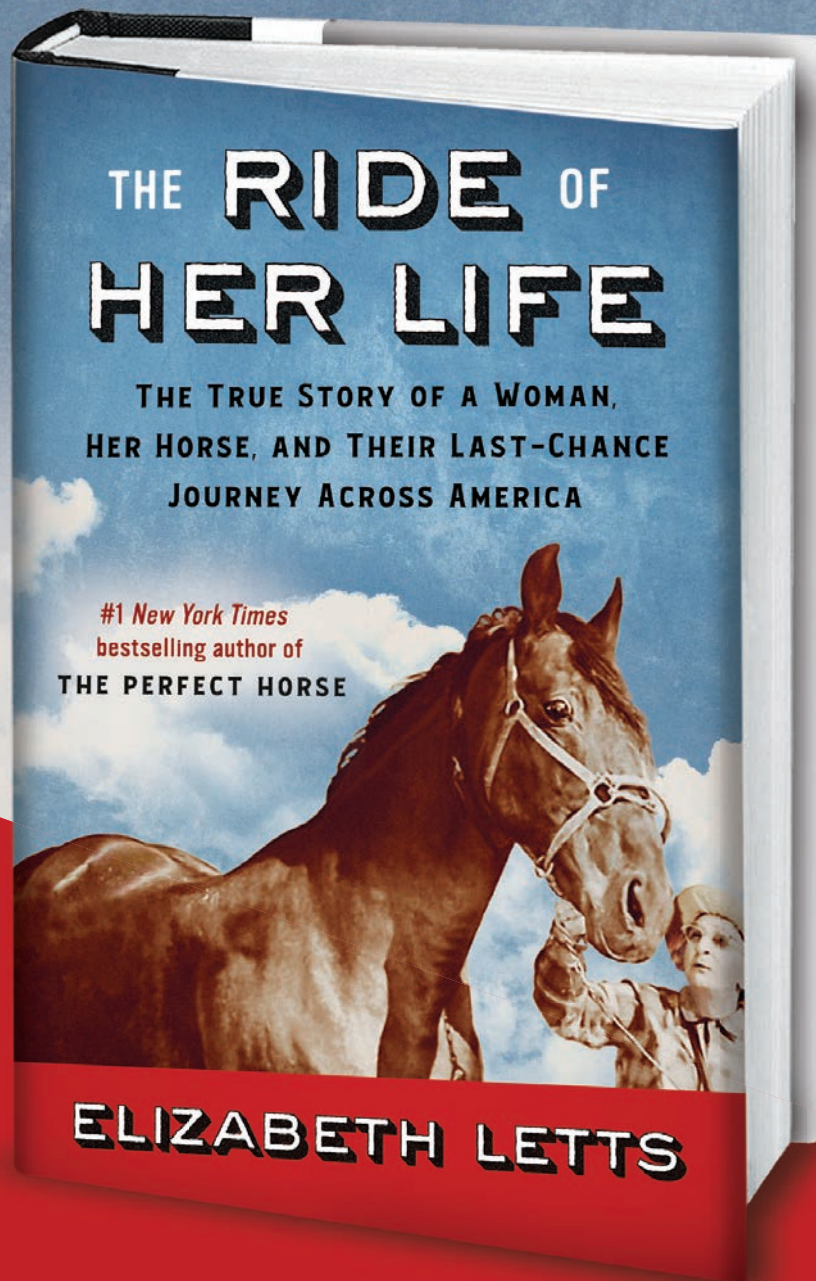


# BOOK CLUB KIT





# AUTHOR'S NOTE



Dear Readers,

I am so excited to introduce you to Annie Wilkins, the indomitable heroine at the heart of *The Ride of Her Life*. Of all the real people I've ever written about, I think she may be the most endearing, and the most unforgettable.

At sixty-three, Annie's down on her luck; she's sick, she's lost her farm, and her doctor has given her two to four years to live. He offers her a spot in the county charity home. That's where a lifetime of working in low-paid jobs has led her. But Annie is not ready to give in to other people's expectations—not by a long shot. She wants to see the Pacific Ocean just once before she dies. So, she gets on her horse and takes off—from Maine, in November. She has no credit card, no GPS, not even a map of the whole country. She plans to figure things out as she goes along.

She fears nothing. Not what folks say about her. Not whether she'll find a place to sleep, or kind people to lend a helping hand. She trusts. Something which it seems we have a harder and harder time learning to do these days.

I challenge you to ride along with Annie, her little dog, and her horse, and to see the world anew, and to think about your own horizons. What have you been holding back on that you might be able to do? What fear are you ready to let go of? What piece of yourself is not so essential?

Be like Annie. Trust and love in abundance. And go, go, go!

