

ROUNDTABLE WITH OLDER RIDERS - STAYING IN THE SADDLE 4 • BOGUS IDEAS IN HORSEMANSHIP - NO.2: BIGGER IS BETTER 8 FEELING WHAT A HORSE NEEDS PART 4 BEGINNING GROUNDWORK 18 • A THIRD, A THIRD, A THIRD - WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION 29



#### Roundable -Staying in the Saddle by Tom Moates

Riding is not just for the young! Tom interviews clinicians and older riders about the challenges of teaching and being a senior rider.



#### Feeling What a Horse Needs Part 4 - Beginning Groundwork by Tom Curtin

Tom continues his narration of starting a young horse. In this installment he does some basic groundwork and examines the situations that arise for horse and human.



#### Bogus Ideas in Horsemanship - No.2: Bigger Is Better by Deb Bennett, Ph.D.

Dr. Deb explores the trend of extra large horses and what that extra size means to both horse and rider.



#### A Third, A Third, A Third by Martin Black

Martin discusses the distribution of his weight in the saddle while riding. He discusses the hows and whys of this distribution.

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# Contributors

**Deb Bennett, Ph.D**. teaches unique anatomy short-courses and horsemanship clinics designed to be enjoyable to riders of all breeds and disciplines, and all levels of skill. Internationally known for her scientific approach to conformation analysis, "Dr. Deb" has made a career out of conveying a kind of "X-ray vision" for bone structure to breeders and buyers. Her background helps her clearly explain how conformation relates to performance ability. Learn more at equinestudies.org.





**Martin Black** is a 5th generation Idaho rancher and 4th generation rodeo competitor. He has a lifetime of experience in handling horses, cattle and roping. In his youth, there was a strong influence of the California-Spanish style of horsemanship. More at martinblack.net.

**Tom Curtin** grew up in the Big Sky State of Montana where his father had an outfitting and packing business. Tom was extremely fortunate to be around and work for some of the most famous ranches of the west; among them The King Ranch, The Four 6's, Johnson Ranch and the 7D Ranch. Along with beneficial settings for horse training, Tom also had the chance to learn from many inspirational men in the horse world. Buster Welch, for example, had a significant influence on how Tom now views and trains the horse. Ray Hunt and his wife, Carolyn, also played an active role in the formation of Tom's horsemanship. Ray showed Tom how to look at things from the horse's point of view, an invaluable aspect of horse training that Tom still honors today. Along the way, however, a constant figure in Tom's life was his father, who remains today an exceptional and an accomplished horseman. Learn more at tomcurtin.net.

**Tom Moates** is a leading equestrian author and journalist. His latest book, *Six Colts, Two Weeks* is now available. More info at tommoates.com.

**On the Cover:** Peps Valentine Beau "Cher" a Quarter Horse mare, photographed on the Elzinga's May, Idaho ranch. Photo by Melanie Elzinga.





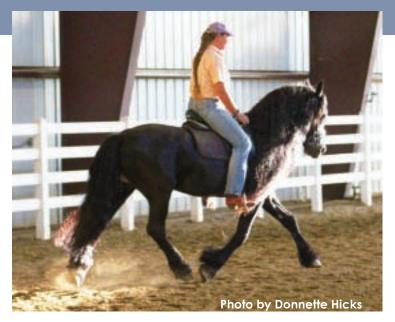
#### Hi All,

Another year is coming to an end. Thank you for sharing your horsemanship journey with *Eclectic Horseman* magazine. I hope you enjoy this issue and find some helpful and inspiring information to help you with your horse(s).

The Magazine and Gazette continue to grow and thrive thanks to your support. Your renewals, gift subscriptions and Mercantile purchases keep this brand of independent horsemanship education alive and evolving.

I wanted to share an experience I had this fall. At the end of the day of filming with Jim Hicks for the The Horseman's Gazette while in Heber City, Utah, I had the amazing opportunity to ride his wife Donnette's Fresian stallion, Zeus. I must admit, I was more than a little nervous watching her warm him up. It has been a long time since I had ridden in a dressage saddle. It had been a long time since I'd ridden a stallion... and as she flew across the arena in a beautiful extended trot, I thought, "I'm not sure I've ever ridden anything like that before!"

Donnette asked me to trust her and so I climbed aboard after she had warmed him up. The feeling underneath me was alarming at first. There was so much life and energy right there on the surface. The strength and movement in his back was like nothing I'd felt before. I walked around the arena a few times on a loose rein... not quite sure how to proceed. Donnette again urged me to trust her and to just have fun. "Okay," I thought, "Here goes nothing!"



Trotting around the arena, trying to find my balance and feel what was going on underneath me, to ride the horse I was on rather than in my usual patterns, something amazing happened... fun. Fun happened. Sometimes you don't feel the things that have been weighing you down until they are gone. The doubt and restrictions of history and fear suspended for just a moment. What an opportunity to truly be in that moment.

My ride on Zeus was electrifying; like the mythical Zeus with his lightning bolts, the equine Zeus shared some of his energy with me and my horse. Thank you, Donnette, for sharing your incredible horse with me and giving me the chance to feel his life and lightness.

Thank you and take care,



**Mission Statement** To be the best resource to help students develop their own horsemanship.

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# STAYING IN THE SADDLE

by Tom Moates

Reiders from retirement age onwards make up a large percentage of horse enthusiasts today. Many horse folks find that once the kids have fledged, they retire, or otherwise have increased time and money available, they finally get that horse they always wanted. It seems quite common for horsemanship clinicians and riding instructors to have clients in their 60s and 70s, and some even older. Below, the topic of older riders gets discussed in our roundtable forum by both professional clinicians and a few older riders.

**DAVE ELLIS** has the distinction of being a professional horseman and a clinician who works with many older students, and at 73 he happens to be in the age bracket for this discussion himself. He has been working with horses since the late 1950s, and began working with Pat Parelli in 1985. Since the 1990s, Dave has taught clinics throughout the world and he has achieved the highest Parelli ratings as an instructor. For more on Dave visit: www.lsranchnaturally.com.

"Probably 75 percent of my clientele are what I'd consider older riders," Dave says. "My thoughts about the older riders are first and foremost, they have to be safe. I realize they don't have the confidence they had when they were young, even though they still have the heart for it. And, they have still got the intellect to learn about it. And, their physical ability is not what it was before."

So, what goes into rider safety for older riders?

"For me, I have to make sure that the horse is as safe as possible without completely de-tuning him," Dave says. "That the horse still be as special a horse as we can have him, yet be—I'll use a word from the 80s—desensitized. That has become a dirty word these days, but I believe that the truth is the horse has to be less sensitive to the kinds of things that would cause him to be unsafe on his own. I like my horses where the human can swing a line and do some jumping-jacks and do all kinds of silly things and have a horse actually get a bit bored with it for the older people.

"How can I help them find a way to help their horse not be as worried or as quick to be reactive—maybe more responsive than reactive. I guess you could say that about all of your students, but the older ones need to know that they're still capable. That we're going to enjoy our horses."

Dave has many approaches to help folks get better with their horses regardless of age, but some are especially helpful for the older riders.

"For example," he says, "everyone that I ride with I make it

a point for them to teach their horses how to come up to them on a log or a rock or a stump or something like that. It might be a 10- or 15-minute lesson with them, and once the horse does it, they all seem to act like they don't mind it one bit. So then the older students, all they have to do is get up above the horse somehow and the horse will sidle up to them and they put the foot in the stirrup and get on.

"I try to make sure that the more seasoned students, that they're comfortable throwing a leg over the cantle and kicking their foot loose from the stirrup. Sliding down the side of the horse. That means that the horse has to be able to handle that without coming unglued. So, we spend time with those little dismounting safety procedures."

As mentioned above, Dave can relate to his older students as he has a few years under his belt. The equine activity he still enjoys on a regular basis is certainly inspiration to folks who wonder about working with horses as they age.

"I'm 73 and still ride five or six horses a day," he says. "I still start colts. I'm still staying pretty active as far as the horse development business goes. I teach all year long—I go out and do clinics all year long."

Dave says he sees many students just starting with horses at an older age.

"We have some in their 60s who this is their first horse," he says. "I've got a woman right here now riding with me over the weekend whose daughter has gone off to college and she's actually got the bug to start doing something with horses. She's in her late 50s. Many [older riders] come here saying, 'Td like to be more confident—I struggle with my confidence.' So I try to find little patterns for them to do and little methodologies that make them very successful without having to be real physical. That seems to slowly build up their confidence.

"We were out back riding following the cows around yesterday and she said she would not have thought about doing that when she came just three days ago. They realize their balance and timing is not what it was and they begin to fear the unknown maybe a little bit quicker than a young person would. If I can expose them to different patterns, small little things that make them successful in small increments, then I see their confidence just grow and all the while pointing out that things will go wrong here and there. We try to be as prepared for those as we can."

There are many benefits older riders gain from owning or being around horses.

"I've learned that horses make older people very comfortable and give them lots of pleasure," Dave says. "When a person has a horse online and they ask him to go around the cone and stop at a fence post, or something like that you can just see these people beam and maybe they're not ever going to get on a horse again. They're just as entitled to enjoy horses and enjoy the thrills [as people who get on and ride]. I have maybe 20 scattered throughout the United States [who only do groundwork] and I tease them and say, 'We're just riding from the side of our horse down here.'

"I try to find a way that first of all they stay as safe as possible, and then help them with their horsemanship, all the while not being disrespectful to the fact that they are older and try to help them realize that they have capabilities in all the wonderful things that we do in natural horsemanship."

**WENDY MURDOCH** has ridden since childhood in a variety of disciplines including Hunters, Dressage, Eventing, and Reining. Wendy has been teaching internationally for over 20 years. Her goal is to make riding more enjoyable and fundamentally simple by showing her students how to achieve what great riders do naturally. Learn more: www.murdochmethod.com

"For the older rider what I see is that this is supposed to be your enjoyment," Wendy says. "It's real important to keep assessing, 'Am I having a good time?"

With many older people getting into horses for the first time, Wendy has some advice to help those initial experiences be more enjoyable.

"If somebody is an older rider and they're just starting out, they really need to start out on an older, safe horse," Wendy says. "The most important thing is that you enjoy riding, and if you set yourself up on a young inexperienced horse and you don't know what you're doing, the chances of getting hurt are great."

Wendy often uses an expression with folks who ask her about how to find the right horse—"Take your adult with you."

"I call it the Black Beauty syndrome," Wendy says. "Most of the older riders—let's face it—are women. They've grown up wanting to have a horse and either they were denied that horse as a child or they rode as a kid and then left riding. So, they're still living that dream of Black Beauty and riding on the beach with the wind in the hair, and the horse bats its eye at you and you fall in love. Many times these adult riders make decisions from their emotional child instead of from their adult. Also, horse people prey on these inexperienced adults because they hit them at that emotional child level and then they suck them dry with all the costs to get where they want to get and they never get there.

