

# MY FRIEND FLICKA

by MARY O'HARA

**THE STORY SO FAR:** Ten-year-old Ken McLaughlin can ride any horse on his family's Wyoming ranch, but he wants a colt of his own. His father, a retired army officer, refuses to give him one when he learns that Ken has not been promoted. But his mother convinces Captain McLaughlin that the colt may be just what Ken needs. He has a hard time choosing his colt until he sees the yearling filly of a "loco" mare named Rocket. Loco is the horse breeder's name for a no-good, untamable horse. Now Ken has come to the breakfast table beaming with joy and simply dying to tell someone of his discovery of Rocket and her colt.

Now continue with the story.

## CHAPTER VII

If you can raise good calves and colts on it, I guess you can raise boys, Nell reasoned. And McLaughlin, with a long line of oat-eating Scotch ancestors behind his brawn and toughness, agreed.

With the oatmeal there was always a big pitcher of yellow Guernsey cream and a bowl of brown sugar. Nell, smiling, pushed them toward Ken, noticing the unusual color in his face. The boy flashed a glance at his mother; his eyes were dark with excitement. His whole face was lit up—transfigured really—and she felt a slight sense of shock. What had happened? He had been different all week, more sure of himself, more alert and happy, but this—

Rob McLaughlin was looking at Ken too, not missing a thing. Something had happened that morning on the range—

"What horse did you ride?" asked he.

"Lady."

"And where is she now? On her way to the border?" jocularly.

"I put her in the Home Pasture. She's out there at the fountain now."

"Was she hot?"

"No, sir, I cooled her off coming home." There was a little smile of pride on Ken's face, and Nell thought, all the right answers, so far.

The examination went on. "Did you give her a good workout?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then don't ride her again today. Take Baldy if you want a horse."

"Yes, sir."

"Break anything? Lose anything?"

"No, sir."

Rob laughed. He leaned over and patted Ken on the head. "Good work, young man—coming along!"

Ken burst out laughing. He was so excited it was hard to sit still and answer properly. He wasn't going to tell about his colt yet—not till tomorrow when the week was up. But it was hard to hold it in, hard not to jump up and run around the kitchen, shouting and crowing. Anyway—he could tell about Rocket—

"I didn't lose anything, I found something!" He boasted, shoveling in big spoonfuls of oatmeal. "I found Rocket. She's back."

When Ken went to bed that night, he kissed his mother, and then threw his arms around her and held her hard for a moment.

Smiling, she put her hand on his head. "Well, Ken—your violet eyes were soft and understanding."

He went upstairs, smiling back at her over his shoulder, having a secret with her. He knew that she knew.

He lit the candle in his room and stood staring at the flickering light. This was like a last day. The last day before school is out, or before Christmas, or before his mother came back after a visit in the East. Tomorrow was the day when, really, his life would begin. He would get his colt.

He couldn't quite remember the color of her. Orange—pink—tangerine color—tail and mane white, like the hair of an Albino boy at school. Albino—of course, her grandire was the Albino—the famous Albino stud. He felt a little uneasiness at this; the Albino blood wasn't safe blood for a filly to have. But perhaps she hadn't much of it. Perhaps the cream tail and mane came from Banner, her sire. Banner had a cream tail and mane too when he was a colt; lots of sorrel colts had. He hoped she would be docile and good—not like Rocket. Which would she take after? Rocket? Or Banner? He hadn't had time to get a good look into her eyes.

Ken began to undress. Walking around his room, his eyes caught sight of the pictures on the wall—they didn't interest him.

The speed of her! She had run away from Banner. He kept thinking about that. It hardly seemed possible. His father always said Rocket was the fastest horse on the ranch, and now Rocket's filly had run away from Banner.

Riding down the mountain that day Ken had traced back all his recollections of her. The summer before, when he and Howard had seen the spring colts, he hadn't seen the spring colts, he hadn't especially noticed her. He remembered that he had seen her even before that, soon after she was born. He had been out with Gus, one day, in the meadow, during the spring holiday. They were clearing some driftwood out of the irrigation ditch, and they had seen Rocket standing in a gully on the

hillside, quiet for once, and eyeing them cautiously.

