

Kathy Johnson's Satirical Commentary on Equestrian Business Practices

Beat the Heat

I love my work. I'm out there and it's 104° and I'm just melting. I stand on my feet for 8 or 10 hours, walking, talking, lifting, shouting. The dust is thick as haze clinging to my throat, my clothes, my eyes. If I'm lucky, there's shade, but there's not a hint of breeze, and I'm sweating like a pig.

Then the horses troop in. Every single one stops to protest at the gate. They roll their eyes and heave a collective sigh. One look at their faces and I can tell they feel like I do. We'd much rather be laying around in front of a fan, sipping water or in my case, margaritas. In this heat anyone would rather be watching than participating, but it's too hot to watch.

They're troopers, these 10 horses, marching around the ring, drawing circles in the dirt. It's too hot to buck or run so they plod around and around. When they've had enough they just stop and look at me like I'm the culprit. Occasionally they bring their unwitting riders to me for a visit. They stop beside me in the center of the ring, horse and rider asking "Why?"

The real culprits, of course, are the riders. It's a hot Houston summer, there's no AC, but these people are standing in line to learn to ride on a hot, tired horse. The students pay up to \$40 an hour for the privilege of flogging an unwilling animal while a hot, tired teacher screeches instructions.

I'm the instructor, or course. I teach English, western, jumping, barrel racing, bareback, anything you'd like to do on or with a horse. I'm the one in the worn out britches with holes in them from saddle friction. You know, the girl with dust from head to toe, red eyes, and a sore throat. I'm the one with the scraggly pony tail and hand-me-downs. I do this for love, not money.

I just love seeing riders enter the ring. They're fresh, cool, in brand new boots, britches, gloves and black velvet hard hats. I don't know who decided riders should wear hot black clothing on all their appendages, but it was no Texan. These riders are glowing, already exerted from saddling up, expectant, excited. They walked eagerly into the ring, dragging lethargic horses behind them.

Some of their excitement rubs off on me, but not on Skunk, Twine or Major who've seen it too many times. I teach the riders correct signals to turn, stop, go. I teach them how to balance. Twine, Skunk and Major teach them that even the most correct signals won't work on an unhappy horse. The students learn persistence, patience and the incessant use of the riding crop.

I really love seeing the riders exit the ring. They're hot, tired, with dust all over their brand new boots, britches, hats and gloves. They're sore, over-stressed. Their horses, having exerted a minimum of effort, are cool as cucumbers. The horses don't stop at the gate on the way back to their stalls. This time it's the riders who stop and look at me like I'm the culprit. Oddly enough, they're ready to try again, because that was a challenge, that was a lot harder than they ever dreamed.

"We never thought there was so much to horseback riding," they all say. "Can we set up another lesson this week?"

No problem. That will be \$40. I really love my work.

Trainers with a Hidden Agenda

Did you ever wonder why trainers never like the horse you own unless they sold it to you? Did you ever wonder why you outgrew your potential Grand Prix horse the second a more expensive horse came up for sale in the barn? Did you ever wonder why people buy \$10,000 horses and never ride them? Did you ever wonder why trainers all have brand new Chevy dualies?

- Here's how some trainers can nail clients -
- * selling a horse to a student in his first year of riding
 - * selling a horse without a vet check
 - * selling a horse sight unseen
 - * selling a horse the client can't ride until the trainer has trained for one year or \$10,000, whichever comes first
 - * showing that horse while the new owner hacks away on an old school horse
 - * charging clients incredible show expenses and trailering fees
 - * selling a horse that is not the trainer's to sell
 - * selling a horse and taking commissions from both buyer and seller
 - * jacking up the sale price of a horse and pocketing the difference, as well as charging a commission
 - * charging boarders for vet care or special feed that the horse has not received
 - * using boarder's vitamins, feed and equipment for the trainer's horses, while the boarder's horse go without
 - * charging for training while a student or assistant, without the owner's permission, is the only one who ever rides the horse
 - * using the boarder's horse in lessons without permission
 - * using the teacher/student relationship for special favors - free labor, legal or medical advice, loans, sex, etc.

