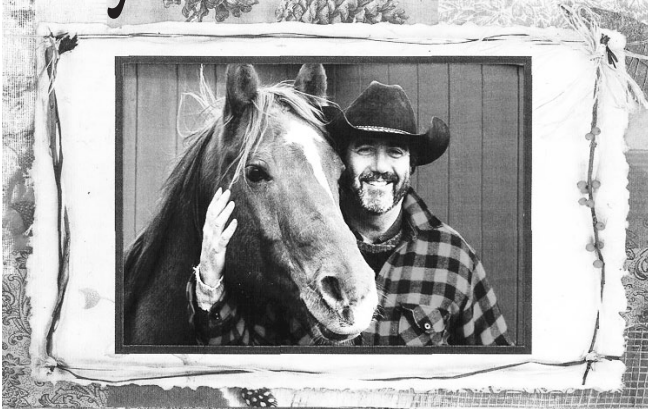


Hayes Is for HorsesTM



What is A Natural Horsemanship Clinic? And should I do one?

By Tim Hayes

Equine clinics have become the phenomenon of the horse world. It wasn't that long ago that if someone said they were going to a clinic you thought they were ill and seeking professional help. The word clinic does in fact mean a place for medical assistance. However it also refers to a group of people meeting together to improve their skills in a specific field.

The growth of popularity in horse clinics has come from two primary factors. The first is greater demand. Over 50 percent of the population is now baby boomers with more leisure time. People who were never around horses as kids are now discovering the joy of connecting with and or owning a horse for the first time in their 30's, 40's and 50's. They didn't grow up around horses and they need guidance. The second factor is the limited availability of local Natural Horsemanship instruction from reliable professional teachers for students of all ages.

To become good with horses no matter what discipline is like becoming a good musician. It's a combination of innate talent, good teachers and dedicated practice.

When I started my journey with horses I wanted to become a trainer. In truth I wanted to be a "horse breaker" like the '70's movie "Breaker Morant". I loved horses and wanted to learn how to control them. I could see they were huge, powerful and dangerous. I thought it was the perfect combination of fun and machoness.

When I saw, what is now referred to as, "Natural Horse-

Tim & Pat at Colorado Parelli Clinic, 1998

manship" I was astounded. I remember immediately having two thoughts. "That's what I want to learn how to do" and "where do I go to learn it?" In the early 90's there were a few "cowboy looking" guys offering what they called clinics. I thought if I do enough research I'll find out who's the best and go with him. The more I investigated the more I discovered both similarities and differences with all of them.

Suffering from life long acute perfectionism I was afraid that if I went with clinician A, I might one day discover that it was clinician B who had "the big answer". I decided if I really wanted to be sure to cover everything, I needed to study with all of them. Over the next five years I participated in and or attended Natural Horsemanship clinics given by Tom Dorrance, Ray Hunt, Pat Parelli, Buck Brannaman, John Lyons, Monty Roberts, Mark Rashid and Richard Shrake. In some cases more than once.

All were excellent. Like great painters; they were all gifted master craftsmen with their own unique style however they all knew and revealed the same secret or "big answer" I was seeking:

- *Create a relationship with your horse by communicating in the horse's natural language. Understand and communicate with the horse physically mentally and emotionally. Establish yourself as his leader by communicating with him naturally on the ground before you get on his back. Then ride together in harmony in any saddle you want.*

The other students who came to these teachers were from all levels and disciplines. New horse owners, third level dressage riders, show jumpers, trail riders and every equine activity I'd ever heard of. There were Belgian Drafts, Thoroughbreds, Quarter Horses, Ponies, Arabians, Mules and Mustangs. The participants rode in every conceivable saddle; Hunter Seat, Dressage, Western, Eventing, Barrel Racing and Bareback.

Up until that time I thought what most people thought about how to control a horse. You told the horse what to do with your hands, legs, reins, bits, spurs and crops. If the horse resisted, you repeated your request using more force until he finally submitted. If you had a "disrespectful" or "misbehaving" horse, you were supposed to "get after him". This meant increasing the force and allowing it to become painful. This would teach the horse to stop misbehaving and show him you were "the boss".

I also thought that I could not allow fear to ever prevent me from getting my horse to comply and that occasionally getting hurt was an acceptable inherent riding risk similar to getting hit in boxing. It seemed that sharing past injury stories with fellow horse people was actually a quasi badge of honor. I was mistaken about it all.

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Morris Park in 1890 and finally to Belmont Park in 1905. Between 1919 and 1978, eleven Triple Crown champions emerged victorious from the Belmont Stakes. Especially memorable was Secretariat's 31-length win in 1973. Fans watched trainer Woody Stephens win five consecutive Belmonts and cheered when Julie Krone became the first female rider to win a Triple Crown race when she took Colonial Affair to the winner's circle in the 1993 Belmont Stakes. There were several close bids for the Triple Crown in recent years from horses such as Smarty Jones, Funny Cide, War Emblem and Charismatic. The Belmont Stakes is known as "the test of champions" because of its grueling distance of a mile and a half. Most of the horses are tired by the time they reach the third leg of the Triple Crown.

There were noteworthy match races at Belmont Park. Zev beat Epsom Derby winner Papyrus by five lengths in 1923, Armed beat Assault by six lengths in 1947, and Ruffian's attempt to beat Foolish Pleasure in 1975 ended in tragedy.