"Ay bet she got a colt," said Gus; and they walked carefully up the draw. Rocket gave a wild snort, thrust her feet out, shook her head wickedly, then fled away. And as they reached the spot, they saw standing there the wavering, pinkish colt, barely able to keep its feet. It gave a little squeak and started after its mother on crooked, wobbling legs.

"Yee whiz! Luk at de little flicka!" said Gus.

"What does flicka mean, Gus?"

"Swedish for little gurl, Ken—"

He had seen the filly again late in the fall. She was half pink, half yellow—with streaked untidy looking hair. She was awkward and ungainly, with legs too long, haunches a little too high.

And then he had gone away to school and hadn't seen her again until now—she ran away from Banner—Her eyes—they had looked like balls of fire this morning. What color were they? Banner's were brown with flecks of gold, or gold with flecks of brown—Her speed and her delicate curving lines made him think of a greyhound he had seen running once, but really she was more like just a little girl than anything—the way her face looked, and the way her blonde hair blew—a little girl—

Ken blew out the light and got into bed, and before the smile had faded from his face, he was asleep—

"I'll take that sorrel filly of Rocket's; the one with the cream tail and mane."

Ken made his announcement at the breakfast table.

After he spoke there was a moment's astonished silence. Nell

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"I've named her," said Ken. "Her name is Flicka."

"Flicka," said Nell cheerfully. "That's a pretty name."

But McLaughlin made no comment, and there was a painful silence.

Ken felt he ought to look at his father, but he was afraid to. Everything was changed again, they weren't friends any more. He forced himself to look up, met his father's angry eyes for a moment, then quickly looked down again.

"Well," McLaughlin barked. "It's your funeral—or hers. Remember one thing. I'm not going to be out of pocket on account of this—every time you turn around you cost me money—"

Ken looked up, wondering, and shook his head.

"Time's money, remember," said his father. "I had planned to give you a reasonable amount of help in breaking and taming your colt. Just enough. But there's no such thing as enough with those horses."

Gus appeared at the door and said, "What's today, Boss?"

McLaughlin shouted, "We're going out on the range to bring in the yearlings. Saddle Taggart, Lady and Shorty."

Gus disappeared, and McLaughlin pushed his chair back. "First thing to do is get her in. Do you know where the yearlings are?"

"They were on the far side of the Saddle Back late yesterday afternoon—the west end, down by Dale's ranch."

"Well, you're the Boss on this round-up—you can ride Shorty."

McLaughlin and Gus and Ken went out to bring the yearlings in. Howard stood at the County gate to open and close it.

They found the yearlings easily. When they saw that they were being pursued, they took to their heels. Ken was entranced to watch Flicka—the speed of her, the power, the wildness—she led the band.

He sat motionless, just watching and holding Shorty in when his father thundered past on Taggart and shouted, "Well, what's the matter? Why didn't you turn 'em?"

Ken woke up and galloped after them.

Shorty brought in the whole band. The corral gates were closed, and an hour was spent shunting the ponies in and out and through the chutes until Flicka was left alone in the small round branding corral. Gus mounted Shorty and drove the others away, through the gate, and up the Saddle Back.

But Flicka did not intend to be left. She hurled herself against the poles which walled the corral. She tried to jump them. They were seven feet high. She caught her front feet over the top rung, clung, scrambled, while Ken held his breath for fear the slender legs would be caught between the bars and snapped. Her hold broke, she fell over backwards, rolled, screamed, tore around the corral.

One of the bars broke. She hurled herself again. Another went. She saw the opening, and as neatly as a dog crawls through a fence, inserted her head and forefeet, scrambled through and fled away, bleeding in a dozen places.

As Gus was coming back, just about to close the gate to the County Road, the sorrel whipped through it, sailed across the road and ditch with her inimitable floating leap, and went up the side of the Saddle Back like a jack rabbit.

From way up the mountain, Gus heard excited whinnies, as she joined the band he had just driven up, and the last he saw of them they were strung out along the crest running like deer.