"Many of my students are lawyers, doctors, professionals, and parents, and they get around a horse and they are the emotional age at which they were denied the horse. So when I say, 'take your adult with you,' it's about saying, 'okay, emotionally I'm a 10-year-old and I want to have that John Wayne dream or the Black Beauty dream,' but they need to take their adult—that professional person, that lawyer, that doctor, that mother, that parent—and ask, 'is this reasonable?' If they make decisions from their adult, they're going to make good decisions. If they make decisions from the child, they're going to make poor decisions because the child isn't capable of saying, 'this is not safe.'

"I have four things that I look for in a horse for my riders, any rider: safe, sound, sane, and suitable. For my adult riders, it's got to be safe and sane, and I will give up suitability in terms of size of the horse or breed for that safety and that saneness. And then the soundness, if they are a little [unsound] when you're just starting off, it's fine."

Fear is another factor that can inhibit older riders from doing what they would like to with a horse.

"I just had two older adults e-mail me and they've both been hurt and now they're afraid," Wendy says. "Fear is real and it needs to be acknowledged because if you deny the fear you're going to get hurt really bad because you will do things that are not safe. The fear is there to tell us, 'look, you need to pay attention to something.' As an adult, if we feel fear we have to stop and go, 'okay, what is it I'm afraid of?' Because, most likely there's a good reason. But so often adult riders think, 'I just have to toughen up and get through it,' and that's typically when they get hurt.

"If you really want to enjoy riding, then you start with a horse that's appropriate to your skill level. If you're going to go buy a horse, take someone with you that is an experienced horseperson that's on your side. Evaluate whether or not it is appropriate for you by watching someone else ride the horse first. I think so many accidents and injuries could be prevented if people who got into the sport got into it with the right horse."

Horses provide many benefits to older riders, and a big one that should not be underestimated according to Wendy is simply getting outside and communing with nature.

"Getting out of the office," she says. "Getting in the fresh air. Getting in the sunshine. Dealing with a being that is nonverbal. We're talking about benefits—it's not just physical benefits; it's the mental and emotional benefits of being with a horse. And I think that actually is huge because no matter how old you get, you can always put younger legs underneath you and still get out there."

Speaking of getting outside, for some time now Wendy has led groups on horseback safaris in Africa.

"A woman who was 84 years old came on safari with us," Wendy says. "She rode every day. This was a woman who just wanted to be on the back of a horse. We had the appropriate horse for her and she packed her 200 kilometers. So the health benefits are not just the physical, but owning a horse means you have to go muck the stall, feed them, take care of them, turn them in and out. There are lots of secondary exercises that come along with it, and those are all great. But the thing that's so important for the older rider is that they have the appropriate horse so that they enjoy riding and they're not overexposed. Just the way you don't want to overexpose a horse."

Wendy's final advice for older riders is for those who have a horse, but maybe not the right horse.



### ROUNDTABLE

"It's okay to get a divorce," she advises. "If this horse is not working out and you really want to be riding and not spending all your time on the ground, then get a divorce and find one that is appropriate for you and your skill level. Because, the most important thing is that you're safe and that you're enjoying it. And then everything else will come. But, you have to ask yourself those really hard questions. It's really important that you're okay with this and that things are going in a positive direction.

"I want my older riders to enjoy riding. I can't tell you how often I've seen older riders that won't get on their horses. They need to either find the right horse or find the right instructor to help them through those sticky moments, not just show up at a clinic once in a while and think it's going to all get resolved. Because, it's so worth it. It's worth that time with your horse."

### DALE WITHERSPOON

"I started colts at the fairgrounds of this little town of Carmi [Illinois] when I was 16 or 17 years old," says Dale Witherspoon. "I'll be 90 in November, and I'm still trying to learn something about it. Must be a slow learner, I guess!" Dale lives about 30 miles west of Evansville, Indiana. Dale

Dale lives about 30 miles west of Evansville, Indiana. Dale has been a horse trainer his whole life and at nearly 90 he still works horses for customers.

"I have a young man that helps me some," he says. "The last two or three years I've let him put the first ride or two on the colts. My barn is about a mile and a quarter from here and I go over there every morning and ride. Right now I have six horses there. I feed those and water them and then after they eat I do a lot of groundwork that we didn't use to do [several decades ago]. You know, we weren't doing anything for the horse's mind. All we were doing was getting the physical part strong, but we were doing very little for the horse's mind. So we've changed all that now. I do lots of groundwork on horses. Three of these horses are mine and the others are customer horses."

Dale says a big difference these days in horsemanship compared to earlier times is that there are many more avenues for people to use to pursue good horsemanship.

"When I started back at 16, there weren't any trainers around here," he reflects. "There were no DVDs, no books or anything, and whatever your neighbor did down the road, well that's probably the way you went. And most of it was wrong. Horse training has changed so much in the last 20 to 30 years. At one time I really thought I had it all, and then I went to a clinic of Pat Parelli. And when I saw Pat I thought, man-oman...so I changed my whole rules of what I'd been trying to teach horses and people."

Dale's advice for older folks is simple:

"My biggest advice is if you've got a horse that's got problems get somebody that's pretty knowledgeable to help you with that horse. When people bring a horse to me, I want them to



Dale at age 85 on Dusty a 10-year-old.

come and watch me and then I'm going to let them work and I will watch them. I try very hard for my customers to come and stay with me as much as they possibly can. People who want to get into horses today, there's a lot of good stuff out there like *Eclectic Horseman* magazine and many others—they've got a great opportunity for them today that I didn't have."

### ROXANNE ELLISON

"Once you're introduced [to better horsemanship] you can't just kick them to go and pull them to stop—there's an elegance in the feel and timing that Tom Dorrance and everyone talks about," Roxanne Ellison explains.

Roxanne, 58, has been an avid horse rider for many years. Her husband, Bruce, is 70. They live in Rolling Hills Estates, California.

"He started riding about 68," Roxanne explains, "and the funny thing was my husband figured out that if he wanted to be with me he better come to the barn because I was there a lot. So then he saw Jack Brainard riding [Jack is in his mid-90s] and he was like, 'Holy cow, I can ride!' And that's what started it all. We go to all of these clinics here in California and I would say our average rider age is probably 60 to 70."

Roxanne's and Bruce's approach to horses is not just about getting out and riding.

"We want to be able to do things with our horses, equipping them with better minds and better understanding of what we're doing—making the wrong thing hard and the right thing easy," Roxanne says. "I think once people get into this mentality in our age, this makes more sense to us older riders because it's just smarter for the horse and smarter for the human. But while safety is our big thing, intelligence and partnership is what we all strive for because we've done that our entire working lives. Those of us in Natural Horsemanship, or 'thinking horseman-



Joan riding Haidas Hardcopy, a 21-year-old AQHA stallion. A retired reiner owned by Faith and Cheryl Fahrenkrog of Davenport, Iowa.

ship' as I call it, yeah we want to be safe, but we want to do it with a certain elegance and spirit of 'it's good for the horse, it's good for the rider.'

"While the safety is imperative, I think the thing that's most over riding once you have gotten to the time in life that we have gotten to—and all of us hope that we're smarter and stronger and better as we go through life in retirement—is we want to do the same thing for our horses."

The first clinic Roxanne rode in was a Ray Hunt clinic and then she rode with Pat Parelli and others. These days, she and Bruce ride with many clinicians throughout the year. Two favorites of theirs are Dave Ellis and Lester Buckley.

"Dave has a nice way of working with my husband, who rode until he was probably 16 and then never rode again until about four years ago," Roxanne says. "We were lucky enough to get a great horse and he started riding."

Roxanne also realizes that the current generation of older riders have some special ties to horses.

"Realistically, this is the last of the generation that grew up with Roy Rogers and Trigger," she says. "At all these clinics I see a tremendous amount of 50- to 70-year-old riders who now have time and money in their lives and they've taken up riding. We're the ones who want to fulfill our childhood dreams of what we grew up with. We're the last of the generation whose parents actually used horses for farming and to get to town. I go to a lot of different clinics and I just see a generation of people who are riding who may not be 20, but we feel like we are."

But older riders do have their concerns, and as Roxanne admits above, safety is a big issue for them.

"For us, and one of the things I love about the clinicians, is that it's about safety," she says. "[The older generation] have gotten to a point in our lives where we've got lives that really are great and comfortable and we are able to spend time with our horses like we never could when we were younger. So the safety factor is a big deal. And then once you've got that safety factor down, it's so awesome to be able to go out and ride with people like Dave Ellis or Lester Buckley. We went with Lester this year at the V6 [Ranch] and it was truly amazing because we're living our lives doing cattle work with the best in the business, we're having the greatest time, and we're safe. For those of us who are retirement age, we didn't get here to get hurt.

"These clinicians are able to make us safe and give us tools. Now because we are safe, we can go out and do things with these guys that we would have never dreamed. You know the average guy wants to get out on the trail and be safe—I want to ride on the V6 Ranch and move cattle!

"For the riders that I see in clinics, all the clinicians, and all the guys who tell me, 'You've got to read *Eclectic Horseman*,' it's because we want to be good for our horses, we want to be safe, we want to come back from these rides, and we're doing stuff that we never dreamed of as a rider. Now we're like, 'This is so much fun!'

"All of these clinicians work with us to increase our physicality so we're not the weak spot for our horses. We're better people because of these guys and gals."

#### JOAN EHNLE

"I had a big life change in 2005," says 82-year-old Joan Ehnle. "I went to a Buck Brannaman clinic and took my mare. At that clinic I learned that I didn't know anything. Since then, I've been learning all I can. I'm on a very fascinating journey. Riding isn't the answer to [better horsemanship]. You have to read the horse. You have to think like a horse."

Joan lives in Illinois, about 150 miles from Chicago.

"I was born in Ontario and I lived there for a long time," she says. "I was lucky enough to have horses. My husband and I, 46 years ago, we raised pure blooded Arabian horses. Now I live on a grain farm."

Joan's advice to older riders is to spend time learning how a horse ticks and to understand that horses are not mechanical beings.

"Everything is a mind/body game and you must learn how a horse thinks," Joan insists. "That's so important. You just don't get on the horse and think you're going to go off into la-la-land because I've known a lot of people in my area who weren't good riders and they've been hurt."

Joan also has some thoughts for older riders who may want to enlist the help of a trainer.

"People will have a horse and they can't get along with it, so they send it to a trainer," she says. "The horse might work out there and it might not. If it works well with the trainer, the trainer sends it back. The person can't do anything with the horse because the horse, it just reverts right back to how it was and the person hasn't had any benefit unless they go with the horse to the trainer. And that's a different story. If an older person is physically able and they want to get into this field of horses and they get good help, it can go well."

