

# A Great Inspiration For Equine Lovers

by DEBRA GINSBURG

Hoping to catch an early wave of the media blitz surrounding the July 25 release of the movie "Seabiscuit," *Chicken Soup for the Horse Lover's Soul* will gallop off the printing press and onto store shelves on July 10. Like all of the previous volumes in this popular series of books, it features heart-lifting stories, 95 in all, that celebrate our special bond with horses. There are sections on horses as teachers, horses as healers, race-horses and equine athletes, companion animals and wild horses, and various other horses that just defy description.

One thing that makes this particular *Chicken Soup* book a must read is that I'm one of the authors. My contribution, however, is not about Cal-breds or even Thoroughbreds, but rather the world champion racing mule Black Ruby. Mules are members of the horse family, after all, and the publishers did make it clear that all kinds of horses qualify.

I got the idea to write my story about Black Ruby when she ventured down to Southern California last summer for a couple of match races with archrival Taz. It was also during this time that Gary Seidler, one of the co-publishers of the *Chicken Soup* books and a CTBA member, contacted me personally to submit some stories for the new book. I had featured him and his wife Lana in the CTBA Member Profile of the *California Thoroughbred's* October 2000 issue, shortly before their filly Queenie Belle captured the 2000 California Cup Matron.

Before he relocated to California, Seidler resided in Florida and raised Thoroughbreds with his business partner and fellow CTBA member, Peter Vegso. He and Vegso established a small publishing company called Health Communications Inc. that publishes the *Chicken Soup* books and other self-help titles. It was Gary and Peter's love for and involvement with horses that led to the creation of *Chicken Soup for the Horse Lover's Soul*. Gary retired from the publishing business when he moved to California, but found himself re-involved when the horse book became reality last summer.

"This year the *Chicken Soup* series celebrates its 10th anniversary and have spanned 60 volumes," Seidler said. "Peter and I thought it would be appropriate to commemorate this anniversary with a book about horses."

Gary encouraged me to send in the Black Ruby story and two others for consideration. Nearly 2,000 stories were actually submitted and my Black Ruby piece was among those chosen for publication. I'm among a half-dozen Californians that have stories published in the book, which also includes a selection from local "Horse Whisperer" and CTBA member Monty Roberts, who wrote the bestsellers *The Man Who Listens to Horses* and *Shy Boy*. Another contributor with California connections is Mike Compton, former managing editor of *California Thoroughbred* who now edits *The Florida Horse*.

Originally scheduled for publication in September, the publishers elected to bring the book out two months early to tie in with the *Seabiscuit* motion picture.

"We believe that 2003 is going to be the year of the horse," Seidler added. "With all the excitement of an underdog hero like *Funny Cide* trying for the Triple Crown and the upcoming release of the *Seabiscuit* movie, we just might have a home run on our hands."

And I wouldn't bet against it. Judging from the number of copies my own family is ordering, I wouldn't be at all surprised if *Chicken Soup for the Horse Lover's Soul* joins Laura Hillenbrand's *Seabiscuit: An American Legend* on the bestseller list.



CTBA members and co-authors of *Chicken Soup for the Horse Lover's Soul*, Gary Seidler (left) and Peter Vegso, sign copies of their book during BookExpo America 2003 held at the Los Angeles Convention Center last month.