



Heroes and Horses: Tales of the Bluegrass

Philip Ardery

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War hero. Lawyer. U.S. Senate candidate. Horse lover. Farm boy. Fundraiser. To this impressive list add one more role ably filled by Philip Ardery: master storyteller.

Heroes and Horses presents a series of delightful vignettes evoking a way of life almost beyond recall. Bourbon County, the touchstone for Ardery's life, is the center that holds together the tales in the collection. Stories about Ardery's family home, "Roccligan," boyhood activities on the farm, and the servants' kitchen gossip paint vivid portraits of a lost time in Kentucky's history.

Though the Ardery family and most of their neighbors were not horse people, all ages were united in their devotion to the sport of racing, with excitement reaching a crescendo each spring at Derby time. At the 1930 Derby, in which Bourbon County favorite Tannery finished eighth, losses from wagering on the horse hit the county harder than the stock market crash of the previous year. Ardery regales us with memories of hitchhiking to Louisville in 1933, sneaking into the Downs, and witnessing one of the most famous stretch runs of all time. He also tells about Claiborne Farms and its 1984 Derby and Belmont winner, Swale?a story that takes us from the heights of euphoria to the depths of despair.

Despite Ardery's spring trips to Louisville, home base for this collection remains pastoral Bourbon County, northeast of Lexington, the very heart of the Bluegrass. Ardery gives us a personal account of the rise and fall of Edward F. Prichard Jr., whose life "seems something of a Greek tragedy." We hear the story of Reuben Hutchcraft, the county's greatest hero of World War I. We learn the history of Barton Stone and the Cane Ridge Meeting House, where the Disciples of Christ denomination was born before the Civil War. And in one of the most moving stories in the book, Ardery tells of his respect and admiration for the wisdom of Cap'n, a former slave who worked on the family's farm during Ardery's boyhood.

Written by one of Kentucky's favorite sons, *Heroes and Horses* will delight anyone with even a passing interest in the Bluegrass State or who enjoys a good story well told.

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