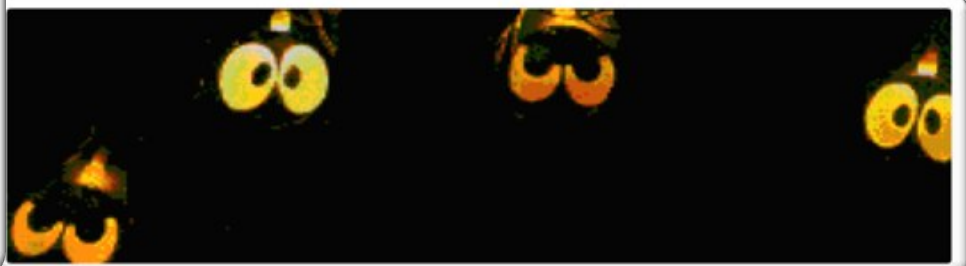


REITERGEIST of Middle Tennessee, A Region 3 GMO

October 2011



Inside this Issue

3 Putting it on the line. Karl Mikolka minces no words in *From My Perspective*.

5 & 6 Vienna tragically loses a rider while the Circle of Friends of the Spanish Riding School reaches out to recruit believers.

12 Good practice makes even better practice. For "Fall Thoughts" addresses both means and motivation.

Who's Watching Whom?

By Cherie A. Beatty, President

Heads Up! If you were to text a modern version of Washington Irving's Legend of Sleepy Hollow, the ghost story where Ichabod Crane wandered in the darkness and came upon The Headless Horseman, you could sum up the action in that one phrase. The Horseman, looking to find a new head, pitched the jack-o-lantern he was using as a substitute at poor old Ichabod, who was never heard from again. It's pretty scary stuff (even in the Disney version with Bing Crosby as the narrator) and perfect escapism for a chilly, spooky October evening when eyes glow in the dark.

In the horse world, "heads up," means watch out and/or be aware. The idea behind calling out is to keep you from being hurt or missing something important or to let you know that another horse and rider is getting ready to pass you or to enter the arena. The phrase can also work in the editing world, where readers let you know that you have made careless mistakes, showing your head was somewhere other than where it ought to have been. So, Heads Up! as the eyes' had it on the September issue; there it should have been Alfred not *Albert* Cerha in my column on teachers; the title of the book from which the illustration of the spine was derived in Holly Mason's column should have been The Architecture and Design of Man and Woman and mea culpa for omitting several sentences from *A Foot on the Ground* when making the jump to the next column of text. Thanks for watching me and I apologize for the pre-season tricks.

Now, heads up for the treats in October! If you've ever wanted to take the perfect picture of your horse to share with friends and relatives or use in advertising, **Barb Riebold**, photographer extraordinaire, is sharing some of her secrets with you this issue, just in time for the holidays. **Picture Perfect** begins on page 7. Then, there's **Holly Mason's** take on what to do with your own head on page 14, and if you thought that riding was all about LOOKING GOOD, **Karl Mikolka** offers concepts to ponder page 3. It's a sweet issue. Enjoy!



Reitergeist of Middle Tennessee is a USDF General Membership Organization (GMO). All members are automatically USDF Group Members (GMs). For USDF Participating Memberships apply directly to the

News for the Reitergeist Community

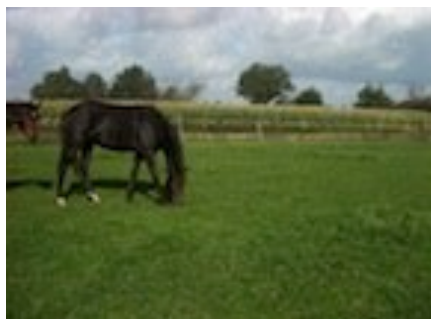
Welcome New Member Anita Adams of Wisconsin.

He's A Boy!

Member **Carol Quinter** of Ohio welcomed her new grandson, Jack Robert Quinter, into the world on September 19th. Jack was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to his parents, AJ Quinter and his wife Dr. Suzanne Quinter. Jack weighed 7 pounds and 9 ounces and is described as happy and healthy. Congratulations!



And He's a Boy, Too! Below is member **Elke Hermann's** 2 and a half year old colt, **Barack**, by the sire of Brentina and out of a Sandro Hit mare. He's looking good in Germany (along with his nosy pasture buddy behind).



Treats and no Tricks to our October Birthday Celebrants!

Courtney Vassar of Tennessee

Cherie Beatty of Tennessee

Pat Randazzo of Massachusetts

Dressage Foundation Offers Grand Grant Opportunities

By Jenny Johnson

There are so many wonderful things about fall, but here at The Dressage Foundation fall means one thing: grant applications!! From September through December, I am surrounded by stacks of applications from adult amateurs, instructors, trainers, and high performance riders. It is such a fun and busy time.

