

EQUESTER

A monthly publication of the Wisconsin Dressage & Combined Training Association

President's Message

Warmin' Up to be a Great 2012

Pam Doolittle

I almost feel like wishing you all happy spring, given the moderate winter we've had so far. Our group at Hidden Pond Farm enjoyed trail riding in sweatshirts and light coats for almost a week.

Warm Advice

Even when the temps did finally hover in the more normal range, I've discovered three great products to help me beat the cold. First, to keep my hands warm, I LOVE the SSG brand 10 below [gloves](#). Warm, water-proof, and not too bulky, they get me through tacking up and that first 10 minutes of my ride, which is where I'm most likely to lose the feeling in fingers. I keep a second pair of lighter, leather gloves in my vest pocket next to a hand warmer, which I often switch out once I'm warmed up and ready to go. I also swear by the Mountain Horse Active Rider's Tall Winter [boots](#) for a good riding feel with the added plus of warm feet and legs. I have a very long calf length (20 inches), and while I like very much the Rimfrost look, they simply aren't long enough for my calves. These boots are long enough, and give me good support in the ankle too. Switching out my warm wool hat for a riding helmet was always the last problematic piece to my ride preparation. I very much dislike it when my ears get cold. For Christmas this year, one of my boarders got me a pair of [Ear Bags](#). These are FANTASTIC!! They fit

directly around your ears, and the helmet doesn't interfere at all with the fit. They stay in place



Nicole Doolittle takes one last ride on Ducci before he heads for his new home. Congratulations, Jennifer McMahon, on your new horse purchase.

without a strap or band to extend under the helmet. And, they even come with a cute little bag to store the ear bags, which I leave inside my helmet in-between rides.

Do you have some winter riding tips to share? Or perhaps you're ready to enjoy a warm, indoor experience to share our sport? Our Annual Conference and Awards Banquet has shaped up to be a great event, and I would like to invite you to join us for conversation and celebration.

Hot Times

Front and center, we will celebrate the 2011 accomplishments of our WDCTA members in competition, volunteerism and other achievements. Our speakers will cover important topics to optimize the performance of your horses. From advances in equine dentistry to using complimentary medicine, to the benefits of cross training—you're sure to benefit from

the expertise and experiences of our presenters.

Drs. Travis Henry and Molly Rice are well known for their equine dentistry practice in the Wisconsin and northern Illinois area.

Using complimentary medicine for the well-being of performance horses has become more widely accepted in recent years, and Dr. Tracy Buscallachi will speak about her experiences in making the best choices in care for your sport horse. I'm particularly delighted to welcome Mr. Alex Gerding to our venue to speak about the benefits of cross training. I wrote about Alex in my first [president's message](#) to you back in 2010, and I shared how he helped me to retain my "sparkle." Alex's students have successfully competed across a wide variety of disciplines around the world, and he will speak about what he has found to work and NOT work in cross training horses.

Continued on next page

**WDCTA
Annual
Conference and
Awards Banquet
More information on
page 3.**

President's Column continued

Our silent auction donations are already streaming in and, so far, include items from jewelry artist Laura Voll, Lia Sophia jewelry donated by Hopeful Farm/ Stephanie Severn, a saddle fitting from Equine Inspired Touch, a bodywork session from Findaway Farm/Competitive Edge Bodywork, lessons from Wisconsin instructors, and more. If you would like to donate a service or item, please contact our silent auction chair, Nicki Butler, at findawayfarm@yahoo.com. Remember, WDCTA is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation, and your donation is tax deductible.

Kim Amini from Midwest English Tack also is planning a fun fashion show for our lunch-time viewing. The registration form is in this newsletter on next page. This is sure to be a fun day, so please join us!

Warmest of Memories

My family navigated some pretty tough transitions over the past month. Talking my children through these things reminds me that even though change can be difficult, and certainly inevitable, it can also enrich our lives and teach us something about ourselves and the world. Change is good.

Our 17-year-old canine companion, Maxie, left us for a better place at the end of December. We said good-bye to her as a family with some tears, but then shared laughter and many stories over dinner that night about all the crazy, naughty and funny things she did as a puppy and young dog.

And, the first horse we ever bred and birthed on our farm, Widucci, went to his new home just a few weeks ago. My two teenage girls were very brave, but also

pretty teary about this—much like their mom. As we watched Ducci leave in the trailer with his new owner, I explained to my daughter that someday I would be watching her leave home to make her own way in the world too.

Warm Thanks

I am finishing this message on Jan. 24, just before we'll be meeting to elect our new state board WDCTA officers, including the position of president for 2012-2014. It could be true that this is the last message I write as your state board president. I'm so grateful for all the people who have poured their hearts and souls into the WDCTA mission under my watch. Thanks to all our state board members for all you've done to help our organization grow and rebuild these past two years.

As of Jan. 21, our membership is already more than 200 strong and growing. Your dedication, leadership and voice have helped in this success. To all the volunteers who have helped at clinics, shows, the symposium, or who shared their advice and stories for chapter programs: Thank you for your many contributions. You are the life blood of our organization, and we wouldn't be here without you. And finally, thanks to all of you, the members, who have supported us with your membership and your input. My favorite part about being president has been writing this message, and then receiving your feedback.

I hope WDCTA has helped you in developing a better partnership with your equine and enriched your journey along the way.

Best wishes for many happy hours in the saddle.



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Group Members
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United States Dressage
Federation

**WDCTA is Wisconsin's
oldest and largest GMO**

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All advertisements, articles and photographs (with photo release) should be submitted electronically to the editor by **the 15th of the month**, with payment for advertisements postmarked no later than the 15th. Ads and calendar of events submissions will appear in both the **eQuarter** and on the website.

Advertising rates and requirements are under Forms on www.wdcta.org.



Happy Valentine's Day



Annual Meeting

Considerations in Equine Health and Training: Helping Horses Perform their Best

A Day of Learning, Annual Meeting, Awards Banquet, Silent Auction & Shopping

Saturday, February 25, 2012

Country Springs Hotel Waterpark and Conference Center

2810 Golf Rd, Pewaukee WI 262-547-0201

www.countryinnhotel.com

Directions: www.countryinnhotel.com/utility/directions.aspx

- 09:00 – 09:30 Registration (and silent auction, shopping, coffee and pastries)
- 09:30 -- 09:40 Speakers and Program Introduction
- 09:40 – 10:20 **At the Cutting Edge of Equine Dentistry:
Keeping Your Horse's Mouth Happy**
Presented by Dr. Travis Henry and Dr. Molly Rice
- 10:20 – 11:00 **Complementary Medicine:
Helping Horses Perform Their Best**
Presented by Dr. Tracy Buscallachi
- 11:00 – 11:30 **Cross Training and Dressage**
Presented by Alex Gerding
- 11:30 – 12:00 Silent Auction, Shopping
- 12:00 – 02:00 Banquet and Awards Program



Open wide, the
Doctor is in
(Sandy Matzen)



Wow, that massage felt goood!
(Stacey Bates)

Seminars and Awards Banquet: \$35 WDCTA Member; \$45 Non-member; \$30 Youth (age 21 & under).

Awards Banquet Only: \$25 WDCTA Member; \$35 Non-member; \$20 Youth (age 21 & under).

Awards Banquet includes Entrée, Dessert and Beverage



Love some jumping with my dressage!

(Shawn Werner)

Come And Join Us!

For Registration Information go to: www.wdcta.org

On The Bit

Caryn Vesperman
eQuester Editor

Lots of Ways to Escape the Winter

Anyone who knows me is well aware of how I feel about winter. I've made it clear to my patient husband that some day when we retire, I am out of here from January through March. In the meantime, I've found a couple of escapes to "survive" this winter (all with horse aspect, of course!)

Winter Escape #1

I recently returned from West Palm Beach where I spent the weekend attending the American Hanoverian Society's annual meeting. I had quite the travel adventure to even *get* there. It took me 12 hours. By the time I arrived, I had 30 minutes to check in to the hotel and whip on my black cocktail dress for the awards banquet. Fortunately, I had been texting Shannon and Doug Langer about my travel progress (or lack thereof), so a spot was saved for me at the table with Shannon and Doug; Marty and Wendy Costello (owners of the stallions, Donavan and Rosall); JJ Tate and her mom, Candy; and Don and Dee Kapper (Progressive Nutrition and great joke tellers).

