

HAPPY TRAILS

■ Carlsbad author finding success with series about girl and her horse

E'LOUISE ONDASH
STAFF WRITER

Walt Disney Studios may not have wanted Brix McDonald's script called "Pony Rider" for a television movie, but that didn't discourage the Carlsbad author.

Even after the story sat on an agent's desk for 18 months, McDonald was convinced that preteens would love to read about her heroine, Carrie Sutton, and her love for a horse named Outlaw.

So McDonald and her husband, John, published "Riding on the Wind" (Avenue Publishing, \$5.95) in December 1997. The book has since received favorable reviews in the Los Angeles Times, the School Library Journal, Midwest Book Review and other trade magazines.

The story is set in Wyoming in the 1860s, just before the Civil War. Carrie lives with her stepmother and a ranch hand on a Pony Express relay station. Her dream is to ride for the service, and her determination leads to other adventures in love and loss.

"'Riding on the Wind' came about because of my love for horses and riding," said McDonald, who, except for 13 years in Los Angeles, has lived in San Diego County most of her life.

"I used to ride in Del Mar years ago. I also was a voracious



JAMIE SCOTT LYTLE / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Brix McDonald's first book, 'Riding on the Wind,' is getting favorable reviews in trade publications. She's pictured here at the Bar-Low Ranch in Carlsbad.

reader and was influenced by many writers in my early youth. Books have been a second world for me."

McDonald described Carrie as "someone I would have liked."

"Before the book is over, Carrie goes from a young girl to a self-assured young woman," the author explained.

McDonald, 46, envisions a series about Carrie Sutton's adventures; the second book, "Outlaw," is nearly finished. It relates the story of the heroine's search for her horse, a journey that brings her to California.

"I've got ideas for up to four more books," McDonald said. "I'm partial to fiction and have ideas that will keep

me going a long, long time."

Books three and four may have Carrie joining the Army

'Books have been a second world for me.'

— BRIX McDONALD
Carlsbad author,
'Riding on the Wind'

and traveling to Gettysburg during the Civil War.

When she isn't writing, McDonald volunteers at her son's school — "I'm a PTA mom" — but when she is writing, "everything else has

to go."

She also uses her down time to see how other authors do it.

"I love to read a lot," she said. "When I do that, I feel like I'm writing."

McDonald's background includes children's theater, video production and screen writing. Her theatrical programs were offered through Carlsbad's Parks and Recreation Department years ago, but in late September, she's offering a teen writers' workshop at the Oceanside library in late September. The date has yet to be set.

"Riding on the Wind" can be purchased through amazon.com and Brix McDonald's Web site: www.avepub.com. It also can be ordered through local bookstores.