On that note, I'd like to once again remind you about the High Performance grants that we have available. The \$25,000 Anne B. Ramsay Grant application **deadline is October 25th**. The purpose of this annual grant is to showcase talented American-bred horses ridden by United States citizens, by providing funds to train and compete in Europe. [http://www.dressagefoundation.org/Anne Barlow Ramsay Charitable Remainder Unitrust.htm](http://www.dressagefoundation.org/Anne_Barlow_Ramsay_Charitable_Remainder_Unitrust.htm)

The Carol Lavell Advanced Dressage Prize **applications are due December 13th**. Two \$25,000 Prizes are available to provide financial assistance for coaching and training to talented, committed, qualified riders whose plans are to reach and excel at the elite, international standards of high performance dressage. [http://www.dressagefoundation.org/The Carol Lavell Advanced Dressage Prize.htm](http://www.dressagefoundation.org/The_Carol_Lavell_Advanced_Dressage_Prize.htm)

We are excited about our recent announcement that a new fund for U.S. breeders has been established at The Dressage Foundation! The Elysium Farm Fund for U.S. Breeder Excellence will begin providing educational scholarships in 2012. Please share this information with breeders in your area! [http://www.dressagefoundation.org/Elysium Farm Breeders Fund.htm](http://www.dressagefoundation.org/Elysium_Farm_Breeders_Fund.htm)

Finally, this year's edition of *The Dressage Foundation News* is now available. I hope you take a moment (or two) to read about some of our wonderful programs and funding opportunities. This issue includes many reports from grant recipients, so you can hear about their experiences from their perspectives. <http://www.dressagefoundation.org/upload/TF%20Newsletter%202011%20Web.pdf>

IS *LOOKING GOOD* SUFFICIENT TO GUARANTEE PROPER INFLUENCE?

In the August 2011 edition of the *Reitergeist*, I also talked about the *Seat* and the negative effect it can have when used wrongly, that is, with force and without preparing the horse's back for its primary duties, those being:

to establish an elastic connection between the hind quarters and the forehand

to provide a firm base for the rider's seat so that he can effectively influence the horse's way of going through his body weight that is backed by a correct position

Acceptance of a certain weight manifests itself in a back that has been carefully conditioned to support the gradual increase of the load, confirming the horse's willingness to *lift itself into* the rider's seat rather than avoid the weight from the seat by dropping *down and away* from it.

Many riding books mention *Schenkelgänger*—*Leg movers* and *Rückengänger*—*Back movers*.

The horse that drops his back will always be a leg-mover, something the Old School warned about and the horse that supports the rider's weight by *lifting its back into it* will always be the back mover, accepted by the Old School as the only correct way of going.

It has long been established that horses by nature are better equipped to pull a load rather than carry one and it was traditionally the trainer's main responsibility to prepare the back of his mount through proper training and conditioning. Today, this approach, based on straightforward, common horse sense, is of minimal concern, if any. Instead, a horse with good gaits, especially natural extensions, is schooled as soon as possible, mainly in movements that will be required in future tests, relying on the horse's cooperation and intelligence rather than investing in its physical development.

The results of such products are always the same. Horses perform in high levels but lack sufficient suppleness, mental focus and physical condition to do their jobs in a relaxed, willing manner with flexibility and good balance. Each and every element is a basic prerequisite for any successful athlete, be it human or equine.

I am well aware that with a statement like that, I will draw criticism from those who do not agree with my observations but for the sake of the survival of Classical Principles, it is my duty to address this subject matter in the hope of inspiring future generations of riders committed to reversing this trend and returning to honest basics. **Continue page 4**



From My Perspective By Karl Mikolka

All riders know that correctness of position and the ability to influence the horse through the seat are valuable assets for the serious trainer and competitor. A premise often overlooked, however, is that in order to be effective, such a laudable quest requires the cooperation and assistance from a horse that provides the necessary support through a carefully prepared, elastically *swinging back*. Without that help, no effort on the rider's part to sit correctly can have any positive influence on the equine student.

"A horse carries the rider with his neck," we were told. At the beginning, this is hard to understand and many novices simply don't believe it. What it means is that without proper stretching of the neck muscles that are attached to the withers, a good stretching and gentle lifting of the horse's spine will not be possible. Without lift, there is no stretch and no carrying capacity. The bottom line is that one can sit like a perfectly formed equestrian Manikin or a shapeless 200-pound sack of potatoes with the same results on such a mover. One cannot separate the details of seat and position from the realities of how the mount is prepared.

Nowadays horses are bred with natural extensions. "*An extension*", we were told, "*increases the distance between the front legs and the hind legs*" thus *robbing the back* of the support it needs to function properly, especially under the load of a rider.

Constantly using extensions just to show off the horse's ability weakens the back and sets the stage for all the other negative side effects we see in modern practice, those being:

Poorly engaged hind legs

Necks too short

Absence of collection

To help the horse's back gain and maintain strength and flexibility we have to develop and cultivate an equal *thrusting power* from the hind legs through straight forward riding. We must aim for ambidextrousness in suppleness and the ability to bend and stretch when working on circles and voltes. We also have to establish an evenly balanced acceptance of the bit through straightness, thus producing a light but steady contact.

If all these requirements can be fulfilled, the back of the horse will, with time, increase its ability to carry not only the rider's weight but also increase its response to the various *aids* applied through the rider's seat, which is sitting *light, normal or heavy*.

Granted, all those preparations need time but cannot be avoided or ignored if one is to prevent grave consequences in the horse's training, its future health, soundness and longevity. A horse at the Grand Prix level, experiencing total burnout and soundness issues, is a living example of compromised training, accelerated, most likely with little regard for the basics. Such horses are often cast aside by their trainers as *not suitable* and frequently sold as *schoolmasters*.

It is my opinion that those who show, especially on International levels, should be more concerned about their responsibility to be an example of correctness for judges, audiences and future young riders. A horse-rider combination that performs on a Grand Prix Level must prove worthy of that name and the execution of the required movements is only a small part of it.