This year the event really tied into the activities of the location, as dressage and jumper competitions were going on the same weekend, which the organizers had built into the activities.

On Saturday, Doug and I left before Shannon and headed to the dressage show.

(Thanks to our limo driver, Candy Tate, for picking us up!) We wanted to get to the show grounds in time to watch WDCTA member, Katie Foster, compete on her horse, Sacramento, in the Young Rider class. She repeated her success from Friday, placing first in the class.

Both Doug and I had forgotten our hats for protection from the sun. (Imagine that, northerners forgetting about getting sunburned in January!) We

scouted the trade fair, where Doug managed to snag us two Vertigo Sport caps that he traded for a box of Girl Scout cookies. (Never underestimate the power of those cookies. Good thing we couldn't resist buying a few boxes from the little Girl Scout earlier.)

Shannon had joined us by now, and we spent the rest of the day watching dressage and then the freestyles in the evening. Ashley Holzer, best known for her partnership with Pop Art, rode her up-and-coming horse, Breaking Dawn, winning the Grand Prix Freestyle with a 76.9%. He looks to be a very promising horse.

On Sunday, WDCTA member, Shelly Reichart, who is in the area for several weeks to compete in some CDIs, picked up Shannon, Doug and I and took us to a polo game. In my opinion, polo is hockey on horse back! At the polo equivalent of "half time," the entire audience was invited out into the field to stomp in the divots, and for our efforts, we were rewarded with champagne and ice cream. We lost Doug for awhile. He was diligently stomping in more divots.

All too soon, the weekend was over, and they dropped me off at the airport. Travel luck wasn't with me *again*. I got stuck in Atlanta. Overall, it took me 23 hours to get home, with me just heading straight to the office when I arrived Monday. At least I got vouchers for the hotel and food, plus \$100 off my next flight (which I've already put toward our California vacation. Did I mention how much I need to get out of Wisconsin in the winter?!)

Escape #2: Janet Foy-Steffen Peters Symposium Wrap-Up

It seems so long ago, but in some ways, it feels like yesterday. I'm talking about the fantastic symposium with Janet Foy and Steffen Peters. If you weren't able to attend – or you want to review what transpired (another great way to "escape" winter, even for a few hours), now you have the chance. As a 2012 WDCTA member, you receive a 30-day **FREE** membership to DressageClinic.com. (See the box for the "How To" details at the bottom of page 7.) The symposium video has already been loaded on DressageClinic.com, so after you sign up, you can curl up on your couch with your bowl of popcorn and watch the symposium. You'll also have access to a plethora of other educational videos. And, if you enjoy what you see, you can continue your membership at a very reasonable rate.

Another way to review the symposium? WDCTA member Haley Madden wrote a terrific story about the symposium and the tips Steffen and Janet shared on *Chronicle of the Horse Online*. Check it out under the "[Voices](#)" section at www.chronoffhorse.com.

Escape #3: WDCTA Awards Brunch

May our winter weather be short, and if it can't be short, may it be mild! See you at the awards brunch at the Country Springs Hotel and WATER PARK! Another escape from the winter.....

Amusing Typo

In last month's in the story, "The Symposium's Behind-the-Scenes Super Stars," there was a typo that spell-check would never pick up. One of the words should have been "**snacks**":

*"The facility was wonderful, the shopping was good, and having the breakfast and afternoon **snakes** was a nice surprise."*

I'll bet afternoon snakes would have been a "surprise," not sure how "nice," however!



(Above) Shelly Reichart and I at the polo match, enjoying champagne on the polo field.

(Below) I've never tried polo, but watching the game definitely whet my appetite for the speed involved! Don't be surprised if you read a future column about me actually trying my hand at it.



CAUTION!

**HORSE
SALES**

Avoid the **Pitfalls** and Increase the Likelihood of a **Match**

By Caryn Vesperman

During the last year, a friend of mine was seriously looking for a new horse with the help of her trainer. She commiserated with me when the horses either weren't what was advertised in terms of size, training or temperament or something showed up in the pre-purchase exam (PPE). She was getting frustrated because her search had been going on for months, and she really missed having a horse to ride. More on my friend's search later.

Her frustration with the search prompted me to put an article together that might help people with the sale process. I asked for other people's suggestions and stories. Some of the submissions made me laugh; others made me shake my head at the buyer or seller's lack of integrity, professionalism, courtesy and even knowledge. When requested, I have left out the names of the story teller, the seller or the buyer.

Thanks to those who submitted their suggestions and experiences. Here's what I heard from you...

The Number One Guideline: Get Help

Once you've decided to buy a horse, have a knowledgeable, trustworthy person – probably your trainer – help you find a suitable horse. They will know you, your goals and your limitations. It may also be a good idea to enlist a knowledgeable friend's help too. Then you'll be able to run some options by them, especially if you get the feeling that the trainer may be pushing you to buy a horse that he or she could ride and compete, but may be beyond your comfort zone. (Yes, that does happen.)

Conversely, if you want to sell your horse and you aren't experienced in this, it may also be a good idea to enlist help. Preparing, marketing and presenting your horse in the most professional manner possible will save everyone time, money and frustration.

If your trainer is willing to help you buy or sell a horse, discuss compensation for his or her time. Their expertise may save you a

lot of money, time, disappointment and maybe even broken bones!

Buyers: Determine Your Riding Goals

Start by asking yourself what you hope to accomplish with a new horse. If you don't own one currently or you are replacing a horse, write down your short- and long-term riding goals. Short-term goals might be to learn the basics of dressage, develop an independent seat, or learn how to do flying changes. Long-term goals might be to successfully show First or Second Level or even ride FEI.

Then think about other factors such as:

◆ *How much time do you have to ride?*

If you aren't able to consistently ride due to work or family obligations, then one of your requirements may be a horse that can sit for a few days or weeks and not be a loony-tune when you *do* have time to ride.

◆ *How often will you be able to take lessons or ride in clinics?*

If the horse is a schoolmaster, do you have access to a trainer who can "tune up" the horse occasionally? (While horses never forget, they tend to be like children who need reminding to clean up their room or say "please" and "thank you.") If your riding time is limited, do you have the funds to have your trainer ride your horse when you can't?

◆ *Can you sit a big moving horse or do you need a horse that you can sit now?*

Later, if you out-grow that horse's abilities, you can buy the next step up and your horse can become another rider's wonderful teacher.

◆ *Do you want to show?*

Unless you are an experienced rider, you might want to consider a horse that has some show experience. You want to learn and have fun, and a horse that remains calm in a chaotic show environment is a great confidence-builder.

◆ *Does the horse have any special needs, quirks or vices?*

Some things a horse does or doesn't do may not be a big deal to someone else, but they may not work for you – or the place you board your horse. Does the horse cross-tie? Can you tie it directly to a trailer? Does it crib? Can it be turned out with a group or does it need individual turnout? Any special feed requirements? Any

shoeing issues? How does it behave with the veterinarian? Does he kick in his stall? Is he easy to lead?

◆ *Has the horse had any veterinarian issues?*

Has the horse ever colicked or had an OCD lesion removed? Has the horse had any suspensory or tendon injuries? Again, these may or may not be deal-breakers, but they are questions you should ask so you can discuss with your trainer and veterinarian.

◆ *Is the horse up-to-date on its Coggins and vaccinations?*

One buyer described her experience when considering one horse:

"The previous owner forged the Coggins, which the State of Wisconsin is now pursuing her over. She never paid for her spring shots and lied about doing fall shots. This from a woman who made me wait to ride her horse because she had to go to church that morning."

Write Down Your Non-Negotiable's and Your Nice-to-Have's

This may sound basic, but it will help keep you on task so you don't change course when you see a pretty face or an adorable weanling. Outlining what are absolutes and what you can bend on will help you answer situations such as: Would you be willing to own a mare if she has everything else and your original preference was a gelding? Would you be okay with an older horse?

