

PETTERSEN: Welcome to WLRN, Falcon River. Can you tell our listeners a little bit about yourself and the land that you live on?

FALCON: Sure. Well first, my name is Falcon, yeah, Falcon River, and I want to thank you, Thistle, for inviting me to share some time with you. I am - currently I live south of Lansing, Michigan out in the country on a little 10 acre piece of heaven with my wife, Ruth Barrett, and our menagerie; We have 2 horses, 3 dogs, 40 or 50 chickens - I can never exactly count - and 2 guineas, and of course, all the other wild creatures that share this place with us. So, yeah, we've been we've been livin' here for three years... But I have to say I've always- I grew up in the country and in my life I've always chosen to live out in the country...

PETTERSEN: And you've always had a relationship with animals your whole life. Before we turned on the recorder you were telling me about your dog, Fluffy. Maybe we can start there.

FALCON: *:laughs:* Sure. Fuffy was my first love. She was the family dog. And I must say that I didn't have the best kind of parents, as many of us, and I didn't have the most...easy life growing up, especially growing up in West Virginia and...in the mountains in the 50s and 60s...So, anyway, Fuffy was this collie, and he was devoted to me, wherever I went she would follow. And she was really my first understanding of what loving affection could be. She was always next to me. I think the thing that was most touching for me is that my mother was not a very affectionate person and my father less so and, if I were injured or something it was - I was on my own. But Fluffy would attend to my wounds with such methodical attention and, I know some folks who probably are - would be a bit uncomfortable with this but, she would clean my wounds. And I mean, if I had a cut or a scratch she would literally hold me down with a giant paw and make sure that that wound was absolutely clean. And she did it in such a way that was so...I was like her puppy.

PETTERSEN: Yeah.

FALCON: She was the mama dog and I was her puppy. And I just really learned so much from her about... I mean, I watched her over and over again - if someone came into our yard, Fluffy would look at them, pause and look at them, and in just a second or two she'd size them up. If she gave a bit of wag of her tail, they were okay, but if that low gurgle sound started in her throat, then...no. *:laughs:*

PETTERSEN: Mhm.

FALCON: And she would not let anyone come close to me that she didn't deem appropriate.

PETTERSEN: Huh. She was protective of you.

FALCON: She was, and she was the best judge of character that I ever knew.

PETTERSEN: Uh-huh.

FALCON: Quite frankly, I still rely on my dogs and my horses to size people up because we...If you come up my driveway, and my dog doesn't like you, you need to turn around and go back out. I don't expect people to be - I mean I understand a lot of people are frightened of dogs or don't really relate to them, but I watch how my dogs respond to people, they can spot an aggressor or someone who isn't presenting themselves as truly who they are in a hot minute.

PETTERSEN: Yeah, that's amazing. Can you talk a little bit more about the mutual relationship you had with Fluffy? I mean, she treated you like a puppy and was very protective of you, but yet I've heard in relationships with dogs - I've never had a relationship with a dog - that you kind of have to assert your dominance. Did that happen with Fluffy?

FALCON: I don't - We may generate more than a few comments here but, I make the big difference between domination and leadership - with my dog and with my horses, and in fact with my flock of chickens. And domination - you cannot, except for maybe a super small dog, you can't dominate a dog. They have teeth. And they are much faster, and sometimes, stronger. And why would I - I don't want...I fought patriarchy my whole damn life. I don't want to live in a dominator relationship with anybody.

But I do want to work in partnership with everyone and live in partnership, and sometimes, even in partnerships, it falls upon one or another person to step into leadership. There can be leadership, and still have partnerships. And I've learned that, not through my relationship with human beings, but through my relationships with my animals. So, I endeavored to be as honest and consistent as I can be, and in that way, my animals trust me. So that when I ask something of them, they comply with my request because they trust me. They don't comply with my request because I'm commanding them to do so and I'm their dominator; They comply with what I ask of them because they have had an experience of me and know that if I ask them to do something it's for all of our best interest.

PETTERSEN: Yeah, and this strikes me as a profound difference between how men have domesticated animals and really imposed that dominant - you know dominator culture on their relationship with animals in general, generally speaking, and how women have a different kind of relationship with animals. Can you talk about how the relationship between women and horses got started and co-evolved?

FALCON: Well...Gosh...First of all I will have to say that I'm not a scholar, nor, you know... I'm not an archaeologist but I have studied that relationship between women and horses and, more interesting - that I've been interested in studying because in other aspects of my life I'm also a Wiccan priestess, and I've been very interested in the magical representations between women and horses, and the goddesses of different cultures and horses, and horses in

society through thousands of years, and it is my personal belief - I have nothing in fact, nothing that I can specifically point you towards and say here is the proof - but it is my personal belief that women are responsible for the domestication of horses. It just makes sense, and yes, horses in ancient times were also hunted for food; However, I think it's women because they would have been responsible for creating the shelters. There is some - I'm also an archer and I teach archery and there is some possible indication that women invented the bow because women would have hunted small game. [unintelligible] And men would have used larger and heavier weapons like spears.

But getting back to the horses, because women create shelters and women create family groups, and animals like horses and wolves, for example - I'm pretty sure that it was probably a woman who threw a scrap of meat to a wolf pup, y'know. I know that's a great simplification but you understand what I'm trying to say here - women have always had, not a dominating relationship with horses, so much as a...

PETTERSEN: ...a partnership?