Should we sidestep our responsibility to act as shining role models and ignore our job of guiding the younger generations in the right direction, or will time pressure and the quest for ribbons determine the compromised standards by which we practice dressage?

This decision each individual rider must make for himself.

Karl Mikolka, © 2011

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In Memory of SRS Reiter Harald Bauer

Vienna, Austria- The news of Lead Rider Harald Bauer's death caused shock in his native country as well as in the United States. Bauer, 43, was found dead on September 19th in a riders' changing room at the Spanish Riding School, an apparent suicide.

Bauer's death, which took place just before the School Stallions were headed for London for yet another public performance, this time to include British dressage rider, Carl Hester, comes close on the heels of recent news stories in the Austrian media concerning continuing difficulties at the SRS. Huge cost over runs, diminishing revenues, and the loss of several of the most skilled and experienced riders under curious circumstances reportedly relating to differences with current management has brought Vienna's famed center of equestrian art under the spotlight of public scrutiny and speculation.

More than one writer in Internet blogs, as well as some in the Austrian press, have opined that the pressure was becoming simply too much for the riders of the School who were working themselves to death and overcome by the stress associated by the instability within the School. There have been widespread observations in the months and years before Bauer's untimely death that the quality of the riding at the SRS has been steadily decreasing even as the pressure on the horses has been steadily increasing with added performances and tours scheduled in an effort to amp up the bottom line and to make the stallions more commercial.

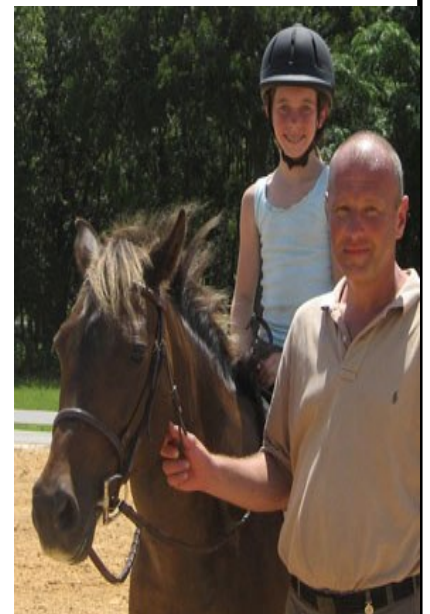
After the School was privatized in 2001, management was given the task of cutting the annual operating losses of millions of euros each year. The pressure to cut costs, raise revenue and to over use the stallions as "performers" has resulted, in the opinion of some, in a loss of quality as well as concern for the well being of the horses according to critics while the austere elegance of the School has been turned into a showy backdrop for society galas intended to fund raise.

A group called '*Freundeskreis der Spanische Hofreitschule*' (Friends of the Spanish Riding School) has been courteously vocal in its disapproval of the goings on at the School but their comments and observations have not gone unchallenged as the current Director has been quick to send out the lawyers to stop all criticism of the SRS in its tracks.

Regardless of the pressure Bauer may or may not have felt, and some who knew him reported that he had suffered from depression for some time, there was unanimous opinion that he was a man who loved his horses and who was devoted to the traditions of the School. Doubtless, criticism of the School, even if justified, would be very difficult for any rider associated with it.

Bauer had been giving clinics in the United States in both Texas and Maryland in recent years. Riders at those clinics liked him, enjoyed his teaching, and admired his own riding and way with a horse. This photo (right), from his personal information page, shows him with a young rider during a clinic held in the United States. He will be mourned by his students, his fellow riders at the School, and his family.

A memorial for Bauer was held in Vienna. At the School his picture, marked with a black mourning ribbon, was on display next to a lighted votive candle and a floral display that featured resurrection lilies.





Dear Ladies and Gentlemen!
Dear Supporters!

A little more than a year has passed, since the „Freundeskreis der Spanischen Hofreitschule / Bundesgestüt Piber“ (Circle of Friends of the Spanish Riding School of Vienna/Federal Stud Piber) was created and that we published our concerns regarding the protection of the tradition of high school classical riding in an open letter to the Austrian Federal Minister in charge.

This open letter was not only supported by you, but by more than 950 supporters all over the world. For this we would like to thank you cordially.

But our struggle for this universally unique institute of culture has not yet come to an end. Therefore we now have structured our so far informal community of interest and have founded the registered society „Freundeskreis der Spanischen Hofreitschule / Bundesgestüt Piber“ (Circle of Friends of the Spanish Riding School of Vienna/Federal Stud Piber). By defining and recording our concerns in our articles of association we want to state precisely, what our point and requirements are. Unfortunately they are more topical than ever!

During the recent shows of the Spanish Riding School so far never noticeable inaccuracies of execution and training could be seen, both of horses and riders.

The directives, lessons and traditions that have been passed on from each generation of riders to the next for centuries are in danger due to wrong decisions, poor management and non-existing or wrong human resources management.

During our public press conference in the Austrian Parliament of Vienna we presented our concerns to a wide public and met great resonance by the press, which now has to be harnessed for our cause.

Therefore it is important that our society continues fighting for the preservation of this cultural treasure, with the backing of members from all over the world, experts, enthusiasts, admirers of classical riding and the Spanish Riding School of Vienna.

Thus we would like to invite you to support us and our concerns not only by your so far valuable signature but also by your membership in order to continue our way.

All details concerning membership, regulations, requests and aims can be studied on our homepage www.freundeskreis-srs.at

Of course we will gladly answer your questions via office@freundeskreis-srs.at and are looking forward to welcoming you in our society!