Items to consider include:

- ◆ Sex
- ◆ Age
- ◆ Training
- ◆ Color
- ◆ Physical characteristics/issues
- ◆ Maintenance requirements
- ◆ Special needs (handling, tying, turnout, vices, feed)
- ◆ Temperament
- ◆ Show experience
- ◆ Gait quality
- ◆ Budget

Once you've separated the "must have's" from the "I could compromise on," then start your search...and stick to your "must have" requirements to keep you from making an impulsive decision. The weanling will not be a first level horse for a minimum of four or five years. That pretty

Continued on next page

Caution Horse Sales continued...

head doesn't mean squat if it and the rest of the body can hit warp speed at the flutter of a leaf.

Buy Training

A good rule of thumb is to buy as much training as you can afford. Don't be swayed by fancy gaits or presumed potential. At best, buying a young or green horse for your child or yourself is a recipe for frustration and, at worst, broken bones. Even if you aren't a novice, it's safer and more fun to buy a horse that knows more than you – and learning will go much faster.

A few years ago, a colleague at work asked me for advice on getting a horse for his daughter. She had outgrown her pony and was interested in eventing. I found a "been there-done that," middle-aged hunter gelding. He went on the bit. He was quiet and willing. He took me over several jumps without hesitation – and I hadn't jumped in years! He had on corrective shoes and sometimes twitched his head during a ride, but he passed the vetting and turned out to be a great teacher and a trustworthy partner. What fun to watch them at events take on banks, coops and water jumps. It made me want to event again (only on him, that is).

Listen to Your Gut

If that voice in your head is sending you a warning, listen.

Don't get in over your head in terms of gaits (you need to be able to sit them!), temperament (what good is pretty if it isn't cooperative?), or soundness (while a PPE isn't a guarantee, at least try to stack the deck in your favor).

And finally, stick to your budget. Don't spend more than you are comfortable spending. I heard some good advice from a long-time professional horseman who said, "If you can take the money you'd spend on a horse and throw it over your shoulder and never see it again, but still be okay with that loss, then that's the amount you could spend on a horse."

Next Step: The Search

Videos are a great way to sell and scout out horses. When making a video, one trainer suggests keeping it brief.

"I hate endless minutes of watching a horse being brushed and tacked. I always skip through it. Unless I'm looking for a horse for a beginner child or amateur with serious physical or confidence issues, I don't care if the horse has perfect manners in the cross ties. In a week or so, the horse usually learns what is or is not okay. If as

a trainer, I'm not able to fix that kind of problem, then my poor clients are really in trouble. I wouldn't pass up a horse that gets the job done just because it didn't have good ground manners, as long as they weren't dangerous issues."

This trainer suggested showing the miscellaneous footage (tacking up, ground manners, etc.) in a separate clip and labeled as such, so if the potential buyer wants to see that, it's available.

What do trainers and buyers like to see in a sales video? Here's what one trainer said:

"If I'm looking for a dressage horse, the perfect sales video includes walk, trot and canter in both directions, simple transitions within and between gaits and some evidence of lateral and longitudinal suppleness. Endless minutes on a 20-meter circle or watching 10 minutes of trot work before seeing the canter is annoying. I like to see what they can do well, and it's nice to see the horse pushed to try things that aren't so easy. It's good to see how they perform under a little pressure."

What are some red flags on videos?

Trainers and buyers indicate they become wary when they see a video has been edited a lot. A few breaks here and there are fine, but if every 10 or 20 seconds there is a break to a new clip, then questions start coming up about what the seller may be trying to hide.

But keeping an imperfect moment in the video is not always a bad thing. Here's an example a trainer provided of how showing a horse, in an awkward moment, can actually sell itself.

"People should understand that no horse is perfect, and if they never put a foot wrong in a video, you have to wonder! Sure, you want to show the horse at its best, but I have actually have made sales because I included some mistakes. I once videotaped a part of a jumping lesson where I set the horse up for a not-so-great distance to a 4-foot vertical. He knocked down a few poles, but kept on task, didn't panic and proceeded to jump a nice combination a few strides later with extreme care. I later heard from the trainer that the botched vertical was the selling point. Her client's previous horse was known to stop in those situations, and after seeing this horse blow it off as if nothing happened, they flew out the next week and ended up buying him."

The Test Ride

Once you've found a possibility, it's time to go see the horse. The biggest advice

regarding a test ride? Make sure the seller gets on first. If the seller doesn't want to get on or doesn't have his or her trainer get on first, walk away. There's a reason someone won't get on a horse they're selling as a riding horse, so why expose yourself to a potentially dangerous situation?

After the seller has ridden the horse, what should you do when it's your turn in the saddle? Here's what one trainer suggests:

"The first minutes thing I take the time to get to know the horse, then I ride the three basic gaits and evaluate the training such as rhythm, contact and suppleness. Then I try a few movements that the horse has been advertised as proficient with, and then I try some more difficult things. I want to know how the horse reacts to being asked for movements it doesn't know. Also, if the horse has been ridden mostly by professionals, I take some time to make mistakes I know my client might make. This might be riding with less-than-perfect contact, bobbling a transition and using incorrect timing or incorrect aids. I want to see how they will deal with the inevitable mistakes that a less experienced rider will make in the learning process."

Additional Advice to Buyers

Sometimes buyers think it is rude to ask if the price is negotiable, but if you don't ask, you'll never know. While you don't want to insult the seller, making a reasonable offer is not out of line. He or she may turn you down, but it never hurts to politely ask.

But, don't expect to get very far negotiating on price if you arrive in a Jaguar convertible, wearing a Rolex and dripping in diamonds. (Yes, this happened to me, and I didn't budge on price – and quite honestly, I didn't like the way the person rode the horse anyway.) I later sold the horse to a young rider for less than asking price. She took the horse all the way to Grand Prix. That, for me, was a great sale. I can't describe the joy of watching her compete over the years, knowing I had bred and started that horse.

Here's another example. A few years ago, I attended a dispersal sale for a large, well-respected Hanoverian breeding farm with my trainer and other clients of his. I joked with one of the women who was wearing eye candy that even Elizabeth Taylor could have appreciated. I said, "You might want to take off your large diamond ring and Rolex before we get there."

"Why?" she asked, surprised. "This *is* my small stuff."

Needless to say, she paid the highest price for one of the horses at the sale.

Continued on next page

Caution Horse Sales continued...

And Sellers...

Be reasonable with the price tag you put on your horse. Ask yourself, if you were looking at your horse, would you pay that price? And, be realistic about negotiating. How many times have we heard of a horse for sale that the seller refused to budge a penny on price? Months later and still paying for board and training, the horse is still for sale. Had the seller taken the negotiated offer, he or she would have come out ahead.

On the other hand, if you believe the horse is worth every penny, stick to your guns, especially if you are under no time or financial pressure to sell.

Another important part of the sales transaction is a seller's honesty and integrity. No horse is perfect, and hopefully most serious buyers understand that. Unfortunately, too many times, sellers leave out something about the horse that the buyer has a right to know. In some situations, this can lead to disappointment or injury. I have never understood why a seller doesn't disclose something that could get someone hurt. Not only is that unethical, but the seller could be liable.

Not being forthcoming also wastes everyone's time. Ask enough questions when you first get the inquiry from a potential buyer, so you have a better idea if the horse might be a suitable match. If it doesn't sound like a good match, tell the buyer that. They will respect you for your

honesty and perhaps will refer your horse to someone who might be more suitable.

Buyers and Sellers: Keep the Faith

It's a tough market for sales right now with the economy, but if sellers are honest about the horse they have for sale, the right person will come along.

Buyers, don't get frustrated with how long the process can take. The key is not to become so impatient that you give in and buy something that doesn't meet your requirements.

Until you find that horse, keep saving your money. Every month you don't find a horse, put the money in the bank like you are paying board. By the time you do find a horse, you will have money socked away for lessons, shows and, of course, tack, because as Murphy's Law indicates, rarely do our existing saddle, bridle and blankets fit the new horse.

Speaking of keeping the faith....

Remember my friend who had kissed a lot of toads? Well, she did her prince, or princess, in this case. She found a trained Swedish Warmblood mare with, as she describes, "A great personality and gaits, particularly her walk and canter. My trainer is very impressed with her. She's forgiving, which is great since I am terribly out of shape. I can't believe she's mine!"

