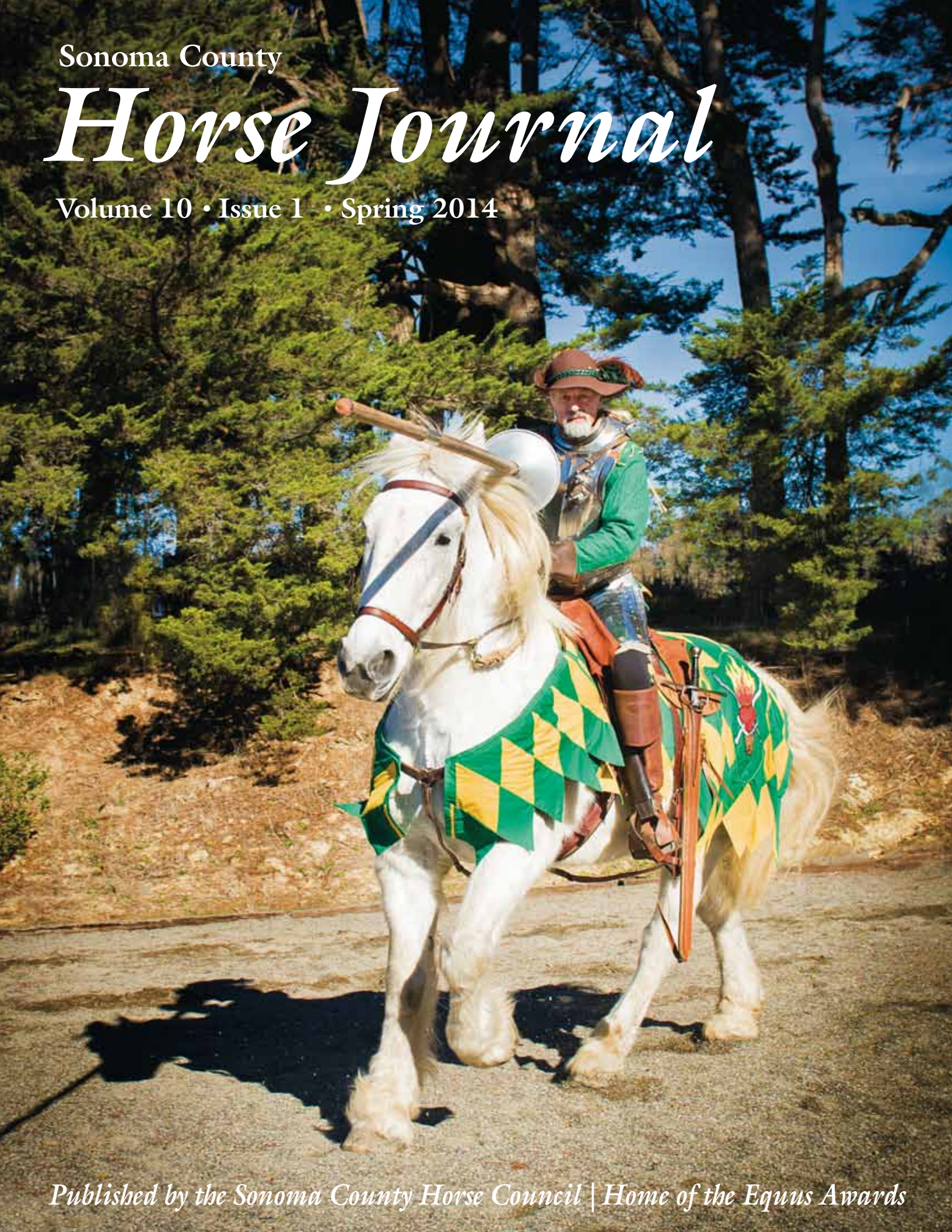


Sonoma County

Horse Journal

Volume 10 • Issue 1 • Spring 2014



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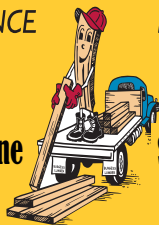
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Sonoma County**Horse Journal**

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**Cover Photo: Marcie Lewis**

Sir William Hammersky rides his steed Rohan in the joust. Read more about the joust, skills-at-arms games and other examples of out-of-the-box horsemanship in this issue of the Horse Journal.

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A Message from the President

Dear Sonoma County Equestrians,

On Saturday March 22nd, we held our tenth Annual Equus Awards Banquet where many local horsemen and women gathered to honor this year's Award winners, to mingle with friends and fellow horsemen, eat good food and drink good wine, but also to reflect on and celebrate the diverse and robust horse industry in this wonderful county of ours. It was a great evening and a good time was had by all.

On reflecting about the horse industry in this county, and the challenges we face, the question is asked: WHAT EXACTLY DOES THE HORSE COUNCIL DO? Everyone knows that we sponsor the Equus Awards each year, that we publish the first rate Horse Journal four times a year and a more frequent newsletter with up to date information about a broad range of current issues, including equine health alerts, that we maintain a first rate website with information about current events, postings from local horse clubs, and we sponsor the Horse Cabinet which holds quarterly meetings with local horse clubs and any interested horseman or woman about issues of common interest. We are proud of these valuable informational services that we provide to the horse community, but they do not go to the heart of our central mission, which is to **support and promote the health and well-being of horses and to preserve, promote, and grow the horse industry in the county.** In other words, the Horse Council's focus is on the entire equine community and our mission is protect our horse industry and to grow it. It doesn't matter what breed the horse is, what discipline the rider participates in, what part of the county you live in, or what business you are in—If you are part of the horse community in this county, the SCHC is in your corner and we are your advocate.

We all know that Sonoma County historically has been a center for the horse industry on the West Coast and that we are not as prominent as we once were. There are many reasons for this, including the slow economy, growing urbanization, and governmental rules and regulations, all of which present real challenges to the entire equine community. In order to deal with these challenges, especially governmental impediments to growth and sustainability, the horse community needs political clout and that requires that we be organized, speak with a powerful and united voice, and that we have the ammo to persuade the governmental policy makers that we deserve their support. This is the role that the Horse Council is uniquely-suited to fill.

For example, the Sonoma County Horse Council has commissioned several economic impact studies by Sonoma State University over the past fifteen years, at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars. Current estimates reveal that Sonoma County is home to more than 25,000 horses, and those horses not only enrich thousands of peoples' lives, but they have created an industry that contributes well over \$500 million per year to the county's economy, and that industry creates or supports thousands of jobs in the county. That is the kind of data that the grape-grower associations have at their disposal, and that is the kind of information that gets policy makers attention. If we are to compete for governmental attention and support with such well-organized, well-funded groups, we need to compete on a level playing field.

The Horse Council can't act alone. We need broad participation from the horse community. If you are not already a member, please show your support for our work and JOIN THE HORSE COUNCIL NOW. Volunteer your time and talent to help us PROMOTE, PRESERVE, AND GROW the horse industry in the county. Go to www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org, click on membership and sign up now. It is not expensive, but it is important in preserving the equestrian way of life in Sonoma County.

Ron Malone, President



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Sonoma County Horse Council at Work

Horse Cabinet Update

Written by Greg Harder, Vice President



Hello again and welcome!

At the January meeting of the Sonoma County Horse Council's Horse Cabinet, we held a discussion on feed. Tom Duffy with Fodder Solutions give a presentation on growing and feeding hydroponically produced barley grass "biscuits."

If you're like me, when Sweetie says we need to buy more hay, you just grimace. Especially when hay is going for \$17 bucks a bale, potentially more if we have a too-dry season. Whatever happened to buying by the ton? Anyway, when someone says this is working, it will save me money, and I have a local point of contact and reference, my ears perk up.

"Fodder" is a piece of sprouted barley grass, grown in a climate controlled growing room you keep at your place. It can look like a storage container, all sizes. You just spread the barley seeds on a special growing tray, and put them in the growing room, which has a fixed temperature and automatic lights and water. The settings are maintained for optimal growth and nutrition. After six days the tray has a "biscuit," which looks like a piece of sod (except no dirt), that you can just pick up and feed to your horse. It's about 12" x 26" and weighs about eighteen pounds. And it's wet, just loaded with water. Your horse is really eating fresh grass.

Locally, Santa Rosa Equestrian Center (SREC) has employed the Fodder Solution methodology with very positive results. Currently their 100-plus horses are being fed grain and grass sprouts that only take six days to germinate and grow to about four or five inches. How are the horses doing on it? Thanks for asking, the horses seem to be performing as good if not better as when they were on the traditional hay and supplement regime. You still have to feed a little hay for dry matter to keep the digestive system running, but overall the results are very positive. Two boarders at Santa Rosa Equestrian were in attendance and they piped in about how much the horses enjoy the fodder, and maintain an excellent weight. According to one user, chronic lameness in her horse is gone and credit goes to increased levels of hyaluronic acid present in the feed...Who knew? SREC owner Tracy Underwood commented about the cost savings for her facility, especially since she grows her fodder right on site.


You can get systems designed to produce one bale a day or many tons per day. When asked for a dollar comparison Duffy estimated the \$17 bale of hay could be replaced for approximately \$8. Currently a study of fodder use is underway at Chico State, and I am waiting with interest for the results. The science behind the nutrition seems to be uncharted waters. The traditional total daily nutrition figures and dry matter calculations need to be revisited due to the nutrition source, eg the edible root zone.

Duffy also presented different applications for this new feed

system. Not only are horse people using this, but also cattle, sheep, goat, and dairy producers. This system is already well established in other countries, such as Australia.

With the looming drought, high priced diesel, and a wife who won't downsize the herd, I am eager to put a pencil to this alternative solution to feeding. If you're interested in further information, contact Tom Duffy at Tom@simplycountry.net

Keep your boots dry, and hope to see you at the next cabinet meeting: May 14, 7pm at the SCDRC Clubhouse.



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The Equine Esquire

Column editor Patrice Doyle, Attorney at Law, Board of Directors

Protecting Yourself Against the “Attractive Nuisance”

Horses and children have always gone together. It's a sweet picture of perfection. However, what happens if a child trespasses on your property and is injured by a horse? To a child, horses can present both an irresistible lure and a hidden danger. Put the two together and you have the potential for liability.

What is an “attractive nuisance”?

“Attractive nuisances” are potentially harmful objects and conditions on the land that are so inviting or interesting to a child that it would lure the child onto the property to investigate. Therefore, courts recognize children can fall harm to risks that adults are more likely to see and understand. Unlike the general rule that a landowner owes no duty to protect trespassers, the “attractive nuisance” doctrine provides that a landowner/occupier may be liable for foreseeable harm to trespassing children. Children usually cannot appreciate the dangers they may encounter with horses. They cannot read warning signs, and easily climb over or crawl under fences. Depending on the circumstances, a horse could qualify as an “attractive nuisance.”

Evaluating your potential liability

Being aware of potential liability is particularly important to those with horses because they: 1) need large areas of land, which requires greater diligence in maintenance; 2) attract people to ride, touch, and admire, especially children who are unaware of the dangers; and 3) can cause significant injuries given their size and strength. To be held responsible for injuries caused by an attractive nuisance, the parents of the injured child must prove each of the following elements:

- The luring condition on the property is in a place where the landowner/occupier knows, or should know, that children may trespass;
- The luring object or condition is something that the landowner/occupier knows can cause injury to children who come near it;
- Children cannot appreciate the dangerous nature of the condition or object if they interfere or touch it;
- The burden on the landowner/occupier to eliminate the risk is slight compared to the risk posed to children; and
- The landowner/occupier has not used reasonable care to stop children from being injured by the luring condition or object.

Never assume you are immune from liability because a child injured on your property was a “trespasser.” The “attractive nuisance” doctrine is an exception to the general rule that landowners/occupiers are not liable for injuries to trespassers. Also, you will likely not prevail by raising the defense that the child's parents failed to properly supervise.

Measures to minimize or eliminate liability

The law doesn't require landowners/occupiers to childproof their property. However, it expects them to be alert to potential dangers to children, and to take reasonable steps to prevent harm to those too young to appreciate the danger. There are many simple

measures you can take to help minimize or avoid liability for an “attractive nuisance,” such as:

- Apply common sense. There is no replacement for good common sense. It's usually easy to spot an accident waiting to happen.
- Check your conduct. Your affirmative conduct in allowing children to trespass on your property could almost certainly make you liable if an injury results from an “attractive nuisance.” When you see trespassing children, warn them of the danger and ask them to leave your property. Notify their parents, if possible. These efforts will help evidence the many precautions you are taking to protect others.
- Make regular inspections. Check your property often to identify any hazards that might foreseeably create a risk of injury to others, especially trespassing children. Take measures to eliminate or minimize the risk.
- Review local laws. Local laws often regulate objects that are dangerous to inquisitive children. Become familiar and comply with applicable local regulations.
- Review insurance coverage. Review your liability insurance policy, specifically the exclusions. Also, often the policy language will state special precautions you must take to protect others from hazards on your property. If you fail to take such measures, your insurance coverage may be voided.
- Listen to concerned parents. Be open-minded if a concerned parent approaches you about a potentially dangerous condition and be solution-focused. A simple conversation may help avoid tragic accidents and lawsuits.
- Secure horses with dangerous propensities. If you have horses with known dangerous tendencies, keep them away from areas where children can easily see and approach them. If these horses are kept inside, make sure their stalls are designed so that children cannot touch or access them.

Proving personal injury under the attractive nuisance doctrine depends on the unique facts of each case. The level of understanding of a child varies depending on the age, and what constitutes reasonable care will change with the type of dangerous condition and age of the child who was hurt. Having an awareness of the law and following the precautions above will help to minimize risks and foreseeable injuries, thus helping to protect you against the liability that comes with having an “attractive nuisance.”

The above article is not intended to be legal advice. Readers should seek legal counsel to determine how the law applies to their particular circumstances.



Patrice Doyle is an associate attorney at Kornblum Cochran Erickson Harbison, L.L.P., and has been an avid horsewoman since childhood. She can be of assistance in guiding you through equine-related legal issues. Contact her at (707) 544-9006 or www.kcehlaw.com.



Feature Article

Joust 2.0 — Medieval Horseback Games

Written by Christine Kennedy

The Spring 2012 issue of The Horse Journal covered how Full Tilt Farm (FTF) became Northern California's only jousting facility. This article expands on that with more information on jousting, medieval skill-at-arms, horseback games, and how much fun it all can be.

The jousting at FTF is nothing like what you've seen on TV. You may also have seen a jousting demonstration at the 2013 Dressage in the Wine Country but that is only part of what is taught. The joust occurs between two horsemen who ride at each other with lances, aiming to break the lance on the opponent's shield or possibly unseat him. Besides jousting, other horseback contests exist. At the 2013 DWC, the riders did not demonstrate the five different skill-at-arms games. The equipment necessary for these games can be quite minimal and simple such as some hay bales or a few posts in the ground.

The skill-at-arms games are wonderful for most horses because it can expose them to something completely different.

According to FTF trainer Sir William Hammersky it can even make your riding better. One of his student's Dressage trainers came to watch a lesson and noted that the student's seat had gotten better, as she was more secure in it.

Students of both the joust and skill-at-arms games have ranged from twelve to sixty years old, men and women. FTF supplies all the equipment, you just bring your helmet. For long term students, personalized lances and shields can be made. Safety is of the utmost importance because, let's face it, we're dealing with potentially lethal weapons here. Many students stop at the skill-at-arms games and may not attempt actual jousting with lances.

These are the games taught:

1. Spear throwing
2. Hitting the quintain (that is a shield on a rotating horizontal arm)
3. Catching rings of decreasing size with a thin-tipped lance
4. Head-opping (mounted sword work)
5. Archery (the most difficult skill to master)

Students start off on the ground learning safe ways to handle and throw spears, and shoot arrows. Once confident and competent, those skills are practiced at a walk on horseback. Ultimately everything is done at a canter. That's when it really gets fun!

FTF prefers students to bring their own horses in order to build on the established partnership. William's philosophy is that the student and the horse are in a special relationship. If your horse trusts you to keep them safe they will go beyond their normal zone of safety to please you.



Sir William's armor

A good seat is essential for the games since occasionally you have only one hand on the reins. With archery you have no hands on the reins thus having your horse move off your legs is essential. Rohan, FTF's main jousting horse, uses a bit-less bridle, responds to voice commands in French (his Renaissance Faire persona) and is independent of rein aids. Australian Stock saddles are used as they are close to the Medieval style without spending money for something custom. It's a very comfortable saddle that keeps riders secure and absorbs some of the impact.

Rohan is an eighteen hand-high (hh) Percheron but any breed of horse can be good at these games. Former eventing horses are great for the games as they are usually brave and confident; reining and barrel horses have excellent leg and seat responses. Hot or spooky horses are probably not suitable, but if that's what you've got, FTF is willing to start slow to familiarize and desensitize. It usually does not take long for a new horse to get

comfortable with all the equipment on the jousting arena.

Historically jousting horses were rarely more than fifteen hh. Knights and nobleman would attempt to buy or breed larger horses to accommodate the weight of the rider, his weapons, the saddle, and 100 lbs of armor; but today's seventeen and eighteen hh horses are a very recent creation.

A little background on Sir William's personal story. A trail rider and an on-again off-again Renaissance faire patron for many years, he was interested in something new. It was at one of these Renaissance faires, shortly after getting Rohan several years ago, that he saw the joust and became really intrigued. He calls it his "adult onset disease." After moving to Sebastopol six years ago it became a passion to share with others. FTF put in two all weather arenas, one of which is dedicated to jousting, and teaching and practicing these skill-at-arms games.

Sir William demonstrates the skill-at-arms games at many venues including schools, nurseries, wineries, fundraisers and private parties. He offers classes to school groups demonstrating armor, weapons,



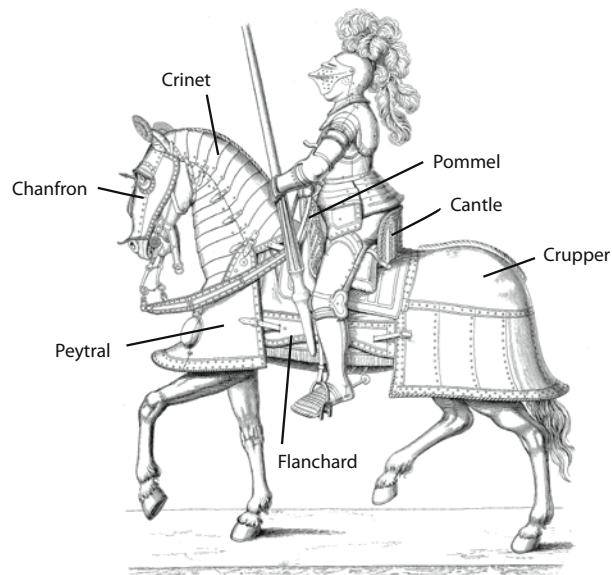
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Sir William and Rohan

and skill-at-arms games of the Medieval/Renaissance periods. He uses a hands-on approach that engages the students as history comes alive with lances, swords, armor, and chain mail; his wit is sharp but the swords are not!

Lessons at Full Tilt Farm are on Saturdays, Wednesdays, and occasional Sundays. William can be reached at 707-827-3855 or e-mail william@skyhammer.com.



Battle Armor for Horse - 16th century

Crinet - Neck	Pommel - Saddle front
Chanfron - Head and poll	Cantele - Saddle back
Peytral - Shoulders and chest	Crupper - Croup and tail
Flanchard - Flanks	

Modern jousting doesn't typically use horse armor, although you will see an occasional chanfron (nose, head, and poll protection). Readers might note however in the illustration below what was stylish and important back in the 1500's!

The materials used for horses followed those of armor for men: chain, or mail, ("chain mail" is redundant and a very recent term) was one of the first metal armor and dates back to before Roman times. It was simply small loops of metal wire woven together. As metallurgical technology developed, metal armor (made of flat sheets of wrought iron or steel) for knights came into widespread use. Plate armor, pieces of steel riveted together, started to appear around the 13th century and became commonplace by the 14th.

Early horse armor was just mail that surrounded the part(s) that needed protection. But mail armor is very heavy, and would add significant weight for the horse to carry. For comparison, an ankle-length mail shirt for a man might weigh more than 100 lbs. Put some mail armor on your horse too and he has some serious weight to deal with. Also, mail was quite expensive to produce.

As plate armor developed and became the norm, wealthier folks could afford to have armor made for their war-horses as well. Any amount of protection is better than none and oftentimes in battle the horse was the target of weapons. If the horse went down, so did the knight, and it was easier to fight against a knight on the ground, than one on horseback.

The illustration above is of polished steel armor for knight and horse and dates back to 1520-1560 CE. The knight is wearing armor similar in style to Sir William's.

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Sonoma County Events

Flying Cloud Farm Christmas Equine Extravaganza Written by Jeannette Bell

In December of 2010, Flying Cloud hosted their first Equine Christmas show directed by Allison Mathy. Flying Cloud owners Jim and Jeannette Bell had always held Christmas parties in the event center for their clients, but Classical Dressage trainer Allison Mathy introduced the idea of having the boarders perform as part of the festivities. The first year it was just a few performances and some stockings hung in the arena, but the camaraderie that was generated among the boarders by performing together was infectious. In 2011, many more people wanted to participate, including riders and trainers from neighboring barns, and the number of performances grew. By 2012, guests were expecting a good show, and all the Flying Cloud/Lyric Dressage clients pitched in with costume design, decorating the arena and the event center, and building a backdrop. Five of the performances can be seen on YouTube under "Flying Cloud Christmas Show 2012..." An estimated 100+ people showed up. Allison's idea had taken off, and 2013 the event exceeded all expectations.