Yours sincerely,

Vienna, 06.09.2011

Freundeskreis der Spanischen Hofreitschule /
Bundesgestüt Piber



Picture Perfect

*In your eyes your horse is the best.
Here's how you can make sure
that your photographs say just that.*

Article and Photographs by

Barb Riebold

Copyright 2011

For five years I was privileged to share an arena with Karl Mikolka, four or five times a year, photographing lessons in clinics he gave in Oregon. Cherie has asked me to share my insights as a photographer to help others who are trying to take photos of animals, horses in particular.

To begin, I will say that taking action shots of horses or other moving creatures is almost impossible without a camera that can shoot at least one frame per second. Digital cameras that are not single lens reflex all suffer from the problem of lag time between when the shutter button is depressed and when the picture is actually taken. It is impossible to take the picture at the exact moment you wish to, much less be able to take several in quick succession.

Entry-level digital SLRs (Nikon or Canon) are available for \$450 to \$650 with a basic lens. You may want to purchase a telephoto lens also. There are many resources available on the Internet to help you choose a telephoto lens, should you decide to make that purchase. I highly recommend the website <http://www.dpreview.com/> to help you make decisions regarding which camera and which lens. Getting one may have a profound effect on your life, as it has had on mine.

Because of the gift of this camera from my husband one Christmas I have made Karl's acquaintance, which is no small thing!! He generously shared his arena with me and opened my eyes to a world of classical dressage, as I did not see it ridden in show arenas and also to the concept of "equestrian body building". After clinics we often looked through the photos I had taken. We hooked the camera up to the television and scanned through thousands of photos. There were some oohs and aahs and also some hearty laughter and "quacks" from Karl when I caught the horses in awkward moments. **Continued on page 8**

Photos: These are all examples of unstaged photos that often present some of the best opportunities to capture personality.



Picture Perfect continued from page 7

Karl educated me about what he was looking for in a good picture, what constituted correct movement. In the beginning I had to laugh when he would tell me things such as: “shoot the picture when the left hind is just leaving the ground, or some such.” I finally convinced him that no eye hand coordination would allow me to take that shot, but several frames a second would. Karl taught me to look with a horseman’s eye and I taught him what a camera could do.

When taking pictures with a digital SLR one needs to have a basic understanding of how the aperture (f-stop), shutter speed and film speed (ISO) are related in order to make your camera work for you. Of course, all cameras also have automatic programmed settings that can be dialed in for whatever situation you encounter. This is handy when you don’t have the time or expertise to play with the variables, but eventually it becomes fun to think it out yourself and it gives you so much more control over your photography.

What follows are some suggestions that may help you to improve your photography. I will try to address a few of the main considerations when taking pictures.

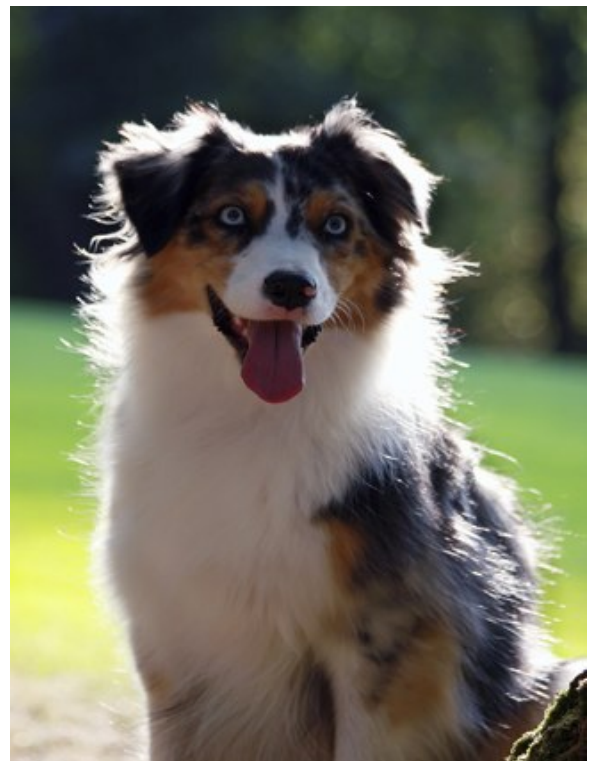
Lighting:

-Light for outdoor photos is best in the morning or evening when the light strikes the subject at a slant, not directly from above. These two times of day produce soft light that brings out the colors. If you are shooting in the middle part of the day the best light you can hope for is an overcast day. It reduces shadows and the washing out of detail from overexposure.

-As a general rule have the light behind you, not behind the subject. Following a horse around the arena with a camera often does not allow the photographer to get between the horse and the light source. As a result this is a rule I frequently had to break. By accident I learned how unique a few of those pictures could be. Most of the photos taken with the light behind the horse were deleted since the side of the horse facing the camera was basically in the dark; but every now and then I was surprised with a beautiful shot. I learned to look for the “highlighting” that made a picture unique. This is a technique I have since used many times in taking pictures of horses and dogs.