Do you have a story or tip to share? Send it to me for an upcoming issue.

TIPS

Sellers

1. Create a concise video showing the critical points.
2. Be upfront about any health issues.
3. Disclose any issues or quirks.
4. Be accurate about size, temperament and gaits.
5. Keep your appointments as close to the agreed-upon time as possible.
6. Have the horse "spit shined" for its presentation.
7. Treat the buyer with respect during and after the appointment, even when the potential buyer passes on your horse.
8. Set a realistic price and think through what circumstances would make the price negotiable.

Buyers

1. Determine ahead of time your requirements for a horse and what are deal-breakers vs. manageable issues.
2. Be honest with yourself and potential seller about your budget, riding ability and goals.
3. Be on time for your appointments and respectful of the seller's time.
4. Get a second opinion: Start with your trainer and even get a knowledgeable friend's perspective.
5. Before you begin your search, discuss compensation for your trainer's time.
6. Have the seller get on the horse first.
7. Ride the horse in company and alone, inside and outdoors.
8. If possible, try to arrange to ride the horse a second time.
9. Do a prepurchase exam, no matter whom you are buying the horse from.
10. Don't be in a hurry and end up compromising on your "must have" requirements. There are more horses for sale than buyers. Your horse is out there.

Exclusively for WDCTA Members Only

Thanks to WDCTA's partnership with the international educational video company, DressageClinic.com, 2012 WDCTA members receive a **FREE 30-Day VIP membership!** The following coupon code has been exclusively reserved for the WDCTA members: WDCTA2012

To take advantage of this offer – and watch other videos including the WDCTA Steffen Peters-Janet Foy symposium:

- * Go to DressageClinic.com.
- * On the home page, click SUBSCRIBE.
- * Click ACTIVATE COUPON.
- * Enter the Coupon Code and choose Username and Password.
- * Click PROCEED and then WATCH to enter the website.

Sit back and enjoy!

My Horse-Buying Experiences... Over the Years

By Heather Smith-Way

Editors Note: *This submission by Heather was so good (and entertaining) that I'm using it in its entirety. She makes good points and shows the lessons she learned, while maintaining her sense of humor.*

Shopping for your first horse - Get help!

No, not psychological help (well, maybe that too – horse people do seem to be a special breed of nutty), but get knowledgeable and trustworthy help, such as your trainer.

In retrospect, probably none of the horses I looked at for my first horse was suitable. At the time, I was around 14 years old, had taken a few lessons, cleaned stalls in exchange for time in the saddle, volunteered at a therapeutic riding stable, and done pretty much whatever I could just to be around horses.

But I was still pretty clueless. My mother was a single parent with no horse experience and a tight budget.

But here are some things I learned over the years...

If the horse is panting and dripping with sweat when you arrive, it's probably not worth getting on.

The first horse we looked at was an off-the-track Standardbred trained (sort of) to ride. The seller was riding it when we showed up, and he had worked that gelding until he was in a lather. His efforts to exhaust the poor horse before we got there were in vain, as it still had enough left in it to run away with me when I got on.

The guy trying to sell you a horse at a low-end auction house parking lot is probably not the most ethical seller.

We didn't know we were going to meet the seller at an auction house. We answered an

ad in the paper, and the seller gave us directions to see the horse. Apparently the horse had not sold at the auction a few days earlier. Even before I saw the horse, I knew the seller wasn't completely in touch with either reality or the truth. He'd said the horse was the perfect size for him, and he



Heather competing on Gem at a Three Gaits Schooling Show in Stoughton. The quiet test doesn't belie the wild early years when Gem didn't want to be without friends nearby.

was "over 6 feet tall." My 5'9" mother towered over him in his cowboy boots. I have to admit, however, riding that little, 14 h reining Quarter Horse around the auction parking lot was a lot of fun. It was actually probably one of the better rides I've had while horse shopping. But he was tiny, and more importantly, it was really creepy how he couldn't seem to chew a treat, his lower lip was really drooping, and his male member was dropped and flapping in the breeze. I rather suspected he was drugged. When the seller gave us a line about having an offer from another buyer, we told him he should take it.

The horse seized for non-payment of board may not have been cared for properly.

We went to look at a big, young Appaloosa gelding. His previous owner had apparently hopped from barn to barn, never paying her bills, and had finally gotten tired of moving him from place to place, so just dumped

him at one of the smaller stables in the area. The stable owner had managed to get his papers transferred to her. She didn't really want him, just wanted him off her feed bill. He was very quiet and sweet, but even I could tell there was something NQR (not quite right) about him. We called the vet to

do a prepurchase exam. He got out of his truck and exclaimed, "This is (delinquent boarder)'s horse! She owes me money!" We put the horse on the lunge line. He was lame. The vet said he'd told the previous owner the horse needed surgery when it was a yearling, but she didn't want to pay for that, and now it was probably too late to fix the problem. At least we only had to pay a small fraction of the exam, since the horse failed so quickly.

The seller may have an ulterior motive for having another horse work in the arena while you're trying out a horse.

When I went to look at Gem, the seller told me her daughter wanted to work her horse, too, so if it was okay, we'd be sharing the arena with them. No problem, right? During my test ride, Gem was pretty good. A little wiggly here and there, but nothing too dramatic. He actually felt a lot like the horse I'd been riding in lessons, who was a little bit green, but basically a good sort. He liked being brushed, he ate treats, he was barefoot. We bought him.

We brought him home and discovered he was ridiculously herd bound. He didn't want to leave the other horses, and if you could get him away from them, he'd freak out. He reared, he bucked, he backed, he bolted. Thankfully, I was a stubborn and resilient kid. Every time he dumped me, I'd hop up and jump back on. Eventually my persistence wore him down, and I started to learn to ride. I even managed to earn a few Pony Club ratings on him, and he won his way

Continued on next page

My Experiences...continued

into my heart. Gem stayed with me for 15 years, until he passed away at the age of 26.

It's a good idea to do more than one test ride.

As Gem aged, he got to the point that I would sometimes let another person ride him if there was another horse in the arena. He was generally on his best behavior for the first ride. Gem was a strategist, however; he'd use the time getting to know a person's strengths and weaknesses before deciding how to take advantage of them.

You can find horses in unusual places. That doesn't mean you should, but you can.

Max's previous owner had never owned a horse before. She went to an all-animal auction to buy some llamas and peacocks and purchased a two-year-old Arabian stallion. Thankfully, she decided to board him with a very sensible woman who recommended gelding him and putting him in training immediately. It became apparent to the owner fairly quickly that if she wanted to get into horses, Max was not the horse to start with. She bought a schoolmaster, and we bought Max for next to nothing.

Besides being young and green, Max was very fearful of people. This is another time it really pays off to be a persistent, horse-crazy kid. I'd often just go out and sit in the pasture. I'd brush, pet, feed treats, and sometimes just sit out there and read. Eventually Max learned to trust me, and with a little help from an instructor, I managed to train him under saddle. We even made it to a few schooling shows and brought home a few ribbons before tragedy struck, and he fell ill with an awful systemic infection. He pulled through, but he'd foundered as a result, so we just kept him comfortable as a companion horse.

Sometimes the warnings are not subtle.

The next horse I ended up bringing home was Arlo. I'd toyed with the idea of getting a young horse, one without as much baggage as Max or Gem, but hadn't been looking too seriously. Then one day, several horses were listed for sale at the University surplus, alongside library tables and old laboratory glass. Because a study had run out of funding, these horses

were being auctioned off via a silent auction. I dug around for more information and discovered the youngsters in the control group had lived at my vet's farm, so I asked him if he thought any of the horses were worth bidding on.

He told me, "Bid on gelding #83. He's one of the most athletic horses I've ever seen.



Who knew when Heather bought Arlo that something was causing him to misbehave that was beyond even his control. Here he handles himself calmly in a parade.

But don't bid on gelding #X (I don't recall the number), because that's the one I want to keep."

I asked him the next logical question, "If gelding #83 is so incredibly athletic, why don't you want that one?"

He answered candidly, "Because he's crazy."

"If he's so crazy, what makes you think I want him?"

"He's not any crazier than your other horses. You'll be fine."