Great equines galloped over the Belmont oval throughout the years: Citation, Nashua, Affirmed, Alydar and many others. Even the great Man O' War raced at Belmont. In 1919 he defeated his lone rival, Donnaconda, in the Belmont Stakes and won the Lawrence Realization and the Jockey Club Gold Cup.

Belmont Park is preparing for the 137th running of the Belmont Stakes June 11 and will host the 2005 Breeders' Cup this fall. Although the term "horsepower" has a new meaning in this age of technology, there are echoes of the past to be found in Belmont Park's setting, traditions and legacy.

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Lexington Bay, whom she plans to ride at Belmont Park. Jessica also successfully shows her own horse, Champagne Bay, a nine-year-old Holsteiner cross.

Dressage A newcomer this year is Cheryl Schoonmaker of Jamaica, Queens, with her handsome Swedish warmblood, Cello. Cheryl brought her horse up from the basics to the F.E.I. levels of dressage. She says that Cello, 14, has "all the best points of a sensitive horse."

Cheryl has loved horses all her life and began riding on Long Island. She took lessons at Knoll Farm, became interested in eventing, and eventually gravitated toward dressage. The dedicated Cheryl leads a busy life, working in Manhattan and commuting to New Jersey to ride her horse. Cheryl and Cello are sure to delight the audience as they execute the balletic movements of high level dressage.

Reining Queen: Jessica Ulrich, the 2002-2003 Connecticut Reining Queen, will present an exhibition with Rebel Red Pine, a 10-year-old quarter horse. Jessica, 23, placed in the top ten in freestyle at last year's Quarter Horse Congress. Riding to the "Rocky" theme and "Yankee Doodle," Jessica incorporates into her routine the requirements of reining competition, as well as dressage movements. Jessica, who came to Belmont Park last year with a different horse, looks forward to performing again for Belmont spectators.

Drill team: The Islip Horsemen's Association's "Spirit of Long Island" drill team is back for a command performance. Riding to upbeat, patriotic music, the drill team members weave their way through intricate formations that take hours of practice to master. According to coach Joanne Gould, a new maneuver called the "suicide wheel" has been added to this year's repertoire. It is dedicated to team member Mary States, who recently lost her battle with cancer, and to all others battling this terrible disease. *The World of Horses is subject to changes & additions*

More: Bella Horse Rescue will be represented in the Parade of Breeds. This group rescues horses otherwise destined for slaughter. "Horses walking for horses" is the theme for their role in the parade. The Parade of Breeds will be led by the Nassau County mounted unit.

Anyone interested in participating should call Betsy Gulotta, 516-546-8841. Sunday is also Family Fun Day at Belmont Park, with activities for young and old. For information call 516-488-6000. — *Rula Rodenas*

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Natural Horsemanship showed me if my horse resisted my request he was telling me (in his language) that I wasn't giving him what he needed. If he was confused or not understanding, he was asking me to improve my cues and become clearer. If I was being too firm ("yelling") and hurting him, he was telling me to lighten up. If he was sore or injured, he was telling me what I was asking of him was painfully difficult. If he was being disrespectful he was telling me that either I had lost his respect due to some of my behavior or I hadn't offered him enough good horsemanship to earn his respect.

In any case he taught me if I wasn't getting what I wanted, it was because I wasn't giving him what he needed. He was honestly trying to communicate with me; I was the one who did not understand. In other words, *I was the problem*. Becoming a better listener with more helpful answers was the solution. *I had to change first, if I wanted my horse to change.*

THE HORSE IS NEVER WRONG

The late Tom Dorrance said: "The horse is *never* wrong." After years of my own experience I believe that to be the truth. All the things we want horses to do they already know how to do. They don't need us to jump, slide stop, passage or side pass. They need us to clearly and respectfully communicate our desires to perform these wonderful things when we're on their backs.

Once a horse feels safe and comfortable he just wants to get along with everybody. He would actually prefer to be a follower rather than a leader. For a horse to turn over the care and protection of his life to another requires that other to be worthy of this responsibility. He needs and expects his leader to be brave, strong, confident, kind, smart, fair and honest. If I want to be the leader, if I want my horse to positively respond to my slightest request, I need to show my horse I possess all of these attributes. Great riding is always preceded by great horsemanship.

Natural Horsemanship is slowly becoming the equine skill of the future in America and abroad. It is being taught in many countries including; England, France, Australia and not just by "cowboys". Today you can study Natural Horsemanship with Olympic Gold medal winner David O'Connor, a master in Jumping and Eventing. United States Reining Champion Craig Johnson now demonstrates how he incorporates Natural Horsemanship in all his competitions. Grand Prix Dressage

Competitor Karen Rohlf is currently conducting Natural Horsemanship/Dressage clinics right here on Long Island.

At the end of a television interview about Natural Horsemanship I was once asked what was the one thing I hoped to get across to people. I said: "Keep an opened mind"

"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a person in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation."

—Herbert Spencer 1935

Note: Natural Horsemanship with Tim Hayes, a half-hour documentary will be shown repeatedly during May 2005 on "Neighborhood Journal" Cablevision Local Programming Channel 18.

He will also be conducting demonstrations, seminars, and Two-Day Natural Horsemanship clinics at barns throughout LI, Upstate and New England. All his events are listed in the event section of this magazine and on the Net at LIequine.com. His next 2-Day clinic will be on Saturday and Sunday May 28 and 29 at Blue Spruce Farm in Watermill, LI.

To host a clinic or for more information call Tim at 631-329-5840 or visit: www.hayesisforhorses.com. ©2005 TIM HAYES