

The Mane Bit

www.harrogatehills.com

905-473-3847

Winter 2008

Harrogate Hills went

to the Mount Albert



Santa Claus

Many thanks to Grampa, Tobias, Scout



Parade!

and their support team!



We thank **Gary's Signs** for the Harrogate Banners! For signs of all kinds call Gary at 905-252-6414.

A FEW THOUGHTS

The other day I was in a coffee shop in the west end of Toronto. There were some students working they who were talking rather loudly amongst themselves. When I finally cleared my throat to announce my presence they looked up and one of the more disgruntled ones asked me, with no particular enthusiasm, what it was that I wanted. When my coffee was prepared she plunked it on the counter, took my money and listlessly told me to have a nice day. Somehow I doubted her sincerity. As I went back to the truck with my coffee I found myself reflecting on all the students who work at Harrogate Hills.

It has been an eventful year for the farm, with a lot of unanticipated changes. But with change has come many unexpected and pleasant surprises. Probably the biggest, and definitely the best surprise for me, was to re-discover what a wonderful group of people work here. So many parents have come to me in recent months to tell me how impressed they are with the staff at Harrogate Hills so I guess it is time for me to come clean and admit that I am pretty impressed as well.

I have seen first hand how much knowledge they have accumulated over the years and I have been pleased by their ability to transfer that knowledge to new students. It is like having six instructors in a lesson!

Each beginner student gets individual attention from endlessly patient mentors which makes the learning curve so much less steep, especially for the younger students. They are attentive and intuitive around the horses and quick to help whenever necessary. I know I can safely turn my back on some students to concentrate on others and the staff are right there, on top of things, ensuring that the riding experience is a safe and fun one for everyone.

I also find the way they all go out of their way to make visitors or new students feel welcome so refreshing, I have overheard them taking visitors on a tour of the barn and their

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welcoming banter is warm and sincere. I have heard them introduce new students to the "system" at Harrogate Hills and I have listened to them as they carefully guide the new rider through the process of grooming and tacking up.

Of course, if this was all they did, it would still be remarkable but this is just what the visitors, students and parents see. As any one who has worked with horses know, there is a lot of hard work that goes into maintaining this many horses. Supplies of feed, like grain and krunch, need to be refilled; hay from the loft needs to be moved to various locations in the barn; water and feed buckets and stalls need to be cleaned daily and the aisles and equipment must be kept clean and organized. The horses also need to be fed and feed has to be prepared for the next meal. Hay has to be put out in the field for the next day and water troughs are cleaned and re-filled. Just steady work, work, work. An yet they do it all in the most cheerful, responsible manner.



I'm ready to eat again!

I am a firm believer in the fact that any job worth doing is worth doing to the best of your ability. Happily it would seem that the students who work for Harrogate Hills share this ethic. I know they will all move on one day and undoubtedly go on to do great things with their lives. I know this because they are so responsible, hard working and serious about their job here. I look forward to being able to say, "I knew them when . . .".

CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS

A **Harrogate Hills Gift Voucher** would always be welcome! These come in any amount and can be redeemed for lessons, camp or the extensive line of Harrogate clothing.

Talk to Pat for further details.



There is still time for you to pick up a **Harrogate Hills Calendar** for that last minute Christmas gift.

Christine Bennis has taken some great photos of horses you know and love and incorporated them into a 2009 calendar! \$20.00 each

Give her a call at 905-473-9742 – or catch her at the barn – before Wednesday, December 17 if you need them in time for Christmas.

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FEEL LIKE RIDING OVER THE HOLIDAYS?



If you are interested in further perfecting your riding skills, you may want to have a lesson or a practice ride over the Christmas Break. Talk to Pat to arrange this – daytime only please!

Fergus



NOT A HARROGATE PICTURE!



But – do you think that perhaps Tobias would accommodate this many riders?

**SUMMER WILL
SOON BE HERE
IT'S TIME TO
THINK ABOUT
SUMMER CAMP!
REGISTER SOON
TO BE SURE YOU
GET THE DATES
YOU REALLY WANT**

15% Early Bird Discount

when paid in full by January 31, 2009

HARROGATE HILLS



The Mane Bit SHOWS 2008



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It's hard to be humble!