Joan also has enjoyed the physical benefits of riding horses as an older rider.

"The walking motion of a horse is very therapeutic for a human spine," she says. "I think the main thing for a person in their older years—you can get hurt by a horse so easy. I mean, you can get knocked down...in other words, a horse isn't a pet dog. Well, a dog will knock you down, too, if they jump on you, but you've got to learn your boundaries. And what I have learned is you must learn to think like a horse. I'll go back and read books that I've had for years and I'll think, 'I don't remember that, but now it makes sense.' It takes a lifetime and you're never satisfied. I'm still learning." HOW HORSES WORK



# BOGUS IDEAS IN HORSEMANSHIP No. 2: Bigger Is Better

by Deb Bennett, Ph.D.

A note to all readers: Although there's a lot of "dressage talk" in the following text, the physics principles we go into here apply just as much to Western-type horses including Quarter Horses, Arabians, and Appalooses as they do to draft breeds and Warmbloods.

#### THE FAD FOR MASSIVE HORSES

These days, massive horses are all the rage in dressage competition, so much so that a horse of less than 16 hands won't even be looked at for international competition. This fad got started in the mid-1970s when Swiss rider Christine Stückelberger, aboard a 17:2-hand, 1500-lb. German Warmblood gelding named Granat, won the European Grand Prix championship, followed a couple of years later by Olympic and World Grand Prix wins. Previous to that time, successful dressage horses had averaged 15 to 16 hands and weighed 1200 lbs. or less, but today we have Americans such as Carol Lavell competing on the 17:3-hand, 1500-lb. Gifted, and Heather Blitz on the 18-hand, 1600-lb. Paragon. The massive-horse fad is an extremely unfortunate development that has had many repercussions on the way dressage horses are trained and judged,



**Fig. 1A.** Capt. Hiram Tuttle's horse "Olympic," the only American horse ever to win an individual medal in dressage at the Olympic Games. A typical Army officer's horse of Thoroughbred X Morgan breeding, he stood 16 hands with estimated weight of 1200 lbs. I advise readers to take a close look at Olympic's conformation: this is a beautiful horse, exactly the kind we should be breeding and promoting (photo courtesy The Army Museum). to the point of provoking a riding-in-lightness movement as backlash. The purpose of this article is to explain why massive horses are not very smart picks for the average horse owner, and not even really for the big-time competitor.

America has had numerous very good dressage horses who were not big—and not Warmbloods. In a recent conversation with Olympic medal winner and coach George Morris, he described Hilda Gurney's Thoroughbred Keen as "the best horse ever." Gurney and Keen helped to take team bronze at the 1976 Los Angeles games. Keen was a big strong horse standing



**Fig. 1B.** Capt. Tuttle riding another of his horses, the Thoroughbred Si Murray, who stood 15:3 and weighed about 1000 lbs. In this picture, the camera captures the change of leads which occurs during the moment of suspension – this is why it is called a "flying" change of leads. The higher the loft a horse produces during suspension, the more time he has to get his legs swapped around, and the more easily he will perform not only simple and tempe changes, but every transition. Si Murray produces about 7 or 8 inches of loft, that is .0080 inches of loft per pound (photo courtesy The Army Museum).



**Fig. 2.** Gwen Stockebrand aboard Bao, a Morgan X Tennessee Walker, performing passage. This horse stood 15:1 hands with estimated weight of 1100 lbs. (photo courtesy the Morgan Dressage Association).

fully 17:2 hands, but he still did not present as much massiveness as a typical Warmblood or draft horse – and in this discussion of physics principles as they apply to riding I am much more concerned with the horse's weight than with its height. Keen did not weigh more than 1400 lbs., which I consider to be the advisable upper weight limit in a horse suitable for riding.

During our conversation, I asked coach Morris about the economics of the American fascination with Warmbloods. Why don't American competitors look for good horses from American bloodstock, I wondered aloud. "We have not wasted millions of dollars buying mediocre horses overseas when better horses could easily have been found at home," Morris said — and then continued, "we have wasted BILLIONS."

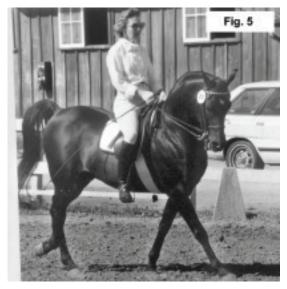


**Fig. 3.** Hilda Gurney with Keen at extended trot. Keen was a Thoroughbred standing 17:2 hands with estimated weight of 1400 lbs. He is producing about four inches of loft, that is .0030 inches of loft per pound. Compare to Capt. Tuttle's horse in Fig. 1B and to Figs. 18 and 19 (author's collection).

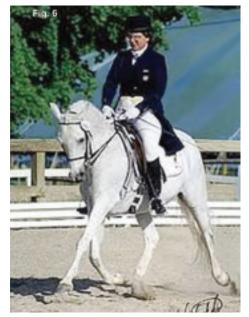
Before the 1970s when the Warmblood craze really took off, we had some winners when hardly anyone in the U.S.A. had even heard of dressage. Let's begin by noticing Army Quartermaster Corps' Captain Hiram Tuttle, the first and still the only American to win an Olympic medal in individual dressage (Bronze), which he took at the 1932 Los Angeles summer games on a Thoroughbred X Morgan named Olympic, a horse he had purchased for the princely sum of \$1. Another cavalryman from Ft. Riley, Chuck Grant, produced Billy Joe Freckles, the first Appaloosa to compete in domestic Grand Prix, and the palomino American Saddlebred mares Shine O'Bit and her daughter Bit O'Shine (a.k.a. Bitte Schön).



**Fig. 4.** Eloise King sidesaddle in habit upon the Arabian stallion Gindari, performing piaffe or trot-in-place. Gindari stood 15 hands with estimated weight of 975 lbs. (author's collection, courtesy Eloise King).



**Fig. 5.** Dr. Gail Hoff-Carmona aboard the Arabian stallion Serr Maariner. They are at the canter on the right hand. "Serr" stood 14:3 hands with estimated weight of 900 lbs. (photo by the author).



**Fig. 6.** Lendon Gray and Seldom Seen at the extended trot. "SS" stood 14:2 hands with estimated weight of 850 lbs. The horse is producing about four inches of loft, that is .0047 inches of loft per pound (author's collection, courtesy Lendon Gray).

From the same era, let's not forget Gwen Stockebrand and her Morgan X Tennessee Walking Horse gelding Bao, who in 1979 were 16th in individual dressage at the World Championships, 3rd in the musical ride, and later won Silver at the Pan Am Games. I was present on several occasions to watch Eloise King on Gindari, and Gail Hoff-Carmona on Serr Maariner-both of these horses were Arabian stallions-trounce the competition at the biggest East Coast Grand Prix, Dressage at Devon. My all-time favorite is Lendon Gray aboard her 14:2hand Seldom Seen, who were American Horse Shows Association champions at 3rd and 4th Level, Prix St. George, and Intermediare I, and Horse of the Year at all levels 3rd through Grand Prix. Seldom Seen was retired—still completely sound-in 1987 after winning the Grand Prix, Grand Prix Special, and Grand Prix Freestyle at Dressage at Devon. All these champions measured less than 16 hands in height and weighed less than 1400 lbs.; see their photos in Figs. 1-6.

#### DRAFT HORSES AS DRESSAGE PERFORMERS

I am sometimes faced with the painful task of having to tell a horse owner the plain truth in front of an audience. Of course all horses have certain flaws;



**Fig. 7.** Big Jim, a Percheron gelding standing 20 hands and weighing 2,400 lbs. vs. Tiny Tim, a Shetland pony standing 10 hands and weighing 440 lbs. (author's collection).

there are no perfectly conformed horses, but I always try to look for positives that balance or even negate any flaws. I try to cushion bad news as much as possible – but it is simply not possible to do much cushioning when what the rider brings is an 18-hand, 2,000-lb. Percheron gelding.

The problem was not that he was a bad horse; he was a reasonably good horse as draft horses go. The problem was that he was being presented to me as a RIDING horse, and what I unfortunately had to tell the owner was that this never really works out. One proof is that, although I had just watched this horse pound around for an hour under the eye of a dressage trainer, once the saddle was stripped off it became evident that the Percheron had a very stiff, dropped back and a maldeveloped neck with not a single muscle properly developed. Its hoofs, like those of almost all horses that weigh a solid ton, were pathologically warped. It could show no more than 5" of bone-tendon substance per 1,000 lbs. of weight-the average for horses of over 1600 lbs. but significantly less than what a riding horse should have.

"What this horse needs", I told the rider, "is not dressage 'training' but physiotherapy." Demanding riding performance from a horse so massive is not merely a silly fad, but cruel. Unfortunately, she had absorbed the idea from reading magazine articles featuring Gifted and Paragon that riding huge horses is perfectly OK. She did not want to acknowledge how short the lifespan of these huge horses typically is, and what extreme measures it takes to keep them working sound. Did she, I asked her, have her own staff veterinarian, private groom, and on-call farrier as Olympic competitors do?

Above all, the lady with the Percheron did not want to admit that she is sacrificing correct form, ease, and lightness by not selecting a horse of appropriate height and weight. The bigger a horse is, the more difficult and physically danger-

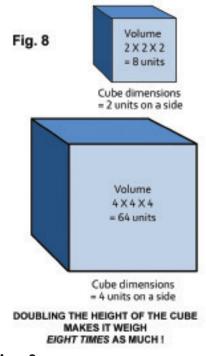
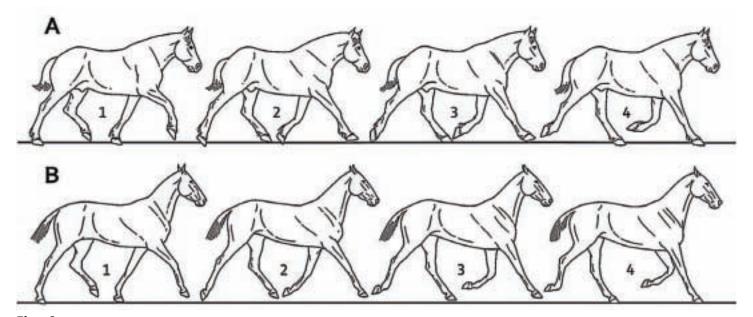


Fig. 8. How weight increases when height of cube is doubled.