So, \$250 later, I'm loading up my new yearling. He was, as predicted, not quite right in the head. He was easily confused, prone to outbursts, had no sense of self-preservation, and was dumb as a post. It took us awhile, but we finally reached an understanding. Despite his athleticism, Arlo never became a dressage horse, although I did manage to turn him into one heck of a trail horse. We had a blast going horse camping. He became incredibly fit, and he'd go through darn near anything.

Once you pointed him down the trail, he was going, come hell or high water. Even things that scared me, he didn't flinch at.

"Grade" horses could be anything.

Including HYPP positive.

Part of Arlo's problem, I discovered later, was that he had Hyperkalemic Periodic Paralysis (HYPP). He was heterozygous, so he didn't have full-blown seizures, and none of the vets suspected his problem was HYPP. The vet school acquired him without papers. The staff was told he was a breeding stock paint, which was probably true. He had some odd quirks. He'd flash his third eyelid when you luneged him with side reins. His stall was always a swamp because he drank and urinated copious amounts. He suffered from frequent, but mild colic symptoms, especially when he didn't drink enough water. If you tried to make him stand when he was nervous, he'd first make this bizarre, jerky, pawing, striking motion with his front legs, and if you didn't get him moving immediately, he'd rear straight up in the air or throw himself on the

ground.

At first I thought his problems were mostly behavioral, but as it turned out, once those muscles started firing uncontrollably, he probably couldn't help himself. One day I was reading an article on horses with HYPP. It described poor Arlo perfectly, so I pulled hair and sent it in to University of California-Davis. While I don't regret my time with Arlo at all, now I would have the test done on any unpapered Quarter Horse before buying.

A warning for the men: If your girlfriend is pregnant, if at all possible, make sure you're the father before selling your horses.

Buying Stan started out as one of the more normal horse-buying transactions I've had. When I joined the Navy, I was stationed on the east coast. I'd called around about some working student positions, lessons and horses for sale. One man I talked to was selling his younger horses because his girlfriend was pregnant. I went to see them, and this mellow, little eight-month-old Belgian draft

Continued on next page

My Experiences...continued

colt followed me around wanting to be petted. I bought him. He didn't know anything, but he was calm, willing, and a real pleasure to work with. After I'd had Stan for a few months, I got a phone call. Stan's previous owner wanted to know if things were working out okay. Turned out, the baby wasn't his after all, so if I wasn't happy with my new horse, he'd be glad to buy him back. I declined his offer, and he said he was perfectly fine with that, just thought he'd ask in case I was having second thoughts.

The height of a horse is some kind of magical, mysterious number impossible by many to quantify.

As a general rule of thumb, I assume most horses will be two inches shorter than what the seller tells me. In most cases, this ends up being the case, although some sellers are quite capable of using a measuring stick. The gentleman who sold me Stan told me Stan's dam was 17.1 h, and his sire was 17.2 h, but he was sure this colt would get to 18 h. I figured Stan would probably be about as big as his mother who was two inches shorter than he said she was. His guess was closer than mine – Stan didn't stop growing until he was eight years old, and finished at 18.2 h.

You can really learn a lot from an older horse.

Stan was a fun youngster, but he was too young to ride when I bought him. The barn I was boarding him at was an active hunter-jumper barn with lots of lesson and lease horses, so there were many opportunities for me to ride. That's how I met Hank. Bobby, the barn owner, was getting a feel for my abilities. One day he pointed at Hank and told me, "If you can get a saddle on that horse, you can ride him."

Hank was a been-there-done-that hunter, but he'd soured as a lesson horse. He was grumpy, had a little bit of a buck and had been pulled out of the lesson rotation after he'd bitten and cow-kicked a few too many people while being tacked up. I tied him close to the fence, kept an eye on his hind leg, and got him ready to go without incident. He started out stiff and balky, but it didn't take long before Hank got back into the swing of things. And he was good at his job. So good that I used to joke you could have propped me up in two-point blindfolded and that horse would have jumped a course in perfect form, finding the perfect spot in front of every fence, with flying lead changes exactly where they were supposed to be. Hank taught me so many things about riding, about

how a hunter course is supposed to be and about how the right horse can make you look good and the job so much easier.

The horse you're riding might be the one you should own.

Sure, not every horse is for sale, but if you really hit it off with the lesson or lease horse, it might be worth asking. After I'd been riding Hank for about a year, he really turned around on the ground, too. He was much more cheerful, and for the most part, he stopped grumping about being brushed and tacked up. Apparently I wasn't the only person who noticed. The barn owner noticed and was kind enough to gift Hank to me. We both knew Hank was older, and his time left was limited. But he was in great shape right up until the very end, and I was glad to have him with me.

Even if you trust your trainer or friend's judgment, people having different riding styles, so you should ride the horse yourself, too.

Eventually my mother decided she should have a horse too. The first horse we went out to look at was a small Quarter Horse gelding with one of the ugliest heads I've ever seen. My mother was pretty turned off by that right off the bat, but I told her having a homely face was a pretty small sin in the whole scheme of things. The sellers, also a mother and daughter, showed up. The horse was good about being caught and tacked up. We'd talked on the phone, and they knew my mother was mostly interested in trail riding. We'd arranged for one of them to ride their other horse to take me on a trail ride around the farm, so I could get a good idea what he was like outside of an arena. The horse was calm even when we went past some of the neighbor children running and screaming. He was short strided and not very athletic, but my mother really wanted a dawdling trail horse, and his gaits were comfortable. I was thinking things looked pretty promising.

Since my mother was a beginner, we started her out in the arena. I'm not clear whether or not my mother asked this gelding to canter, but I do remember he

did. He's cantering around and around the ring, and my mother starts yelling, "I'm okay, but I can't get him to stop!"

Part of the problem was she had miles of rein flapping in the breeze. She had pulled back so her hands were right up against her body, but there was still too much slack in the reins for the little gelding to know she was asking him to stop. After a lot of yelling and gesturing, I finally convinced her to reel in enough rein to make a difference, and she managed to pull him up. At which point, one of the sellers exclaims,

"That's exactly what he does to me too!"

Although the gelding was sweet and good natured, we decided to pass. My mother really needed a horse whose natural inclination was to stand quietly in the absence of instructions.

If there's a skill that's important to you, make sure you see the horse perform it before you buy.

The next horse we went to look at was being sold by a trainer on behalf of one of her clients. I asked the right questions, but didn't insist the horse demonstrate all the answers for me.

The trainer's client had spent most of the last several years trail riding, and then decided to learn dressage. Her trainer convinced her that the horse was unsuitable for dressage and should buy a "dressage horse." We didn't care one whit about his potential (or lack thereof) as a dressage horse; we were looking for a trail horse.

We went out to see him. He was easy to catch, a little girthy but not bad, and otherwise very easy to handle. He stood in the cross-ties quietly and was quite the gentleman. We went for a trail ride around the farm. The trainer rode one of her horses, while I rode him. He was very safe and quiet under saddle. So I dismounted,



A pregnant pause was all the time Heather needed to make a decision to buy Stan.

Continued on next page

My Experiences...continued

and sent my mother off on a trail ride with the trainer, and she had a wonderful time.

We asked lots of questions about what he had done with his owner. The trainer told us the owner liked trail riding him at parks, and that she had also ridden sidesaddle and done demonstrations at the with him.

His vet history also checked out. He had a few health concerns, not surprising since he was in his late teens, but the vet felt his soundness was appropriate for his intended purpose. Armed with outside references and vet support, we scheduled one more test ride, and when that went as well as the first, we made an offer, and it was accepted.

The entire time we owned him he was easy to catch, groom, tack up, and ride. Under saddle, he was a great horse for my mother.

However, he had one bad habit that was problematic for us. He did not stand tied. You could tack him up in a stall or cross-ties, but you could not safely tie him to

anything in front of him. Because we weren't warned, we learned that the hard way. Our first trail ride away from home, he ripped the ties off the side of the trailer, but since he'd been so good otherwise, I thought it was a fluke, that maybe he'd been stung or something. But it happened again. We called the trainer to ask her if there was something special about the way his previous owner had tied him. Maybe he was used to being tied shorter, or longer, with a bungee, or something out of the ordinary. Eventually it came out that he was never able to stand tied. His previous owner had even taken him to trainers and clinics with specialists to try to fix his problem, and they ended up telling her she should just find ways to do things with him that didn't involve tying him. So when she took him for trail rides like we were trying to do, she just gave him lots of hay or found a grassy spot, and hoped he didn't wander off while she was tacking him up.

