

Guest blog:  
Review of *Riding By Faith from Mexico to Canada Across America*  
by Tracey Elliot-Reep  
for A Traveler's Library

*Wynne Brown*

Horses, travel, photography, adventure—what's not to like about a book that combines all four? Especially when it's beautifully designed and even illustrated by the author.

As indicated in the title, there's one more element: Tracey Elliot-Reep lives by her faith. When given an ultimatum by her fiancé to choose between God and him, she bid the man farewell. Since then, she's supported herself through her greeting card company, photojournalism—and by riding horses.

And not just any kind of riding—but loooooong distance riding. As in: through England from Scotland to Land's End, across Ireland, and through 2,000 miles of New Zealand's North and South Islands.

In 2007 with the help of Smoky and Pistol, two not-very-experienced quarter horses, and the kindness of many strangers, she spent six months riding 3,000 miles from the Rio Grande in Texas to the Canadian border. *Riding By Faith from Mexico to Canada Across America* is the story of that journey—and of North America and its history, wildlife, and Western culture, seen through the mind and camera of a young-at-heart English woman on horseback.

What stands out most is Elliot-Reep's unflagging confidence that God will provide for her. Indeed, when things look their bleakest, when there's no water for the horses in New Mexico, when the wire gates won't budge in Colorado, when a boulder field threatens to defeat her intention to cross the Snowy Range in Wyoming, when one of the horses spooks and bolts in Montana, scattering her belongings ("We call that a garage sale over here," remarks one person)—amazingly, along comes someone with an offer to go get water, trailer the horses, guide her to a safe campsite, or deliver hay and grain to her next stop. Along the way also come new friends, hot showers, meals, and places to keep her horses.

Her greatest pressures were not fear of creepy-crawlies, grizzlies, or people who meant her harm. One was finding and carrying enough food for the horses. Her routine was to tether them for two or three hours in the morning before packing up, then toward noon "I would stop wherever I could find good grass to graze, and then again in the early evening for two or three hours until dark. Getting enough food for my horses was one of my top priorities, and the availability of grass decided my route to a large extent."

A second source of pressure was time. At great expense, she'd arranged to meet a film crew several times—a meeting she couldn't afford to miss. In fact, a year later she returned to the U.S., borrowed Smoky and Pistol from their retirement home, and arranged to re-ride some areas she missed the first time through.

In addition to crossing rivers, traversing snowy mountain passes, searching for a way around busy highways, she wrote every day and carried a laptop to store the thousands of digital photographs she took. The images are lovely and are worth the price of the book, even without the informative and engaging text.

What motivates Tracey Elliott-Reep? Her childhood dream of riding: She was quoted in the *Southwest Horse Trader* in August 2009 as saying, "I hope this book will encourage people to live their dreams and that it will stir them up. Decades ago I dreamed about the Wild West while I played cowboys and Indians on Dartmoor and now I have lived that dream. Anyone can do it."

Well, perhaps not quite anyone. But it sure is fun to read about it!

*Wynne Brown is an endurance rider whose equestrian career includes more than 15,000 miles on three horses over the past several decades. Endurance riding is an international sport in which competitors ride 50 miles in 12 hours or 100 miles in 24 hours.*