**Fig. 9.** Suspended vs. nonsuspended "trot". **A:** A draft horse produces a "stepping trot" in which there is no period of suspension. **B:** A Thoroughbred X Morgan showing 4 or 5 inches of loft during the period of suspension at the trot (images from Eadweard Muybridge's 1879 motion studies).

ous any sort of athletic task becomes for him. There are no wild equines that weigh above 1100 lbs. There are many things about a horse that can be modified and improved through diet, management, conditioning, and enlightened training, but nothing can make a huge horse any smaller.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF SIZE INCREASE

The scale of a horse's body affects every aspect of its athletic functioning. Fig. 7 dates from about 1910 and shows Big Jim, a handsome but huge Percheron who stood a fraction less than 20 hands (80 inches, 203 cm) at the withers and weighed just shy of 2,400 lbs. The Shetland pony called Tiny Tim stood 10 hands and weighed 440 lbs. When we double a horse's height, most people expect this would mean that we also double the animal's weight. However, a horse's body is not just a two-dimensional cardboard cutout. Rather, it is a three-dimensional object that has height, width, and depth.

What happens to weight when the height of a cube is doubled? The top cube in Fig. 8 measures 2 units on edge and therefore has an internal capacity (volume) of 2 X 2 X 2 = 8 units. The bottom cube is twice as tall (but because it is a cube, it must also be twice as wide and twice as deep), so its volume measures 4 X 4 X 4 = 64 units. Thus, when we double the height of a cube we do not increase its volume by a factor of two, but rather by a factor of EIGHT !

The volume of a cube is its capacity to hold material. The property of eightfold increase holds true no matter what we may choose to fill the cube with – lead, styrofoam, or flesh and blood.

Now consider the reality of Tiny Tim vs. Big Jim. If the weight increase model outlined above were true for horses, when we double Tiny Tim's height to Big Jim's 20 hands, multiplying Tiny Tim's weight by 8 we should find that Big Jim weighed 3,520 lbs., not the reported 2,400 lbs. Why the discrepancy? Because a horse is not a perfect cube – not as thick from left to right sides as it is long from breast to buttock. Thus, we must regard our cube model as only approximate: when we double the height of a 10-hand pony to that of a 20-hand

drafter, we document an increase in weight of about 5  $\frac{1}{2}$  times, rather than an eightfold increase. Nonetheless, the increase in weight far exceeds the increase in height. I emphasize this fact because the more-than-equal increase in weight is not so very obvious to the eye.

#### MASSIVE HORSES AVOID SUSPENSION

Apart from the obvious considerations that massive horses are often too wide across the back for the rider to sit on comfortably, that it is difficult to find any saddle to fit them, that every practical aspect of management (i.e., farriery, trailering, stabling, and feeding) will cost more than it would for a horse of normal size, many wise and experienced horsemen of the past have warned that large horses usually lack the quickness and agility for under-saddle tasks. Most seriously of all, massive horses are far more difficult to maintain in sound condition when suspended gaits are regularly demanded of them.

Film analysis of horses over and under the 1400-lb. weight cutoff demonstrates consistent differences in way of going. Here's a bit of homework: study motion sequences (A) and (B) in Fig. 9 and answer the following questions:

(a) Look at image 1 in filmstrip (A), which shows a draft horse trotting at liberty (he is being urged forward with a longeing whip). How many feet does he have in contact with the ground in this image?

(b) Examine images 2 - 4 in filmstrip (A). Can you find a time when the horse has all four feet off the ground simultaneously (i.e., a time when the horse is in suspension)?

(c) Now look at filmstrip (B), which is of a 1050-lb. Thoroughbred X Morgan much like Capt. Tuttle's "Olympic". In image 1, how many feet does this horse have in contact with the ground?

(d) Examine images 2 – 4 in filmstrip (B). Can you find one or more times when the horse has all four feet off the ground, i.e., is in suspension?

(e) Why do you think the massive horse "trots" in such a way as to always have at least one foot in contact with the ground?

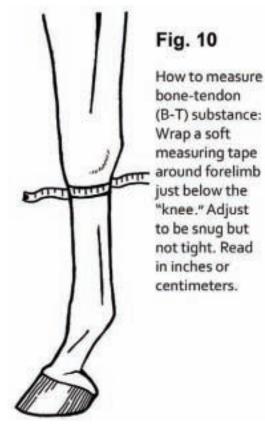


Fig. 10. How to measure bone-tendon circumference (B-T).

#### LIMB AND HOOF SUBSTANCE

Scale and substance are different factors, but they are intimately related, because as you are about to learn, as scale increases in horses, substance goes DOWN.

Engineers follow building codes that dictate how stout the uprights must be to bear the weight of a building's superstructure. The engineering law states that the strength of a supporting member is proportional to its cross-sectional area: if you're putting up a pole-barn, you can't support the roof with twigs. In architecture, this law is used to calculate what is called static load – the load on the uprights of a building, or on the legs of a horse, when it is standing still. We are actually far more interested in what stresses the horse's limbs may be under when he moves, but in order to approach that question, we must first learn a few things about static weightbearing.

Does it matter for purposes of support whether we build the horse's skeleton out of styrofoam, lead, steel, or calci-apatite (the mineral substance that makes bone hard)? Although different materials have vastly different strengths, the engineering principle always holds: a thin post – so long as it be constituted uniformly – is always less able to bear a load than a thicker post made of the SAME material.

Neither does it matter what cross-sectional shape the supporting member has: it can be square, rectangular, round, triangular, or shaped like an I-beam; it can be solid or hollow. So long as we continue to compare like to like, a hollow cylinder of uniformly constituted material that has the diameter of a straw will be weaker than a hollow cylinder of the same material that has the diameter of a cannon bone.

There is a practical problem in applying these engineering principles to living horses: it is obviously not possible to directly measure the cross-sectional area of the cannon bone in the living horse, because to do that we would have to cut the horse's leg

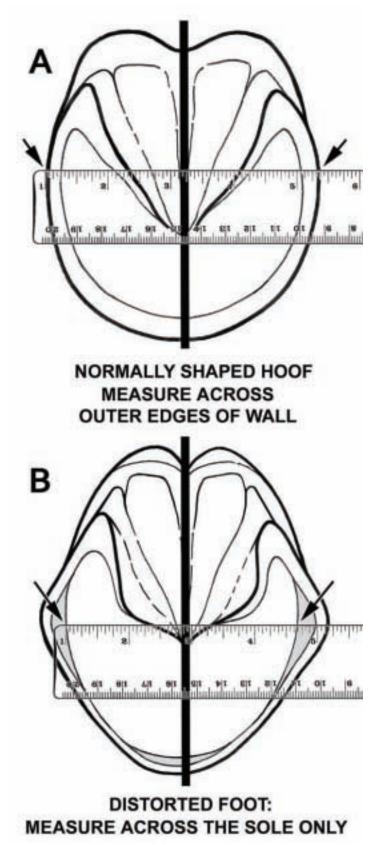


Fig. 11. How to measure hoof width.

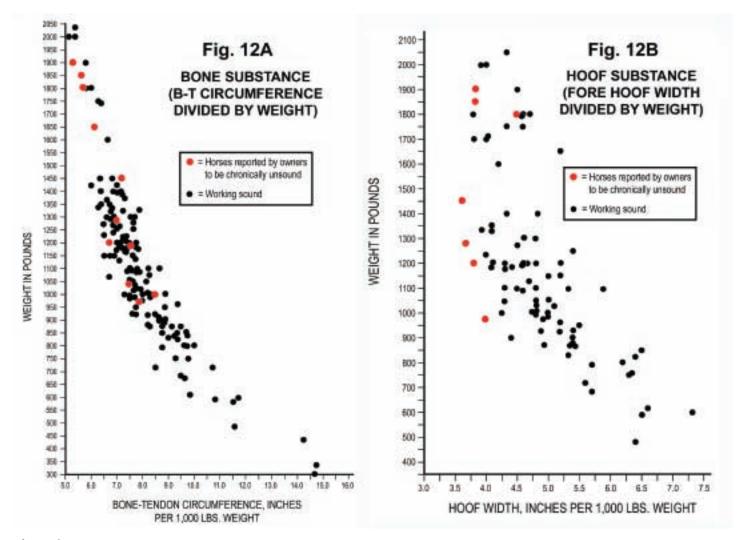


Fig. 12. Substance data for a wide variety of breeds. A, scatterplot for bone substance. B, scatterplot for hoof substance. Red dots indicate chronically unsound horses.

off. What we can do is wrap a tape measure around his forelimb to determine the bone-tendon or B-T circumference (Fig. 10). Maximum hoof width is another very useful indicator of the weightbearing capacity of a horse's limbs (Fig. 11).

Of course, bigger horses have bigger limbs and feet, but absolute size does not predict durability. Rather, it is the RATIO of limb circumference or hoof width to the bodyweight that predicts bearing strength. I express a horse's limb substance in terms of inches of bone-tendon circumference per thousand pounds of weight (Fig. 12A). Studies of average substance in both wild and domestic horses lead me to recommend that a horse intended for riding use have 8 inches of B-T circumference per 1,000 lbs. of weight. Likewise, horses with fore hoof width of less than 4.5 inches per 1,000 lbs. weight (Fig. 12B) are far more likely to have chronic soundness issues.

The charts in Fig. 12 show that as we increase the massiveness of the horse, limb circumference and hoof width DOES NOT KEEP UP. For example, a 16:2-hand Warmblood advertising an "impressive" 9 inches of bone does not impress me at all if he weighs 1400 lbs. (i.e., he presents a ratio of only 6 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches of bone per 1,000 lbs. of weight)! Thousands of measurements taken over the past century on horses of many breeds yield an alarming bottom line: the bigger the horse, the smaller its B-T circumference and hoof width is likely to be, relative to its mass (Fig. 13).

#### Homework: Measuring B-T and Hoof Width

Next time you're headed out to the stable, bring a footlong ruler and a soft cloth dressmakers' tape with you. Before attempting to put the tape around the horse's leg, make sure he's not afraid of the tape. Wrap the tape around the leg as shown in Fig. 10 and pull it up snug enough to flatten the hair, but not tight enough to pinch the skin. Read the circumference of your horse's leg – his B-T measurement, and record it.

You'll also need to know your horse's weight to within plus or minus 25 lbs. The best way to determine this is to take your empty truck and trailer to a weigh station. Then go back home, load up your horse, and weigh again; the difference is the horse's weight. This method is more accurate than weight tapes or guesstimation, and you might like to have it for other purposes too; for example, to ensure accurate dosing with wormers or medications.

Once you have the B-T circumference and the weight, you can calculate your horse's substance:

(a) Multiply the B-T by 1000

(b) Divide this by his weight

The result is inches of B-T per 1,000 lbs. of weight. The ideal once again for riding horses is 8 in./1,000 lbs.; 7 inches/1,000 lbs. is the minimum recommended.

