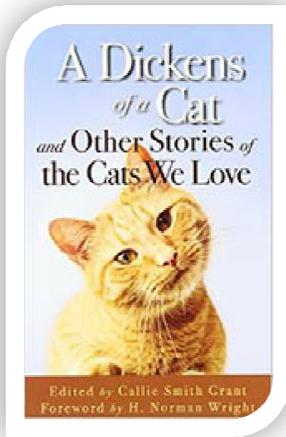


## Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- May 2014



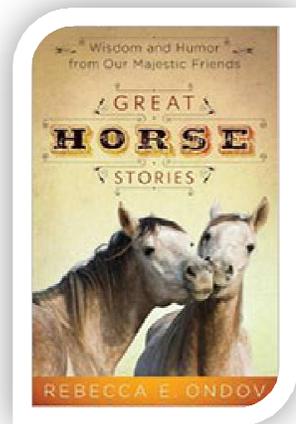
By the time you read this, June will be well under way. I have always loved the sixth month of the year. As a kid, it meant school was out. As a mom: vacation bible school, swim lessons and the beginning of softball season. As an empty nester, which is my life today: blooming roses and flourishing tomato plants. This year in Tehachapi, the roses are outdoing themselves. Hmm... Maybe I should be reviewing gardening books.

But instead, I've been reading animal books. Have you noticed the proliferation of animal stories on the market these days? There are doggy detectives, military dogs, valiant cats and caregiving cats, racehorses, bats, elephants, and so many others I've not become acquainted with yet. As a child, I read every horse and dog book published and now many years later; here I am enjoying the newer stories as much as ever.

This month, I want to introduce you to a new author—or maybe editor is a more apt description. Callie Smith Grant has collected other people's stories for her cat-and-dog compilations. So far she has produced *A Dickens of a Cat: And Other Stories of the Cats We Love*, *A Prince Among Dogs: And Other Stories of the Dogs We Love* and the first one I ever read *The Dog Next Door: And Other Stories of the Dogs We Love*. What a great place to laugh, cry and be entertained by the many dog tales, from puppies to old dogs of every color and shape possible. These animals have saved lives and sanity, protected people from danger and offered comfort when life got too difficult. What a fine collection of heroism and inspiration to wile away the hours.

I have also read Callie Grant's *The Cat in the Window: And Other Stories of the Cats We Love*. I have never forgotten a saying I came across. "The dog thinks you are God, the cat knows she is." There are a lot of funny lines out there regarding the differences between dogs and cats, but both live their purposes well in the training of their humans. People manage to teach dogs tricks and to come when they are called, but cats are another matter. However when they adopt someone they are faithful, just like their canine counter-parts. One blessing you are guaranteed to receive from both is increased laughter.

The last book I'd like to recommend this month is *Great Horse Stories: Wisdom and Humor from Our Majestic Friends* by Rebecca Ondov who lives in Montana along with horses, mules, a dog, and two barn cats. (With Rebecca's permission, I used the name Wind Dancer in my *Wild West Wind* series. Rebecca's mule became my striking paint Wild West show horse, which belonged to my heroine Cassie Lockwood.) One of the funniest stories in Rebecca's book is about a little girl



with a large temper and her pony. I'm still chuckling about it. Rebecca has written several other books using both her own stories and those from other folks. Her love of the outdoors comes through vividly as she writes about the animals she loves.

So if you are looking for something to read between your busy summer events or something short before you turn off the lights at night, I highly recommend any of these collections. They also make good read-aloud-to-family books. I'm hearing that's happening more and more. What a great trend.

In the meantime, my next contemporary novel, *Heaven Sent Rain* will be released on July 1st. Adventures happen when a highly successful business owner meets a small boy with a scruffy dog and is drawn into a life she never planned for, that now includes a creative and caring veterinarian who stitches Mutt back together and draws caricatures of all his clients and their owners. “What an unlikely trio in a compelling tale”, said one reviewer. I hope these three tug on your heart as well.

May you find time to play with your kids, your pets and your friends as we ease into this glorious summer.

Until next time,

*Happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine*