

POSTSCRIPT TO THE 1952 EDITION OF *TSCHIFFELY'S RIDE*
by Aimé Tschiffely
published by Hodder and Stoughton in London

An eventful quarter of a century has passed since I unsaddled Mancha and Gato for the last time. In most of the countries through which they carried me and my pack, many things have changed. When we started out from Buenos Aires, only two cobbled roads connected the capital with nearby towns. To-day a number of modern highways cut through the pampas, and in some of the other South and Central-American Republics roads have been built also. Taking such and other improvements into consideration, I wish to make it quite clear that the foregoing pages were written shortly after the conclusion of our journey.

Knowing only too well how 'touchy' some of my South-American friends are if anyone says – or especially writes – anything about their countries which is not flattering, I sincerely hope that nothing I have written in this book has hurt the feelings of any reader. Time, conditions and even people have changed greatly, and surely will go on changing.

Should the reader wonder what I have done since the completion of our long expedition, here is a brief summary of my activities since then. In life many strange things happen to us, and sometimes they come about quite unintentionally as far as our plans and aims for the future are concerned. Thus, after the publication of this book, I wrote a number of others dealing with various subjects, including some of my subsequent travels through different parts of the world. In my *Bohemia Junction*, as well as in *The Tale of Two Horses* and *Ming and Ping* (the last two are for children) are related a number of adventures and stories lack of space did not allow me to include in this already bulky volume. Every now and again, after having led a sedentary life for months, struggling with manuscripts, when the open spaces call me I set out to see more of this world which, despite its creaky and groaning state, continues to smile at those who smile with it. And so I carry on, not as a rider of horses now, but as a struggling author who tries to keep his balance – mental and physical – on an office chair, whilst leaning over blank sheets of accusing paper.

After their return to the pampas, Mancha and Gato enjoyed life on the beautiful "Cardal" ranch where they roamed about at will. During the warm months, the two inseparable companions spent their time out on the grassy plain, but in winter, towards evening they trotted up to a gate there to wait until it was opened for them, when they heeded for a roomy loose-box where oats, bran and alfalfa hay were in readiness for them. Early in the morning, if by any chance there was some delay in letting them out, they neighed, stamped and generally protested in order to attract the attention of the man who was in charge of them.

Some years ago when I made a trip to the Argentine, upon arriving there I hurried out to the ranch to say "how d'you do" to the horses. After they had been driven into the corral, followed by a number of gaucho friends I approached the place where, in former years, I had had some exciting fun, and, incidentally, more than one rough tumble.

Within the circle of stout posts I was overjoyed to see my old pals. Although still some fifty yards away, I shouted, "Mancha! Gato!" Immediately both turned round and stared at me, their heads held high, ears pricked and nostrils dilated. I slowly approached the corral, and entered through the gate, the men watching with intense interest. I spoke to the animals, and they slowly came towards me. When I touched Mancha's broad forehead, both sniffed me all over. To find out if they still remembered one or two simple tricks I had taught them, I stood in front of one and snapped a finger. Immediately a fore-leg was lifted, and I was allowed to inspect the hoof, and when I repeated the noise, this time snapping my finger under the horse, he at once lifted a hind leg. These tricks the animals had learnt in the wilds, ten years before, when I tried to make quite sure that no stone or other hard object was lodged in a hoof to lame them.

There could be no doubt they remembered me, but to make quite sure, I returned to the corral later. On this occasion I did not show myself until one of the men had called the animals several times. They made no response, but when I shouted their names, both at once looked up and came towards me. I made several other simple tests, which left me in no doubt that both remembered me clearly.