Would you like to see these pictures in colour?
Go to www.harrogatehills.com and check out
The Mane Bit on line.



Obviously a good time was had by everyone. We look forward to seeing even more talent (2 legged and 4 legged) at the shows in 2009!

Many thanks to Christine Benns for the great photos.

HOW LONG DOES A HORSE LIVE?

This is a frequently asked question. It is somewhat like asking "how long is a piece of string?" so I spent a wet Saturday afternoon consulting that know-it-all Google on the subject.

Wikipedia has a short, concise answer - *The expected life span of a horse or pony is approximately twenty to thirty years.*

The Guinness Book of Records believes that Old Billie, a Cleveland Bay cross eastern horse born in 1760, lived to the incredible age of 62.

Yahoo claims it depends on the breed. They say that miniature horses are being trained as guide horses for the blind and disabled, instead of dogs, because they could live about 40 years. They go on to say breeds that are slower to mature (warm bloods) seem to live longer than Thoroughbreds (hot bloods) which mature faster. Morgans and Lipizzaners have a longer lifespan and ponies can live to be as old as forty or more. (It looks as though Pebbles could be around for quite a while!)

Petplace delves a bit deeper and credits preventive medicine for increased longevity. You have probably heard the term "long in the tooth" which comes from the practice of determining a horse's age from the length of his teeth. In the wild horses spend most of their time grazing and the harsh stems of the grasses slowly but surely grind the teeth down, This is OK as long as their teeth continue to grow. However by the time the horse reaches its late teens or early twenties the teeth stop growing. The horse, in the wild, continues to graze until the teeth wear down completely so that he becomes weaker and weaker and probably falls victim to a predator.

If you have ever helped feed the Harrogate horses you will know that Kerry no longer has hay or carrots, instead he eats alfalfa cubes, grain and krunch which all have to be soaked in water to make them much easier for his

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stumpy, old teeth to cope with. He had started to choke on the hay, carrots and dry food as he is no longer able to chew them properly.

You do not often hear of a horse suffering high blood pressure or heart attacks (except for the occasional race horse or competitive cross-country horse which has been pushed past its limit). Generally their respiratory system stands up well to the test of time – they may develop heaves as a result of dust, molds and allergies – but their lung function does not generally deteriorate with age as happens with mere mortals.

Muscles and bones tend to improve with use, but the joints are less able to repair themselves; once arthritic changes appear they are not reversible but can sometimes be managed with veterinary help.



A horse can be a girl's best friend

On a personal note, we recently had to make a very hard decision. Sunny was a 19 year old Thoroughbred, we had owned him for ten years. We did know, when we bought him, that his knee joints were not all they should have/could have been, but his good looks and personality won us over. He loved to work and always had something to teach us, but over the last couple of years he was tripping more and more often. It seemed it was only a matter of time before he fell down and would not be able to get back up. So, rather than have this

happen in the middle of the winter, on the ice, in a snowstorm, and have to wait hours for a vet to arrive, we made the decision. It was like losing our best friend, but it was the best decision for him.

On her business-like days Pat will tell you that she gives her horses 365 days to recover from whatever ails them. This seems more than fair. However these 365 days are frequently extended. Let it be known that, at Harrogate Hills, these decisions are never made easily.



SHIVERING

Don't be too alarmed if you find a horse shivering on a bitterly cold day, but do take it as a sign that you may need to alter his management to keep him a bit warmer.

When temperatures drop rapidly, the horse's central nervous system directs each major muscle group to set off a single vigorous contraction. A fraction of a second later, nerves in the muscle determine it is too tense and fire a command to half the contraction. This cycle continues at an incredibly fast rate, about 10 to 20 times per second, resulting in shivering. All this muscle action is converted to heat, keeping the horse warm, but at a very high cost to energy stores.

If you discover your horse shivering on a particularly cold and windy day, it's probably not cause for concern. On the other hand, if he seems to have trouble handling the cold over several days, he may be depleting vital resources. In this case he probably needs a blanket and/or better shelter, along with more hay.