-Indoor photos often require the use of a flash, but the results are less than impressive. If possible increase the aperture and ISO (film speed) settings to maximize the light you have. Try shooting without flash. Photos taken with natural light often have more “warmth” than those taken with a flash and do not have their light areas washed out. Lighting may not be much in your control if you are taking photos in a riding arena. I was fortunate to have a beautiful and well-lit arena to work in. The kickboards were white, allowing the horse’s legs to be seen. Try taking a good picture of a “brown” horse in an arena with brown footing and brown walls! It is very difficult, if not impossible to do, unless you have extremely good lighting, something that is unusual in riding arenas. Most of the horses Karl worked with were Lipizzans, so that also made my job easier since their white legs contrasted well with the footing. **Continued on page 9**

Examples of Backlighting your Photos



Position:

-If you are photographing a small animal get down on its level. So many people take pictures of pets or other small animals from above. You will have a much more interesting and engaging picture if you get down to the level of the animal you are photographing. Try getting up close and just shooting part of the subject. This can be much easier with a telephoto lens. Unless you are trying to take a funny picture avoid shooting head on with the nose pointing at you. Horses, especially, can be pretty unattractive when their noses appear disproportionately large. Try taking photos from a different angle. You have nothing to lose with a digital camera. Experiment! **Posing horses or other pets can be tempting, but the best results are usually achieved with patience; wait until the personality of the animal shows itself.**

Focus:

- Lens opening (aperture), or f/stop, determines how large an opening is available for the light to pass through onto the sensor. **The f/stop scale is inverted, that is, the larger the f/stop number, the smaller the lens opening.**

A smaller f/stop will allow more light to enter the camera allowing a faster shutter speed. A larger f/stop will allow less light in and will require a slower shutter speed for enough light to reach the sensor. **If you are in an arena without abundant light you will need to open your lens to its widest aperture (smallest number) to get enough light to be able to shoot at a shutter speed fast enough to freeze motion.**

I would say that a shutter speed of 250 is absolutely the slowest you can shoot and not have too much blur in a horse's trot. 500 (1/500th of a second) or more is required to capture motion in a canter. In dog agility I like to shoot at speeds of 1/1000th of a second or faster.

Larger aperture settings (think small number!) also result in a shallower depth of field. The shallower depth of field is not a bad thing. Having the background be blurred focuses attention on the animal and can produce quite artistic effects outdoors or indoors. In landscape photography it is essential to have a small aperture setting to get the greatest depth of field possible. This is usually not difficult when you are outdoors, depending on the time of day. The other setting that can help you boost the shutter speed is the "ISO" or film speed setting, which you can change on a digital camera. A faster film speed will allow faster shutter speeds, but at some point "noise" is introduced into the image that can make it appear grainy. If the choice is between noise (at ISOs of 800 or above) or blur, go for the noise.

Continued on page 10



Picture Perfect continued from page 9

There is an abundance of fun and reward to be had with digital cameras. Learning is much enhanced by the immediate feedback you get from viewing the photos. There are many aides built into the cameras to help you to learn about exposure (highlight warnings to tell you when detail is being lost in light areas), histograms to allow you to see if the light in your photo is balanced.

After the pictures are on your computer then the fun really begins (in my opinion) because that is when you enter the world of manipulating your photos. This has led me to many Photoshop seminars and many, many hours sitting in front of my computer playing with my photos: making collages; adding filters to make photos appear to be paintings; adjusting color; removing unwanted objects.

There is no end to the things you can do and create. I am truly looking forward to retirement, when I can more fully explore this new area of artistic expression. Taking the photo is just the beginning!

[More photo examples continued on page 11]

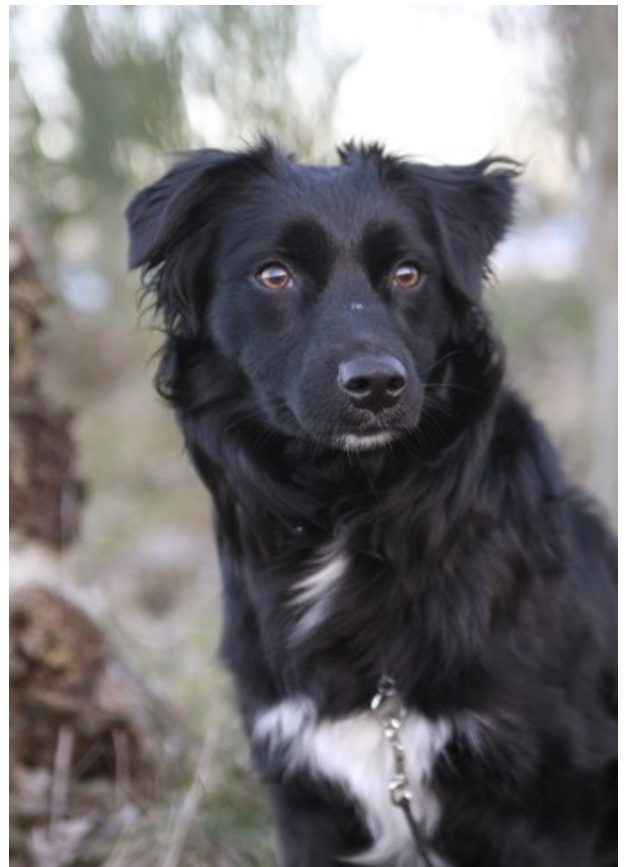


Above: Another example of Time of Day Shooting

Below: Shallow Depth of Focus creates centered attention on the subject.



Choosing the Time of Day to Shoot can Make the photo



Quick Checklist for Shooting

- ✓ Do you understand how your camera works and what it can and cannot do?
- ✓ Have you made sure that all distracting objects are cleared from the image you wish to shoot?
- ✓ Are the subjects clean and tidy? Hair trimmed, shirts tucked in, wearing correct attire, tack clean?
- ✓ Did you think about what story you wanted to convey with your photo- a formal portrait, a casual image, a personality shot, a working picture that shows correct work?
- ✓ Did you consider framing the image vertically as opposed to horizontally for a different look?
- ✓ Have you taken practice shots before you try to take the blue ribbon picture?
- ✓ Animal photography can be difficult. Do you have a helper on hand, just in case?
- ✓ Did you double check Barb's article for pointers?