On a cold wet morning in January 1936 I went to see my friend, Cunninghame Graham (who wrote the preface to this book) depart from London in order to re-visit the Argentine after many years. Although 84 years of age at the time, he was determined to go and make the personal acquaintance of Mancha and Gato, so before he boarded the train at Paddington Station, I handed

him a tiny bag of oats, to be given to my horses. This little bag he put into a hand bag as if it were a priceless gem. When the train steamed out of the station, somehow I sensed that this would be the last time I would see my wonderful friend's flowing shock of silvery-white hair, and that I would never again shake his strong hand; the hand which was equally dexterous with the reins, the lasso and the pen. Unfortunately, shortly after having arrived in Buenos Aires, he contracted pneumonia, and when a specialist stated that the case was a serious one and that a journey out to the pampas was quite out of the question, Mancha and Gato were transported to the city, so that he could see them from the window of his hotel. The little bag of oats I had given him in London was not forgotten, for on Cunninghame Graham's request, a lady took it to the horses, and shortly after my friend died. When his body was taken to the port to be shipped for interment in Scotland, as the huge procession slowly wended its way through the streets of Buenos Aires, Mancha and Gato, led by two gauchos, followed immediately behind the hearse. And so, like prairie riders of old when they set out on a long journey, my friend was followed by two spare horses.

On 17th of February, 1944, I received a telegram informing me that Gato had died that day. The telegram was followed by a letter written by my friend, Dr. Solanet, on whose ranch the horses had been every since their return from New York. Among other things I read, ". . . Gato died at 4 p.m. without suffering. As usual, together with Mancha, he was standing at the gate, waiting for his feed of oats. When the man who looks after them approached the gate, he was puzzled to find Mancha gone, and Gato lying down, apparently asleep. Upon investigating, he discovered that dear old Gato had died, evidently from heart failure, and that he had set out on his voyage to Trapalanda where Don Roberto waits for him . . ." (Dr. Solanet refers to Mr. R. B. Cunninghame Graham, and who in his preface refers to "Trapalanda," the gauchos' heaven for horses.)

In a subsequent letter, Dr. Solanet says, ". . . I feel sorry for Mancha who will have nothing to do with any other horse. I am sure that horses sense what it means when a companion dies. They know that he can't be found anywhere. Mancha never calls Gato. He is not restive, and does not fuss as formerly he did when temporarily separated from his friend. Now intelligent Mancha is sad and lonely. He keeps on his own although I have put twenty other horses into his favourite field. It is useless; already a week has passed since Gato die, but he takes no notice of any of them, and roams about alone, far away from the others. Now I shall bring him to the stables where I am keeping a show mare for which he always had a soft spot in his heart."

Although this was done, the mare had no further attraction for Mancha, but eventually he made friends with an old draught horse, in whose company he could always be seen, far away from the mass of other horses who grazed on the pampa.

I was in London when, early in the afternoon on Boxing Day 1947, my telephone bell rang. Upon answering it, I was glad to hear the voice of my friend, Mr. Ralph Deakin, the Imperial and Foreign Editor of *The Times*. After having expressed the hope that I had spent a happy Christmas, he informed me that he had just received a cable from Buenos Aires, and proceeded to give me the sad information that Mancha had died on Christmas Day. Mr. Deakin explained that as the news would appear in the next issue of *The Times*, he thought it would be better to forewarn me about what I would read. I shall never forget this act of consideration. As it happened, a cable sent to me from the pampas by Dr. Solanet, arrived only on the following day.

Here I must make a correction of two statements which appeared in all the preceding editions of this book.

In 1925, when my two horses and I set out from Buenos Aires, Mancha was eighteen years of age, and Gato sixteen; not sixteen and fourteen, as I set down their respective ages. Argentine Criollo horses are noted for longevity, especially in cases where animals are broken in when they are of mature age, say after having reached six or more years. Between ten and twenty, Criollos are at their best, and if – as in the case of Mancha and Gato – they have endured many hard Patagonian winters, they are bound to be tough, for ruthless Nature eliminates all but the hardiest, as is explained in the introduction to this book.

The many people from different parts of the world who went to the "Cardal" ranch to see the two horses, will agree with me that neither of them showed the slightest trace or sign of having been affected in any way by the difficult journey. The very fact that Gato reached the age of thirty-five, and Mancha that of forty, substantiates this statement. Thanks to my two horses' demonstration of resistance and hardiness, the Criollo breed – which a quarter of a century ago threatened to disappear – flourishes once more, not only in the Argentine, Uruguay and Chile, but throughout South America, where breeders take a great interest in the type of animal of which my two companions were such typical specimens.