Equus, December 2008

The Mane Bit MY FIRST HORSE SHOW



With my 40th birthday fast approaching, I thought that I was pretty much done with what I considered to be "dangerous" activities. Oh, sure, it was fine for my daughter Nikki to be riding, younger bones and all that, but after watching her riding for four years, when the opportunity presented itself, I shocked myself by agreeing to give it a try. I thought why not, I could check it out and if I didn't like it I could always try something else.

Well, that was three years ago and I am still riding. I absolutely love it. I enjoy a freedom when I am riding that I have not experienced with any other activity. All thoughts and worries about the regular stuff are gone and my complete concentration is on what I'm doing. Although I understand the concepts, the practical application while actually riding the horse sometimes leaves a little to be desired. The quest for the connection with the horse is exciting and frustrating at the same time.

For those of you who know me, my opinion is that Sadie is the best and "the most beautiful horse in the barn!!". Plus she's got a little bit of an attitude, so we have good rides and bad rides and I have even been thrown off a few times, but she is still my favourite.

The idea of participating in a schooling show was outrageous to me but in some strange way, very exciting. Everyone kept saying that it was just for "fun", and after witnessing the ladies from my class (the Barn Babes, as they are known) go in a few of the previous shows, I felt it was my turn, so I signed up to be in the October Show.

After gathering all the things I thought I would need, having some experience getting Nikki

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ready for her shows, I headed to the barn on show day. The weather was a mixture of rain and sleet – I could tell right away that the horses were going to be very interesting in the arena.

I really didn't get too much time to think about being in the show, since I was helping in the barn that day. It wasn't until I went to get Sadie ready that it came to me exactly what I was doing. By the time she was tacked up and I was ready, I could barely breath and panic had set in.

After trying to behave normally during the warm up, the light rain outside turned into sleet against the barn roof which made the horses and me a little more nervous (the pumpkins didn't help either). Sadie and I were just getting used to everything when I heard the dreaded words, "You are now being judged!!" My hands began to shake. My first thought was "this is supposed to be fun", my second "wrong diagonal again. Get the heels down" my third was "you can do this - it's just like a lesson" and before I could have another thought the first class was over. What a blur.

Needless to say, my placement was a little discouraging, but after a few encouraging words from James (my husband), Nikki (my daughter) and Pat, I was able to slow the shaking in my hands and start concentrating on the next class.

It went much better; I could even recognize that there were spectators in arena. (I missed those during the first class). Although I caught myself on the wrong diagonal again, I was able to correct it and before I knew it the flat portion of the class was over. But it was the Hack class and there was a jump to be done. I knew that we hadn't jumped for a while in our regular class but I was thinking that we would get a test run. Nope. We went right to judging. As I watched the other competitors, all Pat's jumping instructions ran through my head at lightening speed and before I knew it, it was my turn. As I came around the corner to the jump my one thought was "Please don't let me

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fall off!!' Sadie was spectacular! It was maybe our best jump together up to that point. Good enough for the red ribbon. Things were looking up.

The final class was the obstacle course. Finally – the fun part. I really enjoyed watching everyone else go through the course and since Sadie is not known for her bursts of speed. I thought we should just try to make sure we hit all of the elements. I think the only way it could have been faster was if the pylon had a longer crop in it – hanging off the side of Sadie as far as I could go and still missing the crop makes me laugh even now.

Overall the show was a fantastic experience and if you remove all the nerves it really was a lot of fun.

Many thanks to the staff, Pat and my fellow riders for their support and encouragement. I'm not sure if I will do it again, but I will certainly continue riding . . . and wait for the announcement of the next show in the spring.

"Cheers" and "Heels Down" – Donna Pelrine

DID YOU KNOW . . . ?



The name hippopotamus came from the Greek words "hippos", meaning horse, and "potamus", meaning river. Though the hippo spends most of the day in the water, it is more closely related to the pig than the horse.

Hippos like to lie in the sun on their bellies close to shore. They are surprisingly agile and climb steep banks each night to graze on grass. Despite its stocky shape and short legs, the hippo can easily outrun a human and have been clocked at 48 km/h. The hippopotamus is one of the most aggressive animals in the world.

If you know why this ungainly, not very pretty, stubby legged animal was named after the horse, please write an article for the next edition of The Mane Bit!