



The Wild Stallions (Sundance Western Book 7)

John Benteen

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THE WILD STALLIONS

The Appaloosa horses bred by Chief Joseph's Nez Perce Indians were the finest anywhere. That's why the Army wanted to get its hands on the herd—so it could breed up top-quality remounts and ride the Indians down even easier. To do it, they hired a sadistic horse-trader named Luke Drury.

There was just one problem. Jim Sundance had no intention of letting Drury or the Army get their hands on the Appaloosas. Instead he planned to sell them to an English aristocrat and have them taken out of the country.

But Drury played rough ... up to and including cold-blooded murder. So now it became a race against time. Hunted every step of the way, Sundance, and the beautiful Lady Bucknell, had to get the horses to the relative safety of Mormon country, and then get them shipped out to England. But they were going to fight on their hands ... one that could only end in wholesale slaughter ...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Benjamin Leopold Haas was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1926. His imagination was inspired by the stories of the Civil War and Reconstruction as told by his Grandmother, who had lived through both. Ben's father was also a pioneer operator of motion picture theatres, "... so I had free access to every theatre in Charlotte and saw countless films growing up, hooked on the lore of our own South and the Old West."

Largely self educated (he had to drop out of college in order to support his family), Ben wrote his first story, a pulp short for a western magazine, when he was just eighteen. But when he was drafted into the Army, his dreams of becoming a writer were put on hold. He served as a Sergeant in the U.S. Army from 1945 to 1946, and saw action in the Philippines.

Returning home to Charlotte (and later Sumter, in South Carolina) in 1946, Ben married Douglas Thornton Taylor from Raleigh four years later. The father of three sons (Joel, Michael and John), Ben was working for a steel company when he sold his first novel in 1961. The acceptance coincided with being laid off, and thereafter he wrote full time.

A prolific writer who would eventually pen some 130 books under his own and a variety of pen-names, Ben wrote almost twenty-four hours a day. "I tried to write 5000 words or more every day, scrupulous in maintaining authenticity," he later said.

Ben wanted to be a mainstream writer, but needed a way to finance himself between serious books, and so he became a paperback writer. Ben's early pen names include Ben Elliott (his grandmother's maiden name), who wrote Westerns for Ace; and Sam Webster, who wrote five books for Monarch. As Ken Barry he turned out racy paperback originals for Beacon with titles like *The Love Itch* and *Executive Boudoir*. But his agent was not happy about his decision to enter the western market, and suggested he represent himself on those sales. Ben had sent a trial novel to Harry Shorten of Tower Books. Ben's family remembers it being *A Hell*

of *A Way to Die*, written for Tower's new Lassiter series. It was published in 1969, and editor Shorten told his new author to create a western series of his own. The result was *Fargo*.

The success of *Fargo* led to the Sundance series. Jim Sundance is a half-Cheyenne gunslinger who takes on the toughest jobs in order to raise funds to fight the corrupt Indian Ring back in Washington. The short-lived John Cutler series followed, and then perhaps Ben's crowning achievement, the *Rancho Bravo* novels, published under the name Thorne Douglas.

Ben Haas died from a heart attack in New York City after attending a Literary Guild dinner in 1977. He was just fifty-one.

Fan favourite James Reasoner has hailed Ben as "one of the best action writers of all time". In *TWENTIETH CENTURY WESTERN WRITERS*, David Whitehead wrote that Ben Haas "ran

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