Now try doing a hoof width measurement. First, determine

which is the smaller of your horse's forefeet. Lift that foot as if to clean it, and lay your ruler across the widest part of the sole. The measurement should normally go from the outside edge of the wall on the medial side to the outside edge of the wall on the lateral side.

Many horses' feet are distorted in shape (flares, wall separations, etc.). In this case, measure only across the sole. Then measure the width of one wall (usually something like 3/8ths of an inch), multiply that figure by 2, and add it to the sole measurement.

- To calculate your horse's "hoof substance":
- (a) Multiply recorded hoof width X 1000
- (b) Divide by horse's weight

This gives a result in terms of inches of fore hoof width per 1,000 lbs. of weight. Compare the figure for your horse with data given in Fig. 12B. Look also at Fig. 14 and notice how the number of pounds per square inch (static load) goes up as hoof width shrinks. Where does your own horse stand on this chart?

#### **ELASTIC SIMILARITY**

Fresh compact bone loaded parallel to its long axis will bear a static load of 19,000 – 30,000 pounds per square inch (1330-2100 kg/cm2). This is roughly four times the compressive strength of concrete. When compressive stress is applied at an angle to the long axis of the bone it is called shear stress. The resistance of compact bone to shear is also quite high, from 7150 to 16,800 lbs. per square inch (500 kg/cm2 - 1176 kg/cm2).

These figures make it clear that the weightbearing capability of bone is far higher than the weight of even the heaviest horse – and from this, one might reason that the skeleton is so vastly overdesigned that it would never break down—even in a 2,000-lb. draft horse asked to go pounding around in a dressage court. Indeed, bone fractures due to compression are the least common class of injury. However, in the course of athletic activity under saddle, twisting, bending, and shear often combine with compressive stress to multiply the total force acting upon a bone.

Strain gauges attached to the limbs of living animals allow measurement of the stresses acting upon bones when the body is in movement. Animals that have been studied differ in weight by a factor of 25,000, from tiny chipmunks up to huge elephants. Amazingly, the results of all tests are similar: the maximum stress values recorded during the most vigorous forms of movement in each species turn out to be almost exactly equal to the breaking strength of bones.

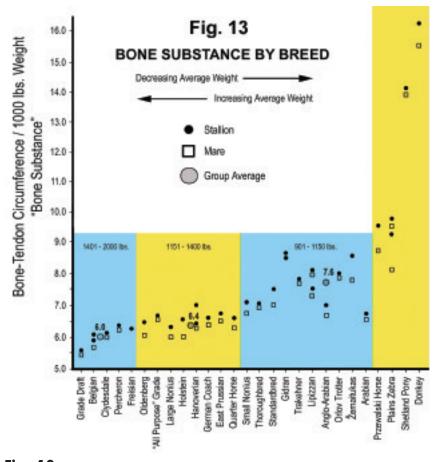
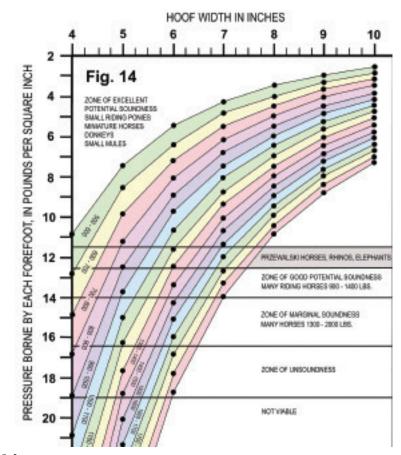


Fig. 13. Bone substance by breed. The data represent measurements made on more than 5,000 domestic horses, donkeys, and wild equines.



**Fig. 14.** Pressure borne by each forefoot in pounds per square inch. Where does your horse stand on this chart?

The stiffness of a bone, or its ability to bend, are reflections of the mechanical property known as elasticity. Real animals neither exhibit one-to-one scaling (one-to-one scaling would make the skeleton much too flimsy, blue line in Fig. 16), nor scaling to accommodate static weightbearing (eightfold increase in limb dimensions, which horses never achieve, yellow line). What hoofed mammals actually show is scaling according to elastic similarity (red line) -- they make their bones stouter not according to the static load they must bear, but according to the amount of bending stress the bones are likely to undergo in movement. In other words, the bones of animals are built so that they resist bending better than impact.

#### HOW MUCH "BONE" IS ENOUGH?

The larger the bone-tendon circumference that a horse presents relative to his body mass, the better – for greater B-T circumference at once implies both greater weightbearing capacity and greater potential for ongoing soundness. But how much "bone" is enough?

The Przewalski or Mongolian Wild Horse, the closest living relative of the domestic horse, provides a useful baseline (Fig. 15). They present 9-14 inches of B-T circumference per 1,000 lbs. of weight. By contrast, "bone" substance in domestic horses averages only 6.7 inches –about 3/4ths the wild average. Have we gotten our horses into trouble here? The answer to this question is, increasingly, "yes."

As the size of the horse increases, because the skeleton scales up only by the rule of elastic similarity, it will become less and less capable of resisting impact. The "tolerance" between an impact that the skeleton can absorb-vs. one that will snap boneswill, in other words, become smaller. As we have previously seen (Fig. 9), massive horses, like elephants, protect their legs from concussion-typically by offering minimal suspension in both trot and canter. This does not mean that large horses are incapable of bouncy gaits-a rider or driver can stimulate a massive horse to offer longer and higher suspension. What it does mean is that massive horses run a much higher risk of injury and lameness. This is why it is unkind and unwise to use draft horses, or any horse weighing over 1400 lbs., as a riding horse.

#### **BONE DENSITY**

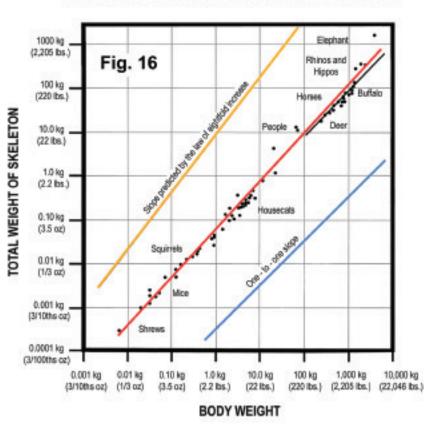
Arabian owners often think "higher bone density" excuses weediness, but it is not any more OK for an Arabian to have low substance than for any other breed. First, we need to define terms: "density" means mass (practically, weight) PER UNIT VOLUME. In other words, if we have a cube measuring one inch in each dimension made of lead, we may find that it weighs 2 pounds. A similar cube made of styrofoam would weigh much less, perhaps 4 ounces (1/4th pound). Lead is denser than styrofoam because a cube of lead weighs more than a cube



Fig. 15. A Przewalski horse mare at Monarto Zoo, South Australia (photo by the author).

of styrofoam of the same size. Normal bone is intermediate in density between lead and styrofoam.

Higher density implies nothing about the "quality" of bone; quality comes from bone's internal structure, which in all healthy horses is alike. Increasing bone density does NOT increase its strength; in fact, the opposite is true. Abnormally high bone density is a disease called pachyostosis; osteoporosis is its opposite. We want neither one in our horses.



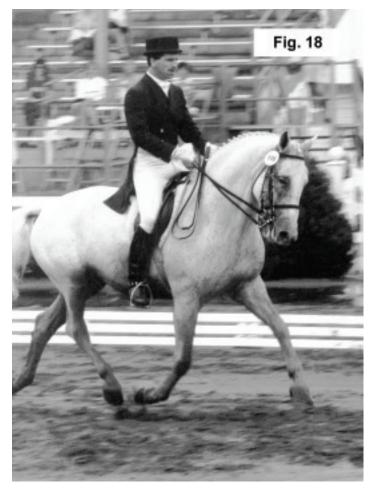
#### FIG. XX: SCALING BY THE LAW OF ELASTIC SIMILARITY

Fig. 16. Scaling by the law of elastic similarity.

Years ago I built an apparatus (Fig. 17) for determining the density of horse cannon bones. I have used it to measure a wide range of breeds—everything from miniature ponies to huge draft horses. Before dipping the bone into the water, the investigator must first weigh it and record the weight. Then the bone is dipped into the water in order to find its volume, which is equal to the amount of water that overflows into the beaker. The density of the bone is found by dividing the recorded weight by the volume. The results:

(1) Normal bone density averages about 19 grams per cubic centimeter, with various published studies showing a range between about 15 to 22 grams per cubic centimeter. Horses in the riding horse weight range—from 900 to 1300 lbs.—cluster near normal. This would include most breeds of "light" horse; they all show the same range of bone density.

(2) Horses in the riding pony weight range— 400 to 900



**Fig. 18.** George Williams aboard the Lipizzan stallion Conversano II Sarissa. Lipizzans are the bulldogs of the horse world, broad, muscular, and heavy for their height. This horse stood 15:2 with estimated weight of 1250 lbs. During the moment of suspension in the extended trot shown here, the stallion produces a remarkable 8 or 9 inches of loft, that is, .0072 inches of loft per pound (photo by the author).

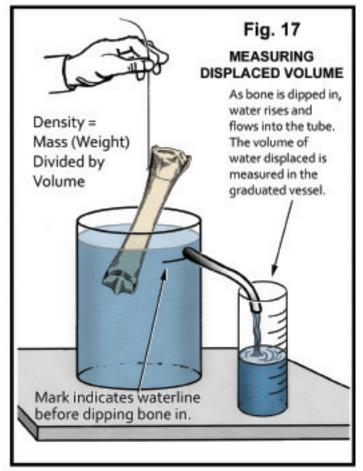


Fig. 17. Simple apparatus for measuring the volume of a bone.

lbs. – also cluster near normal, though with a tendency to lie at the high end of the normal range.

(3) Horses between 1300 - 1700 lbs. (590 - 770 kg), i.e., over the recommended limit for horses of riding type, cluster toward the low end of the normal range.

(4) Horses above 1700 lbs. (771 kg) show lower frequencies of normal bone density, with many individuals falling below the normal range.

These results point to two important conclusions:

(1) Arabians tend to have normal bone density – just like ALL OTHER BREEDS that are similar in weight.

(2) The smaller the horse, the greater the chance that bone density will be normal.

#### Pound for Pound, Smaller Horses Are Stronger

The above data show that smaller horses are far more likely to remain sound through years of use. We can also easily show that pound for pound, smaller horses are stronger than larger ones. One of the worst effects of the massive-horse craze is that ponderous movement has now become the expected norm and even the preferred style—at dressage shows. Lightness is lacking.

What is "lightness"? It has two aspects in riding horses:

(1) Lightness is the lifting or "cantilevering" of the forehand relative to the core of the loin and haunches that results in the unweighting of the forelimbs. True lightness is the result of true collection, which itself can only be achieved when the horse has been taught to move forward vigorously upon the rider's request, yet without bracing a single muscle. Lightness can come only from softness. Large horses are as capable of softness as small ones, and if they are well conformed, they will also be equally capable of lifting the forehand.