FALCON: Yeah, a mutually beneficial relationship. There are entire cultures in other parts of our world that sustain themselves on mares milk and mares blood - ancient cultures - and if people are interested I would invite you to look at the horse culture of current and ancient Mongolia, for example, where those folks live and travel with their herds of horses, and horses sustain them in ways that we can't even begin to imagine. So, that family relationship that women create, and the herding relationship that the female horses create. By the way, there is this stereotype out there that, in a wild horse herd it's the stallion that is the leader; That's a bunch of crap. The stallions follow along behind the herd, but it is the lead mare and either her daughter or her sister that decide where the herd goes.

PETTERSEN: Mmm...hm!

FALCON: And in the archaeological records I would draw your attention to - I'm fairly certain that folks will have seen and heard of the painting, the wonderful paintings of animals in the caves in Lascaux, France. And if you aren't aware of what I'm talking about, look it up. There are wonderful paintings deep, deep in the ground that were most probably - it has been established recently - were most probably done by women, because the artists left their handprints on the wall, and they're quite small. Quite small. And one of the most famous of these paintings is an image of two horses standing side by side, one looking one direction and one looking the opposite. If you watch any wild horse there today you will see the lead mares do the same thing. The reason they do that is that they're working in partnership so that one can keep watch while the other eats. And that way they can [unintelligible] for themselves and the herd.

PETTERSEN: Mhm. Wow. How old is that painting?

FALCON: *:chuckles:* I have no i- I mean, millennia, maybe, maybe 30 40,000 years old,

PETTERSEN: Mhm...And currently today, you have a relationship with two horses on the land where you live. So, in the patriarchal dominant culture, there's this idea that you have to break a horses spirit, right? ...which is a horrible - I think the horrible approach to having a relationship with a horse. Can you talk about how you interact with your horses on your land and the spirit of the horses that you're living with?

FALCON: Yeah. So, first of all, both of my horses are rescues. The elder horse is 19. Her name is Eowin -E O W I N - and Eowin is a purebred Tennessee Walker, and also a purebred, what's called 'Champagne'; Tennessee Walking Horse is a breed, and the Champagne Horse is what's called a color registry in the horse world. Both of those creatures are created by intensive inbreeding. And so when there's intensive inbreeding there are of course attendant health issues in the resulting bulls that are born. Eowin - I rescued her from Walking Horse breeder who, because Eowin didn't perform up to

her expectations she put her out for sale to the meat industry, and I got there before the meet buyer did, with cash. So Eowin is Golden Palomino and beautiful. And she still lives - even though I've had her for 10 years, she still lives with the residual trauma of the way that Walking Horses are treated.

The other horse that I have is a young Mustang. Her mother was caught wild out in Nevada and gave birth to this baby in one of the BLM basically kill pens. However, the mother and baby were rescued along with several other hundred other Mustangs and take them to a sanctuary.

PETTERSEN: So we had some technical difficulties, Falcon you were talking about the Mustang, that you rescued, where she was born, who her mother was - can you keep talking about that?

FALCON: Sure, so, our little Mustang, Maddie, is approximately three years old, and she came in with her mother to a local rescue organization here in Southern Michigan, and when she arrived she was near death. She was emaciated and sick with a disease that's carried by Opossums, of all things, because she had been eating dirt and pick up some Opossum feces - anyway that disease is often fatal, so it's taken us the last two years to bring Maddie back to full health and function. So, anyway, she's completely healthy and entirely full of herself. *:chuckles:*

And, what I wanted to say is - so I have these two horses here, and each one of them have gone through traumatic experiences - one who is 19 and the other who is three - and what I want to say about that is, with each one of these animals, I have had to learn to develop different leadership strategies, so that they trust me and accept my leadership - not my dominance, not my dominance - but I do make sure that I behave in a way that is consistent and that I behave in a way that is worthy of their trust, and once an animal gives you their trust, then that's everything. It's the greatest gift, and it's a huge responsibility, which I don't feel that humans take seriously at all, but I've learned more about living in partnership, and I've learned more about

developing true leadership skills in living with my creatures than I ever learned from any other human being. So...

PETTERSEN: You're like Artemis.

FALCON: *:laughs:* Artemis claimed me when I was a child, and she has been my guide ever since. I didn't always know it, but I know it now.

PETTERSEN: Wonderful. Is there anything else you'd like to say to our WLRN listeners, Falcon?

FALCON: Yes. Don't give up. We're going to get through this. And we're going to create a better world from it.

PETTERSEN: Right on. Don't give up on the feminist movement, which was another conversation we were having a little bit before we turned on the recorder. *:laughs:*

FALCON: *:laughs:* Oh my god. I've been a feminist since 1975. Oh, Lordy, we could have many conversations.

PETTERSEN: Yeah.

FALCON: Yeah.

PETTERSEN: And maybe it behooves us feminists to turn to the animal world and the animals in our life and learn from them as you have in how to better relate to one another.

FALCON: Well I will be honest and tell you that everything I learned from animals informed my own particular views on feminism, and how it could be and how it ought to be. Absolutely. Animals for my first companions, my first and my greatest teachers. Always have been.

PETTERSEN: Yeah. Fluffy

FALCON: Fluffy. Yep.

PETTERSEN: Wonderful. Okay, Falcon, well thank you so much. Have a great day.

FALCON: Thank you. Thank you everyone. Keep on keeping on.

PETTERSEN: Right on.

FALCON: *:laughs:*