Allison Mathy had to decide between two very different career paths: Dressage trainer or opera singer. Coached by her mother, FEI Dressage trainer Carolyn Carroll, Allison was sitting atop horseback before she could walk. However, in addition to her love of horses, she discovered at a young age her talent as a musician. Allison trained in operatic voice and the arts under academic scholarship at one of the country's leading universities. Luckily for the Sonoma County horse world, her love of horses won out, and she spent the next ten years developing her Dressage skills with such greats as Robert Dover, Steffen Peters, and Laurie Falvo.

In October of 2010, Allison relocated her very successful Dressage training business in San Diego to Sonoma County. She married Jeff Mathy, founder of Vellum Wine Craft. Jeff and Allison were married on September 11 at Flying Cloud in Petaluma where she started rebuilding her Dressage clientele as founder of Lyric Dressage. Flying Cloud, as both an upscale equestrian facility and a first class event venue that showcased equestrian exhibitions, was the



Allison Mathy and Cielo

perfect home for a top level Dressage trainer with a passion for performing arts. The 2013 Christmas Extravaganza was bigger and better than ever. Three large Christmas murals were added to the stage and ninety poinsettias encircled the show arena. Approximately 140 guests attended the seven performances which consisted of Allison

Mathy riding Corado in a Prix St. Georges freestyle, Carolyn Carroll riding Andiamo in a traditional Portuguese Garrocha exhibition, a "pas de trois" with Jeannette Bell, Miriah Mather and Jaclyn Pepper, Katy Sommers riding Garabato, Lindsey Labrum riding a spectacular piaffe and passage to Little Drummer Boy sung by boyfriend, Shox Hincks, Jaclyn Pepper (Gold Medalist, National Young Rider 2013) riding her FEI freestyle on Taboo, and the Lusitano Stallion Grand Quadrille, featuring Allison Mathy, Carolyn Carroll, Lindsey Labrum, and Debbie Port. Following the show, guests were invited into

the event center for a roast turkey, ham and lasagna dinner.

The enchantment of the show is two-fold. Guests and performers delight in the splendor of the Christmas decorations and costumes: twinkle lights, candles, and garlands abound while horses and riders are adorned in tapestry and sparkle. But the true magic is in the fun that the riders have with their horses and each other, the sense of accomplishment when it's over, and the excitement to start planning for next year. Allison's talent is not only in the Classical Dressage training of the horses and the production of the show, but in the ability to welcome riders and horses of all levels and incorporate them in a presentation that delights the spectators. We at Flying Cloud look forward to the production of the 2014 Christmas Equine Extravaganza! Videos are posted on the Flying Cloud website: <http://www.flyingcloudfarm.com/2013-weihnachtsfest/> so you can relive the performances and if you would like to participate in next year's event as a performer or participant please contact Lyric Dressage via email at allisonmathy@gmail.com.

Jeannette Bell and her husband Jim are the owners of Flying Cloud Farm in Petaluma. Flying Cloud is a Dressage boarding and training facility as well as an upscale special event facility. Jeannette and Jim built Flying Cloud in 1989. Jeannette grew up in Chicago, moved to the east coast at eighteen, attended Smith College and Columbia Graduate School of Business, and spent ten years in corporate finance before starting Flying Cloud.



Katy Sommers and Garabato

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Sonoma County Events

Barn Raising

Written by Sarah Reid

This is a story about a barn, a horse, a storm, and a woman who is making a big difference.

When I called Linda Aldrich about interviewing her for this article, her response was: "Sarah, we are still \$15,000 shy of our goal!" The horses need help.

Most Sonoma County equestrians know about Linda and her friendly enthusiasm and spirit. Many of us associate her with the pony rides at Howarth Park, as an SRJC instructor, and because her pony Midnight received the 2011 Equus Horse of the Year Award. But many people are not aware of Linda's Pony Express, and the many equine which benefit a multitude of people, young and old. And her horses and ponies are all rescued animals.

The horse

Milo was one of Linda's rescues who not only benefited from Linda's patience and care, but also made a huge difference in the lives of teens and eighty-four year-old Lucy (see more of Milo's story on the Pony Express website listed below). Sadly, after a chain of events in December 2012, Milo took his walk over the "rainbow bridge." It had stormed heavily. The small barn blew down. The horses had limited shelter. Linda described, "They were knee-deep in mud." Milo slipped, fell and sustained a compound fracture to his hind leg. "That was a huge loss," says a sad-faced Linda.

The barn

A new barn is needed for two main reasons: to provide shelter for the horses and ponies, and to provide a needed space for equine programs in inclement weather. Up stepped the Empire Contractors Association (ECA). Linda enthusiastically told me, "They went above and beyond the barn pad ... did a road and the drive. They have been so supportive!" The ECA provided the completed barn pad, graded gravel road and drive as their 2013 Community Relations Project.

ECA members donated time, labor and materials for this project, as well as support for the Lagunitas fundraiser in November 2013. Thanks to generous time and planning by Rodney Sichel (President ECA, Empire Asphalt), Lacey Torkelson Smith (Wells Fargo Insurance Services), and Gail Cochran (RCX Construction) the barn pad got done, and fast. Contributing ECA businesses include Dale Smith (RCX Construction), Jim Pardini (Toby's Trucking), Belinda and Dean Soiland, Bill Williams and Chuck Darrell (BoDean Company), Ken Dern (Aaction Rents), Jo Gannon (Pace Supply), and from



At the Lagunitas fundraiser

Ghilotti Brothers Inc, Tom Donohue, and Dante and Mike Ghilotti. Supervisor Susan Gorin and Rebecca Hermosillo, a representative from Congressman Mike Thompson's office, attended the official ribbon cutting for the barn pad. Thanks also to Supervisor Shirlee Zane for her support. ECA member John Bly was essential in coordinating the ribbon cutting.

What's needed

A four-stall barn and the funding to make it happen are what's next. "We're still \$15,000 short." This "barn allows continuation of the programs year-round. Getting the barn finished is foremost, having a roof over the horses' heads," Linda said. "But also to have the programs year-round." The Lagunitas fundraiser was on a very rainy night in November, fun and well-attended. The program included getting your picture taken with two of the horses. This event brought in about \$5,000 of the needed funds to allow Linda to place the order from SC Barns. Linda is hesitantly thankful that the weather has been so dry because it keeps her precious equines safer than slippery wet.

The programs

Besides the famous pony rides at Howarth Park bringing joy to thousands of children, Linda's Equine Assisted Skills for Youth (EASY) has reached countless at-risk teens. Her Athena House program provides the natural healing of horses to women in alcohol and drug recovery. Casa Calmecac would like a similar program for men. Linda has provided Make-A-Wish Foundation visits with horses, as well as a place for Oakmont elders to be around the horses. Recently, Linda is working with organizations in Sonoma-Valley to provide programs for the Teen Center, Boys & Girls Club, and Stand By Me Mentoring.

To discover more about Linda's wonderful programs, and stories about her horses, ponies, and students, check out www.thepony-expressrocks.org. To contact Linda about fundraising, donations, or programs, please contact her at 707-538-9323.

Sarah Reid (Equus Award 2012) is an equestrian representative to several open space and park projects. If you would like to share trail or public land news with Sarah, or you have an idea for a story, email her at trails@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org.



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Sonoma County History

SCDRC Clubhouse

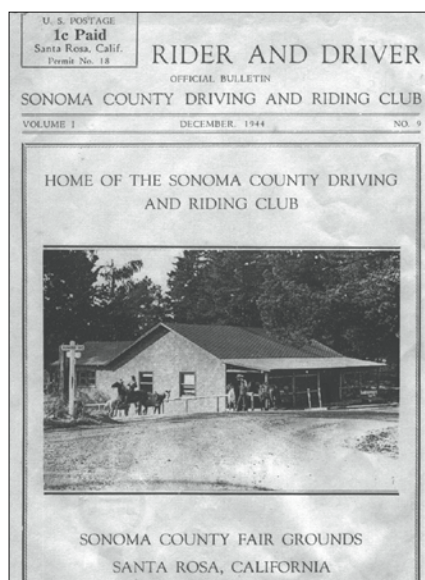
Written by Joan Rasmussen, Editor-at-Large, Treasurer

The Sonoma County Driving and Riding Club (SCDRC) clubhouse sits at the Aston Avenue entrance of the Sonoma County Fairgrounds. At once unimposing, due to its humble demeanor, and startling, due to its contrast with the more modern buildings that comprise most of the fairgrounds structures, it is in many ways a throwback to a simpler time.

The Sonoma County Driving and Riding Club was founded in 1937 by Warren P Richardson (whose name may be familiar to those who frequent Annadel State Park, as a major trail is named after him), Charles H Bauman, and Dr MP Franchetti. The club became incorporated in 1941 and the following year, the clubhouse was funded by member donations. The construction of the clubhouse on the Sonoma County Fairgrounds was made possible by a resolution dated October 22, 1942 by the Board of Supervisors and the County of Sonoma, "permitting the Riding and Driving Club of Sonoma County to construct a building at their own expense on an unused portion of the Sonoma County Fair Grounds" and to be "designated as a Sonoma County community club house for the use of all persons interested in the riding and driving of horses."

Since then, the rustic building has served as a meeting place for all manner of horse-themed events and meetings. Of course, the Sonoma County Driving and Riding Club holds their monthly meetings there as does their Junior Auxiliary. In addition, Back Country Horsemen meets monthly, and the California State Parks Mounted Assistance Unit holds their large membership gatherings twice a year. The semi-monthly forums of the Sonoma County Horse Council are held there, and Riding On Faith hosts Cowboy Church at the clubhouse twice a month. Several horse-related organizations put on fundraisers and social events at the clubhouse. The SCDRC does not rent out the building but asks those who use it to contribute to the cost of maintaining the building.

The interior of the clubhouse has a distinct "Cowboy Clubhouse" feel. A generous fireplace graces one wall, and a bar is tucked into the far end of the building. The middle is open, making it conducive to meetings and dinners. There is a fully stocked kitchen as well as storage areas and rest rooms. The décor is decidedly horse-y, with trophies and photographs of equestrian events from the last few decades gracing the walls.



Having a treasure like the clubhouse available to all manner of Sonoma County horse lovers is a rare privilege and a tribute to the foresight of those 1942 Board of Supervisors members, who saw and appreciated the significant contribution of the horse industry to the county's culture and economy. Over the years, both the horse industry and the county administration have become more sophisticated and more complex. The nature of the fairgrounds has changed. Those of us who grew up in the county remember the Fairgrounds as a hub of horse activities, with a show held there almost every weekend during the show season, as well as 4-H and Pony Club events. In the 1970s, the NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity was held there, and the CSHA State Convention show was held there from 1966 through 1986.