On the “Cardal” ranch, among stately cypress trees stands a simple though beautiful stone monument, made by a distinguished Argentine sculptor of animals, and near it the two inseparable companions rest, still side by side.

In my heart there is room for many animals I have loved, but Mancha and Gato will always have a special corner of their own. The Red Gods have given me some great days and many a grand horse, but among them my two companions of the long trail will always rank as the greatest. Farewell, faithful and stout-hearted old friends!

A. F. TSCHIFFELY

Chelsea, London,
March, 1951

With grateful thanks to Benno Affolter, Tschiffely’s biographer, for sending us this Postscript from the rare 1952 edition.

Other books in English by Aimé Tschiffely:

Tschiffely’s Ride – This is the story of the greatest equestrian epic of the twentieth century, a journey that came about because a man and his horses refused to quit - ever! During the course of their travels Tschiffely, Mancha and Gato crossed deadly deserts, passed through jungles, traversed sky-high mountain passes - and rode on. They were assailed by vampire bats, mistaken for gods and navigated the Panama Canal - but rode on. Nothing stopped them. No one since has rivalled their accomplishments.

Bohemia Junction – One reviewer described “Bohemia Junction” as ‘Forty years of adventurous living condensed into one book.’ It is all that and more! Exotic people, faraway places and equestrian adventure make up the background to the explorer’s autobiography. “Bohemia Junction” is packed with the amazing assortment of humanity that Tschiffely met during his lifetime of travel, including cowboys, prize-fighters, writers, Indians, and the eccentric riff-raff of three continents.

Bridle Paths – Through the ancient New Forest, over the lonely mountains of Wales, and across the rugged landscape of Scotland, the renowned author investigated the nooks and crannies of this island kingdom. Mounted on his gentle Cob mare, Violet, Tschiffely details the last roving adventure of its kind. “Bridle Paths” is a final poetic look at a now-vanished Britain, as it was before the advent of suburbia changed it forever.

This Way Southward – With the Second World War raging across Europe, the most famous equestrian explorer of the twentieth century decides to make a perilous journey across the U-boat infested Atlantic. His mission? To return to his old haunts in South America and undertake a harrowing 7,000 mile journey by car through Argentina, across the inhospitable regions of Tierra del Fuego and over the majestic Andes mountains.

Round and About Spain – The Second World War had recently concluded, and life in England was still full of hardship and rationing. Is it any wonder then that when a visiting Spanish professor urged Aimé to explore his sunny country, the ever-wandering Tschiffely jumped at the chance? The only problem was that the English government prohibited any of its citizens to depart overseas with more than £50. Such a paltry amount would barely allow Tschiffely to stay alive and it immediately ruled out the idea of him buying and riding horses in search of Spanish adventure. Yet just when things look as bleak as a foggy London morning, a British motorcycle company offered to donate one of their new machines to the stranded traveller. The resulting trip saw Tschiffely joyfully roaming five thousand miles during a four month exploration through the country he labelled “the land of the unexpected.”

The Tale of Two Horses – This book tells the story of the journey from Buenos Aires to Washington DC from the point of view of the horses! With a preface by famed horseman R. B. Cunningham Graham, “The Tale of Two Horses” is amply illustrated with drawings by the author. No equestrian travel collection could be considered complete without this wonderful book!

The Little Princess Turtle Dove – The *Little Princess Turtle Dove* of the title is a delightful child who is the daughter of the Inca, or king, who brought peace and prosperity to the Indians. A mysterious woman grants her the power to talk to, and understand, animals. Unfortunately Turtle Dove’s eldest brother, the Inca’s heir, turned into a nasty old man who bullied his subjects and his sisters. He locks her and her sisters up in prison, from which Turtle Dove is rescued by her pet llama, Keeyla, who has been given wings for the occasion.

Ming and Ping – a fascinating account for older children of the travels and adventures of a certain Mr. Ming and his strange feathered companion, a penguin named Ping. A fictional story, it is packed with factual information about the lives of the South American Indians. To be republished by the LRG Press in summer, 2012.

For more information, please visit www.aimetschiffely.org.