"Yee whiz!" said Gus, and stood motionless and staring until the ponies had disappeared over the ridge.

Then he closed the gate, remounted Shorty, and rode back to the corrals.

Walking down from the corrals, Rob McLaughlin gave Kenie one more chance to change his mind. "Better pick a horse that you have some hope of riding one day. I'd have got rid of this whole line of stock if they weren't so damned fast that I've had the fool idea that someday there might turn out one gentle one in the lot, and I'd have a race horse. But there's never been one so far, and it's not going to be Flicka."

"It's not going to be Flicka," chanted Howard.

"Maybe she might be gentled," said Ken; and although his lips trembled, there was fanatical determination in his eye.

"Ken," said McLaughlin, "it's up to you. If you say you want her, we'll get that line to die rather than give in. They're beautiful and they're fast, but let me tell you this, young man, they're loco!"

Ken flinched under his father's direct glance.

"If I go after her again, I'll not give up whatever comes, understand what I mean by that?"

"Yes."

"What do you say?"

"I want her."

"That's settled then," and suddenly Rob seemed calm and indifferent. "We'll bring her in again tomorrow or next day—I've got other work for this afternoon."

(TO BE CONTINUED)



**FIRST-AID to the AILING HOUSE**  
by Roger B. Whitman  
Roger B. Whitman—WNU Features.

You may not be able to replace worn or broken household equipment. This is war. Government priorities come first. So take care of what you have... as well as you possibly can. This column by the home-owner's friend tells you how.

### CLEANING RUGS

Soiled carpets, rugs and upholstery can be cleaned by shampooing with soap jelly. Ordinary soiling will come out easily, but obstinate and unusual stains should have professional care. Also, shampooing can be used only on fast colors. Put four cups of pure, mild soap chips or flakes in a bowl or wide-mouthed jar, and add one cup of water. Soap jelly will form within an hour. Put a portion in a mixing bowl and beat with an egg beater until you raise very stiff suds.

Using a soft brush, work the jelly on the fabric in a space about 12 inches or so across. After time for loosening the dirt, wipe with a clean, damp cloth. Then, using a stiffer brush, brush the nap in the right direction. Continue in this way on the next space to be cleaned. The suds are so dry that upholstery fabric will not be soaked as would be the case with soapsuds as usually used.

After cleaning, the fabric should be dried quickly. A rug should be supported on boxes and old chairs, so that air can get at the back, as well as the front.

### Dry Wells

Question: In putting in dry wells for gutters and downspouts, how far should they be from the house? How big should they be? How much below the cellar floor level?

Answer: They should be at least 15 feet away from the house, so that water soaking into the ground from them will not work back into the cellar. If the ground is loose and sandy, the dry well should measure inside three feet in diameter and four or more deep; exact size will depend on the roof areas that are drained. In firmly packed soil, the holes must be bigger. If the water cannot return from the dry well to the cellar, depth relating to the cellar floor would make no difference.

### Storing Books

Question: I wish to pack and store part of my library. Should the books be wrapped individually? How can I protect them from insects?

Answer: Store them in wood boxes lined with waterproof paper. Individual wrapping is not necessary. Include in each box a double handful of moth crystals (paradi). Keep the boxes in a dry place and away from dampness. Avoid storage in a basement, however dry it may appear.

### Mohair Furniture

Question: Can furniture upholstered with mohair be safely stored?

Answer: Yes, furniture can be satisfactorily stored in a reliable storage warehouse. Make inquiries of the names of the best established firms in the business in your city. Furniture covered with mohair or other wool type fabrics should be mothproofed. Some warehousemen have such a service, or they can advise you of firms who do this type of work.

### Unheated House

Question: We own an unheated house near the seashore which is difficult to rent. We would like to put in some kind of an inexpensive heating plant. What do you suggest?

Answer: A coal-fired, hot air heating system will be the least expensive to install. If the house is a small one, bungalow-type, a pipeless hot air furnace may be satisfactory. Your local heating contractor can give you information and costs of installation.

### Loose Chair Legs

Question: The glue that holds together the sides of the legs of a mahogany chair has loosened. How can this chair be tightened?

