

Hayes Is for Horses



Horses, Humans & Egos

By Tim Hayes

One of the most impressive qualities of many of today's top Natural Horsemanship Clinicians is their honesty to admit they don't have all the answers. They remind us to keep an opened mind and that horsemanship is a life long journey where we never stop learning. Their desire to keep searching for the best way to find true unity between horse and human is what makes them great teachers.

Whether it's Tom Dorrance, Ray Hunt, Pat Parelli, John Lyons or Buck Branneman, originally they were all taught the more traditional (non-natural) methods of horse training and horsemanship. Remarkably it was after they became successful in practice and reputation that they publicly admitted that someone else's different training method might be better. Not only did this take an opened mind, it showed great humility and courage with their egos.

I didn't grow up with horses and didn't get involved with them until I was in my 40's. The bad news is I missed out on being young, fearless and riding by the seat of my pants. The good news is when I finally fell in love with horses and wanted to learn everything I could, Natural Horsemanship was being taught by these master horsemen.

Being an "old" beginner turned out to be a blessing. I knew I knew nothing. I could ask endless questions, make mistakes, fall of my horse and not once have to experience the excruciating pain of hearing my ego scream "You don't look good!" and "What are other people thinking about you."

As the years went on however and I learned more, I became aware of a familiar little voice in my head that started to appear when I was out playing with horses and humans. It said; "Now that you're a horseman and a teacher it's important that you look like you have the answers so don't ask questions."

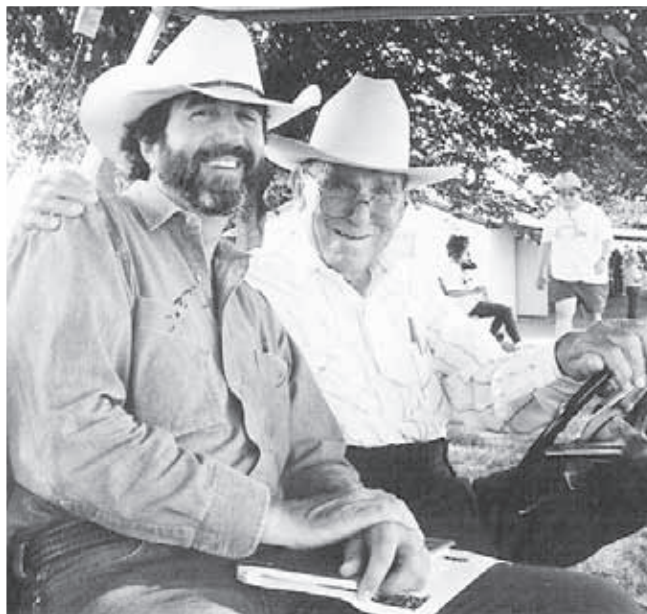
Now when I work with people and see them struggling with their egos, trying to keep an open mind and try something different, I also see myself. What's difficult for the student can also be difficult for the teacher. Unlike horses; humans have egos. Sometimes it's difficult but I know I'll learn more if I try to stay in what the Buddhist's call "beginner's mind." I remind myself; when I was a beginner I never learned as quickly or as much. I was also never happier.

The more I learn about the relationship between humans and horses the more I see that all of us who love and ride horses have the same goal. It doesn't matter if we ride English or Western, studied at the Spanish School of Riding or learn to ride on a Montana cattle ranch. The goal is to be one with our horse. To have a true happy and willing partner. To ride in harmony and have it be as fun for our horse as it is for us.

Years ago when I was privileged to study with the late Tom Dorrance, I had a million questions I wanted to ask him. I wanted to know everything he knew but I knew that wasn't possible so I asked him what books he would suggest I read when I got home. Tom had grown up on a northern California horse and cattle ranch. He had become so well known as great horseman he was referred to as "The Horses' Lawyer." He could tell you exactly what your horse was saying to you.

Naturally I expected him to refer me to some classic cowboy manual. Instead he simply said read "Dressage," by Henry Wynmalen, and "Kinship With All Life," by J. Allen Boone. I had no idea what to expect from the latter book but I had heard of dressage and that was the last thing I thought a California cowboy would know about, much less be recommending.

I bought both books, read them and over the years many others like them. Now I know why one of the greatest horsemen of our time suggested them.



Tim Hayes, left, with Tom Dorrance. Photo courtesy T. Hayes

"Dressage" teaches what we all need to do with our horses, no matter what discipline we chose to ride: communication through lightness from the mind to the body to the legs to the feet. It teaches us to communicate with the horse not just physically but mentally and emotionally.

"Kinship With All Life" is a little tiny book. Some read it and find it too "far out" or childlike. Others find it charming. Nevertheless its message is clear. Horses, like all animals including the human, are creatures that possess a spiritual nature. For me this means on some level we are all connected and equal. We all deserve to be treated with compassion and respect.

Learning something for the first time can be fun and exciting. Learning a new or different way can also be exciting. It can also be very threatening to our ego. Natural horsemanship teaches me to be flexible. Nothing is set in stone. If I want to learn more and keep getting better, I need to keep an

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the head. In the past ten years Dr. Brooks has treated 187 head injuries which occurred in riding accidents. Of those the most consequential were concussion; fractures, which accounted for 35 injuries with none among riders wearing a helmet with a retention harness; blood clots, accounting for 35 injuries with 24 of those among riders not wearing helmets; and 27 fatalities, with 26 occurring among those not wearing a safety helmet. "The key is the retention harness and the appropriate helmet each time and every time," said Dr. Brooks.