While there are some shows still on the schedule, the venue has given way to a variety of other activities, which may make the relevance of the location less obvious to those unaware of the rich equestrian history of the facility. Security concerns have limited the access to the clubhouse, requiring the use of a keypad code to gain entrance to the fairgrounds and, therefore, to the clubhouse. Anybody who has waited in the car line-up outside the gate before a meeting knows the issues that have been created by this!

Access to the clubhouse is a headache not only to those who use the clubhouse but also to County agencies, who have expressed security, safety, and economic concerns. Egress and ingress to the fairgrounds is an issue. The Real Estate Division of the General Services Department of the County is working with representatives of the SCDRC to develop a Memorandum of Understanding, with the goal of reaching a mutually acceptable solution to these problems. The County needs to feel that their concerns have been adequately addressed; the horse community needs continued and improved access to the clubhouse, as intended by the Board of Supervisors.

The SCDRC is confident that a solution will be found and that the clubhouse, which has been a valuable and historic resource to the Sonoma County horse community, will be available for many decades to come!

Joan Rasmussen grew up in Sonoma County and currently lives in Sebastopol. She got her first pony, Tiny, when she was ten, and now enjoys trail riding with her Quarter Horse buddy, Cowboy. Joan supports her horse hobby by providing bookkeeping services (In Balance Bookkeeping Service). She occasionally blogs about her horse experiences at cowdex.blogspot.com. To reach Joan, email her at joanras795@gmail.com.

Court House, Santa Rosa, California
October 22nd, 1942.

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SONOMA PERMITTING THE RIDING AND DRIVING CLUB OF SONOMA COUNTY TO CONSTRUCT A BUILDING AT THEIR OWN EXPENSE ON AN UNUSED PORTION OF THE SONOMA COUNTY FAIR GROUNDS WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT SAID BUILDING WILL BE TURNED OVER TO SONOMA COUNTY TO BE BY IT DESIGNATED AS A SONOMA COUNTY COMMUNITY CLUB HOUSE FOR THE USE OF ALL PERSONS INTERESTED IN THE RIDING AND DRIVING OF HORSES.

Trails and Open Spaces

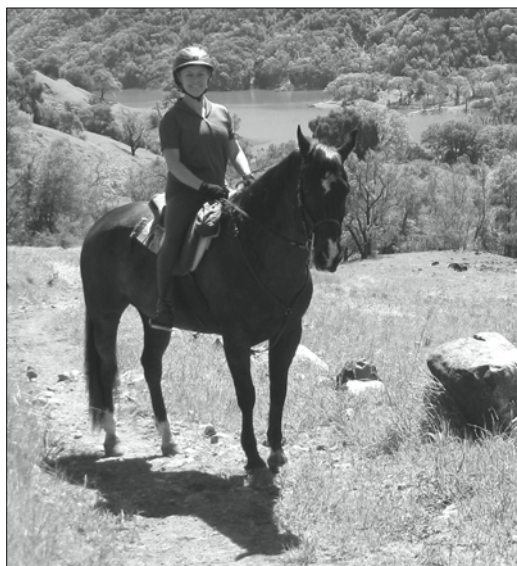
Column editor Sarah Reid

Trails and Parks Update for Sonoma County***Tolay Lake Regional Park, Petaluma***

This park is under new Master Plan re-creation after the acquisition of Tolay Creek property by Sonoma Land Trust. The new property will now be more than twice the size of the current one. Equestrian representatives are active with the planning process to determine access and facilities for riders. Currently the park is open to permit holders Saturday and Sunday during winter, adding Fridays during summer months. To obtain a permit and gate code through orientation, please visit <http://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov> and click on Tolay Lake. Access to Tolay Creek is with Sonoma Land Trust only.

Taylor Mountain Regional Park & Open Space Preserve, Santa Rosa

A new hiker-only trail—Todd Creek Trail—was built by volunteers in August, 2013. A new trail on Colgan Creek in the eastern property has been planned, and is in the permit stages. This will be a multi-use trail, opening up great riding opportunities on about



four miles of varied terrain. Until new trails are officially established, please remain on signed official trails to minimize land damage and erosion. Grazing continues on the property with about forty head of cattle.

Hood Mountain Regional Park, Santa Rosa

The Los Alamos Road entrance and parking area is now open after long closure following 2006 storm damage. While this is a beautiful place to ride, and provides access onto the McCormick Addition of Sugarloaf Ridge State Park, Los Alamos Road is twisty, narrow, steep and very rough. Recommend re-con in a car or truck with no trailer first. The parking lot is large and shady.

Winter trail closure

As of this writing all parks and trails remain open due to unseasonably dry weather conditions. The following parks will have trail closures when rain begins. Please respect winter trail closures to prevent trail damage and preserve the trails. Selected trails at the following parks may close during winter conditions: Shiloh Ranch (Canyon and Creekside Trails), Sugarloaf Ridge (Vista, Brushy Peaks), Jack London, Willow Creek (all trails and parking area). Armstrong Woods/Austin Creek often closes all trails to horses in winter conditions. Call ahead. Thanks to parks staff for keeping trails open according to weather.

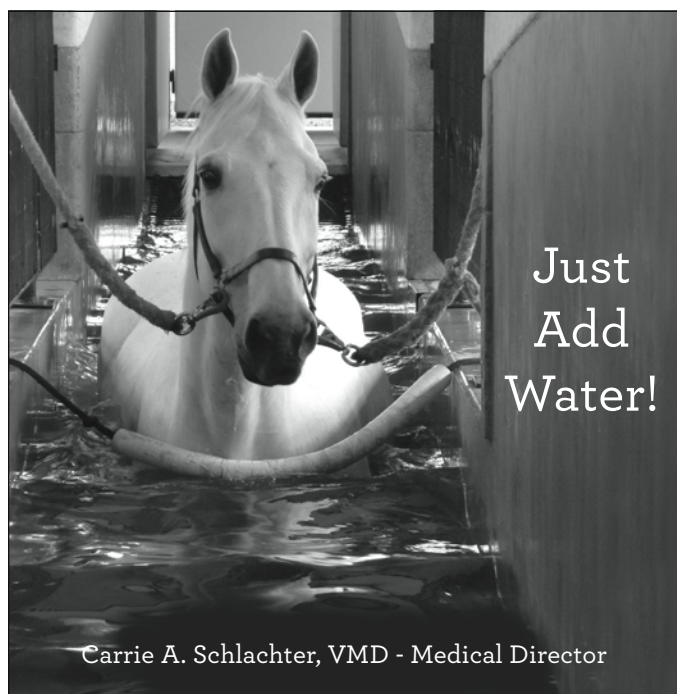
Winter trail work

"Sleet nor rain nor snow..." will stop the trails crews from maintaining the trails! The Sonoma County Trails Council (SCTC) continues with the Third Saturday Annadel Work Days (third Saturday of each month) at different locations and executing a variety of projects. The SCTC also has trail work days planned for Sugarloaf Ridge, Sonoma Mountain Bay Area Ridge Trail, and Little Black Mountain. Help preserve our trails—join a volunteer crew. To receive emails and find dates, please visit Sonoma County Trails Council at www.sonomatrails.org. SCTC provides tools, gloves, crew leaders, training, Clif bars, and beverages.

Manure bunkers

Local gardeners are happily removing the manure from bunkers located at most trail heads—often on a weekly basis. If you or someone you know needs manure, please contact Tolay Lake Regional Park, as that manure bunker is seriously overflowing. Thank you for cleaning up after your horses.

Sarah Reid (Equus Award 2012) is an equestrian representative to several open space and park projects. If you would like to share trail or public land news with Sarah, or you have an idea for a story, email her at trails@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org.



Carrie A. Schlachter, VMD - Medical Director

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SPORTS MEDICINE & REHABILITATION



The Equestrian Athlete

Column editor Lily Baker-Lubin

A Mirror to Improvement

"Your horse is a mirror to your soul. Sometimes you might not like what you see....sometimes you will." – Buck Brannaman



Lily and Roxy at Rancho Murieta

Whether we appreciate it or not, horses expose us. We choose how we receive, interpret, and utilize that information. Elite athletes accept their partner's "feedback" openly and accept the challenge to improve.

If we approach our horses mindfully, we quickly observe that we are always either training or un-training a horse. Most of us have ridden a horse that is "dead to your leg." What many of us fail to realize is that "dull" horses (barring any associated physical ailments and discomfort) learned this method from a rider. Professionals view each ride as an opportunity to address this undesirable pattern.

But sometimes it can feel like professionals possess secrets of the trade unknown to the eager amateur. Current research in rider and horse biomechanics is beginning to illustrate what patterns distinguish the professional rider from the novice or amateur. By evaluating and comparing physical and mental variables between these two groups, we see distinguishing patterns. Over the next few articles I will be discussing these findings and suggesting ways to improve.

Evidence suggests that elite riders are capable of higher sensitivity and anticipatory levels than novices and are therefore able to produce more "stable and precise synchronization." This synchronization doesn't just produce a static pretty picture. Rather, as Forest Gump would say, "Pretty is as pretty does." Professionals are more skilled at "impedance matching," which means they can fluidly absorb, adapt and influence a horse's gait. The quiet but effective seat is an absolute prerequisite for such precise communication. But how does this affect the horse's understanding of aids?

Horses learn through pressure and release. A touch with a leg, a slight shift of balance, a squeeze of the reins. Each of these is the application of pressure. When a horse is first being taught the basics, the rider applies an aid individually and quietly followed by a pause which gives the horse a chance to guess. If the horse guesses incorrectly, the aid is quietly repeated followed by a pause. When the horse guesses correctly the rider immediately provides a release and perhaps a reward like a pat. Early basic training requires great patience and sufficient time for the horse not only to learn the meaning of individual aids, but also to understand that this is the language that will be used. Since horses use their own innate communication system of pressure and release, the precise application of a rider's aids makes use of an existing predisposi-

tion. A horse that has been properly backed not only accepts the weight of the rider but understands that the rider is his leader who will be cuing him to respond to pressure that is always paired with a release. Notice that if there is no release, there is no way for the horse to know that an aid has been given.

Consider the dilemma of a horse ridden by an unskilled rider who is applying constant, unintended pressure: banging legs, tugs on the reins, unsteady balance. These aids may be followed by random and unintentional releases. The horse that has a steady disposition will try to tune out these pressures and keep guessing—these are the saintly horses that make good schooling horses precisely because they've been dulled. The sensitive horse will initially try to guess but faced with rider gibberish he will try to escape first by bracing or by expressing a mild form of resistance, then eventually misbehaving by bolting, bucking, or rearing.