There are only four kinds of trainers, those in it for the money, those in it for the power, those in it for the money and power, and those who really don't know why they are in it. Now wouldn't you really rather have a Chevy dualie?

The Evils of Hunt Seat

Students should begin riding in a dressage or balanced seat. I doubt that hunt seat has its merits, especially for beginners and certainly not for anyone advanced past the trot. I don't need to build up dressage. Dressage is natural, it's riding, it's the ends and the means of good horsemanship. What needs to become clear are the evils of hunt seat.

"Push your heels down!" A hunt seat instructor screams at the frightened five year old perched on Old Pepper.

Thanks to all of you that responded to my call for Appaloosa Sport Horses. I have written an article by that name that will appear in the November issue of the Appaloosa Journal. I was not looking to buy a horse only for good sport horse competitors. From what everyone said about their Appy you have some good horses.

Thanks, Olva Pharo

ride.

There is no feeling, no function, just form, form. Hunt seat riders equitate, they don't

Pumpety, pumpety, kick!

"Push your heels down!" Another instructor screams at a terrified teen-ager cantering a line of fences at an "A" show.

Yes, jumping position is necessary over fences and when galloping. Any dressage rider can assume this position and jump safely. Hunt seat is not a style or an art or a system. A perched 2-point is simply a position. The reason they call it hunt seat is because they never find it.

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Cruel and Unusual Working Student Relations

by Kathy Johnson

There are two ways to learn to ride, the expensive, easy way or the cheap, hard way. If there was a cheap, easy way to learn, we'd all be Olympic medalists.

The cheapest way to learn to ride is to become a working student. Beware synonyms; volunteer, apprentice, work study. At summer camp they're called junior counselors and C.I.T.'s.

I call it Free Labor.

Many trainers started as working students. Some trainer gave them a break. What a break, mucking stalls, cleaning water buckets, teaching beginners, any job the trainer couldn't pay someone else to do. Eventually, working students may get to break horses, or their necks. I guess my favorite duty was sweeping cobwebs off the stable ceiling. I stared at the ceiling for so long, I got disoriented, felt like I was standing upside down on the ceiling, sweeping the floor. With the time and labor involved, I could've painted the Sistine Chapel. Other favorite were cleaning the trainer's

apartment and making him coffee. One guy went on a rampage and insisted every hoof in the barn was oiled, whether it needed it or not. Fortunately, this whim only lasted a week. Still, 40 horses, times 4 feet, times 7 day a week.....

And for what? To ease the work load on some harried trainer who didn't have time to sweep his ceiling let alone teach a "free" lessons to a working student. The trainer forgot the hard horrible hours slaved for that one hour weekly lesson. If there was a scheduling conflict, the first lesson to get bumped was the working student's. After all, a paying lesson takes priority over a non-paying working student. Hard work never beat cold, hard cash.

I got them all back in the end. My working students sift cat scat and dead grasshoppers out of the oat bin. They pull foot long manes on crazy throughbred yearlings. They wash my dog, babysit, and teach my lessons, while I sip the coffee that they made. Just kidding. Still, it makes me smile to jump off my horse and toss the reins to my very own working student. Now I've arrived.

To obtain it's horse burns gasoline and air. air to 1% fuel.

To obtain it's horse FAT, and air and prob the car.

A by-product of the engine is gum, varnish compounds greatly rec

A by-product of the acid, and acid kills. It increase in lactic acid caused horses to have theory went, give him destroy the acid. This think that the "seizing incorrect relay of imp muscles possibly caus cles incurred in strenu lytes).

Your horse is a wo is the size of a soccer l out he can increase his normal rate. In compa able to increase their h horse can empty and f minute!