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# The Mane Bit

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[www.harrogatehills.com](http://www.harrogatehills.com)

905-473-3847

Summer/Fall 2009

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## HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO LEARN TO RIDE?

One of the most difficult questions to answer is one that is frequently asked by beginners. At the start of their riding career they are curious to know "how long will it take to learn to ride?"

The reason this is a difficult question is because people have such a different idea as to what riding actually is. The person who goes on a trail ride may feel that they know how to ride simply because they successfully manage to arrive back at the stable at the same time as the horse. Another might believe they know how to ride because they can convince the horse, however crudely, to walk, trot, canter and perhaps even jump over a small fence. Still another may see Olympic riders and wonder if that is the ultimate goal.

Riding has a fairly clear, recorded history beginning with the writings of Xenophon in 380 B.C. Although many harsh, cruel things were experimented with after that time, the Renaissance of riding began to occur in the 1600's. Pluvinel is credited with re-establishing the connection between individual, kind treatment and the successful training of the horse. At this time Xenophon's writings were re-evaluated with a new appreciation for the understanding he had shown regarding the nature of the horse

Though selective breeding has helped the elite equine athlete produce performances that Xenophon would have found astonishing, it is a fact that the horse has not changed substantially in his mental makeup. He has the same fears and insecurities as his ancestors and he still seeks confidence and leadership from his human partners.

At Harrogate we believe that in order to bring out the best in horses, riders must bring out the best in themselves. Through a logical program of practice and theory the rider learns not only to control his physical self but also his emotional self.

But still there is the question.....how long will it take to learn how to ride? Many sports – swimming, figure skating, martial arts – have a system of badges or belts to reflect a proven level of competence and (just as importantly) an inner journey that never truly ends. Each badge or belt achieved is truly an accomplishment worthy of respect.

At Harrogate Hills Riding School, beginning in September, we are going to offer a program that allows riders to have a yearly opportunity to see more clearly where they are on their riding journey. The requirements for each level will be clearly defined and the testing will take place in February each year. In order to qualify to take this test, the rider must

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have taken lessons for a minimum of five of the previous six months. Should re-testing be necessary there will be an opportunity for this the following June.

Beginning with the first level and their first experience with the horse, Harrogate riders will be able to continue to map their progress through a system of badges for each level. In the beginning the horse is the teacher and as the rider continues to develop he will reach the point where, with patience, skill and theoretical knowledge, he will be able to share the teaching role with the horse.

Alois Podhajsky (Olympic medalist and Chief Rider at the Spanish Riding School in Vienna from 1939-1965) once said:

*“Equestrian art, perhaps more than any other, is closely related to the wisdom of life. Many of the same principles may be applied as a line of conduct to follow. The horse teaches us self control, constancy and the ability to understand what goes on in the mind and the feelings of another creature, qualities that are important throughout our lives. Moreover, from this relationship with his horse the rider will learn that only kindness and mutual understanding will bring about achievements of highest perfection.”*

I am so proud of the way Harrogate Hills' students ride, their perspective and their over all compassion and understanding of the horse. We are very excited about this program as our new level system will give students an opportunity each year to see how far they have progressed. Not only will it illuminate the path we are on but hopefully it will become a catalyst for a life time of learning.

Pat

## RIGHT AND WRONG



When feeding a horse a carrot, apple or piece of crunch keep your hand flat so he does not mistake your finger for a carrot!



Never kneel around a horse – always crouch so that you can spring up and away at a moment's notice (left). Focus on the horse – if this patient horse on the right decided to kick out at a fly, you wouldn't even see it coming.



No helmet, halter tied around the neck, more worried that her friend sees her than what the horse might do next – you would never see this happening at Harrogate Hills!

### THE RAFFLE

It all started when Naomi Jennings very generously donated an amazing piece of her stained glass art work. There are always far too many jobs, large and small, that need to be done on the property and she believed we could raise some money to put towards these projects. Very close to \$700 was raised. Thank you so much Naomi. Thanks also to those who purchased tickets!

