

Q & A for *Horses In Living Color*

How did you develop the concept for *Horses In Living Color*? What was your motivation?

Clarence Stewart was behind my original motivation to photograph colorful horses. He was the first white male Thoroughbred registered by The Jockey Club, and when he galloped at Saratoga one morning in 1979 I was absolutely smitten. Patchen Wilkes Farm also was very helpful in nurturing my love for these magical animals by allowing me the honor of photographing their white Thoroughbreds.

As some Thoroughbred breeders have begun experimenting with 'colorful' pedigrees, other unusual Thoroughbreds have followed. Photographing any horse is an honor and for almost forty years I've been photographing bay, chestnut and grey Thoroughbreds. But to add brilliant colors or unusual markings...how wonderful!

The Blood-Horse ran a pictorial of my colorful Thoroughbred photographs, and Jacqueline Duke, the Editor of Eclipse Press, suggested I broaden my scope and photograph other breeds to expose my work to a new audience.

I loved the challenge and soon found myself photographing a magnificent black Friesian, an incredibly spotted Knabstrupper, an unbelievable bay Arabian stallion – horses very different, visually, from Thoroughbreds!

Do you have a new favorite breed after working on *Horses In Living Color*?

I don't necessarily have a new favorite breed, although I now have a much more rounded appreciation for all breeds. Each has some unique aspect that's fun to explore and bring out through photos – from the 6-hand Mini to a 19-hand Shire.

I'd have to say that brindle horses stand out, as I'd never seen such a thing. I was fortunate enough to photograph not one but three brindles.

How did you locate the many different horses in this book? How many different states did you visit?

I've long studied colorful Thoroughbreds, so they were easy to track down. For other breeds and colorations, the Internet proved an invaluable resource. One Web site's members in particular, and notably a photographer named Audrey Crosby, were wonderfully helpful (www.equine-color.info). I'd post on the site asking if anyone knew of an Appaloosa with a blanket that I could photograph on my next Mid-Atlantic trip, for instance, and forumites would inevitably offer suggestions.

I visited perhaps twenty states while working on the book, all the while wishing I could get to all fifty. In some cases, I picked areas due to the rarity of one particular horse – such as a brindle, a zorse (horse/zebra cross), or a Curly (American Curly horses feature curly coats, manes, and

tails). In other cases, I picked locations where several interesting horses lived within driving distance – such as Ocala, Florida, with its wealth of horse farms.

Which shot was the most difficult to get?

That's a tough question, and two images come to mind. One shows ten Misty descendants posed together, held by members of the Chincoteague Pony Drill Team. Trust me, getting ten ponies to stand still – including a foal – was an impossible task! But the team members were really game and helpful.

I felt most vulnerable while photographing a zonkey – an offspring of a zebra and a donkey (and yes, it looked just like one might imagine!). Nancy Nunke of Spot 'N Stripes Ranch, known as the "zebra whisperer," is comfortable in confined spaces with her animals. Yet the zonkey was not exactly people-friendly and none too happy to be in that confined space with this clicking woman. My heart rate was sure elevated while trying to get photos!

What was the most fascinating thing you learned in the making of this book?

It was fascinating to learn that horses exist in so many colors and patterns, from white to black, with so many variations in between. I photographed a mostly-white Quarter Horse who had a wide black blaze down her face, for instance – she looked like a child's fantasy! Such a rare combination is called a "badger face." And I hadn't known that some palominos actually sport dark manes and/or tails.

Even more amazing, perhaps, was learning that – genetically – a black horse can visually appear white, or that a bay horse can be visually chestnut. As equine color genetics is such a quickly evolving field of study – and much is not yet understood. I steered clear of scientific analysis (there are several books about equine color genetics currently available).

What was the biggest challenge in putting this book together?

It was initially difficult for me to keep the book visually interesting, without then delving into genetics. Once I came to terms with the fact that I'm a photographer, rather than a scientist, that issue resolved itself – although I know there are a few equine color genetics students who won't be completely satisfied. If a person views the photos of horses with "lacing," or if they find "zorses" interesting, related information is readily available online.

Another issue was keeping the book from becoming a "breeds book." There are many breeds' books out there, and not all breeds lend themselves to colorful photography.

Also, I didn't want the book to be too heavily filled with "What's that?" photos, so I included some 'standard' chestnuts and bays and such. Yet no one who ever saw the all-time winningest Arabian stallion, the bay Good Thunder, could ever call a bay coat 'standard' when gazing at that magnificent creature!

Did you use different/new techniques to capture some of these unique colors?

I didn't use any new techniques, although I saw these horses in a whole new light. The farms I visited were often very different, visually, from Thoroughbred farms – and many of the horses were so tractable that they could be taken into different surroundings (trying that with Thoroughbreds is not always a good idea!). One member of the Equine Color Web site posted a photo of a field of gorgeous yellow/white flowers (well, weeds) at her farm, for instance. I asked when those flowers were in bloom and planned an Oregon trip around that time of year. She left the weeds in place for me and, voila!, we got beautiful photos of her palomino filly leaping through the flowers. Such opportunities aren't generally possible at Thoroughbred farms.

The stunning Colonial Spanish stallion Cayuse Gold forced me both high and low: He had such a strong dorsal stripe that I found myself climbing a ladder for a better vantage point, and his leg barring got me down low to best capture those stripes. Such positions rarely serve a purpose with Thoroughbred photography.

What did you hope to accomplish with this book?

I hoped to create a book of interesting imagery that would fuel imaginations – from the imagination of a young girl to that of a jaded horse breeder. A tall order! But it was great fun to put it all together.