixie is one of my dad's favorite things to do; he also takes us out and lets us run in the yard behind the house we live in. One time we went out the door and, while I was busy looking for a place to do my business, a big, hairy brown thing with antlers on its head came flying straight toward me. The big brown deer rolled me over like a ball rolling down the hill. This upset my dad more than it did me.

Through His Eyes

Georgia Lynn Slawson

In telling my story, I tell the story of countless others, both human and animal. You never know what life has in store. Each step forward takes you along a winding path, sometimes seeing clearly ahead and at other times walking blindly into the future. Also, the path we walk is often chosen for us by others. Perhaps the best we can hope for is that the life we lead allows us to be of service to others and to make the world a better place.

Many humans constantly dream about and wish for the day when they can retire. I know my current owner did. I often heard her talk about wanting to spend her days sitting in the sun, listening to the wind in the trees, breathing in the scent of the flowers, and feeling the soft grass under her feet, the same as I did every day. But, whether human or horse, being put out to pasture and doing nothing day in and day out is not always as wonderful as it sounds. You soon find yourself searching for meaning and purpose in your life, even if you are a horse. If you are lucky, you find those things and find yourself in the process. Best of all is when you find them together with the one you love.

So, let me introduce myself. My name is Up Hyre Flying Tiger, otherwise known as Tigger. I am what humans call a Morgan, a breed of horse. I was born in 1993 and I am 22 years old, or better said "young," since I have recently changed my backyard pasture for an arena where I am helping people in my new job.

Journey

L.S. Journey (Strait)

Staring out the window of Dad's truck, I tried to stop fidgeting. Excitement vibrated through me, like a kid on Christmas Eve. The country song moaning from the radio twanged my last nerve and I reached for the dial. Flip, flip, flip...static. Commercial. Static. Groaning in frustration, Dad brushed my hand away from the knob.

"Give it a rest, Lil. That radio has to last 12 more hours."

I leaned back in the familiar old truck seat and attempted to get a grip. "Sorry, I just can't wait to get there."

Dad patted my arm. "We'll be there before you know it. Take a nap or something." He smiled knowingly and turned his attention back to the highway stretching before us. We both knew it would be impossible for me to sleep anytime soon.

Sighing, I watched the wintery Missouri landscape race by. I couldn't believe I was finally going to pick up Journey. Almost a year had passed since I made the unthinkable decision to send her away. Every hard minute worked since that day was dedicated to getting Journey back. Since I'd been forced to send a piece of myself away and live in that impossible, lost place, well – never again.

A Walk to Wisdom

K.S. Wuertz

Some birthdays are just harder than others, maybe not harder, but definitely more significant. Fifty was a significant birthday for me. I was unhappily rolling along through my tumultuous forties when I saw it approaching – the big 5-0 . and I knew somehow, to loosely quote Bob Dylan, "The times they are (were) a-changin'."

I wanted a different job. I wanted to stay home more. I wanted more peace and contentment. I wanted to do something wild. Instead, I went to the local animal shelter and adopted something wild.

I first saw her in May or early June. There she stood, standing behind the chain link fence in her kennel, smiling at me. Her white hair was matted and her nipples drooped from having litter after litter of puppies. The shelter somehow knew she'd had the fourth or fifth litter, just before she was dumped in a small hamlet rounding the bend of a country road.