At first we believed the trainer when she said she wasn't aware of his problem, that her client had neglected to pass that information along to her, but later we got confirmation from one of her working

Eventually I spotted an ad for an older gelding who'd been trail ridden extensively.

The horse was a ribby, old chestnut gelding with a kind eye and a head like a mailbox. His feet were way overdue for a trimming, and he was definitely in need of some groceries. Early on in the test ride, the horse was panting and breathing heavily, but it was hard for me to tell if it was something like COPD or if the poor horse was out of condition. My mother really liked the horse, and wanted to know what I thought. I told her I honestly couldn't tell how much of his problem was neglect or genuine health problems. After much hemming and hawing, we decided to have him vet checked. I think pity was a big motivating factor in that decision, as well as anger and frustration at the seller, since he kept insisting everything was completely normal.

The vet found the horse was so overdue for a dental exam that most of his back teeth weren't even coming into contact with each other. That was probably the reason he was so thin. He also had COPD, and the vet wanted to know if that was a deal breaker for me. If it was, we should stop the vet check right there. For the long walking trail rides my mother likes, I told him it might be manageable, so he should keep going. The horse was also footsore and back sore, but like me, the vet couldn't tell how much was due to an actual problem and how much was because he lacked proper hoof care and had so little flesh over his back. Basically we were looking at the purchase price as equal to what we'd have to do to get him healthy enough to work. He was a sweet horse, and we would have been willing to take a chance on him, but we certainly weren't willing to pay much for that privilege. The seller, who was in complete denial, wouldn't budge on the price, so we walked away. Hopefully the old horse found a soft landing somewhere, but sadly I suspect not.

Sometimes it's hard to separate the quality of the horse from the condition it's in.

For some inexplicable reason, my mother then decided she needed a Tennessee Walker – no other breed would do. Given her frugal nature, combined with her stiff requirements, finding one to look at was a challenge.

Had an interesting, unusual or wish-you-could-forget experience buying or selling a horse? Send it to newsletter@wdcta.org.

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THE GREATEST STRENGTH OF A RIDER IS EDUCATION

Two Members' Stories

Hitting the Jack Pot When You Buy an Older Horse

By Jayne Ayers

I bought a horse to be a school horse from a student who had taken lessons from me off and on for years. She said it was her sister's horse, a Thoroughbred trained and shown to Third level, had evented, and had been sitting in a pasture, unused for a couple of years. She said he was 18 years old and sound.

I bought the gelding, sight unseen, trusting her to be accurate in her description. I paid a bit more than I thought an 18-year-old Thoroughbred should be worth, but I needed a school horse rather badly at that time.

I decided to search for more information on this horse. I had his Jockey Club name, but his tattoo was hard to read. My search for a horse a few years on either side of age 18 had come up empty. "Oh well," I thought, "he's sound and a good school horse."

After a few years, an article on my teaching came out in a national dressage magazine. Pictures of this Thoroughbred with a young girl on him were included in the article. A few weeks later, I got a call from a lady in Florida who said she had owned the horse for many years, evented and showed him through Third level in dressage. She had sold him at age 20 to the sister of my student! She gave me his birth date. It turns out the horse was 28 when sold to me, not 18! Caveat emptor!

The good part is the gelding gave lessons for me for almost seven years.

He died at age 36, still sound and cheerful.

By Caryn Vesperman

Even when I was a kid, I didn't have a trained horse. If the horses I owned were broke, the word preceding that word would be "barely."

It's not the path I would recommend.

For anyone looking for a horse, especially for a child or any novice rider, I would suggest buying as much training as you can afford and put young, a specific color or breed, fancy gaits or a pretty head way, way down the list.

Since I had to buy every horse I've ever owned (and not having the last name of Forbes), I thought buying the "better" horse (in terms of movement, looks and potential) was the way to go. But, having champagne taste on a beer budget meant I had to buy young and green. For years, instead of buying a horse that could teach *me*, I bought the cheaper, young horse instead of the schoolmaster. (My definition of a schoolmaster is not just an FEI-level teacher, but also a horse at the lower levels who knows his job and has "been there-done that.")

Going Green

Yes, I learned a lot with green and unbroke horses, and yes, I learned to be persistent. However, my progress would have been much faster had my horses known more than me. My first horse, bought at age 14 with babysitting money and other savings, was a three-year-old buckskin Quarter Horse mare. I remember submitting a question to an equine magazine, asking what a canter lead was and how to ask for it. (That's indicative how much I knew about riding. Until that point, I thought you just kicked more to get the trot and even more for the canter!) Fortunately she was a saint of a young horse and only bucked me off once every spring.

When I left for college, I couldn't afford to board both of us, so I gave her to a nice family. Once I started my career, I bought another horse, 99 Proof, that knew a little bit

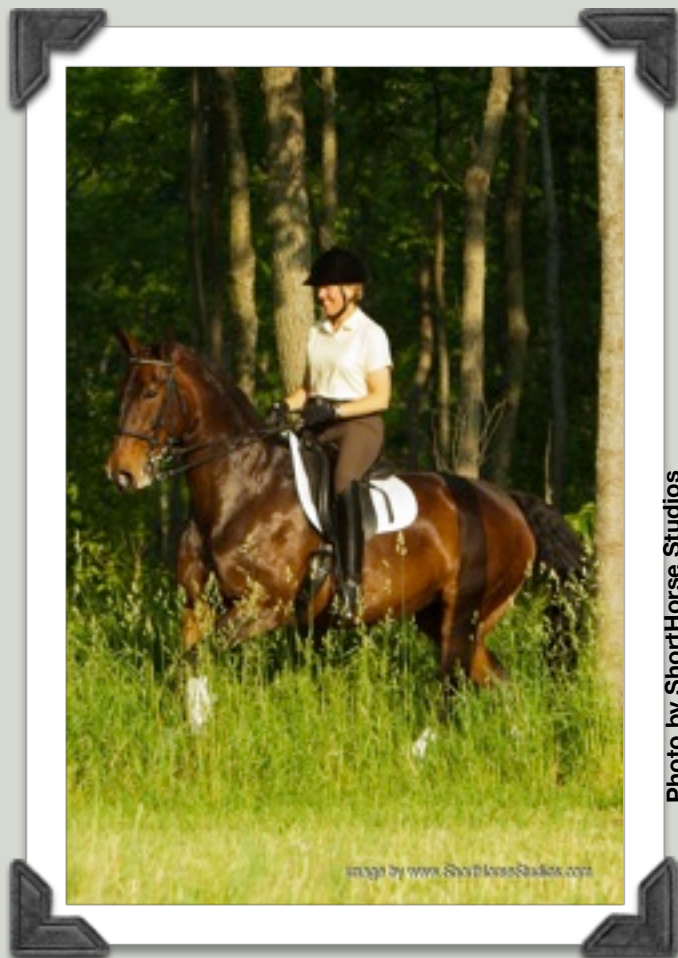


Photo by ShortHorse Studios

One of my favorite photos of Sally, as you can see from my face how much I am enjoying the ride! My smile can only be matched by my friends' smiles after they ride and learn from her.

more than I did. Over the years, he and I fox-hunted, did hunters and lower-level eventing, and later focused solely on dressage.

After I sold 99, I bought a barely backed Westfalen and eventually earned my Bronze Medal on her. I continued with green horses, especially since I got interested in breeding Hanoverians on a very small scale, and if you don't sell them as youngsters, people want to see them under saddle!

A couple of horses I started over this time, I kept too long, believing they would be my future FEI horse. While I believe most horses with three good gaits and a cooperative brain can do third level, not all of them can go beyond. To be honest, I should have taken a couple of trainers' advice and sold them sooner than I did. Besides my ignorance and stubbornness, what they say about hind sight is true!

Continued on next page

Fast Forward to a Lesson with Alex Gerding

For nearly eight years, I've worked with [Alex Gerding](#). Usually Alex starts lessons with the question, "What is the plan?"