(2) Lightness is also measured by the amount – the height – of suspension. The higher over the ground the horse's body "lofts" during the period in the trot, canter, flying pace, or gallop when there are no feet on the ground, the lighter his movement. Look at Figs. 6 and 19 to see small horses achieving 4 - 7 inches of loft. The larger the horse, the less loft he will be able to achieve and the sooner he will fatigue.

When we see a horse move "round and soft," with the whole block of the forehand elevated with respect to the haunches, and we see him literally fly forward through

the air with lots of suspension in his gaits, then we have identified the horse that actually has superior movement. Superior movement is certainly NOT measured by how much the animal may "extend" its forelimbs to the front—!

The smaller the horse, the easier it is for him to produce high-quality movement. I have no problem with Keen (Fig. 3) or Conversano Sarissa (Fig. 18) as riding horses; what I'm pointing out is that even though these bigger mounts fall below the recommended 1400-lb. weight limit, they simply don't produce as much suspension per pound of weight as smaller horses. If we go over 1400 lbs., we are dealing with massive horses that are weak relative to their weight, and it is that weakness plus muscle fatigue that gives rise to ponderousness.

#### FIGURING OUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT

There is no law against using huge horses for dressage competition; only the application of common sense and reason can stop the practice. Ultimately, people will have to decide whether the current fad favoring massive horses should guide their thinking, or whether the principles and laws of nature outlined above should be more important.

A little cultural insight might also help. Throughout their competitive career, Lendon Gray and Seldom Seen faced criticism that was sometimes ugly, amounting to prejudice. Interviewed by an International dressage magazine, Ms. Gray remembered, "there were often discouraging comments from judges and the commonest was that Seldom Seen didn't cover enough ground. An interested physicist once studied his stride compared to the top U.S. Olympic horse at the time and SS's stride was slightly longer than that horse in relation to his height."



**Fig. 19.** Vignir Sigiersson aboard an Icelandic gelding, captured during the moment of suspension in the extended trot. The horse stands 14 hands with estimated weight of 750 lbs., and produces 6 or 7 inches of loft, that is, .0093 inches per pound -- the highest amount presented in this report (author's collection, courtesy Eyjólfur Ísólfsson).

How beautiful is physics, because it does not lie!

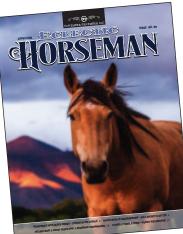
It is also worth asking – if Seldom Seen was such an "apparently" mediocre mover -- why he kept winning. The answer lies in the scoring system embedded in all dressage tests from 2nd level up: transitions receive double weight. The transitions into and out of piaffe and passage count heavily. This is also why Arabian Grand Prix horses ridden by Eloise King and Gail Hoff-Carmona often scored a whopping ten percentage points higher than their competition: because smaller animals can more easily "handle" rapid weight shifts – which is what every transition comes down to.

Seldom Seen was short-listed for the U.S. Olympic dressage team every year during his Grand Prix career, yet it was a sham because USET officials stated publicly that they would never allow him to be on the American dressage team. Chalk this up, if you like, to human nature: officials at the USET can be just as mesmerized by the massive-horse fad as the least knowledgeable armchair jockey. Gray commented, "The people at USET used as an excuse that the European judges wouldn't accept him. So [we took] SS to Europe by ourselves," she said. "The European judges were a bit surprised to see him, but scored him more fairly than the American judges. This still didn't convince the powers that be at USET, though."

Such is the nature of the Giant of the Age, who has the power to make people blind and deaf so that "seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not hear." I admire Lendon Gray's training and riding; even more, I admire her levelheadedness, kindness, and courage. "I showed Seldom Seen because I loved riding him," she said. "I was proud of the training I had done, and when I went in the ring I knew if we had done our best, if the judges liked it, it made me happy. If the judges didn't, Seldom Seen still made me happy."

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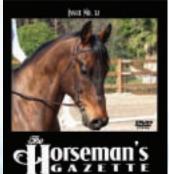
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In this latest DVD offering of vintage footage, Tom directs Bryan Neubert in the starting of two young horses at one of his clinics. Tom mentions several times that the learning that will take place for people will be when they go home and spend time with their own horses; the clinic is an opportunity to be exposed to some new ideas. This DVD also includes footage of Harry Whitney riding a horse though obstacles; tires on the ground and a bridge and closes with a conversation between Tom and Harry about "approaches." There are some great gems in these interactions. We hope you enjoy this opportunity to spend some time with Tom.

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The Horseman's Gazette - Peter Campbell Special Collection \$29.95 A collection of all the segments we filmed with Peter for the Gazette. Enjoy all of these segments in one collection. • Preparation for Opening a Gate

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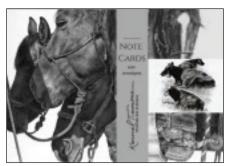
#### 2018 Karmel Timmons Calendar \$8.00

This limited edition calendar is 6"x 6" when closed and 12" x 6" when opened. The paper is a very heavy card stock with a smooth finish which makes it very sturdy, thick and easy to write on. Coil binding which allows the calendar to lay perfectly flat against the wall. Rounded corners and hole punched for hanging. As always, it's being printed in the U.S. Karmel designed all aspects of this calendar herself.

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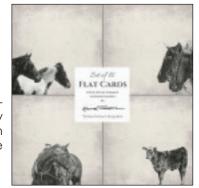
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#### Campfire Mug \$15.00

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Your favorite caps in Winter colors. Call for availability!



A HORSEMAN'S PERSPECTIVE



Feeling What a Horse Needs

# Part 4 - Beginning Groundwork

with Tom Curtin Photos by Emily Kitching

*Editor's* Note: In an effort to help us develop our eye and understand what is taking place in a particular moment, we visited with Tom Curtin about a series of photos taken at his clinic last summer in Buffalo, Wyoming. It is a unique opportunity to learn what Tom is seeing and feeling from moment to moment and what these changes mean to him and the colt.

The Secret as Tom Dorrance said, if there is one, is that "it's in the feet." A perfect example is loading horses in a trailer. You've seen horses look in the trailer, their mind might be in the trailer, but if their feet aren't in there, you're not going anywhere. Sometimes you'll see a horse escape into the trailer. He puts his feet in there but his mind didn't necessarily get in. His mind is right there with his feet don't get me wrong, but he just escaped in there. His feet are in the trailer, his mind is still on whatever put enough pressure on him to cause him to escape into the trailer in the first place. Sometimes you may have to do that. But if you get his feet into that trailer his mind isn't going to be too far behind. But you can get his mind in the trailer all day long but if his feet don't get in you're not going anywhere. You can go up there and shake a feed bucket, you can get him to look in the trailer you can get him to do all these things, but if the feet don't go in, you're not going anywhere. You have to be able to get to the feet. If you can get to the feet you will be able to get to the mind. Just because you get to the mind doesn't mean you are going to get to the feet.

A trainer who is moving the feet, getting lightness but not softness will get things done through repetition. If the horse can accept that, things will work out. But if he doesn't then he's the rogue, or no good to anyone. He won't put up with that crap. And they can get some lightness in the horse, but a lot of times they will just mentally tune you out. They just go through the motions. And I don't mean this wrong, but that's where a lot of these folks are at with these horses. They have these horses just doing the maneuver, This is not about the maneuver. I could care less about that horse stepping his hindquarters over; what I care about is how does he feel about himself when he's around me. It's not about the maneuver. So many folks are teaching this stuff with maneuvers... you gotta have this foot here and that foot there. That's not what this is about. What I'm trying to get them to understand is how does that horse feel about you when you're around, no matter what you ask him to do. So a lot of times people will get a lot of lightness and they'll get those horses going through the maneuvers, and the horse understands the maneuver, but it has no value to him, no meaning to him. He's just doing the maneuver.

How do you know if the horse is finding value in it? The more horses you mess with, the clearer that is. But you might not have that opportunity, so what I tell folks is find someone who is doing something with their horse that you really like, but you might not see what they are doing to get that done. Watch those folks, or visit with them. Don't take my word for it; take the horse's word for it. How does that horse feel about things? Does he get unsure? Does he understand? Does he look like he's just going through the motions? A lot of times you can't tell the difference and that's why things are going like they're going. One guy might not be able to tell the difference between one guy's horses and the next, so they might think someone has something going on. A lot of folks don't even realize if a person isn't getting softness. Think about where the horse is coming from. If the horse doesn't know what you want, you're not sure what you want, or that you could have something else, how's the horse ever going to make it? If a horse and rider are getting along OK and they are pleased with where they are at, there's nothing wrong with that. But there is something else out there.

How can you tell the difference between lightness and softness? It always goes back to what Ray said, "What happens before it happens so that when it happens you know what happened." Start to recognize those places so that you can recognize what you want to have happen. Those are the kinds of things that are going to shape up, and you can feel that in him. You'll feel that horse turn loose. He might get real light there, but he won't have a mental or inner softness. Just because a horse is light on the outside doesn't mean he's soft on the inside. And that's where this softness has to come from. You can make a horse be light, but you can't make a horse be soft. That's his choice. Instead of you just worrying about what you want, he knows you care about how he feels about things. That's that building that relationship with that horse, knowing that you care about this, you see, and have an actual understanding about how he feels about it. That's what's so important to the horse. These horses start to realize that you're aware of how he feels about things. Then the horse starts to do things for you because he wants to, not because he has to. You just have to understand it's more about what he needs, not what you want.



Now we're going to spend a little time working with him • on the ground with a halter. And you can see this little guy, he's a little bit unsure of where I am approaching. If you look you can see the lead rope in my right hand, even more than my left hand, there's a little tension on that. He's wanting to step back. I'm not going to pull on him but I've got some tension on that lead rope. But if you'll notice my position, I'm actually walking with him as he's stepping back. I'm not going to make him stay there but I would like him to come up off of that. He doesn't feel quite like he can right there, but that's all right. I'm not going to make a big deal out of. He's just a little unsure of things right there.

He's gotten guite a bit softer in my right hand. He's still unsure about things, but he's feeling like he can at • least stay. He's not thinking about leaving so much. He hasn't really softened in his neck and let down; he's just accepting what I'm doing. He hasn't turned loose or softened; he's just kind of accepting that, which a lot of times you have to recognize that spot because what happens if you don't is you end up running over their feelings. And this is what they feel like before they may soften. A lot of times people get lightness in their horses, and they mistake lightness for softness. Now don't get me wrong. When a horse gets soft he's extremely light, but just because he's light, doesn't mean he's soft. I've found that if you're looking for a gauge of whether or not they are soft or just light, is see if you can maintain that feeling from a standstill whether you are on the ground or on his back. Take it up into movement and see if the feeling holds, through movement. If that feeling holds you have some softness going on. He has to have some softness to take that from a standstill into a movement. Once you get some experience in that area, then you can feel if it will carry.