Research has shown that novice riders demonstrate a delay in timing as they struggle to absorb the motion of the horse. They also lose their dynamic balance. In the Pilates studio, I often encounter riders who are initially unaware of just what specific body control is required to produce optimal movement. For example, spinal articulation or the ability to sequentially move the spine in one direction is more challenging than we initially anticipate. Some segments are mobile and others are locked. Until we can identify and correct those patterns, the rider unwittingly compensates in the saddle producing incorrect movement. Common Pilates exercises that emphasize spinal articulation include pelvic curling to bridges, roll-ups, cat, and swan. Isolating which segments need to be stabilized and which segment is the mobilizing or moving segment is similar to giving clear and correct riding aids to a horse.

As you gain independent control of your body, you can build a more correct seat. You will be training yourself in complex, consciously executed movements which will eventually become incorporated as automatic responses. Remember, as Kyra Kyrklund said, "It takes 10,000 repetitions of a movement for it to become automatic." You want those 10,000 repetitions to be correct from the start...Especially if you wish to attain your horsemanship goals. As you halt and salute at the end of any test, the judge will be considering how to score your collective marks. These include elements such as elasticity of steps, attention, confidence, lightness and ease of movements, and harmony between horse and rider. It is this harmony or ability to adapt and positively influence a horse's movement that studies are now describing as "synchronization." Your journey to achieve harmony with your horse begins with an understanding of its foundations.

Lily Baker-Lubin is an avid equestrian, and the founder and director of Top Training, a comprehensive performance enhancement program. Top Training offers athletes Pilates and Sport Psychology services. Baker-Lubin has a MS in Kinesiology and has completed Body Arts and Science International's comprehensive teacher training, Core Align 1 & 2, Ride Right's coaching certification as well as other extensive exercise science education. She has been a competitive athlete her whole life and has been an equestrian for over twenty-four years. You can contact Lily at rideright3@gmail.com.

*The Vet's Office***Feeding Horses: Forage (Part I)**

Written by Michelle Beko, DVM

Having practiced veterinary medicine for over twenty years and having had the pleasure of being a horse owner for much longer, I have noticed that there isn't a shortage of opinions on how to best feed a horse. In fact, many people are quite adamant about their opinion! Let me tell you what I think.

First let me say that there is *more than one appropriate way to feed a horse*. There are, however, some basic principles that should be followed. The first is that the majority of a horse's calories should be in the form of forage, eg hay or grass. Long stem fiber promotes good gastrointestinal motility and horses can use a significant portion of their day chewing it. Old horses with bad teeth may be an exception to this rule as they may have difficulty chewing and need pelleted alternatives, preferably made primarily from forages.

Secondly, it is very important to feed the correct quantity of feed. Most will need approximately 1.5% of their body weight in hay. That would be about 16.5 lbs. of hay a day for an average sized horse, preferably divided into two or three feedings. That said, there is quite a bit of individual variation. Most thoroughbreds will need more while many Morgans and Peruvian Pasos will need less. Regardless of breed, horses should be fed the quantity that allows them maintain the appropriate weight. The biggest mistake I see as a veterinarian is overfeeding. Excessive weight places undue

burden on a horse's musculoskeletal system, poses an increased risk of laminitis and makes it difficult for him to keep cool in warm weather or when exercising. Conversely, being fed too little is the most common problem causing a horse to be underweight. All horses should have a body condition score of 5-6/9. (Please visit <http://www.empire-equine.com/Vaccinations-HMP.html> for a body score chart)

Thirdly, the quality of the feed is as important as the type of feed. All hay should be free of mold and have minimal dust or weeds. I personally prefer to offer at least two types of hay so there is some variety to the diet. If one is low in certain vitamins or minerals hopefully the other won't be. Alfalfa has gotten a "bad reputation" for some reason. It can lead to enteroliths (intestinal stones) if it makes up more than 50% of a horse's diet, however, it is protective against gastric ulcer formation. Good quality alfalfa is easy to find and quite nutritious. It has a higher protein and calcium content than most grass hays and most horses love it. It does not cause kidney disease. I think most breeding and sport horses benefit from having some alfalfa in their ration. I personally feed my horse about one third of his ration as alfalfa and the rest as orchard grass although many other combinations are perfectly acceptable. I do usually recommend avoiding oat hay for older horses as it tends to be coarser and therefore harder to chew.

Some horses may need supplements to maintain their weight. This could include grain, beet pulp, rice bran, or mixed pelleted feeds. We will discuss these in the next issue (see Feeding Horses: Supplements (Part II) Summer 2014 Horse Journal).

The last principle I would like to discuss is changing feed. It is inevitable that from time to time we need to change our horses feeding regime. If possible this should be done gradually. The forages they eat are difficult to digest and require huge numbers of bacteria in their large intestine to get the job done. A gradual change in feed allows those populations of bacteria to adapt to the change. Many studies have shown that a recent change of feed (within two weeks) is a risk factor for colic.

...One more thing. Most of our equine buddies appreciate some apples, carrots or horse cookies too and that is perfectly acceptable!



Michelle Beko, DVM, has been an equine veterinarian since 1991. When not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter, Eventing her horse Zeke, hiking, and travelling. You can reach her at Empire Equine at 707-545-3909, check her website (www.empire-equine.com), or on Facebook.

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Horse Council
Equus Awards Banquet*
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President Ron Malone with Martin Ranch Supply raffle winners, Pat and Fred Radelfinger

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An entertaining evening program



The cowboys had a rootin tootin time at the Equus Banquet

Honoring:

**Romax Foldager • Ashley & Howard Herman • John William Kaufman, DVM
Mary Kathleen “Kate” Sullivan • Patricia Michele Williams**



Patti Williams



Riana Porter for Romax Foldager



Emcee Tony Benedetti and President Ron Malone



Kate Sullivan



Ron with Ashley and Howard Herman



Riana and Rissa Porter



Ron and John Kaufman, DVM



Patti and her guests

Many thanks to Photographer Extraordinaire, Marcie Lewis!

Photos of the Equus Banquet available for viewing and purchase on Marcie's website by April 6th.
marcielewisphotography.com



Spitting Sand—A Learner's Journey Conversations

Column editor Jessica Boyd, Director of Advertising



Calabar

Training is more like an on-going conversation than any one tip, tactic, tool, or trick. Despite the plethora of resources out there, it comes down to communication between you and your horses and how to hear each other. Conversations with Calabar and Lena are not verbal, but both horses make their opinions known without the human reliance on words. Learning to listen and use what they're telling me to further the training is my job, one they don't always make easy and one that constantly changes. Some days, it goes like this:

With Calabar

"How about working on our trot today, Calabar?"
"How about running around in the arena, bucking and farting, then rolling?"
"Okay, but you have to warm up in the round pen first."

With Lena

"Where are my carrots? I think you gave him more carrots than you gave me. I counted. Oh, and I'd like to roll now, too. My turn! Three times each side. Maybe four."

Other days, it goes more like this:

"Wow! What a wonderful canter you have, Calabar!"
"I know." (Blows on hoof.)
"Lena, your trot is so much easier to ride than Calabar's!"
"Well of course it is. Now where is my carrot?"

The conversation changes all the time, minute by minute even, and paying attention is the best way to be sure I'm holding up my end of the dialog. When I don't pay attention, the dialog stumbles and the ride can get wonky.

"You're off balance," Calabar says.

"Yep, you're right," I respond, taking a deep breath, untwisting my pelvis and looking over his ears to where we are going.

"That's better," he says, by relaxing and moving out more smoothly. This makes him easier to ride, so I relax more and the communication loop comes full circle, which helps a lot in the scary corner of the arena.

"Calabar, the dark corner is exactly the same as it was yesterday, just keep going."

"Fine, but if the giant spider eats us, it's all your fault."

Lena and I have much the same conversation, only in her case I've learned to go sideways with her rather than sit the squirt forward performed by Calabar.

"How about a circle instead, Lena? No, not an oval that bulges away from the scary thing. Okay, how about we just walk past it

instead of skittering sideways?" This is usually answered by snorting and several circles, but eventually we get there.

What both horses need is for me to be open to have the conversation and then move it forward. Having a plan for the ride is great and they may even agree to go along with that plan, but when they don't, it's better to change the dialog instead of nagging to get my way. Occasionally, this means we have to go backwards a little bit.

"You've jumped over things before, Lena."

"Nope, I just don't recall doing such a ridiculous thing. You go right ahead over it; I'll be on the other side of the arena watching you." We were only doing ground work that day, but it was still important to get her over the jump if only as an exercise for her brain.



Lena's opinion

So we went back to the basics. Over poles on the ground, over the trail obstacles, up to the jump. She went over it, but quickly, as if it might leap up and attack her from below. We kept at it until she walked over it, slowly, without trying to fly, just once.

With Calabar, it's usually about motivating him to be entertained by work. I've learned (thanks to him) that means I need to be entertained by what

we're doing. He is always paying attention to my moods, so if I'm bored by trot circles, we won't make much progress with our trot circles. If I'm nervous about asking for a canter in the outdoor arena, he is nervous about what I'm going to ask. And in the dark nights of winter, inside the indoor arena where noises from outside echo back to us in spooky ways, there can be attention hurdles to overcome. So sometimes we play a lot first, which leaves less time for riding but more time for communicating and teaching.

We all need to be engaged and entertained by what we're doing. It makes it more enjoyable and when it's fun, we're learning. I've actually noticed if I laugh, they respond to it with a shift in energy, an opening and a softening. When we're having a good ride, it's because we're more in concert with each other. When I remember to listen, they return the favor and the conversation evolves, taking us new places together. That's what horsemanship means to me, and it is a journey of the heart and soul.

"And carrots. Don't forget the carrots!" say both Calabar and Lena.

Jessica Boyd lives in Sonoma County and is a Director for Neigh Savers Foundation, Inc. (neighsavers.com). She also blogs with some regularity about her own herd at Spotty Horse News (spottyhorse.blogspot.com). You can reach Jessica and her herd at spottyhorse@gmail.com.

Readers Write

Out of the Box Tool for Improving Your Leg Position and Effectiveness...Think Toes Down!

Written by Jessica Miller, Dressage Trainer and USDF Gold Medalist

I use a tool I consider a little different from what we learn in most of our basic riding lessons. We all learn when we start riding in any discipline that we should keep our heels down and stirrup on the ball of our foot. I completely agree with this for several reasons. First, we learn this for safety so our foot does not go too deep or even all the way through the stirrup. It is also to keep our legs stretching down nice and long and provides a stable support for our bodies when jumping.

In Dressage, we want a deep seat with long legs nicely under our seats. I am looking for a plum line of ear-shoulder-hip-heel when I am working with my students. The inside leg is slightly more forward than the outside leg and neither leg is too forward. However, once I have my students competent in their basic balanced position, I teach my Dressage students about a tool I call "Toes Down."