The winners were as follows:

**Jean Robichaud** – stained glass by Naomi Jennings

**Janis Harper** – Introduction to Sailing for two people donated by Rick Butler of Grassroots Sailing

**Anne Sprincies** – two framed photos donated by Russell Dalby.

If you would like something immortalized in glass, contact Naomi at 905-853-6699, or go to [www.motionglassworks.com](http://www.motionglassworks.com)

Feel like learning to sail or joining this unique club? Call Rick Butler, Grassroots Sailing, 905-252-7256 or go to [www.grassrootssailing.ca](http://www.grassrootssailing.ca)

### SAFETY TIPS

- When returning your horse to his stall always make sure you bolt/clip the door closed.
- The bars should always be placed across the open barn doors just in case a horse gets loose in the barn.
- Remember Pebbles and Hollywood can get **under** the bars so please pay extra special attention to closing their stall doors.

### DO YOU KNOW THE RULES OF THE ARENA?

How close can I ride to the other horses?

- There should always be a horse's length ahead of and behind the horse you are riding. It is not a good idea to pass a horse in the arena – if you need to find another space it is better to circle.

Who has the right of way?

- A horse that is cantering has priority on the track over a trotting horse. A horse that is trotting has priority over a walking horse. If you need to slow down or stop be sure to get off the track and go towards the centre of the arena to avoid being rear ended. If you meet a horse coming towards you, be sure to pass each other "left to left" as you would when driving a car on the road.

How do I avoid being run over when entering the arena?

- Shout "**DOOR**" when you are at the entrance, then wait long enough to check there is nothing coming.

What are all those letters on the walls and why are they there?

- These are the basic letters used for riding figures in the dressage ring. They also make it easier for your instructor to explain where she wants you to turn while you are learning to ride. The letters are **AKEHCMBF** – an easy way to remember them is **All King Edward's Horses Can Make Big Fences**. The centre of the arena is always called **X** and is half way between **E** and **B**.

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## **OH – TO BE A HARROGATE HORSE!**

Every summer the horses in the big field look forward to exploring new pastures where the grass is long and lush.



They are excited to go over to the new field for the first time.



*(Many thanks to Christine Benns who took these photos from the safety of Pat's truck parked in the middle of the field.)*



They love to relax and eat as much as they possibly can!



At the end of the day they are just as excited to come back for their supper that is waiting for them in their nice clean stalls!



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## SUMMER CAMP 2009



It certainly looks as though horses and campers enjoyed their 2009 camp experience.



**For the first time ever there will also be an adult camp this year! It will run from Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup> to Friday, August 28<sup>th</sup>. There are a limited number of spaces – check with Pat to see if there is still room for you!**



### USE OF THE AIDS

You have probably heard of the “aids” used when riding. Do you understand what this means? Put simply we are “aiding” or helping the horse to understand our requests.

There are different types of aids, **natural** (seat, legs, hands, weight) and **artificial** or **auxilliary** (voice, whip, spurs).

The aids can be used in the following ways:

- Yielding/asking aids
- Non-yielding aids
- Regulating/guarding aids
- Auxilliary aids

When using the **yielding/asking aids** it is important to treat your reins as a pair – they should be the same length and used together to obtain halts, half-halts and to change pace, as well as to improve the carriage of the horse and the contact you have with the horse. You should never pull on the reins but rather think of it as a non-allowing contact. Every asking aid must be followed by a yielding (giving) aid.

A **non-yielding aid** would be used in conjunction with bracing your back and forward driving leg aids. They should help the horse go “on the bit” or become “round”.

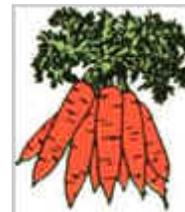
**Regulating/guarding aids** complement the action of the inside asking rein to obtain flexion. You might put your outside leg in a “guarding position” just behind the girth to prevent the hind quarters swinging out. A sideways or open rein would be used for turns.

### HEATHER AND KERRY



The hardest thing about animals is that they cannot live for ever. At the end of June it became necessary to have Heather and Kerry ‘put down’. They were both over thirty years old and patiently taught many people to ride in their time. They were the best of friends and could always be found together in the field – at least they were able to enjoy the new grass this spring.

They are missed by everyone who knew them.



#### SAFETY TIP

If you experience an unscheduled dismount (*fall off*) it is a good idea to remain lying on the ground until you are sure there are no horses feet nearby. The horse will always do its very best to avoid hitting you and keeping a low profile, with your head down, can only help the situation.