Warmly,  
Elizabeth Letts

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The quotes at the start of each chapter were carefully chosen by the author to convey something about the mood or action in the pages to come. Did any of them particularly stand out to you?
2. This book, in part, recognizes the kindness of strangers along Annie's journey. Have you ever experienced a such kindnesses from strangers? Tell us about it/them.
3. Annie has a special bond with all her animals. She instantly bonds with the horses Tarzan and Rex—and Depeche Toi is her loyal shadow. Have there been special animals in your life?
4. Did Annie's story inspire you to travel? If so, where will you go?
5. As an older woman, traveling alone, Annie was not a typical solo traveler of the era, but as a white person she didn't come up against the kinds of hazards that Black Americans faced during her era. How would her journey have been different for a person of color? Is it easier or harder to make a journey like Annie's today, or does it depend on who is making the journey?
6. What was your initial reaction when Annie decided to ride Tarzan from Maine to California? Have you ever tried anything that other people laughed at or said was impossible? Did Annie inspire you to strike something new off your bucket list?
7. How did Annie defy the expectations of women in the 1950s? Or even those of today?
8. What was one of your favorite moments during Annie's journey? Why did it resonate with you?
9. Annie spent months travelling across the country with her animal companions. After our collective time in lockdown, do you have a new appreciation for the company of animals? How do you think you and your animals would do on the road?
10. Before reading the book, had you heard about Annie? Were you surprised this story isn't more well known?
11. Setting plays a big role in the plot—from Annie's farm in Maine to sitting in the saddle on the highway to ending up in a new friend's home. Why do you think setting is so important? Which setting was most appealing to you?
12. Does the author use language in a way that's different or striking? How did she capture the feel of the 1950s and the difficulty of Annie's journey? What style or "voice" does the author use?

# SOME MAPS OF ANNIE'S JOURNEY





# ANNIE'S MEAL AT THE HIGHLAND HOTEL



## MOCK TURTLE SOUP

### Ingredients

¾ cup unsalted butter	½ cup Worcestershire sauce
6 celery stalks, chopped	1½ tsp. chopped fresh thyme
1 cup chopped yellow onion	1 tsp. kosher salt
2 garlic cloves, minced	1 tsp. hot sauce
1½ lb. ground sirloin	½ tsp. ground black pepper
1 cup water	½ cup fresh lemon juice
½ cup all-purpose flour	6 large hard-cooked eggs, peeled and chopped
1 (32-oz.) container beef broth	½ cup sherry wine
2 dried bay leaves	¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
1½ cups tomato puree	Garnish: lemon slices, chopped fresh thyme

### Directions

In a large Dutch oven, melt butter over medium-high heat. Add celery, onion, and garlic, and cook until tender—about 5 minutes. Add sirloin, and cook until meat is browned and vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes.

In a small bowl, whisk together 1 cup water and flour until smooth.

Return to pan, stir in flour mixture, broth, bay leaves, tomato puree, Worcestershire, thyme, salt, hot sauce, and pepper. Bring to a boil, and reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, uncovered, for 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

Add lemon juice and cook for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Discard bay leaves. Stir in eggs, sherry, and parsley. Garnish with lemon slices and thyme, if desired. Serve immediately.

Source: [tasteofthesouthmagazine.com/mock-turtle-soup](http://tasteofthesouthmagazine.com/mock-turtle-soup)

# ANNIE'S MEAL AT THE HIGHLAND HOTEL



## 1950s JELL-O DESSERT

### Ingredients

1 package (4-servings) lime Jell-O  
1 package (4-servings) orange Jell-O  
1 package (4-servings) strawberry Jell-O  
1 package (4-servings) lemon Jell-O  
3 cups boiling water  
1½ cups cold water  
1 cup boiling water  
½ cup cold water  
1 (8-oz.) container Cool Whip, thawed

### Directions

Prepare lime, orange, and 1 package of strawberry Jello as directed on the packages.

Pour each flavor into separate 8-inch square pans. Refrigerate 4 hours or until firm. Cut into ½-inch cubes; measure 1½ cups of each flavor. (You can use the remaining cubes for garnish if desired, or for snacking.)

Stir 1 cup boiling water into remaining package of lemon Jello in a medium bowl until dissolved completely. Stir in ½-cup cold water. Refrigerate 45 minutes or until slightly thickened (consistency of unbeaten egg whites).

Stir in ½ of the Cool Whip. Gently stir in measured gelatin cubes.

Pour into a 9 x 5-inch loaf pan. Refrigerate overnight.

Unmold and garnish with remaining gelatin cubes and whipped topping, if desired.