There are several reasons why I find the "Toes Down" tool very useful. First, I like the rider to feel the horse's barrel under the inside of the lower calf, ankle bone, and heel. If our legs are too far forward then our leg ends up in the narrowest part of the horse's barrel by the girth. Second, I want to feel the horse's side where it begins to blossom out behind the girth and from there it quite easy to find the horse right under my leg. I use my upper legs to control the shoulders, I use my calves to shape the barrel and I think of my ankles and heels as the part of my leg in charge of the hind legs. Third, by a feeling of spreading the toes and thinking slightly toes down, we can get our stirrup straight and parallel with the ground as well as correctly underneath our seat. Fourth, I want the inside of my leg on the horse rather than the back of my calf or foot. By thinking about grounding my toes down on the stirrup I can have a little bit of heel out rather than toes in feeling so I don't bunch my toes together. Fifth, I want to



Jessica helps a student with foot position

have my inside leg to have the point of the toes and the point of the knee aligned. This allows my thighs to be nice and long and perpendicular to the ground. Lastly, for the outside leg I want the leg to reside slightly further back with the hip and heel aligned. I then keep my hamstrings engaged to hold my leg in place underneath me and by thinking very lightly, toes down, I keep my stirrup nicely straight and in a correct position which allows me to feel my horse with a consistent light contact.

The "Toes Down" concept helps me have a light, consistent contact under my lower calves and ankles, which then allows me to easily monitor how engaged and over the back my horse is. If the hind legs are out behind, I don't feel that nice round horse underneath that part of my leg. I want both hindlegs under me creating a feeling that the horse gets squeezed through my lower legs and in front of the

saddle making the hind end feel shorter and the front end longer and fuller out in front of me. The horse's barrel underneath the saddle feels like there is a beach ball under it and I am continuously creating it with my lower leg inviting the hind legs to step up underneath me. I had a great trainer named Rachel Saavedra who used to say, "Imagine the horse is a beanie baby and you want to fill the neck and chest all the way to the head full of beans. You do it by gathering the beans from behind you pushing the beans up." I use this metaphor a lot when I teach because it is a wonderful visual image, and it helps my students recognize the feeling of the horse under their lower legs.

Jessica Miller is a USDF Gold Medalist who trains at Woodbridge Farm in Petaluma. She is available for training, lessons, and sales. Visit www.jessicamillerdressage.com for more information and to contact Jessica.

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*All Creatures Great and Small*

Column editor Grant Mill, DVM

Psychological Trauma: The Longest Yard in Rehabilitating the Neglected Horse



Art – Day 1

Art – Day 120

Since Coins to Help Abandoned and Neglected Equines (CHANGE) became a 501(c)3 in 2007, we have had the unique experience of being able to help the Sonoma County Animal Control Department with some of “the worst of the worst” horse cases. Most cases involve criminal abuse or neglect in which horses come into our volunteer-based foster barn rehabilitation network in states of severe emaciation and poor health. CHANGE has had the opportunity to hone its skill in these cases, and many of our successful case outcomes can be viewed on our website: www.sonomachange-program.com. We often receive comments from astonished supporters on our facebook page about how quickly we have physically restored a skinny, beat up shell of an animal into a healthy and vibrant horse. Our approach is no secret: all horses receive proper veterinary care (including blood testing, hoof care, dental work, vaccinations, deworming, and any necessary medications), excellent housing and management, and a high-quality diet. Results include horses like Mindy, pictured here with a sixty-day time elapse between entering the program to being ready for adoption (see figure 1). Because CHANGE maintains ongoing relationships with our horses’ new owners after we have adopted them out, we have had the rare opportunity to follow these horses for extended periods of time. Our observations have concluded that physical rehabilitation is only part of the healing process for an abused or neglected horse. The psychological damage that they incur as a result of their trauma is far reaching and long lasting, and while we can fix their bodies relatively quickly, it can take far longer to heal their minds. This article is intended to help horses in Sonoma County by sharing with readers some of what our horses have taught us about their healing process over the years.

The physical hurdles

Horses that are underweight can, in some cases, regain an optimal body condition in a relatively short amount of time. When assessing body condition, horses are scored on a scale of 1 to 9, 1 being emaciated, 9 being obese (see link to body scale figure accompanying feeding article on p 13). Generally, a body condition score of 5 to 6 is considered ideal, and each body condition score can represent between forty-four and seventy-five pounds, depending on the height and breed of the horse. Therefore, a horse with a body condition score of 1, 2 or 3 is likely to be hundreds of pounds underweight! What is the best way to get them back on track in a safe, yet cost-effective and efficient manner? Here are some tips based on what we have learned:

- Involve your veterinarian in the initial assessment of the horse.



Mindy – Day 1

Mindy – Day 60

He or she can help to determine a treatment course for the horse including blood testing, dental work, parasite control, and a feeding/ nutrition program. Remember: Any assessment made of your animal is essentially a diagnosis, and any recommendations made constitute the prescription of a treatment. All of this can only, and should only be done by a licensed veterinarian. Veterinarians continually undergo extensive training on topics pertaining to managing emaciated horses. For instance, if the horse that you rescue has dental problems, veterinarians can identify and address them early on, which will maximize the horse’s efficiency in gleaning nutrients from feed and by pointing you in the direction of the most appropriate feed for the teeth that the horse has to work with. Similarly, if the horse has a disease or a blood work abnormality, knowing that ahead of time will help steer the course of rehabilitation and allow you to address those specific problems.

- No two horses will be rehabilitated the exact same way. Feed recommendations can be drastically different depending on the nature of the horses’ previous situation. For instance, a horse that had continual access to nutritionally inadequate feed will be managed differently than a horse that survived for a long period of time with no feed at all. One should take caution in simply introducing feed to a malnourished horse without first consulting a veterinarian. The wrong type of feed, or excessive amounts, can induce life-threatening illness in some cases. Furthermore, be prepared to change the feeding program often according to the physical signs that the horse exhibits.
- Gaining weight is about calories. In order to gain weight, the body must be in an anabolic state. But for that to happen, the rate of caloric intake (from food) must exceed the rate of caloric expenditure (from metabolism, exercise, etc). Many people think that feeding some grass hay to underweight horses is the best way to refeed an underweight horse. Well, not from a digestible energy standpoint and not according to published research. Grass hay is actually relatively low in digestible energy but high in carbohydrates (sugar), which is not ideal for a horse trying to regain weight. In many instances, other more appropriate diets are advisable. Also, a calorie saved is a calorie earned. Therefore, weight gain can be assisted not only by increasing caloric intake, but also by limiting caloric expenditure. An example includes blanketing. If a horse is insulated by a blanket in cold weather, it can conserve calories that it other-

wise would have had to burn to keep warm.

- CHANGE has observed in multiple cases of malnourished horses that they will keep their heads down in feed almost continuously for about two weeks before they take a break. Therefore, feeding small meals often may be beneficial.

Mind over matter

As mentioned, the physical endeavors are really the easy part, especially when managed in conjunction with veterinary oversight. But the psychological adaptations that the horse had to make to survive its ordeal are more difficult to change. Here are some of the more salient observations that we have made of abused horses, and ways that we have successfully addressed them:

- Malnourished horses can be food aggressive to both humans and other horses. This makes sense since they have received substandard feed, and in many instances, have had to compete for food. We have found that feeding them separate from other animals, and a frequent and consistent basis is helpful. Also, a striking number of malnourished horses associate feed with pain on account of gastric ulcers that have formed due to empty stomachs, concentrated stomach acid, and stress. Therefore, addressing ulcers may be paramount to breaking the anticipated pain sensation that the horse experiences with hunger pangs. We cannot stress enough how important it is



Bob – another success story

to be consistent down to the minute on the feed schedule. Psychologically, these horses experience terror in not knowing if or when they would eat next. As an aid in restoring their trust in the world, feeding them on an interval that they can rely

on is an essential foundation step towards recovery. Over time (sometimes years), horses that are fed on a routine schedule in a safe environment, usually relax when it comes to food aggression.

- At CHANGE we feel very strongly that every horse should have a set of equipment that is theirs and only theirs. Thanks to generosity on the horse community, CHANGE runs a supply donation program in which all horses in the program get their own blankets, halters/ropes, grooming kit and buckets. We feel that the smells and sight of these items can provide the horse with a sense of grounding and consistency—two elements that are usually lacking or absent in an abusive environment. We make sure that the horse's "stuff" follows it wherever it goes—from rehab to its adoptive home.
- Horses are sentient beings. Time and time again we have experienced them humbly accepting our help in the most passive and gentle manner. It is almost as if they know that they are in trouble and that we are trying to save them. Similarly, they seem to know that they are being taken from the hands of an abuser. It seems as if they are dejected in knowing that they are unwanted. For this reason, we go to great lengths to painstakingly choose suitable adoptive homes for our horses. We have a rigorous screening process that involves applications, interviews, reference checks, and site visits. We try to find "forever" homes to avoid our horses ever feeling rejected again. As a safety net, we have a "revolving door" policy for horses that we adopt out. If, for any reason, an adoptive home can no longer keep a CHANGE horse, the adopters are contractually obligated to return the horse to us.
- Finally, horses with psychological trauma require a faithful commitment from us. If a horse exhibits behavioral problems or vices, sometimes the inclination is to avoid the horse. It is fair to say that, at times, interacting with the horse can be downright frustrating and displeasing. But these are the horses that need the most "hands on" and the extra hours of attention. These animals have a tremendous capacity to forgive. They may not ever forget, but they do not seem to hold a grudge once they can trust that the person helping them now is making a genuine effort. Given the fact that most of these horses have endured years of neglect, it is only logical that they will not let down their defenses overnight. It can take years in some instances, for horses to decide that humans are worth knowing again.

Although some of these observations seem somewhat simple, they are what the sixty-one CHANGE horses have uniformly taught us to be true during our intervention on their behalf. To learn more from them, read their stories at www.sonomachange-program.com.

Dr Grant Miller specializes in large animal practice. In addition to being a full time veterinarian, Dr. Miller founded the SoCo CHANGE program in 2007, which provides ancillary support services to the So. Co. Animal Care and Control Department in cases of equine abuse, neglect, abandonment, and voluntary relinquishment. Dr. Miller also trains animal control officers around the state of California on several subjects involving large-animal husbandry, handling, and case investigation.



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Readers Write

“Bio” Diversity

Written by Chris Ellsworth

Whether you wear a Stetson or a jumping helmet, you are a rider. I'm going to make the case for at least trying the other hat on and diversifying your biography; you'll become an even better rider for it. Simply being exposed to the “hows and whys” of another part of the horse world—seeing what else is possible with horses and the incredible things they do—will expand boundaries and enlarge your perspective on horsemanship. The following is a partial list of things I believe every horseperson should do in his or her life and why.

Go on a serious trail ride in rough country, especially if your whole horse life has been confined by the sand and rails of an arena. Certainly ride an experienced horse with experienced people but be prepared to have your viewpoint on the delicacy of horses challenged. If you ride jumpers you may find your horse's feet get braver by overcoming natural obstacles like a steep trail carved out of boulders with a chest-deep river at the bottom. Likewise, if you're someone who mostly rides out on the trail, ride a really good jumper. All challenges are not found along the trail; the skill, timing, and courage needed on the jump course can help you learn to stay with your horse when riding out.