A Foot on the Ground

By Renee B. Boblette, Ph.D.

“Fall Thoughts”

An interesting series of events in September raised issues that gave me the impetus to write this column. As I reflected upon these proceedings I came up with two sayings that seemed in an odd way to tie these events together. The first is an old adage, “Practice makes perfect,” and the second is a Bible verse from Galatians 6:7 that simplified states “...for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

I was asked to focus on the practice makes perfect saying when I took an introduction course in woodworking. The teacher said that he took issue with the saying on the premise that just because you do something a lot does not necessarily make the “doing” or the results of “doing” perfect. Instead he preferred to think that good practice makes for an even better practice. Hmmm...talking in riddles? Not really, but hold that thought.

The Bible verse is often used while shaking an accusatory finger at someone who has done something that perhaps did not turn out in such a positive manner. The message often carries an undertone of, “See, I told you so!” I have rarely heard it used when someone has done something extremely well, but the intent of the verse is to suggest that all actions have consequences, even though those consequences, good or bad, may not be immediate. This verse came to my mind with both the accusatory finger as well as with an image of a glowing endorsement when I began my second year as a classroom assistant.

Since I have returned to a teaching environment, I have become much more aware of what I sow will become what I reap. Working with younger children is interesting because they live so much in the moment. What you do with them can have instantaneous results, but I also realize that I may never see the long term effects that my daily interactions with them will have over the course of their lives. This realization makes me much more aware of what I sow, not only in their presence but when I am apart from them. I revisited another old adage; am I practicing what I preach? Am I doing the best I can to make my actions match my words? Am I using great care when I choose those actions and words? These thoughts brought me back to the theme of practice.

To practice implies that you want to put into memory something that you have learned that you feel has value. There are several types of memory; each which serves us in a different way.

Muscle memory is automatic, precise,

and a non-verbal medium. Dancers and athletes are masters of muscle memory. **Virtual memory** is the ability to project yourself into the emotions and feelings from your past, and to let them manifest physically. Actors and really savvy business people use virtual memory for success on the stage and in the boardroom. Sensual memory draws upon the senses. A smell, taste, sound, the feel and or color of a fabric (for example) can flood the memory with an image of the past and set the brain in to motion. Institutional memory is the idea that nothing is ever entirely new. This type of memory allows us to realize that the secret of creativity is the ability to remember the past in order to create for the future. Finally, there is **ancient memory**, that sense of *déjà vu*. It is the gut feeling, the one that cannot really be explained but demands that we pay attention to it. It is the part of reason that has been reinforced in us over centuries of practice.

In rethinking the adage, “Practice makes perfect,” compared to, “Practice makes a better practice” I have begun to see that just the doing of the action is not enough. The practice has to have a proper intent, a purpose beyond a finite goal, and an image that this “thing” being practiced is being absorbed into our memory banks as surely as food is being absorbed into our digestive systems. It is really hard to undo something that has been wrongly practiced and/or become an ingrained habit. Try brushing your teeth with your brush in a different hand to see what I mean.

Recently, I worked a lot with a dancer who wanted to take her final level of the Royal Scottish Country Dance teachers’ examination. When she failed she was very surprised and disappointed. I have had to accept that deep inside I was neither. This dancer usually goes to classes five to six times a week. At least six teachers committed time and energy trying to get her ready for her exam. She spent time, energy, and money and still failed. Why didn’t her practice make her perfect? A simple answer, quantity does not equal quality.

Continued on page 13

Fall Thoughts continued from page 12

She shopped around using different teachers to reinforce what she already did well and failed to take to heart the advice of the teachers who tried to point out what she needed work on. I was one of the latter. Four of her six failing categories were areas about which she and I had butted heads on numerous occasions.

Her muscle memory failed her and her technique suffered. By not practicing the dance form to the highest standard available to her she was unable to present the steps and formations properly. She did not make use of her institutional memory in that she failed to absorb the lessons and traditions from the past and still find a way to insert her own creative energy in her teaching. The components of teaching she felt uncomfortable with she chose to ignore. Instead of attacking her weaknesses with the same fervor she put into the elements she enjoys, she called upon a teacher that would cater to her desires instead of addressing her needs.

Her goal was to pass a test. A different vision of the purpose of the exam could have been to comprehend that by attaining the highest level of competency it would facilitate in holding her true to the cultural, historical, and artistic facets of the dance form and that by teaching to that level she could pass on this knowledge and correct form to her own students.

Thus, I read with interest the article about the clinicians that do not teach in the September issue of Reitergeist. The time spent with them is a ritual of platitudes and a litany of classical "isms" that fail to address the individual rider's or horse's needs. I saw the similarities.

The failed dancer elected to spend the majority of her time, effort, and practice with such clinicians. Both rider and dancer may have full shopping carts of "BIG" names, rules, exercises, and experiences, but the ala carte menu did not meet individual dietary needs and their practice suffered. The dressage rider has a super shopper bonus, however. He or she can go to a variety of clinics and competitions and walk away with ribbons and kudos whereas the dancer had only a pass/fail option.

