



## Cross Training: Good for Humans, Good for Horses

By Tim Hayes

In 1997 I participated in a Natural Horsemanship clinic given by Tom Dorrance. The year before I had researched all the top Natural Horsemanship clinicians of the day to figure out whom I should pick as a teacher: Ray Hunt, Pat Parelli, Monty Roberts, John Lyons, Buck Brannaman and Mark Rashid. When I discovered that all these teachers gave credit to Tom as their teacher and inspiration, I decided to begin my education with Mr. Dorrance. I have since gone back to study or work with all of his aforementioned disciples. It's been an incredible gift. They are all masters.

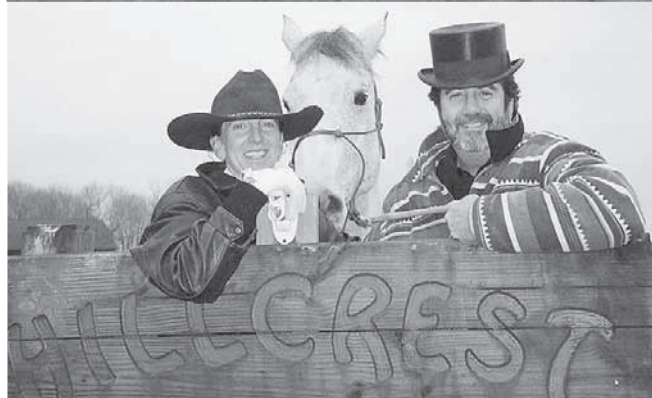
Tom was a cowboy. He was also a creator of miracles when it came to helping people with their horse problems (he called them "people problems"). His message was about having all humans and horses get along better. Well over 50% of Tom's students rode English. At this time out West Tom was not only acknowledged as the world's greatest horseman but as the father of a revolution; what is now referred to as Natural Horsemanship.

When the clinic was over I asked Tom what books he would recommend I read. I was expecting him to say something like, "Lessons From The Ranch." Instead he simply said read "Dressage" by Henry Wynmalen. I had heard of Dressage. I knew it was French, I knew riders with English saddles practiced it and it was the last thing I thought a California cowboy would know about much less be recommending.

In the spring of 2001 I attended Equitana USA in Louisville Kentucky. It was a 4-day event held in 2 buildings each the size of Nassau Coliseum. One was totally devoted to English the other Western. On the 4th day I listened to a wonderful talk on the benefits of Cross Training in competitive equine events. The talk was given by a 28 year old cowboy about 5'8" and 150 lbs named Ty Murray.

Two years before Ty had received the award of World Champion All Around Cowboy for his 7th time. Ty began his talk by saying: "When I began training for the rodeo, I realized there was no way I could ever control a 2000 lb. bull. But I could learn to control myself and how I reacted and responded to them." Ty went on to say that he began to practice martial arts and use a trampoline to master his reflexes and balance. He called it "Cross Training"

As I listened to Ty, I thought back to cowboy Tom Dorrance recommending I study Dressage. I began to think that maybe one way to become good at one sport was to practice a different sport that has similar physical skills. I remembered years ago reading an article about professional football players who used ballet exercises in their practice to improve their agility.



Tim and Deb Wilcox at Hillcrest Stables 2006" Photos by Lynn Farley

Today Cross Training is widely accepted and practiced in many sports. Nowhere is it more valuable than with riding horses. As I've said before, horseback riding, no matter what discipline, is the only sport where you can fail because your "equipment" becomes anxious.

Unlike Ty Murray on his bull, I need to be able to control myself and my horse not just to win but to be safe. Natural Horsemanship teaches me that being good with horses is more than having the physical ability. I need the skill and knowledge to control the mental and emotional states of both my horse and me.

Horses learn through repetition but they can get bored and dull with routine. Horses that are constantly drilled for any type of competition often breakdown mentally before they breakdown physically. Competition on any level is stressful for both horse and rider.

Cross Training with your horse is easy, fun and can make a significant positive improvement. For those who Jump, practice Dressage or ride in an arena, taking your horse on trail rides can do wonders for you both. Doing something together, not having an agenda or schedule, allows you and your horse quality time to just enjoy each other.

Horses that have not gone on trails before should always ride with other trail experienced horses that are relaxed and confident. As you and your horse become comfortable and start enjoying being together out in the country, your regular routine, be it Jumping or Dressage will become less stressful, more fun and often improve.

If most of your horse activity is trail riding, learning how to ride over small jumps or practicing more sophisticated communication with simple Dressage exercises can become your Cross Training. Learning how to go over small jumps in harmony with your horse greatly improves your balance, your seat and your confidence. Learning where each one of your horses feet are at all times, knowing how to move your horse laterally and many other Dressage exercises are wonderful ways to improve your lightness, flexibility and control.