Go on a pack trip in the mountains AND HELP WITH THE PACKING; along with learning to handle five ropes at once, the importance of having your horse truly broke to lead will become immediately clear to you, as will the necessity of having excellent balance. Good packers are fanatics about balance. I have seen expert packers add pebbles to a load for balance and they seldom have to repack an average load. On the other hand, I have seen average packers who aren't as concerned become experts—at repacking! You'll think back on that the next time you have to realign your saddle.

Ride a mule. This is a must. Everything is the same only different and you will not be able to fool yourself into thinking it's not. A mule won't allow it for one thing and for another, there is too much of a difference to ignore. Riding a mule disabuses the horseperson of the notion that any two equids can be handled the same way. By being so well illustrated, this juxtaposition of differences between subspecies can help a horseperson see the variations between individuals.

Take some Dressage lessons and learn something about nuances and horses. Study classical horsemanship to learn how to see and focus on the smallest details of riding. Also, if riding a mule illustrates the differences in equines, Dressage highlights the similarities. If you look closely there is an element of Classical Dressage in almost every well-done maneuver in any other riding discipline.

Trim a hoof—with proper supervision, of course. Don't be afraid to dig into the nitty-gritty mechanics of your horse. Learning about



Chris and Pancakes

your horse literally from the ground up can help open your mind to thinking about some other areas of your horsemanship that have been easier to ignore than study. It will also make you feel better when it's time to pay your horse shoer again.

Drive a team. It was not so long ago that more folks drove horses than rode them. Working with teams is nearly a lost art but one worthy of preserving. It takes considerable skill and forethought to communicate through the lines to two horses at once. Having fed cattle with teams before, I can tell you that the amount of trust you can develop with a good team is unbelievable and the amount of good judgment a team of drafties can display while your back is turned to pitch hay is phenomenal.

Nearest and dearest to my heart—go work some cattle! Your horse will instinctively know he has a real job. It will give meaning and purpose to all those turns

and stops you ask him to do. It will require you to keep track of multiple animals, directions, and objectives at once and *let go of your intense self-focus*.

Teach yourself and your horse something completely new. Study it, think it through, then just do it. Reopen the window to learning and growth. Don't worry about getting great at it, just let it take the two of you where it will and enjoy the ride.

Chris Ellsworth has spent a lifetime working with horses and riders of all types and kinds, helping both work through their troubles using methods that are “more mental and less spectacular every day.” He will be conducting clinics in Woodside, CA on April 19-20, and Oakland, CA on April 26-27. Contact Sylvie Anacker, asorges@gmail.com or (415) 309-0162 for more information or visit Chris' website at www.chearthorses.com.

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*Sonoma County Artists***Horses R Art:****A Conversation with Artist Melinda Hughes-Berland**

Written by Tiffany MacNeil

While waiting in line at Western Farm Center, a postcard with transcendent horse images by Melinda Hughes-Berland caught my eye. She kindly agreed to share her inspiration and background, to give us a glimpse into the soul of an artist.

In this interview I learned that Melinda got her first horse at age fifteen, and has owned twelve different horses over the years. In 1976, she won the High Point Award from the CSHA riding Clem, her husband's \$100 twelve-year old Heinz 57 horse, who stood 15.2 with four white sox and a blaze. She also owned a wonderful 16.2 Appaloosa from the wild herds of Fallon, Nevada that she turned into her jumper when she was twenty-three. She currently owns a lovely palomino Tennessee Walker named Rio.

Is your art considered photography or painting, or a combination of techniques?

I call my art digital paintings or complex photographic composites. I often combine up to twenty-five layers of photographic images to create a single finished art piece. Often it takes as long to make a digital painting as it would for a painter to paint it! I essentially PAINT in Photoshop.

Do you have any formal schooling or training in art?

I graduated from SSU with a major in Psychology and a minor in Art. After many years of working in photography, I received my National Master's Degree through Professional Photographers of America (PPA). I attended several PPA affiliate schools, including the California Photographic Workshops, West Coast School of Photography, and special seminars given at the Brooks Institute. This is where I really learned about how to use the light correctly and to get good expressions from my clients in my portrait photography. I learned how important image IMPACT, composition, color harmony, and storytelling is. I also learned the importance of always doing my very best for every client.

When did you transition from classic portraiture into art?

I started with photographing horse shows all over the West for many years, including the Tevis Cup (Cougar Rock), then in 1988 took my first classic portraiture class from a brilliant master photographer, Carmen Schettino. About eight years ago, I started experimenting with Photoshop, blending layers and having a lot of fun. With film, I had tried the techniques of sandwiching slides and double exposures. As digital technology progressed, I could start to create very high quality portrait and fantasy equine art images.

Is your art known outside of Sonoma County?

Yes. In 2011, I won fourth place in the International Print Competition and was also awarded Diamond Photographer status through PPA. There were only thirteen photographers that year who received that coveted award internationally. The Diamond status means all four of my print entries went into the national traveling loan collection (getting into Epcot Center).

What do you want the viewer to get from your images?

It is important for me to bring out the spirit, the soul, as well as the personality of the horse. I prefer to photograph them in motion, when they are happiest and most free. I create my art from my heart, soul, and vivid imagination developed from my connection with horses. This vision I get comes from of a deep level of trust

*Stallions of the Gods*

with these lovely creatures, and it is the most rewarding experience I can imagine! My art expresses my love and respect for them.

Where do you get your ideas?

Sometimes in a dream, like Stallions of the Gods (see photo). I envisioned the scene before I shot for it. When I met the Andalusian stallion, Jerte, imported from Spain, I felt he was royalty in his last life. He was the most magnificent animal I had ever met. When he looked at me, he looked into my soul. Such kind, wise eyes. For the creation of Stallions of the Gods, I went to Marin County and then to Sonora to get the backgrounds I envisioned. Later in Photoshop, I kept changing and moving parts around until I felt the image was complete. Sometimes when I have an idea come to me, I'll ask around to see who has beautiful Arabians, or an Andalusian stallion—a match for the picture in my mind's eye. I also create wild animal art, which started with photographing an eight-hour old baby giraffe at Safari West on a visit with Karl Bastian, a friend and former president of the Sonoma County Horse Council.

Any advice that has helped you along in life?

It may be cliché, but the statement that "genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration" applies. Don't give up. Follow your heart. And keep telling yourself that you can do it. Just have a passion for horses and art and you are halfway there!

Melinda is available for portraiture and creating equine fantasies with your horses, and has a large selection of her images for purchase at www.horsesart.com. She teaches Photoshop classes out of her home in Santa Rosa (which doubles as an art gallery of her images). She can be reached at 707-799-5008. For details visit www.hughes-photography.com.

Tiffany MacNeil creates and facilitates inspirational experiences for individuals and groups, with nature and horses as her partners. Her business background, lifelong connection to animals, and involvement with yoga form a diverse collective on which to draw. She is founder of Rocks & Rivers Outdoor Adventures (www.rocksandrivers.com), based in Santa Rosa.



Readers Write

The Karen Chex Story: Part III

Written by Ted Draper

My five-year-old son, Tom, came home from school and noticed that Karen's paddock was empty. He found me and asked, "Where is Karen?" I had to tell him "Karen is in horse heaven and she is no longer hurting." Tears welled up in his eyes and he asked between sobs, "Why did she have to die?" So we walked out to where she was buried.

Talking about Karen, I choked up and was unable to tell Tom about a horse that had taught me many lessons. The time was not right for me to tell the story about this great horse. We stood quietly at her grave for a long time. The burden of Karen's care was lifted from me but I felt the loss of a friend. I knew she was not hurting any more and that gave me consolation.

Karen Chex had been a champion working cow horse and a brood mare. She was admired for her courage and tenacity. The vets at UC Davis hospital felt Karen was just an experiment, and she wouldn't last long with only three legs. When Karen Chex came to the ranch, I knew nothing about her will to live or her attitude or her intelligence. I was hired to do everything possible to help her live enough time to give birth and nurse the foal. According to the vets, we would be lucky if we could keep her other legs healthy for another six months. There was no way her right leg could last fifteen months. Every experiment with a front leg amputee ended within eight months. The Bryants (Karen's owners) had made it clear that she was not to suffer. If she could survive for a year, she was to be as comfortable as possible. The health of her stump and durability of her other legs would determine her fate.

Bob and Katie Bryant, had installed a pipe corral which was to be Karen's new quarters. I had an unobstructed view into her stall and paddock from my bedroom and other rooms that faced the barn. The first thing she did was hop into the stall and check out her new home. After a short time she started pacing back and forth, calling to the other horses, and working herself into lather. I went into her paddock to catch her and she pinned her ears, shaking her head telling me to leave her alone. Boo (Elizabeth) Woolsey, the woman who took care of Karen at the hospital, had told us that she was a woman's horse and she did not like men.

It took two of us to catch her and I felt a little foolish. She could pivot on her hindquarters with such ease or duck away, cutting as if nothing was wrong. Caught, she was gentle and responsive. I tied her up so she wouldn't get all worked-up. After the Bryants left, and the late afternoon shadows grew long, she began to settle down. I let her loose, and she went into the stall and started eating. She seemed content with her new quarters. That evening we were able to sling Karen, clean and scrub the stump, following Boo's step-by-step



Karen Chex and her prosthetic

instructions, and refit the prosthesis. I'll admit at first I was intimidated by Karen's cranky attitude. I soon realized Karen's sour attitude was just a big bluff. A few days later Boo came by and brought more supplies. Karen perked up and I could tell she was happy to see her. There was a special bond between them. The first week we were overly concerned about her welfare. I would check her late at night and early in the morning. Every time I came near her paddock, she would back her ears and grind her teeth just to remind me that I was not welcome. After awhile this

sour attitude became an indication that everything was just fine.

Boo's father, Dr Jack Woolsey, was going to be Karen's vet. He was truly amazed, for he had never seen a horse with three legs live as long as Karen. It had been more than five months since the amputation. He also cautioned us not to expect her to survive for very long. He examined the stump and it appeared healthy. His biggest concern was the durability of the right front leg. Dr Woolsey said Karen's right leg appeared in good shape, and showed no sign of weakness. "It could break down at any time," Dr. Woolsey cautioned. If any kind of hoof or joint problem occurs, call him immediately. He warned us not to get our hopes too high about Karen making it to the projected foaling date.

We were optimistic about Karen. I'd known her for two weeks and I could tell she had intelligence, strength of character, and a determination to survive. Along with a well-muscled body, good leg conformation, and strong bones, these were the mental characteristics that would keep her alive. We had no experience with taking care of a three-legged pregnant mare, so we were learning day by day. I felt in my heart that she could make it.