Source: [recipelion.com/Free-Quick-and-Easy-Jello-Recipes/1950s-Magic-Jell-O-Dessert-Food-Video](https://www.recipelion.com/Free-Quick-and-Easy-Jello-Recipes/1950s-Magic-Jell-O-Dessert-Food-Video)

# ANNIE CAMPING OUT



## BILLIONAIRE'S FRANKS & BEANS

### Ingredients

1 yellow onion, diced  
1 fresh poblano chile pepper, diced  
1 rib celery, diced  
2 tbsp. minced fresh cayenne pepper, or other hot red pepper  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste  
1 tbsp. light brown sugar  
¼ cup ketchup  
1 tbsp. Dijon mustard  
½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce  
2 ½ cups chicken broth, or as needed  
2 (15-oz.) cans cannellini beans, drained, and rinsed  
¼ cup sliced green onions

### Directions

Lightly score hot dog skins from end to end on 4 sides. This helps keep them flat when they cook. Slice into ½-inch rounds.

Melt butter in large pot over medium heat. Add onions, poblano pepper, celery, and cayenne pepper. Season with salt and pepper. Cook and stir until vegetables are soft and onions are translucent, 5 to 7 minutes.

Stir in hot dog slices and cook until heated through and fat from hot dogs mixes with the butter, about 3 minutes. Add brown sugar, ketchup, mustard, Worcestershire sauce and pour in chicken broth. Stir in beans. Raise heat to bring mixture to a simmer; reduce heat to low and cook until flavors mix, about 30 minutes. While beans are cooking, use a wooden spoon to crush some of them against the side of the pot to help thicken the stew. If mixture gets too thick, add more broth.

Just before serving, stir in chopped green onions.

Source: [allrecipes.com/recipe/244913/billionaires-franks-and-beans](https://allrecipes.com/recipe/244913/billionaires-franks-and-beans)



# DRINK RECIPE



## SADDLE TRAMP SHOOTER

### Ingredients

$\frac{3}{4}$  oz. Stolichnaya ( Stoli ) Raspberry vodka

$\frac{1}{2}$  oz. Absolut vodka

1 splash(es) orange juice

1 splash(es) grenadine

Cranberry juice

Pineapple juice

### Directions

Shake with ice and strain into a shot glass.

Source: [barnonedrinks.com/drinks/s/saddle-tramp-6448.html](http://barnonedrinks.com/drinks/s/saddle-tramp-6448.html)



# ANIMAL TREAT RECIPE



## APPLE PRETZELS RECIPE FOR DOGS

### Ingredients

3 cups almond flour

1 egg

1 cup plain, unsweetened applesauce

### Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside. Beat egg and set aside.

Mix applesauce and almond flour in a large bowl

Pour 1 tablespoon of the egg into a bowl and set aside

Pour the rest of the egg into the bowl with mixed ingredients

Stir the mixture until a dough forms. Take a two-tablespoon-size piece of dough and roll into a tube. Take each tube and make into a “U” shape, then twist the ends together and fold back to the top to make a pretzel shape.

Place the pretzels onto the baking tray. Brush the top of each pretzel with the remaining egg. Bake for approximately 25–30 minutes, until they’re slightly browned and firm. Remove from the oven and allow to cool before serving.

Source: [akc.org/expert-advice/lifestyle/homemade-vet-approved-dog-treat-recipes](http://akc.org/expert-advice/lifestyle/homemade-vet-approved-dog-treat-recipes)

# ANIMAL TREAT RECIPE



## HEALTHY HORSE TREATS

### Ingredients

- 2 carrots
- 2 apples
- 1 tbsp. canola oil
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup molasses
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 3 cups whole wheat flour
- 2 tbsp. dried peppermint

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two cookie sheets with parchment paper or nonstick liners.

Shred the carrots and apples. Please use flavorful apples, like Macouns or McIntoshes.

Put the shredded apples and carrots into a bowl, preferably of a stand mixer. (You could do this by hand, but the mixer will create a better texture and is easier. Most handheld mixers aren't powerful enough for this dough.) Add the remaining ingredients. Cooking tip: measure the oil in the measuring cup and swirl around before pouring out. Next, measure the molasses in the same cup. The molasses will then slip right out into the mixing bowl.

Using the paddle attachment, beat the mixture until all is shiny.

Scoop out small balls. Bake for 1 hour, or until dry all the way through. If the tops turn dark brown before the centers are done, cover lightly with a sheet of tinfoil. Cool on a wire rack. If the cookies are baked until soft like regular people-cookies, the horses will love them, but they will only stay fresh for 3 days. Baking so that they are dry through their cores give them a longer shelf life.

Source: [cooperativehorse.com/2014/01/homemade-horse-treats](http://cooperativehorse.com/2014/01/homemade-horse-treats)