Answer: Take out the loose chair legs and run, clean off all glue, then spread a generous amount of casein glue on the parts to be glued. Bind all parts until the glue has dried. Another method is to use metal slips for tightening loose chair legs. At hardware and dime stores.

### Steel Windows

Question: Where can we get steel windows and screens for steel casements?

Answer: Your best chance is to get them from the manufacturers of the windows. You will probably find the name and address somewhere on them, or can get this from the builder of the house.

### Salt-Spotted Silver

Question: How can I clean black salt spots from my silver salt shakers?

Answer: This is almost impossible to do at home. Take them to a silversmith.

## Farm Topics

### Miracle on Farm Front To Meet Food Goal

#### Conservation Farming Proving to Be Godsend

Total war requires total production. This is as true of essential crops as it is of armaments, and the miraculous achievements of factories are being matched by miraculous production on the farms of America to meet greater food goals. The big objective of World War I was, as today, to win the war, and all efforts were toward increased food production on American farms. However, the methods being used today differ from the methods used then, because farmers have learned a bitter lesson. They helped win the last war, but many lost their farms and their livelihood in the aftermath.

From earliest days there has been a mistaken idea that increased production meant a natural increase in soil ruined. There were a few progressive farmers who raised their voices early for action against soil erosion but their attempts were futile. As long as there appeared to be an inexhaustible supply of new land just beyond the western horizon, men preferred to leave the ruined land behind them, and to exploit new frontiers.

World War I created a sudden and abnormal demand for more food, with the emphasis on wheat. Agriculture's answer was increased food production through increased acreage. Wheat alone jumped from 47 to 74 million acres during and immediately following the war era. The increased acreage resulted from a big "plow-up" of land which in

#### Keep Machinery Going



Shirley Perry hammers out the prongs of a manure spreader while Gail Daily tightens the bolt on a wheel. These girls are taking a farm course so they can do their bit on the food line while many a farm hand is doing his bit at the front.

turn brought about the big "blow-up" from the dust bowl about 10 years ago.

When the black fog of dust winged its way across the sky and darkened eastern cities as far as the Atlantic seaboard, America realized that something drastically wrong had happened to its agriculture. Then the time was ripe, although late in the battle against soil erosion, for conservation farming to get its start. Adapting and improving the techniques of the early soil erosion pioneers, the work of the Soil Conservation service and the AAA has proved a Godsend to the United Nations in the present crisis. Because land is the farmer's chief business asset and because land is indispensable to the national welfare, the national farm program includes conservation as one of its objectives.

#### Curculio Threatens 1943 Peach Crop

Peaches are in grave danger of being destroyed by the curculio, if prompt and decisive control measures are not taken, says Dr. Clyde F. Smith, associate entomologist of the state experiment station at North Carolina State college.

He reports that about ten times as many beetles are being found this year as compared with 1942 and that growers will have more worry peaches at harvest time unless they use every possible means of controlling the curculio.

Dr. Smith makes four suggestions for controlling the beetles and he says that all four methods should be used. First, collect and destroy as many adult curculios as possible by jarring the trees. Second, follow a proper spray program. Third, pick up and destroy all drops. Fourth, cultivate under the spread of the trees, as soon as wormy peaches cease to drop.

#### Farm Notes

When young pigs are old enough they should be pastured on clean ground—pastures which have been freed of worms and disease organisms by plowing.

Most farms have more than one type of soil which, with a rearrangement of field boundaries, could grow hay or pasture crops more efficiently than they do at present.

## For you to make



7504

RIGHT from your scrap-bag steps this footwear! Both sandals and scuffs are entirely of rags, soles and all, and make gay, inexpensive play shoes or bedroom slippers. Use up scraps in varied colors.

## HOUSEHOLD HINTS

Carpet sweepers need constant care and watching if they are to work best. Empty them frequently, keep the brushes very clean and cut off any hairs or threads that cling to them. Oil them as the maker directs. When not in use, hang up the sweeper to save wear on the brushes.

Corn meal used in puddings, or mush, should be thoroughly mixed in a little cold water before hot water is added. It then will