Days slipped into weeks and then months. Karen would still sour her ears, grind her teeth, and shake her head when I came near. When I walked into her paddock I would tell her to knock it off and take hold of the halter and immediately her attitude changed. Each morning I would take her out to graze and she would spend an hour or two and then start heading slowly back to her paddock. The added walking would be good for the health of the foal. She did not walk but used her hind legs. She supported herself, and then hopped on the right front leg. Then supporting herself on her front legs, she would move her hind legs forward. One day I was watching her graze and noticed the baby kick out. The baby was very active. Karen looked around at her side and then to me as if to say: "Look I'm going to have a baby." She seemed as content as any brood mare. She was beginning to tolerate me and I understood her and went along with her cranky nature.

One morning in late fall, I went out to her paddock and she did

not greet me with her typical nasty nature. She was just holding up her prosthesis and neighed to me. I knew something was wrong, so I stripped off the bandage. The nasty smell was the same and I couldn't see anything different. As I cleaned the end of the stump, I felt a sharp point, and I pick at the object. It was a small piece of bone that was working its way to the surface. This really scared me. I didn't find any more pieces of bone, but thought the end of the stump had begun to fragment. I called Dr Woolsey. After I refitted the prosthesis, Karen could feel everything was all right. She was back to her old self, but she did not want go out to graze. Boo had warned us that occasionally a small piece of bone will break from the end of the stump and work its way out. As precaution we wanted Dr Woolsey to take xrays. He saw no fragmentation or deterioration of the stump. Perhaps the walking had caused the problem with the bone chip. As time went by, Karen and I began to bond. She was not a horse that would seek attention. Her only sign of acknowledgment was her sour ears and her menacing dark eyes if anyone came too close. We settled into a routine of changing dressings every third day and changing the bandages on the other legs every week. The right front leg was holding up well.

Time was getting close for Karen to foal and she was very big in the middle. Now she stayed close to her paddock and sometimes stayed in her stall all day. I left the gate open so she could graze. Like all expecting mares she was uncomfortable. After her morning hay, I would lead her out to the small field, but before we reached the field she would stop and refuse to go any farther. She would just stand and look at the other horses for a while and then slowly hop back to her paddock. That was all the exercise she would get per day, which I felt was not enough for a pregnant mare. When she got back to her paddock, she would drink and then stand in

the doorway so she could see out side. She liked to watch me ride in the arena or see the other horses around the ranch. She lived in the center of the action and I believed that gave her a sense of participation. When she wanted her dressings changed she would stand in the doorway and paw the ground with her prosthesis, knowing I would immediately attend to her leg. Karen knew that I understood her habits. Karen knew me as well. She would get real irritated when she saw I was getting ready for a horse show. She wanted to go.

When Karen first came to the ranch, we had a few people call to see how well Karen had adapted. After a few months we got no more calls except Boo and the Bryants. Boo was now in vet school out east. As Karen approached her one-year anniversary and her foaling date, we received a few calls from people inquiring about Karen and the pregnancy. Karen had now lived longer than any other horse amputee. She was making medical history.

I was now checking the udder daily. She became very irritated the closer she got to the projected foaling date. Dr Woolsey came out and checked her. He felt everything was normal and should foal with no problem. Boo wanted to be here for the foaling, and so did the Bryants. Karen spent more and more time lying down. We moved her into the foaling stall during the night and out to her paddock during the day. We dressed the stump every third day. We wrapped all the legs in new bandages and wrapped her tail, and she was ready. When the milk had filled into the nipples, we let folks know it would be any time. The word spread that Karen was going to foal, and the phone never stopped ringing, as many of Karen's fans called. When wax appeared on the nipples, I told everyone it would be within the next twenty-four hours. In the early morning hours of the next day a little colt, Miracle Chex, was born.

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Readers Write

Old Man

Written by Beverly Coons

I was in a state: stomach tight, sweating, heart pounding. And for once, my husband was driving like an old woman. We had to turn back after starting to Napa, because I forgot my riding boots! Now we were late. What if my riding instructor tired of waiting? What if I missed my chance? I had waited forty-six years for this day.

We found my instructor, and followed her to the little miniature ranch where he lived. I tried to breathe, tried to make amenities with the owner, but edged toward to barn, toward the stall that housed him. And there he was, taller than I expected, looking at me with kind brown eyes as if to say, "So who are you?" I was lost, lost in those eyes. I hadn't ridden him yet, hadn't led him yet, hadn't even touched him yet, and I was lost. If I had had a way, I would not have left without him. I didn't even know the asking price. Didn't know if he was sound. Didn't matter.

We went through the protocol of horse buying. Trainer rides horse, prospective buyer rides horse—even jumps horse (even falls off horse). Both rides were awkward. His stride was much bigger than I was used to as a beginning rider. Didn't matter.

He came to Oakridge for a two week trial. I almost lived at the barn. I spent money on him: new halter, new blanket, new brushing boots, new grooming equipment. Then we had the vet check. Front feet had some navicular changes, not sound on a circle on hard ground. Not going to ride him on a circle on hard ground. Didn't matter.

Paid for him. Wept with joy. A horse! My horse!

Thus began my seventeen years (so far) with my sweet, stately, gentle chestnut, named Wyndham. We struggled to master basic Dressage, enjoyed happy gallops in the field, and became a team at jumping. When he had to retire from Eventing, we discovered trail riding. He was a gracious host to any other horse that accompanied him in the trailer. And he was also quite happy to be out just with me, even when I took him places no horse should go (sorry Wyndham!). He would sigh, lower his head and pick his way carefully. I would get off and walk beside him, apologizing and promising never to go that way again. When we "retired" from trail riding, we discovered "picnics" in the pasture were fun, or just a snuggle at dinner time.

Our world had continued to narrow with the encroachment of Cushing's and the increased problems from arthritis in his neck. In fact, I thought, that at twenty-nine, he was just going to be my



Beverly and the stately Wyndham

friend who I fed, brushed, walked with. But on our 17th anniversary (Dec 13th), I decided I must climb on his back again. It had been a year since I was warned not to ride him. I put on the helmet I had never taken home, led him into the arena and over to the fence. He obediently stood while I hoisted my sixty-three year old body up on the rail, cautioned him to stand still, and swung a leg over his lovely broad back. Ah! Home again. He responded quickly to my nudge and cluck, and

swung into that surprisingly big walk. Ears pricked, eyes bright, head up. His whole body shouted, "We're goin' for a ride! Me and my mom! We're workin' together again!" Funny old man. I had to put a little pressure on his halter to make sure he didn't break into a trot!

I hope to make this a weekly event. If not, it doesn't matter. Just owning him, knowing him, has been such a gift. And every extra gentle lap around the arena will be icing on the cake. The picnics will continue, and snuggles at dinner time remain priceless. Just being with him is what matters, still lost in those lovely brown eyes.



Bev Coons is a retired middle school English teacher, enjoying her new "career" as volunteer, gardener, and horse woman.





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Readers Write

The Papaya Prescription

Written by Wanda Smith

Two of my horses had been acting strangely. My cutting mare was so lame I hardly rode her for seven months; my Dressage gelding often levitated when cinched up. An equine chiropractor told me she thought my gelding had ulcers. She suggested UlcerGard, but when I winced at the price, she said to try papayas. I did and within a week, he was fine. I then tried papaya on my mare with the same results. I had never heard of this treatment so I researched it on the internet and found the following information.

Equine stomach ulcers create a painful condition that can reduce a horse's performance and can even lead to death. Papaya is often successfully used to treat equine ulcers. Papaya aids digestion in part by increasing mucous secretion in the mouth, esophagus, and stomach. Papaya also initiates a thickening of the horse's natural stomach lining which provides protection against excess acid. It gives damaged tissues a chance to heal and helps prevent new ulcers. In fast action performance horses, the esophageal mucous protection can help keep reflux from damaging the esophagus. In an ulcer study published in the March 2005 issue of *The [national] Horse Journal*, "rapid relief within three to five days" was reported from feeding papayas. The same study reported that the other major natural products for digestive problems, herbal blends, worked considerably more slowly. A race horse that had such severe ulcers it could not race, even after many weeks on an acid reducing pharmaceutical, had a clear endoscopic exam after three weeks on papaya, and then won a stakes race.

Unlike most of the conventional anti-ulcer treatments, papaya is safe for long-term use. The calcium/magnesium antacid type products work by neutralizing acid and coating the stomach wall with a chalky protective layer. However, if papaya are feed over an extended period, resulting high levels of magnesium can interfere with the absorption of calcium. Keep this in mind, because low calcium levels can cause nervousness, bone changes, weak and aching muscles, and abnormal heart rhythms.

The expensive pharmaceuticals which reduce acid production are great for most acute ulcer symptoms. However, acid is needed to control and modify bacteria in the gut. If the acid levels are low for many months, "bad" bacteria, particularly *Salmonella*, can over populate the digestive tract and create conditions for colic. Furthermore, prolonged low acid levels can cause poor absorption of vitamin B12, inefficient utilization of dietary protein, food allergies, bloating, and foul manure.

Papaya is also useful in conjunction with administration of certain medicines. Many barn managers "prep" the horse with a half dose of papaya to trigger extra mucous in the digestive tract lining just before they administer an anti-inflammatory capable of damaging the stomach lining. They then administer the anti-inflammatory, and follow up with another half dose of papaya to wash away the foul taste of the medicine.

The mucous producing characteristic of papaya is complemented by the enzyme it contains, papain. Papain closely resembles the

digestive enzyme pepsin. Old horses benefit from papaya because its enzyme breaks down what their less efficient digestive tract can't and they gain weight. Papaya also helps foals who get "scours" when the hormones in their mother's milk changes during the first heat presents the foal's digestive tract with a new challenge, for which it does not have the appropriate microbe population. The papain enzyme picks up where the foal's own system is insufficient.

Cribbing often decreases when horses have papaya daily. About half of adult cribbers also reduce or cease the habit. While most positive effects of papaya are evident in a week, in the case of a confirmed cribber, it can take up to a month for improvement. (Cribbing associated with stomach pain or missing nutrients is most responsive to papaya.) Because papaya is sweet, it is also ideal for camouflaging unpleasant medicines.

Papaya is also a mild "blood thinner". The increased circulation associated with the slight anticoagulant effect may account for the very shiny coats and high incidence of dapples on many horses given papaya.

Note that papaya should not be administered to a horse that is on an anticoagulant, as there may be an additive affect. Some stages of pregnancy can be complicated by bleeding, so it is unwise to administer papaya to a mare who is pregnant or who is about to be bred.

As with any medication or supplement, consult your vet or equine health practitioner for advice.

P.S. I give each horse the pulp (and the seeds) of half a papaya a day, mashed and mixed with their pellets.



*Wanda has owned horses for over four decades, managed a Quarter Horse breeding ranch in the Santa Cruz Mountains and in Guerneville, and showed Cutting horses. She has recently branched out into the Dressage world with her horse Chime. Wanda is the author of *Horses of the Wine Country* and the Executive Director of CEPEC (www.cepec.us).*



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