He's still paying quite a bit of attention, but he's starting to turn loose a little bit. • Notice his tail is a little softer. He's paying attention to what I want. He still hasn't really turned lose and softened up in his neck and shoulders yet, but he's kind of getting to where he can accept this and it feels better to him. I'm not saying it feels good yet. But see, I went from what I was doing, I kind of moved on, so he's kind of thinking a little bit about what happened before. He's staying aware of what is going on; his ears are a little more relaxed. He's a little more sure about staying there, but he isn't completely turned loose. Look back at the prior photo. His left front is moving, where here he has his feet a little more settled. When things start to come out in those horses' feet, that's what Tom said, he said, "If there was ever a secret to working with these horses, not that there is, but if there were it would be in their feet." And that's what helps settle that mind. Then you can feel if it will carry.





5. He's paying attention, but if you notice he's trying to get comfortable in his mouth. He's feeling that rope coming down that left side and his mouth isn't tight. He's trying to work his mouth a little bit, and I just give him a little time there as I lower my hand down hip. Again his feet are good and solid; his tail is pretty relaxed; he hasn't tightened his back end up.



He really turned loose here. See where I'm standing? He can't really see me from that spot. A lot of times when I do this with a horse I might just be there, checking this out, and I'll set that all up and if he's soft in there and he doesn't weigh anything and he's pretty comfortable, I'll let the horse wait there. I won't let him wait too long, to where they swing that head back around, get straight in there, or get in trouble, but on the first try or two I'll step over (see next picture, how I stepped over so that horse can see me). And I took a little more of the slack out of that rope.

He's kind of hanging in there. Things are kind of working out a little bit better for him. As I take the rope off the off side, I'm just kind of paying attention to his eye and where is body is up there and paying attention to his front end because you can tell I'm moving my way to the back, as you can see. I want to see how he feels about this and I'm just kind of paying attention to what he's looking at, how he's feeling, his facial expressions, how he feels about things, how he feels in his body about things.



I've stepped over so he can see me. I don't pull. I just take the slack out of it. He can't straighten his head back up but he can see me. That really sets a horse up. A lot of times people will just pull that horse around and that can really get a horse in trouble. But if you can just step over in there where he can see you and then just hold a little tension on that, then I'll wait for him to find his way out of there. If he can't see you from that previous spot, and you go to pulling on him, a lot of times if a horse hasn't been handled a lot and he doesn't understand that pressure on his head, he'll go to fighting and that rope will get real tight on his hip. He'll go to fighting and he'll get real scared. He might try to kick at that or just try to blow out of there. You see that a lot the first time someone tries to do this with a horse and they really try to blow out of there. Well, I want to keep him feeling as good as he can possibly feel so that he will think his way through this. In this picture he's just thinking about that rope. He's not tight anywhere. It might look like I am pulling on him, but I'm not. I don't have a lot of pressure on there, just enough to where it just comes tight. Then I let that horse find his way out of there. I won't pull on that. If he tried to take his head back, I'd just hold that. He'll feel that and then he'll put that together with his feet. You can make this so that the transition is really smooth for the horse or you can get him to where he is really bothered and kinda jumping around. You can tell it's really coming through in his mind about coming back there, but it hasn't come out in his feet yet. When it comes out in his feet then it will go back to his mind. He's all prepared to do it; he just doesn't quite know what to do in that picture.



I even stepped around there a little bit more. I'm • just holding that. I'm not pulling. You can tell by my posture and the way I'm holding onto that rope. I'm just holding it there. I'm not pulling it to me. I'm just waiting for him to figure this out. A horse can only stand like this for so long and he has to do one of two things. He's gotta take his head back and straighten it up with his body, or he'll take his body around and straighten it up with his head. And I'm wanting him to figure out how to straighten his body up with his head. Now he's real light in there, just trying to figure his way out of there, and I'll give him plenty of time in there.

We're still waiting on him, I don't care how long this takes. I'll leave that up to him. He'll figure all that out • I'm not in a hurry right here. I'll just wait this out a little bit. I'm not going to pull him through there, or try to shove him around. He's gotta do one of two things like I say there. And I got him blocked so he can't straighten his head up with this body, so I just wait on that. I give a horse a lot of time in that area. Sometimes they'll play with that stirrup or hang out for a minute, he don't know what else to do. He doesn't yet know that it has anything to do with his feet. This horse is right in the mind. A lot of people say you have to get this done through the horses mind. I'm not necessarily going to disagree with that, but the way you get that done is by controlling the life in the body, through the legs to the feet. This is a perfect situation where this horse's mind is really right here, it just hasn't come out in his feet. You have to get to his feet before it works in his mind. For him to ever know in his mind what to do with his feet, you have to get to the feet.





Now take a look at my right hand. When I'm waiting I'm not doing • nothing. I'm constantly fixing and shaping and trying to set things up. And I think a lot of times when people wait they just stop doing anything. And all that life runs out. I'm not waiting and doing nothing; I'm fixing here. I don't want to make this happen; I want to fix it up and allow him to do it. This is a lot of times where people maybe don't know what to do here. They either do nothing or they make it happen. And I don't want to make it happen; I want to just keep fixing. Years ago, I didn't know how to fix anything. Ray helped me learn so much by learning how to fix things up. So right there I'm kinda just still waiting doing a little fixing, trying to help him learn how to do something with his feet. If you get too quiet while you're waiting, he thinks he's found what you're looking for. If all that life goes out, and then he says, "Okay, well here we are." They actually get a little unsure about things sometimes, or just relax and think this is what he wants me to do.



I even go on around there a little further. Now look back to the picture ahead of this. My hand • is probably not a whole lot further around the corner, but if you'll notice, his head and his neck, are starting to try and straighten up with his body. He's trying to straighten that back. So now when you start to feel that, it won't be long and it will come out in his feet.



12. He's starting into movement here. So that I get that to come all the way through there for me, I'm going to keep holding for just a little bit. If I softened right there, I'd end up maybe not getting what I was looking for. So I'm just holding that tension in there just a little bit longer. The difference being he's acting to my actions, not reacting. He's feeling his way off of there. We felt him into this position; now we're going to feel him back out.



You can see here how I soften to him. He's already starting to work his mouth. • That really felt good to him; he had an understanding of that. A lot depends on how he works his mouth. People pay attention to the horse working his mouth, but they don't pay attention to what happened before he started working his mouth. A lot of times you'll see it come out in their tail just a bit before it will come out in their mouth. Or it may come out in their ear before it comes out in their mouth. And there are a lot of places that you can start to watch and build in a horse. Something happens before it happens with the mouth. But when that horse has started to do some of those things and it starts to come out into his mouth, a lot of times those horses have come to peace with what just happened to them. A lot of times a horse might go through a maneuver and never work his mouth. He accepted it, but that don't mean he felt good about it. That's where a horse will accept what he can't evade and he'll evade what he can't accept. That horse there he just accepted things, doesn't mean it felt good to him. Once a horse gets comfortable with a particular maneuver or gets an understanding of what you're asking him or an understanding of what he's feeling, he won't work his mouth. He'll be good with it before you ever started into it. A lot of times a horse will work his mouth when he's been unsure of something, and then it gets to feeling good to him. Once a horse feels pretty good about things, he won't have to work his mouth. That softness will be in there a little bit longer, and come out in a better way for him so then he won't have to work with his mouth.



14 I'm just giving him a moment to think. Just a moment to sort through things and give him • a chance to think about what he just went through. And you can't ever go wrong rubbing and petting one. Let them know that you know what they just did felt good to you because if you don't, then they know that also, so then it has no meaning or value to it.



16 I'm stepping over where that horse can see me. In the last photo I'm on the right side but as soon as I get that rope over the edge, at least for the first few times, I like to, before I put too much tension on them, I like to get over there in that horse's eye where he can pick me up. I just found that it makes it so much easier for these horses to come through. And there are a lot of neat things going on when you start this. Going back to the very first picture we looked at where this horse was unsure of the rope going up over his head. Those are all things going on down the road helping him to get ready to put your bridle on or getting up above him. In this picture you can see where he's got a nice float in his lead. He doesn't weigh anything on the end of my lead rope. And he's got a pretty good understanding of what's going on right there.



15. Whatever I do on the right side I do on the left and keep the horses as balanced as I can. That odesn't mean that I might not work on the right side two or three times. I wouldn't necessarily switch sides every single time. I might work on one side two or three times until that horse feels good about it and then continue onto the other side. If it felt good after one time, I might go over to the other side. So when I talk about keeping a horse balanced, that doesn't necessarily mean that every time I do something on the right I then immediately go and do it on the left. I might do three goes on the right and only one on the left. It all depends on how that horse feels. It might be easier for him on one side than the other, and to work on the side that he's a little unsure about you, might need to do more work there to actually get him balanced.



17 He's completed that turn. Now I'm going to ask him to lead up off that lead rope and step for-• ward. I'm directing with my left hand. I'm giving him a place to go. There's not a lot of tension on that lead; it's just offered out there. I'm not going to pull on him to get him to go forward. I'm going to offer it to him to give him a place to go. I support with my right hand to get his feet to come alive. I see so many times people pull on a horse to get him to walk off. Next thing you know you just have those horses dragging around on the end of your lead rope and then you have to get after them. To keep that confrontation from coming I'll just offer that a little bit and support with my right hand to get those feet to come alive.



18. You can see he's a little bit unsure about moving off. Go back to the prior photo and look at • my right hand. See how my right hand is fairly soft? My left is offering a place to go. Now in this picture my left hand hasn't changed much, but look at what my right hand is doing. I've asked him once, maybe twice; he's a little unsure about things,



You can see his hindquarters starting to go. This is something that I really look for in a horse. I'm • trying to get people to understand that for so many years, people talked about disengaging the horse's hindquarters. This is where I'm talking about getting these horses to engage their hindquarters. Getting him to come from behind, engage those hindquarters and go somewhere. To me in the prior photo, him stepping over behind, that's not a bad thing. He's getting those hindquarters engaged. If he can get those feet alive and get those hindquarters engaged then it will start to come out in all four feet. The lead rope in my left hand, see the float in it? Now his feet are starting to come alive.



19 I'm still offering him a place to go, and this horse has moved, but basically he's just moved his back feet away from that pressure that was in there. He's moved his hip away, I have to keep offering, because that's not what I'm asking him to do. I'm asking him to go on around me. So I'm going to stay right there with that.