My second grade students are at an awkward age. Their minds and bodies are still malleable and in a state of flux, but the ancient and sensual memories are vibrantly alive in them and in continuous use. I am constantly being challenged to draw upon the powers of all my memory resources as well as to have firm footing in the practice of educating. In that, I reap as much as I sow because they are constantly teaching me.

I also learned from the dancer. Teaching is more than doing. Each class is a lesson to both teacher and student in creating a better practice. When there is fixation in one's ways new learning cannot take place.

Although I will not continue to sow in fallow ground, neither will I shake the accusatory finger because this experience has helped me reflect upon my own practice. When the dancer goes to retake the exam in August 2012, I shall wish her a heartfelt "good luck".

Still Collecting.....

Donations for the Reitergeist basket to be given away at the USDF Convention in December are starting to trickle in. We have a promise of a Yankee ball cap from a member in New York, some buckeyes from a member in Ohio, promises for "things" from members in Missouri and Ohio, and a Jack Daniel Topsy Cake from Tennessee, but we are a long way from filling up the basket.

If you are from a state not represented on the goody list, please do consider sending something for the basket so that all of our members' states and countries are represented. Items must be received by November 1st in order to be included in the cornucopia of stuff. **Please mail your contribution to Cherie Beatty, 159 Hopkins Bridge Road, Unionville, TN 37180.**

Membership Fees Will Soon Be Due

A timely reminder that GMO fees are due November 1st. The fees for this year are \$25 for an individual member and \$15 for a supporting member. Individual members receive the USDF



Connection magazine as well as the Reitergeist newsletter. Supporting members receive only the newsletter.

The membership form for 2012 may be found in the September newsletter. Both new and renewing members must complete the form and mail it in by the due date in order to continue receiving the newsletter. Thank you in advance for making it easy to keep up with the paperwork.

The Mikolka Minute Meditation

"Like a recurring principle theme in a musical composition, have a basic plan and return to it frequently during a training session. Remember it is not **what** you ride but **how** you ride it that determines success or failure."

Dressage by Design:

A Head for Balance

By Holly Mason

The human head weighs about 12 to 18 pounds. When used as a proper counter weight with the rest of the spine, it is unquestionably effective in transferring the source of locomotion to the hindquarters of the horse. If a rider is looking down or just disconnecting the top seven inches of the spine from the trunk of the body, you put your horse on the forehand.

Most people, who do not practice straightness throughout the day, tend to have long muscles at the back of the head and neck and short muscles in the front. After years of incorrect posture, off your horse, these muscles get “locked” in position. This accounts for the “head bobbing” we see in the sitting trot at shows and all around us.

As one examines the effect down the spine, a slightly forward head usually rounds the shoulders. If you sit very straight and then let the head go forward (a position that is prevalent at computers) the shoulders will move forward. This also causes the latissimus dorsi to soften and the whole curve of the spine starts to change and that changes the angle of the pelvis.

Our backs are meant to have several curves that allow the discs between the vertebrae to act as cushions against gravity. When the vertebrae are not level, all kinds of calcification/arthritis can start at the edges of the vertebrae where the bone has pushed the cushioning disc the other way. Then the nerves that come out of the spine at the sides may get pinched, especially if a rider has a lateral or side-to-side crookedness. From this you can get sciatica, general low back pain and postural distortion that may even affect your internal organs, as the nerves of the spine transmit impulses to the organs in the abdominal cavity.

As a teacher of dressage for

over 30 years, teaching the correct use of the rider’s spine is, of course, essential. Even if we have lunge horses available to use to help students feel the balance, they still need to know how to translate this to their own horses, which most of the time have learned to adjust for the rider’s imbalances and are carrying their crookednesses by being crooked.

The first step is a change of awareness - the head really counts. It’s so easy to discount what our bodies do in cars, at computers and carrying things - it’s awful to watch kids with big backpacks and chins jutting forward, because it is a path to spinal distortion at a very young age. Just as a horse, that at 7 years old has not come off the forehand and is already hard to correct, these kids as adults may have some health problems and pain as they age.

The Dance Connection

The dynamic stretching of the torso comes first - one must stretch and yet move with the horse in a dynamic way. In dance, generally, but especially in partnering, the dancer who is about to be lifted must be stretched and lifted, so that they become one unit for the other dancer to lift. If they are not lifted or only partially lifted the dancer’s weight becomes more of a “dead weight”, i.e. unconnected, so the lift will fail, or not be very high, or the lifter might be injured.

For horses to move fluidly under us, we must lift in dynamic tension so that we allow the motion in their backs. Even the smallest rider on a very big horse can, with a sloppy head and slightly mushy posture, very effectively keep the horse’s back from moving well. **Continued on page 15**

It’s as Simple as:

A - Contract the Abdominals

B - Engage the Back with the muscles under the shoulder blades.

C - Keep the Chin in and stretch up the back of the neck

You can practice in a chair before moving on to your horse.



A



B



C

A Head for Balance continued from page 14

The slight tipping forward of such a position also puts weight on the horse's shoulders and the base of the neck - the horse's back, especially behind the saddle, and then moves less and less.

Taller, Thinner, Younger.

If it looks good, it is good (to paraphrase Duke Ellington's "If it sounds good, it is good"). Carrying yourself in a stretched, effective way makes an elegant, youthful and graceful presentation that helps your horse perform well and enjoy the work.

Stretching in Dynamic Tension while Mounted

A - Contract the Abdominals

B - Engage the Back with the muscles under the shoulder blades.