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## Hidden Proverb Puzzle

Find all the **Parts of a Horse** words in the puzzle below. Circle each letter individually. Words can appear forwards, backwards, horizontally, vertically and diagonally. When finished, the leftover uncircled letters will spell out a proverb.

- |              |              |            |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| BACK         | FLANK        | LOIN       |
| BELLY        | FEET         | MANE       |
| BODY         | FOREHEAD     | POLL       |
| BROAD        | FORELEG      | POWERFUL   |
| CHEST        | FROG         | PROPORTION |
| COAT         | GASKIN       | SHAPE      |
| CONFORMATION | GIRTH        |            |
| SHOULDER     |              |            |
| CREST        | GULLET       | STRAIGHT   |
| CROUP        | HAUNCH       | TAIL       |
| EARS         | HINDQUARTERS | TEETH      |
| ELBOW        | HOOVES       | THICK      |
| ERGOT        | HORSESHOES   | WIDE       |
| FEATURES     | JOINT        | WITHERS    |

N	E	K	C	I	H	T	H	G	I	A	R
V	E	E	R	G	O	T	E	E	F	N	A
H	L	O	E	S	E	O	S	L	K	I	I
I	G	A	S	E	G	H	B	E	L	L	Y
N	O	I	T	R	O	P	O	R	P	U	L
D	I	F	R	U	T	K	H	O	O	L	G
Q	R	S	L	T	C	E	W	F	V	A	I
U	H	D	N	A	H	E	C	S	T	E	D
A	E	C	B	E	R	R	F	R	P	Y	S
R	C	O	N	F	O	R	M	A	T	I	O
T	O	H	U	U	O	C	H	E	S	T	E
E	A	L	P	G	A	S	K	I	N	M	O
R	T	F	O	R	E	H	E	A	D	A	U
S	E	O	H	S	E	S	R	O	H	T	M

*(Thanks to Horsepower, July/August 2008 for this puzzle)*

Answer to puzzle on page 8.

## DRESSAGE AT BLUE STAR

Over the summer we took two trips to Blue Star to participate in their schooling level dressage shows.



*Erin and Cirrus*

Erin Harper took Cirrus who she has trained from a yearling. Cirrus took everything in her stride and came away with several first place ribbons. Congratulations to Erin and Cirrus!



*Heather and Rocky*



*Geoff and Tobias*

Heather Woods took Rocky to his first show. Rocky went up the road like a pro but he was not sure he wanted to be a show horse once he entered the ring. However, he came into his own and was close to perfect for the second class of the second trip. We look forward to great things in the future from this horse and rider!

Geoff Bishop joined us with Tobias in August. It was the first time they had entered the dressage ring, they did a great job and came home with a 3<sup>rd</sup> place ribbon. Well done!

If anyone else is interested in participating in a dressage show please let Pat know.

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*Christine Benn  
Photography*  
combining art,  
nature,  
and the majestic horse

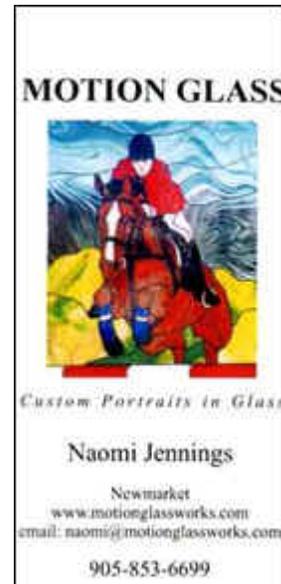
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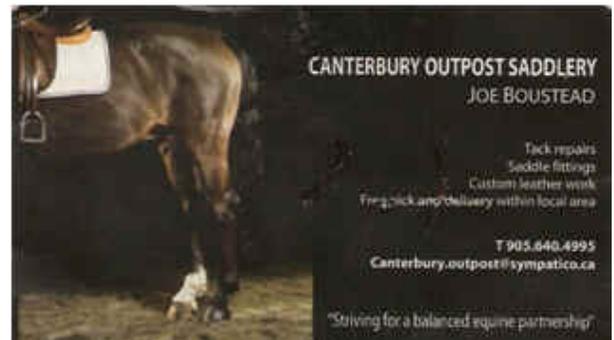
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"Striving for a balanced equine partnership"

**Answer to the Proverb Puzzle:**  
*NEVER LOOK A GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH*