He's still coming on around there. It might look like my lead rope is going towards his back end • there, but that lead rope is starting to focus energy into his shoulder. See his hindquarters are alive; now I have to get his front end to go. His expression tells me he's just trying to figure things out. He's paying real close attention to me. He's got his eyes and ears on me and he's stepping that hindquarter over. Right here he's really engaged in his hindquarters, really reaching up underneath himself. It won't be long; those front feet will level out. He's starting to have an understanding of that. He's getting ready to move those feet and he's getting ready to have that front end walking. He's not upset about anything; he's not leaving the scene, but he's really trying to figure out what to do with those feet. And he knows that I'm directing those feet. He might not know exactly what to do with them, but he knows I'm directing those feet somewhere.



Now he's kinda getting to where all his feet are moving. He's looking more forward where he needs to go. You can tell he's a little bit unsure about this. What is likely to happen is he's aging to go in there and get a little heavy on that lead rope. You see his head is to me, but the bridge of his nose isn't to me, and he's kind of protecting himself right there. Mother Nature is telling him to protect himself. More than likely there's agina to be a brace come in there. Self-preservation is working, but he hasn't left the scene yet. But that's probably coming. He's going to go out there and feel the end of that lead rope.

There's our brace. That horse is braced there; he's not being disrespectful for not going forward. He's braced in there • because he doesn't know what else to do. He's moved his hindquarters over, that hasn't really worked. He's tried to move his front forward, but if you notice in these pictures his front end is drifting away from me. He's not getting round around me. So what my right hand does, it's still offering that place to go. I'm not pulling on him, he's pulling on me. He's found the end of that. Now you have to be careful letting him find the end of that because next thing you know he'll get to the end, and his weight outweighs mine and he'll be dragging me around. So you want to be real careful letting a horse hang on you like that. You can see in this picture, he's still a little bit unsure about getting round and going around me. He's really reaching out with his right front; he's trying to hang on me there. Now this is a situation where we are going into something that's not good. But knowing what I know about things I can keep with this and know that we are going to come out the other side good. If you go into something knowing that there is no way of coming out the other side good, don't keep going. Change what you're doing. But this is a situation where I can kinda keep working in this area because I know what the outcome is go-



ing to be. See how he's braced up and hanging on my hand? If a horse starts getting heavier on you, you got to get heavier. When a horse gets light, you have to get a whole lot lighter. This horse is starting to figure out how to hang on me. Look at that photo and you see his side of the picture and you see my side of the picture and the weight doesn't add up. Physics are fixing to take over here in just a little bit. He's reaching out to the right; he's not getting round and going around me.



He's starting to get a little bit more round. And all • four feet are reaching equal. But if you'll look, his body and everything is in pretty good position, and his head is in a good position, but you see where his nose is going? See where this brace that we sometimes talk about shows up in a horse's jaw? This is building right here. That's what's fixing to come next. You can see where his head is inside his halter. He's got a little twist in his jaw. So sometimes you gotta soften to this spot right here because there's a lot of good things going on in here, but you gotta be careful because you may encourage some undesirable things right here. And the undesirable thing you see setting up here is setting his jaw against me. He has a little bit of a brace in his jaw.



He's softened his jaw. See how that halter is sitting on him and he's kind of a little bit softer in there? He's just a little bit starting to get round. He's trying to figure this out. All four of his feet are going along there pretty good. I'm getting him ready; I'm going to pick him up and step him over with his hindquarters.



He's come around a little bit in his back end and you can still see and feel where the halter is on • his nose that he's not really looking to his left; he's just a little braced there. He's just a little unsure of what to do there. Again I'm offering with my right hand and I'm going to support with my left. I want that front end to come across. He's never looked left. I'm not as worried about his front quarters as I would like to see him look to the left. He's focusing on me because he's unsure of what to do. He's not comfortable with what I'm asking of him. Again, like I say he's getting a little heavy on my lead. We're building a little bit of a heaviness in this horse.



I start coming in here and feeling of him. He's trying to figure his way out right here, but as you • can see, we almost got that brace just a little bit stronger in that jaw right here. His head and neck have come all the way around that corner, but he hasn't come through with the bridge of his nose. This is going to show up later. It's building right now. What a guy could do right here is take a little time and back up. Go back and spend a little more time taking that horse's head around left and right. Get this a little bit better where you maybe didn't run into this. That might not necessarily be true because once you put it into movement it changes. It gives them a better chance of making it. To help this horse get better when I was talking about taking this horse's head around, you can see the roan horse off to the right in the background there, doing just that.



**28**. He's thinking about stepping back and looking to his left. I don't want him stepping into me when he comes through that turn. I want him stepping back over himself and coming across with his front end. Still hasn't looked left; that thought still hasn't come across to him. What I'm going to do is keep working on that, and if I can get him thinking left, I can get it to come out in his feet. He's starting to back up in that picture.



He's still backing. Now he's just starting to think about looking left. It still doesn't feel good to him but he's trying to escape and come out of there. You see how I'm stepping into him to get that to come out into his feet? He's looking a little, but if you look at his expression, he's got a whole other reason to not want to go left. My little mare has worked at keeping him off of her all day, and he's sure that she can do that here. But to me, she's not running that deal, I am. And she's starting to think about stepping forward there.

30 Now he's thinking GO left. The mare is still there, but he's looking for a way out of there. I'm blocking with my right hand but also directing him that way. Me stepping into him is kind of blocking him from coming forward. And now we got it to come through in his feet and you can see where I have stopped with him a little bit to give him the space to allow him to get those feet to move off. Again that little mare thinks she needs to help things out there a little bit.





B B We come back and I'm offering him to step back the other way with his hindquarters, getting him to break his hindquarters over. I've got a real short bend in that horse's neck; therefore, he's going to load his weight up on his front feet and allow his back feet to step over. You can see his right hind has reached up underneath and he's stepping his hindquarters over.



32. I'm asking that front end to come across. Again, you see how he's kinda looking at me. He's not thinking right; he's thinking about where I'm at and what I'm doing. If you'll look at my lead rope I've got a little energy in my right hand. Supporting that front end to kinda go. I'm just offering this and waiting, I've got a little energy going in my right hand. I'm wanting him to come across to his right.



He is really looking out to his right. Now • that horse has a really good understanding of what I was asking him to do there. He's looking for somewhere to go, his feet are coming alive, and he doesn't have a big float in that lead. What we have to be careful of is, when he ages, we've asked him to go that way, we don't want to be too quick to pull that nose back to us; otherwise, you'll stop that movement. I have a float in both sides so that he can go where he can go and that lead rope will go through my hand.

He's really come through and got real round. His head is on the end • of his neck. The bridge of his nose is headed in the correct direction. He's looking left, he's moving left, and all four feet are moving equal. You can see my right hand is a little more quiet. I don't have to push him on and if you look at my left hand he doesn't weigh a thing. You can look at that rope and tell that it isn't as heavy in my left hand as it is in my right. And Ray really talked a lot about that. He said your lead rope shouldn't be as heavy on the side that your horse is on because your horse should be carrying that end, as the end that your horse is not on. A lot of times you'd see him throw his lead rope down on the ground and move it around, and it would move real light in the dirt, and he'd say your horse on the other end should be lighter.





In all these photos we've felt for him. If you go back to #32 we're • feeling for this horse. And again, he may be a little unsure and not have an understanding but we are feeling for him. Picture #33, we're feeling with him. There is a little life in my lead rope, a little direction, his foot is up off the ground, I'm getting him to go and move, I'm feeling with him. As he softens and understands that, in #34, now we're feeling together. This picture is borderline feeling with him and feeling together. If you'll notice I'm going with him, but there's still a little life in there. I have to keep some life in there to keep him alive. In photo #35 we're feeling together. Enjoy that one, because it doesn't last long! His nose is tipped left, he's looking left, all four feet reaching equal, now he's round and we're feeling together. Through all this, all I'm doing is fixing it up so that my idea becomes his and doing what Ray spoke of as, and what is so important to me, is coming from the other side. This horse's idea and my idea were a long way apart when we started, at different times, but now, our ideas have come together.

Editor's Note: We hope you enjoyed this series. Look for the next parts of this colt's continued ground preparation for riding.



### **EMPIRICAL INSIGHT**

# A Third, A Third, A Third By Martin Black

**Sometimes** I'm asked where I put my weight in the saddle in relation to my legs, my seat, and my thighs. There's not many things I do "just because" or, "that's what I've been told." Even if it is correct I want to know what makes it correct so I understand. So here's what I do and why I do it; there are other ways of doing it and reasons for doing it other ways.

The lighter we are in the seat, the easier it is for a horse to move. The heavier we are in the seat, the more effort it takes for the horse to move. So if we want to make it easier for the horse we can increase the weight in our stirrups and thighs and decrease the weight from our seat. This may take some conditioning for some riders that just want to sit in the saddle like they are sitting on a chair. It may take some muscle toning so their legs don't get tired.

If we want to discourage the movement in a horse we can decrease the weight in the stirrups and thighs and increase the weight in our seat. Most rid-

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**Massachusetts** 

ers that ride heavy in the seat will have slower moving horses. So if we want a horse to travel slower we can sit heavier.

This is like the toddler when they want picked up. They rise up and get taller and when we get ahold of them, they are ready to get with us and are easier to pick up. But when they don't want picked up they slouch down and get real limber and feel considerably heavier and harder to pick up. I think it's the same way for a horse if we try to get with them or if we are making it hard for them to get with us.

We can use this as a cue to help stop our horses. If we have a lot of rhythm with them when we want them to be traveling, then we get heavy in our seat even before picking our reins up, they notice that.

It's important for horses to be in the rhythm, it's part of their survival. When they run to the herd to avoid a perceived predator, they get in sync with the other animals. If they didn't they would be crashing into each other and the predator could catch them easier. They also try real hard to get in rhythm with us. We may

# have to work at this, but they come by it naturally, without even thinking about it.

So, if we can ride with about a third of our weight in the seat, about a third on the thighs, and about a third in our stirrups, I believe this gives them a good feeling. Then if be want to increase the horse's rhythm, lighten our seat and possibly our thighs and increase the weight in our stirrups. This brings our center of gravity forward and makes it easier for the horse to take us.

There's other reasons why a horse may be faster or slower than a person likes; but if we decrease the weight in our stirrups and increase the weight in our seat it makes it harder for the horse to have a good rhythm with us. If we roll back against our tail bone, bring our pelvis up and forward and take our shoulders back, raise our knees until we hardly have any weight in the stirrups, the horse will generally slow down.

Like the old saying goes, "ride a fast horse slow, and a slow horse fast." They will even out.

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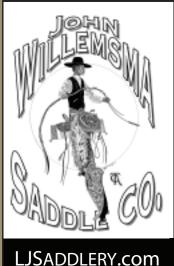
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