In this particular lesson, I was on a Hanoverian mare, Brienza, that I had bought as a weanling. She could get 8s and 9s on her walk and trot, but the canter was a challenge for her because her hind legs were straight and she was built slightly down hill. I struggled with the canter and, no surprise, the flying changes. My previous horse, who could do piaffe and passage, also had difficulties with flying changes. I could get single flying changes with her, but if I got two or three down the long side, I was lucky. Flying changes simply made her tense and insecure. No doubt, my lack of understanding and experience in teaching them did not help her.

So here I was again, struggling with flying changes on another horse. The harder I tried, the worse it got and the tenser both Brienza and I got. All the while, I was telling myself I was so stupid.

The lesson ended, and defeated and discouraged, I untacked my horse in the aisle. I have ridden all my life and kept hitting the flying-changes "ceiling." I'd tell myself, "This isn't brain surgery or rocket science. Why can't I get it?"

I was so frustrated. About 10 minutes later, Alex came into the barn aisle and said four words, "I have a plan."

That plan, as we discussed later over dinner, was to find me a horse that was a flying change genius. Alex knew the horse had a big job ahead of it. Not only did it have to do the changes without getting screwed up from my attempts, but also had to help me get my confidence back.

Alex was heading to Germany to look for an FEI horse for another client. He said he'd keep an eye open for me.

At this point, my husband said (thankfully smiling as he left the room), "I don't want to hear any of this."

Jackpot!

Alex found his client a horse and found one for me. I never went to Germany to try her. All I knew was that she was a 17-year-old, bay Hanoverian mare. Before he left, Alex had asked if he found any potential horses, would I want to fly there and try

them. I said, "No," that he knew what I needed and he'd be stuck teaching me with whatever he found, so I'd rather save the money.

Now, I'm not recommending that everyone buy a horse sight unseen. Not everyone would be comfortable with that decision (and their trainer might not be comfortable with that either!).

Salope (barn name, Sally) arrived in December and will go down as the best horse I've ever had the privilege of owning.

I didn't care about color or beauty or breed. I was only hoping for a horse that was trained to about Prix St. George. What I got was a horse that not only knew flying changes, but all the Grand Prix movements. Sally is the first horse I've ever had that knew a LOT more than I do. What fun!

Taking a Calculated Risk

The point is, I took a chance and bought a horse that many riders wouldn't have thought was worth the risk. They would have passed on Sally because of either her age or an old injury. (She was 17 and had started her career as a jumper and then tore her deep digital flexor tendon on her right front leg, was retired from a jumping career and switched to focus on dressage.)

But I was confident in Alex, and Sally passed the pre-purchase exam with very good flexions, x-rays and ultra-sounds. I didn't even tell anyone how old she was when I first got her. Still today when people see her, they can hardly believe her age. (But don't tell her. She's rather sensitive about the age thing.)

I took a chance and bought a horse to teach me some important next steps. I wasn't planning to buy a "forever horse." I told myself even if she was sound for only a couple of years, that was okay – I was buying an education.

But Sally turned out to be more than I could have ever expected. The first year I owned her, I earned my USDF Silver Medal; the second year, my USDF Gold Medal. And while it isn't easy to ride FEI, it is certainly easier when you have a teacher like her.

We have had a few minor issues over the five years I've owned her, but Sally is sound at age 23 and can still perform all the Grand Prix movements. She has been worth every penny and continues to teach me. In fact, where flying changes uses to

be my nemesis, now they are one of my favorite movements!

I also get such joy offering my friends the opportunity to ride her, especially when they may be struggling with understanding a particular FEI movement such as piaffe, passage or one tempe changes. It's very satisfying to see the lightbulb moments for them, just as it was (and still is) invaluable for me.

She also has rewarded me in many other ways too. I bred her and got, "triplets" by the German Hanoverian-approved stallion, Diamond Hit, via embryo transfer. These three fillies will be started under saddle early next summer, and I hope they are just like her.

A couple of years ago, I toyed with the idea of selling her to recoup some of the purchase price, but that didn't transpire, which in retrospect, I'm glad to still have her to learn on. I've had offers, even recently, from people who want to lease her, but I turn them down.

I guess when I decided to invest in my riding education, I did end up buying...my forever horse.

Do you have a story about buying a special horse? Or about selling one? A horse that taught you, took care of you, made you laugh or one that now teaches someone else? Send me your story: (newsletter@wdcta.org).

BITS 'N PIECES

"After all is said and done, more is said than done."

This anonymous quote fits a lot of situations, but doesn't even remotely describe the contributions of several inspirational and dedicated leaders in the dressage community who have died recently:

- * [Lowell Boomer](#), founder of the USDF and The Dressage Foundation (as reported in last month's eQuester),
- * [Peter Lert](#), leader in many capacities with the USDF,
- * [Elizabeth "Liz" Searle](#), FEI judge, co-founder of the American Vaulting Association and the KWPN-NA breed society, and
- * Lois Heyerdahl, S judge and one of the first leaders of dressage in Wisconsin and the U.S.

Note: Lois' family asks that any donations made in her name, be sent to her husband, Chuck Heyerdahl, 17341 Hammer Road, Sparta, WI 5465. The funds will be used to purchase a patio brick in her name at the USDF headquarters in Lexington, Kentucky.

All four leave a lasting legacy in the increased awareness and promotion of dressage.

In addition, Maryal Barnett, an S" judge, active member of many USDF committees and clinician (who has devoted many years to teaching in Wisconsin), also is experiencing a sad time: On Jan. 15, her husband, Charlie, passed away peacefully in his sleep at hospice after a gradual decline this past year. For those who would like to give a memorial, Maryal asks that we send donations to The Dressage Foundation or Hoofs Fund, Inc.

Great Way to Break Up the Winter: Attend the WDCTA Annual Conference This Month

The WDCTA annual conference is **Saturday, Feb. 25** at the Country Springs Hotel & Waterpark in Pewaukee. This year, WDCTA is doing something a bit different to accommodate those traveling distances during "ify" winter weather. Instead of an evening banquet, it's an awards brunch. In addition, a panel of speakers will talk about their area of expertise (dental, complementary medicine, cross training) and then take questions from the attendees. Find the form on the last page of this newsletter.

Another Deadline Fast Approaches

Want to save money on Janet Foy's new book, "Dressage for the (Not So) Perfect Horse?" Then check out the order form on the second-to-last page of this newsletter and mail or fax the order in. Deadline is Feb. 1. Be sure to watch the newsletter, website and our Facebook page for information about a book signing in Madison when Janet returns for one of the Southwest Chapter-sponsored clinics in 2012.

With Spring...Come Riding Clinics!

Back by popular demand: The Southwest Chapter is bringing back two clinicians this year – Maryal Barnett and Janet Foy. WDCTA members can audit for a very reasonable price, and SW Chapter member's auditing fee is the most reasonable of all: Free! The first clinic is with Maryal Barnett, March 24-25 (opening date is Feb. 10) and the next clinic is with Janet Foy, May 11-13 (opening date is Mar. 30). See you there!

Then You're Done With It

Complete and send in your awards registration form. Get it done now and you don't have to worry about it for the rest of the year. Don't let the first show go by and realize you can't get credit for those scores. Find it under "Forms" on the [WDCTA website](#).



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Classifieds

Two saddles: **Stubben Scandica dressage** saddle, 17.5", black, good condition, \$1,195. **Crosby All-Purpose**, 17.5", brown, good condition, \$550. Contact Caryn Vesperman at email: touchstonefarm@gmail.com or call (608) 455-2208.