The take home message is that horses are just like humans. If every time they see us they think: "He's going to ask me to do this

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**Hippology:** The primary objective of the Hippology contest is to provide an opportunity for youth to demonstrate the breadth of their knowledge and their reasoning ability in subject matter related to equine science and management. Vicki Bolton, NYS 4-H Hippology Chairperson, coordinates the state program.

The top 10 junior individuals, in the order of placing from first to tenth, were: Kala Stafford, Anna Young, Christa Lubanski, Jana Magone, Kasandra Wong, Brianna McGuire, Sarah Schuessler, Melena Hagstrom, Stepahnie Rawling, and Rebekah Janson.

The top ten senior individuals, in the order of placing from first to tenth, were: Emily Truesdell, Katie Goers, Matti Hart, Amy Lack, Amanda Wendt, Becky Gibbon, Megan Born, Megan Janson, Jordan Brown, and Sarah Moylan.

**Horse Communications:** The 4-H New York State Fair Horse Communication Invitational event allows 4-H'ers to learn to stand before an audience to talk about an important topic, demonstrate an idea, or to persuade them on an issue. In the Horse Communication event the topic must be horse related and members can participate in Individual Demonstrations, Team Demonstrations, Public Speaking or Special Program. Rich Miller, NYS 4-H Horse Program Communication Chair, coordinates the state event.

The top 10 junior individuals, in order of placing from first to tenth, were: Marissa Horton, Clinton County; Chelsea Wright, Livingston County; Isaac Ward, Broome County; Amanda Jones, Genesee County; Piper Gianforte, Madison County; Dakota Wong, Monroe County; Carolyn MacAroy, Saratoga County; Jana Magone, Monroe County; Kasandra Wong, Monroe County; and Karleigh Chatt, Genesee County.

Placing first in Junior Public Speaking was Kimberly Kovacic of Wyoming County.

The top three junior team presentations, in order of placing from first to third, were: Brittany Cook and Emily Rosebush, Onondaga County; Madison Mugnolia and Leah Kibler, Ontario County; and Jenna Brokaw and Justine Burnett, Steuben County.

The top ten senior individual presentations, in order of placing from first to tenth, were: Katherine Pruyn, Steuben County; Karis Kourofsky, Clinton County; Ron Bartholomew, Cayuga County; Amber Ball, Cattaraugus County; Aprille Tweedie, Rensselaer County; Anna Recker, St. Lawrence County; Laura Janson, Madison County; Kelsie Cavanaugh, Broome County; Allora Campbell, Orange County; and Lauren Heath, Clinton County.

The top five seniors in public speaking, in order of placing from first to fifth were: Ellen Winger, Cattaraugus County; Jessica Woodward, Niagara County; Meaghan DePaula, Albany County; Karlie Emrich, Oneida County; and Julianna Bond, St. Lawrence County. The top three senior team presentations, in order of placing from first to third, were: Sarah Moylan and Sarah Gosselin, Albany County; Seth Sampson and Aaron Sampson, Wyoming County; and Kendra Trammel and Kim Bennett, Ontario.

Placing first in Senior Impromptu Speech was Bethany Hobin of Wyoming County.

4-H is the Youth Development portion of the Cornell Cooperative Extension program in New York State. To learn how to become involved in the 4-H Horse Program contact your county Cornell Cooperative Extension office or Jean Griffiths, Extension Horse Specialist, Cornell University, 607-255-2857.

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again, how boring." Or "She's going to take me into that arena and drill me till I go nuts." Eventually they're going to get bored, stressed, lose interest and start resisting. Wouldn't you? On the other hand if we can add some variety in our program, whether we're competing or pleasure riding, our horses will look at us and think: "Great, here she comes. She makes my life interesting." Or, "I wonder what we're doing today? He's always fun to play with."

One of the wonderful things about my Natural Horsemanship classes is at one time or another everyone gets to do some Cross Training with their horse. Our English riders are learning to ride without a bit, and our Western riders are learning about collection. I am even learning Dressage from EESF's head trainer Deb Wilcox. This occurs when we've returned from a trail ride with my horse Austin and Deb on one of her high level Dressage competition horses. By the time the class is over not only have horses and humans improved, we have all accomplished something more important; we had fun!

*"Imagination is more important than knowledge" - A. Einstein.*

All Tim's events are listed in the event section of this magazine and on the net at: [www.LIequine.com](http://www.LIequine.com). To host a Clinic or for problem solving contact Tim at: 631-329-5840 or at [Mews22@aol.com](mailto:Mews22@aol.com). For more information visit: [www.hayesisforhorses.com](http://www.hayesisforhorses.com). ©2005 Tim Hayes.

## Poetry Corner

*By Paula Timpson*

### "Wind"

*Wind was horse's name-  
Free, wild as sun's setting  
colors remaining-*

*Wind was the  
way he made me feel  
so real  
loved and honored as a person*

*Wind's eyes were  
all that mattered because his soul  
lived in them-*

*Wind is Forever-  
He is pure  
Light and Joy  
for my Soul*

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