C - Keep the Chin in and stretch up the back of the neck

Remember: The goal is to stretch the muscles in the front of the torso, as well as the back and all the way up the neck, to hold the upper body in an erect counter balancing position that is neither rigid nor sloppy.

Columnist Holly Mason is the author of It's Never Too Late, which has an accompanying DVD also available. An internationally recognized authority on biomechanics, she resides in Rhode Island and is available for clinics in the United States and internationally. Her work has appeared in American as well as in foreign publications. To order It's Never Too Late or to book a clinic please contact Ms. Mason at



Please Save the Date for these Reitergeist Events

All events are held at Snug Harbor Farm, Unionville, TN, unless otherwise noted. No Dogs, please, with the exception of certified service dogs.

November 5-6, Clinic with Dressage by Design by Design's Holly Mason, at Snug Harbor Farm, Unionville, Tennessee. Last clinic of 2011. Auditors welcome. **Space available for one rider.** For information contact reitergeist1@aol.com

November 6 First General Membership Meeting. Begins at 4 PM with dinner to follow. Reservations required for those who wish to have dinner. RSVP to 931.294.2253 or sngbrdressage@aol.com NLT 25 October.

For information about schooling shows and rated shows in Region 3, please visit the website of **The Central Tennessee Dressage Association, CTDA, www.tennesseedressage.com**

More News for the Reitergeist Community

Region 3's Drew Carlin Named 2011 USDF Youth Volunteer of the Year

Lexington, KY - The United States Dressage Federation (USDF) is pleased to announce that Drew Carlin of Columbia, SC, has been selected as the recipient of the 2011 USDF Youth Volunteer of the Year Award. This prestigious award honors one outstanding youth volunteer who has contributed on a national and local basis to USDF and dressage. As the recipient of this award, Drew's name will be engraved on a perpetual trophy, housed in the Roemer Foundation/USDF Hall of Fame. This trophy was donated by the Akin family of Warwick, NY, in honor of Lendon Gray. Drew will also receive a \$500 scholarship provided from funds raised through the Youth Silent Auction, held annually at the Adequan/USDF Annual Convention.

At only 16 years old, Drew's volunteer efforts and innovative projects have left an inspiring mark on dressage. For the past five years, she has been a vital junior representative for the South Carolina Dressage and Combined Training Association (SCDCTA). In order to provide an educational opportunity to fellow youth, Drew took it upon herself to organize an annual junior dressage clinic at no cost to the riders. Through her determined efforts, Drew works to gather donations to run the clinics for free each year. Each rider walks away with a video of their rides and a gift basket with donations from local tack shops and businesses. In addition to Drew's efforts creating educational opportunities, she also began her own manure composting business called *Drew's Poo*, in which 100% of the proceeds go toward youth activities for her local GMO, SCDCTA.

Jill Allard of Region 3 stated, in Drew's nomination, "I feel Drew's contributions are unique because she is a self-starter. Not only has she put in countless hours planning, finding quality clinicians, fundraising and organizing, but the entire project has been initiated by her for the purpose of helping other junior riders."

The USDF Youth Programs Committee selected Drew for her innovativeness and ability to think outside the box in volunteer efforts. The committee wholeheartedly commends Drew for her dedication to dressage and ability to be a positive role model for other youth through exceptional volunteerism.

For more information about the USDF Youth Volunteer of the Year Award or the USDF Youth Silent Auction, please visit the USDF website at www.usdf.org, or contact the USDF office at youth@usdf.org.

Something to think about

Equestrian Tact may be defined as the ability to:

- 1. Know when to do something**
- 2. Have a sense of priority**
- 3. Know how to ask**
- 4. Have a sense of justice**

Julian Westall in *Educating the Young Horse*

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Here is another example of Barb Riebold's amazing photography. The image captures the essence of a vital, majestic stallion. A good picture is worth a 1000 words. Let the joy of life speak to you.

Joyfully, In Closing

The passing of inventor, entrepreneur and all around creative genius Steve Jobs at the age of 56 was not unexpected but was still felt as a personal shock by people around the globe. He touched more people than he could have ever appreciated during his time on the planet, including everyone who reads this newsletter.

Without the vision of Steve Jobs, English majors who were terrified of anything that resembled math or technology would never have learned to manipulate a computer through an operating system designed for people who didn't think like engineers. They learned to produce newsletters, ad fliers, spread sheets, and communicate over the ether without breaking a sweat or suffering anxiety, all thanks to Steve Jobs and his "insanely great" Apple machines, powered by his vision.

As he faced mortality, Jobs also gave

us other things to think about. At a commencement speech at Stanford, he said grads should look in the mirror and ask each day if this was the last day of their lives would they be happy doing what they were doing. If the answer was "no", it was time for a change. Life is short. Live your lives, not someone else's life, he exhorted, and he led by good example.

Those of us who are privileged to be close to horses each day and who are part of the community of riders who believe in the message that Mikolka has been preaching since he arrived in the 70s to the United States, should be able to look in our mirrors and answer Jobs' challenge with a resounding "yes".

Surrounded by talented people, willing to share what they know, in Reitergeist, our mirrors should reflect people in love with what they do, committed to doing it, and eager to move forward to higher achievement in this shared passion for the horse.

Reitergeist is published electronically by the 15th of each month for the members of the GMO. Hard copies may be obtained for \$6.75 an issue.

Reitergeist of Middle Tennessee www.reitergeistofmiddletennessee.com or reitergeist1@aol.com

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