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CALLENDAR

*A listing in the Calendar of Events is a service provided to WDCTA members only.
Send your submissions to newsletter@wdcta.org by the 15th of each month.*

WDCTA State & Chapter Meetings

February 14

Southwest Chapter Meeting - 6:30 p.m.
Business meeting only
Barn lounge, Hickory Knoll, 5438 Hwy. M, Fitchburg
Contact: [Donna Thomas](mailto:Donna.Thomas@wdcta.org) at (608) 835-8549

March 13

Kettle Moraine Chapter Meeting - 6 p.m.
Sundance Film Festival award-winning, movie, "Buck"
Mukwonago Public Library

March 17

Southwest Chapter Meeting - 1 p.m.
Spring Tune Up for Your Horse: Current Best Practices.
Talk by Dr. Jennifer Thompson
Alicia Ashman Public Library, corner of Old Sauk and
High Point Roads, Madison
Contact: [Donna Thomas](mailto:Donna.Thomas@wdcta.org) at (608) 835-8549

April 10

Southwest Chapter Meeting - 7 p.m.
My Experiences with the Young Rider Program
Talk by Katie Foster
Contact: [Donna Thomas](mailto:Donna.Thomas@wdcta.org) at (608) 835-8549

May 8

Southwest Chapter Meeting - 7 p.m.
Business Meeting
Location TBA
Contact: [Donna Thomas](mailto:Donna.Thomas@wdcta.org) at (608) 835-8549

Saturday, Dec. 8

SW Chapter "Death by Chocolate" Holiday Party
Location - TBA

WDCTA Clinics & Events

Feb. 25

WDCTA Annual Conference & Awards Brunch
Country Springs Hotel & Waterpark, Pewaukee
Contact: Pam Doolittle (608) 644-9423
psdoolittle@yahoo.com

March 24-25

Maryal Barnett Clinic
Hidden Pond Farm, Mazomanie, WI
Contact: Pam Doolittle * No auditing charge for
(608) 712-1400 SW Chapter members
psdoolittle@yahoo.com

May 11-13

Janet Foy Clinic
Judd's Green Meadows Farm, Belleville, WI
Contact: Mary Hanneman * No auditing charge for
(608) 455-1037 SW Chapter members
mahanneman@gmail.com

July 6-8

Janet Foy Clinic
Judd's Green Meadows Farm, Belleville, WI
Contact: Mary Hanneman * No auditing charge for
(608) 455-1037 SW Chapter members
mahanneman@gmail.com

Aug. 10-12

Janet Foy Clinic
Judd's Green Meadows Farm, Belleville, WI
Contact: Mary Hanneman * No auditing charge for
(608) 455-1037 SW Chapter members
mahanneman@gmail.com

Sept. 7-9

Janet Foy Clinic
Judd's Green Meadows Farm, Belleville, WI
Contact: Mary Hanneman * No auditing charge for
(608) 455-1037 SW Chapter members
mahanneman@gmail.com

Oct. 12-14

Janet Foy Clinic
Judd's Green Meadows Farm, Belleville, WI
Contact: Mary Hanneman * No auditing charge for
(608) 455-1037 SW Chapter members
mahanneman@gmail.com

Shows

Remember, only USDF/USEF recognized shows or schooling shows designated as WDCTA-recognized are eligible for WDCTA year-end awards.

Stay Tuned!

Non-WDCTA Events

April 6-8

Alex Gerding Clinic
Touchstone Farm, Brooklyn, WI
Contact: Caryn Vesperman * No auditing charge
(608) 455-2208
touchstonefarm@gmail.com

May 18-21

Alex Gerding Clinic
Touchstone Farm, Brooklyn, WI
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(608) 455-2208
touchstonefarm@gmail.com

June 15-18

Alex Gerding Clinic
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(608) 455-2208
touchstonefarm@gmail.com

Sept. 28-Oct. 1

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10/12

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2/12

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WDCTA-SW Chapter 2012 Dressage Clinics with Maryal Barnett

at Hidden Pond Farm, 6486 Breunig Road, Mazomanie WI 53560

March 24 -25 opening date Feb. 10*

***More dates coming soon**

*

Separate application required for each clinic!

Maryal is an accomplished rider and judge, and has competed at the Grand Prix level as well as serving as an [Fédération Equestre Internationale](#) (FEI) "C" Dressage Judge, and [USA Equestrian](#) (USAE) "S" Dressage Judge. She is a USDF L Faculty member and certified instructor examiner, and has held numerous board positions both with the USDF, ASHA and USEF. Highly regarded for her ability to connect with and teach students at all levels, her philosophy and methods are always positive and encouraging.

All rider applications must be postmarked on or after the "opening date" (see above). Riders will be selected on a first come basis with preference given to WDCTA-SW chapter members, followed by WDCTA members from other chapters. Refunds will be considered at organizer's discretion with receipt of veterinarian and/or doctor's certificate. Alternates will have first chance at open slots. Tentative Schedule: Friday evening lessons should time permit, Saturday 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM, Sunday 8:00 AM– 4:30PM.

Rider Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone _____

Email: _____

Horse's Name: _____ Breed: _____

Age: _____ Schooling Level _____ Showing Level _____

RIDER FEES: For 2 rides

WDCTA Member \$270 (\$135/ride) Non-WDCTA: \$320 (\$160/ride)

Ride time preference? AM PM (will try to accommodate) _____

Will you need a stall? Overnight** For day** Just in and out (no fee)

**Organizer will contact you with details regarding leaving your horse.

******Negative Coggins required with application******

AUDITOR FEES:

WDCTA-SW Chapter members – NO CHARGE!!

WDCTA member 1 day @ \$15 _____ 2 days @ \$25 _____

Non-WDCTA member 1day @ \$20 _____ 2 days @ \$30 _____

Attending: Saturday Sunday

Includes coffee/water/soda and snacks. Bring your own lunch and chair!

Rider / Auditor Fee \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

Make checks payable to: WDCTA Southwest Chapter

Mail to organizer with check & 2012 Coggins:

Pamela Doolittle, 6486 Breunig Road, Mazomanie WI, 53560

Questions?

608-712-1400 or psdoolittle@yahoo.com

WDCTA-SW 2012 Janet Foy Dressage Clinics

at Judd's Green Meadows Farm, 6412 County A, Belleville, WI 53508

- May 11-13** - opening day March 30
- June 1-3** - opening day April 20
- July 6-8** - opening day May 25
- August 10-12** - opening day June 29
- September 7-9** - opening day July 27
- October 12-14** - opening day August 31

Separate application required for each clinic!

Janet Foy is an "I" rated FEI judge, USEF "S" and Sport Horse Breeding judge. She has judged US and international FEI shows, including the NAYR Champs, Dressage at Devon, & USA World Cup League. She is a USDF L Faculty member and instructs Federation Judges. She is a USDF bronze, silver and gold medalist, having ridden horses to Horse of the Year Awards from Training to Grand Prix. Janet was a member of the USDF test writing committee, making her uniquely qualified to provide her students with insights to accurate test riding.

Rider applications must be postmarked on the "opening day" (see above). Riders will be selected on a first come basis with preference given to WDCTA-SW chapter members, followed by WDCTA members from other chapters. Refunds will be considered at organizer's discretion with receipt of veterinarian and/or doctor's certificate. Alternates will have first chance at open slots. *Tentative Schedule: Friday - Sunday 8:00 AM- 4:30PM.*

Rider Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone _____

Email: _____

Horse's Name: _____ Breed: _____

Age: _____ Schooling Level _____ Showing Level _____

RIDER FEES:

WDCTA Member: \$125/ride or \$365 for 3 rides Non-WDCTA Member: \$140/ride or \$420 for 3

TRAILER IN FEE: \$10/ride or \$25 for 3 (everyone pays except Judd boarders)

Ride Preferences: Friday Saturday Sunday AM PM (will try to accommodate)

Will you need a stall? Overnight ** For day** Just in and out

**VERY limited overnight stall availability & additional cost – organizer will contact you with options

Negative Coggins required with application (if you board at Judd's, don't send.) All shots must be current.

AUDITOR FEES:

WDCTA-SW Chapter members – NO CHARGE!!

WDCTA member 1 day @ \$15 _____ 2 days @ \$25 _____ 3 days @ \$30 _____

Non-WDCTA member 1 day @ \$20 _____ 2 days @ \$30 _____ 3 days @ \$35 _____

Attending: Friday Saturday Sunday

Includes coffee/water/soda and snacks. Bring your own lunch and chair!

Rider / Auditor Fee \$ _____

Add Trailer in Fee \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

Make checks payable to: WDCTA Southwest Chapter

Mail to organizer with check & 2012 Coggins:

Mary Hanneman, N8160 Smith Rd, Brooklyn, WI 53521

Book Signing Party in Madison in May!
Watch for details!

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