"The statistics available show that there is a very specific risk to riders not wearing the proper headgear," observed Mr. Ellis. He cited medical information and statistics that pertain to equestrian sport in the United States:

A person 2 to 3 feet off the ground traveling at 2 to 3 miles per hour can suffer permanent brain damage

Riders are elevated 6 to 8 feet and at a hand gallop are traveling at 22 to 24 miles per hour in a forward position, they therefore have a substantially increased risk of a head injury, and that risk increases dramatically if they are not wearing a securely fastened safety helmet.

According to the American Medical Equine Association/Safe Riders Foundation, 20% of all equestrian injuries are head injuries, and 60% of fatalities are due to head injuries.

According to National Electronic Scoring System (which provides emergency room information to the Center for Disease Control) the most likely age group for equestrian injuries are adults 25-44 years of age, and the majority are female.

A rider who has sustained one head injury is 40 percent more likely to suffer a second and more serious injury.

The British Equestrian Society's hospital admission rate for equestrians fell 46% when they adopted a similar standard.

In 2003 USEF Hunter & Jumper competitors accounted for over 55% of the Federations reported head injuries. Eventing accounted for 25%, and the remainder was distributed among all the other breeds and disciplines.

"An ASTM/SEI approved helmet cannot totally prevent an injury, but it certainly can help manage the risk," said Mr. Ellis.

Bill Moroney, President of the United States Hunter Jumper Association also applauded the new rule changes, "At our USHJA convention in October we listened to the USEF Safety Committee's argument and asked them to come back and provide us with compelling information to support passage of these changes. They did that in Louisville, and as a result we confidently support them."

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Catamine; Three-year-old colt: Smarty Jones; Three-year-old filly: Ashado; Turf male: Kitten's Joy; Turf female: Ouija Board; Sprinter: Speightstown; Steeplechase: Hirapour; Jockey: John Velazquez; Apprentice jockey: Brian Hernandez, Jr.; Trainer: Todd Pletcher; Owner: Kenneth & Sarah Ramsey; Breeder: Adena Springs.

ODDS AND ENDS

While the champions were being feted, New York racing was battling allegations of horse doping or "milkshaking" (a sodium bicarbonate mixture administered to a horse before a race to enhance performance). New drug testing and stiff penalties are addressing this problem. But the New York Racing Association faces an even bigger problem in the future. Its franchise expires in a few years, and the financial-

ly-stressed NYRA may not be able to make a competitive bid for a new franchise that would begin in 2008.

Jockey Richard Migliore achieved his 4,000th career win this winter. The Mig is Long Island's hometown hero. He grew up in Bay Shore, started riding and chose the race-track over the show ring. He survived a near-fatal neck injury in 1988.

Look for Hall of Fame jockey Jerry Bailey's autobiography to be published in April. It is titled "Against the Odds: Riding For My Life."

If you like racing art, click on to www.patrish.cc. This Florida-based artist captures the color and excitement of the racetrack with her palette knife. She also works on commission and can be reached at 561-743-3487.

The move to Aqueduct's main track was postponed from March 9 to March 16. Two races are affected: the Toboggan and Broadway Handicaps, originally to be run at seven furlongs on the main track and now set at six furlongs on the inner track March 12. Opened in 1975, the one-mile inner track was designed for winter racing and is generally used from early December until the beginning of March, depending upon weather conditions. NYRA track superintendent John Passero likes to take a cautious approach and believes the one-week delay will be beneficial, considering the unpredictable weather. As of March 9, post time changes from 12:30 to 1 p.m. For racing information call 718-641-4700.

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Schonheit, is described as a "hot" mare that required a lot of patience and perseverance. Lisa made such a brief appearance at the dinner that she could not be caught for comments. Her groom and student, Tracy O'Connor, praised Lisa's ability (she has trained horses up to F.E.I., including her young Trakehner stallion, Avatar) and said, "I am very fortunate to have worked with her. She is more than an employer. She's my best friend."

The dinner was a big success, thanks to award sponsorships, the generosity of Mary Sutton and Riders Choice Saddlery, many donors of Chinese auction raffle prizes and the efforts of committee members Joanne Ambrosini, Anna Boylan, Noreen Galoppi, Dale Gifford, Kathy Grisolia, Lorraine McInerny, Regina Radzak-Myers and Barbara Zebrowski. Party favors included treats for both horses and humans placed at every table. A collage of old photos evoked a touch of nostalgia and served as a reminder that dressage is still alive and well on Long Island.

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opened mind. The day I stop learning, I stop growing. If I want my horse to be teachable, I have to be teachable. That's natural.

Leo Tolstoy wrote: "I know that most men, including those at ease with problems of the greatest complexity, can seldom accept even the simplest and most obvious truth if it be such as would oblige them to admit the falsity of conclusions which they have delighted in explaining to colleagues, which they have proudly taught to others, and which they have woven, thread by thread, into the fabric of their lives."

For more information visit: www.hayesisforhorses.com, or call Tim at 631-329-5840