



The Mane Bit

www.harrogatehills.com

905-473-3847

Summer 2003

TALES FROM HARROGATE

Many years ago, at The University of Toronto Riding School, the powers that be decided that in order to serve all of the University community, we would have to offer trail rides as well as riding lessons. Against our better judgment, the staff, armed only with our loyal school horses, had to implement the policy.

On a bright, sunny day a mother and her daughter, neither of whom had ever ridden before, came by and asked to go on a trail ride. I led the horses out to the driveway and began the almost always painful process of hoisting the new riders aboard. Since Chuck was generally happy to stand around I chose to heave the little girl up on to him and then attempt to get the mother on to Toby. This turned into a rather comical affair of much jumping, groaning and reorganizing on the ground. Finally, on perhaps our fifth attempt, the mother was encouragingly close to getting her leg over to the other side.



Unfortunately, by this time Chuck had decided it was time to move on. He started walking towards my car. Now this was not

just any car. It was my beautiful, blue 1971 Dodge Charger, with bucket seats and hideaway headlights.

I really loved that car.

I called to the little girl ... "stop him please" ... he kept plodding ... I strained to push the mother towards the saddle but, besides groaning, she did nothing ... I yelled in desperation ... "PULL BACK ON THE REINS!!!!". Still he kept walking. The little girl, pulling as hard as she could, was now almost lying on Chuck's back in her effort to stop him, but still he kept walking, with his mouth gaping, towards my car. Just as I was considering the legal consequences of dropping the mother on the ground Chuck reached my car, bared his teeth and scraped the quarter panel from the back window towards the tail light. The little girl started to cry and the mother, upon hearing her child in distress, abandoned her attempt to climb on to Toby and fell in a heap on the ground.

I secretly hoped that the excitement of having tried to get on would be enough for all concerned but, as I mourned my car, they bravely decided to continue.

After finally getting everyone aboard, we set off at a sedate walk. I looked back at Chuck, wondering if he knew how much I hated him at that moment. Yet, somehow, he seemed sort of sweet and innocent as he made his way through the forest. The longer he carefully carried the little girl, the more I found myself forgiving his transgression.

The rest of the ride was uneventful and we decided to go back the short way, through the creek. The horses never hesitated to cross at the shallow point but, as we carefully picked our way through, I heard an ominous splashing sound. I looked back and there was Chuck, full stop, pawing at the water. There was no doubt about his intentions but before I could get turned around he unceremoniously lay down in the water. The child started to scream and jumped off into the creek. The mother began screaming as well and, in her



panicked attempt at a dismount, fell off Toby and into the creek too. Chuck, oblivious to all the excitement, buried his nose in the water, rolled over luxuriously, and finally stood up and shook like a dog. Then, in playful disregard, Chuck and his newly liberated friend, Toby, cantered gleefully back to the barn.

I know it was wrong to find this funny.

I tried to comfort the clients as they walked sullenly back to the barn on foot, but there was no appeasing the sobbing child or the sodden mother who was convinced that these "wicked" horses had made their day a disaster on purpose. I was still apologizing as they climbed into their car and, as I watched them drive down the driveway, I made a personal promise that if I ever had my own place I would NEVER, EVER take out public trail rides again.

And I never have

Until next time, Pat.

EXPERT'S CORNER

The rider must always show himself superior to the horse in mental and physical self-control. Submission to his will should not be sought by force but by his superior intelligence.....

If reward is to be of any value it must immediately follow the exercise. Unfortunately there are many riders who are quick to punish but forget about rewards and take the good performance of their partner for granted. The simplest way for the rider to show his appreciation is by patting or speaking to the horse with a soothing voice. Patting does not mean slapping the horse with an open hand to make as much noise as possible, which is often done to impress the onlookers; the horse's neck should be caressed fondly and delicately.....

From the manner in which rewards and punishments are administered, interesting conclusions can be drawn as to the character and mind of the rider.

From
THE COMPLETE TRAINING OF HORSE AND
RIDER
 (In the Principles of Classical Horsemanship)
 Alois Podhajsky

There is no situation where the horse's natural kindness and noble nature should be insulted or abused by dissonance, rough treatment or unbalanced riding

"A Matter of Trust" Walter Zettl

WHY TAKE RIDING LESSONS?

Like any other sport, horseback riding requires a particular skill set that is learned much more quickly, safely and efficiently with proper teaching. After all, Olympic riders still have coaches!

But unlike other sports, riding involves two individuals -- a horse and a person - - each of whom must not only acquire physical and mental skills, but also learn to communicate with a partner who doesn't speak the same language.

Learning to ride well involves learning to simultaneously relax and control your own body while sitting on top of a constantly moving horse in order to communicate with the horse through clearly given body signals or aids, all the time reading and responding to the horse's feedback. A tall order!

No matter what your riding goals, you and your horse will benefit from good instruction. Besides, riding lessons are fun and provide the motivation many of us need to ride more regularly.

(www.acreageequines.com)

THE TRAINING PYRAMID



SCHWUNG is translated as "impulsion".

REGISTER EARLY FOR SEPTEMBER 2003

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone # _____

E-mail _____

Riding experience (please describe)

Lesson times preferred:

Sun Mon Tues Wed Thur Fri Sat

Morning

Afternoon

After school

Evening

If a horse rests its head on your shoulder it means the horse trusts you.

A FACT OF LIFE



Ever wonder why cleaning stalls is such hard work? Depending on how much he weighs, a horse produces between 14.5 and 20.5 kilograms of manure and from 3 to 9 litres of urine in a day.

SOURCE:

Complete Equine Veterinary Manual
by Tony & Marcy Pavord

A HARROGATE HERO

Congratulations to *Billy Mason* who received the *Dr. Willets Award* at Mount Albert P.S. for being the *Most Improved Student* and graduating with over a 75% average.

Way to go Billy – you are obviously more than a good horseman (and mucker and runner!).

Q) What did one horse say to the other horse?

A) The pace is familiar but I can't remember the mane.

NEED SOMETHING TO DO?

If you have a few moments over the summer with nothing special to do why not take the time to write down the reasons you enjoy riding at Harrogate Hills? When you have something down on paper you could drop it in the box in the lounge, e-mail it or send it to Pat via Canada Post. The e-mail address can always be found on the web site. We would LOVE to put your contributions in print.

Just to get you started, I will attempt to put in words how I came to ride here.

Nine or ten years ago I started taking my daughter to Harrogate Hills in Gormley. She had never ridden before except at a (*non-Harrogate*) Day Camp where she had fallen off three times in a two-week period! Every Sunday we made the pilgrimage to Gormley.

Then there was the move to Holt.

From the beginning I noticed a good atmosphere about the place – everyone seemed happy, the girls (and a couple of boys) who worked there all appeared to know what they were doing and had the best interests of the horses and riders at heart. I eventually summoned the courage to ask if there was a time when "old" people could ride – this suggestion was met with a certain amount of dis-belief and amusement and was not taken very seriously. Eventually I managed to have a practice ride on Paladin and have rekindled a childhood passion that will no doubt continue until I break some vital bone in my anatomy.

I firmly believe that, whatever your age, whatever level you aspire to, you are better off hanging out at the barn than you would be at a shopping mall. There are also many more lessons learned here than just "how to ride".