

# Between the Reins

Forum for the Narrow-Minded and Opinionated

*This newsletter is an all-volunteer effort designed to reflect the horsemanship approach taught by Harry Whitney. While Harry will offer his thoughts and ideas, he does not take personal responsibility for the interpretations of the contributed student writings. The goal of this publication is to provide students with additional insights into the principles for creating meaningful relationships with our horses.*

## Around the Pen with Harry

The following is an excerpt from a taped lunch discussion made available by Kathy Baker who has been a student of Harry's for many years; first, in Florida and, now, in TN. Kathy does "barefoot trimming" as well as some equine massage therapy. More about her at: <http://followyourblissfarm.blogspot.com/>

Horses are gamblers," Harry said. "By that, I mean, a gambler thrives on an intermittent reward. If something is really high on a horse's list of options in his life, then it's a huge reward when that comes through. So, if we miss one time out of sixty and fifty-nine more times he tries it in hopes it comes through that one time ... " Harry chuckled as he finished saying this. "And we feel like we are not making any progress. We have done it FIFTY-NINE TIMES and he still does not seem to have it, but he is **hoping for that ONE we missed!**"

Harry goes on to say that there are two aspects of this part of a horse's nature. "The more important it is to a horse, whatever **IT** is, the more he holds on to that. So, he can have experiences that are not important to him --- it might take a 1,000 of those before he might see a pattern to it. Then, he begins to realize there is an importance to it. **BUT**, if it is *really important in his life*, then it takes very few repetitions.

Harry posed this question: "How many times does a horse have to figure out how to get the feed bin open for him to work at it for the rest of his life?" He continues, "That is important to him! But, the other things that are important to him are the things that are life threatening. There are the

(really, really activities horse is and then

*"How many times does a horse have to figure out how to get the feed bin open for him to work at it for the rest of his life?"*

positives, really, positive as far as the concerned) there are

the really negative ones. And both ends of that scale are the important things. In between is a whole lot of stuff that doesn't have that much importance. So, we do it time after time after time and we say he will never get it. But let him find by bolting out of the arena and getting with his buddies **one time** ... see how long you work on keeping it from happening! *Because that was important to him!* We get frustrated thinking we are failures because a horse can learn something in one experience and we gotta give him a thousand to get what we want. But the things **we** want are not important to him. He just puts them out of his mind. That has no importance, no relevance to his life."

### NEWS! NEWS! NEWS!

"Between the Reins" now has an Editor! Beginning with the next issue, Sarah O'Brien will take on this newly-created role. We are currently finishing up a set of "Writer's Guidelines". Any students interested in these and other newsletter-related information can read more at the following:

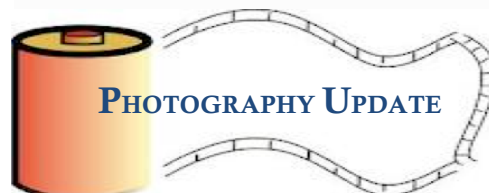
Blog site: <http://betweenthereins.blogspot.com/>  
 Email address: [BTReditor@gmail.com](mailto:BTReditor@gmail.com)

**WELCOME, SARAH!!**



## Upcoming Clinics

- |                   |                  |                             |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
|                   | <b>2011</b>      |                             |
| Clovis, CA        |                  | 10/1 – 10/4                 |
| Hammi Valley, CA  |                  | 10/8 – 10/11                |
| Salome, AZ        | Weeks beginning: | 10/31, 11/7, & 11/14        |
|                   | <b>2012</b>      |                             |
| Australia Clinics | Various dates:   | 1/20 through 2/20           |
|                   |                  | Check website for locations |
| Salome, AZ        | Weeks beginning: | 3/5, 3/12, 3/26, 4/2, 4/16  |



As many of you know, photography is a passion of Harry's and his photography website continues to grow and expand. We are pleased to announce a new Featured Photo page, which will offer photos selected by Harry. He personalizes these photos with a bit of background and commentary on what inspired him to reach for his camera. In his horsemanship, he encourages us to start to recognize the "little stuff"; you can start to appreciate how the smallest details matter as they come together in these beautiful images.

Photos offered will change every six weeks or so. Photos will be offered at special internet pricing.

All images on the website are also offered as posters at very affordable pricing.

**\*NEW!\*** Greeting cards are now being offered on select images.

Please visit Harry at [www.harrywhitneyphotography.com](http://www.harrywhitneyphotography.com)

# The "Art" of Communication



*Harry has consented to let us shine a spotlight on his photography. Yippee! Some of you who have attended his clinics either at the Arizona ranch or on the road may have had the pleasure of viewing some of his vast collection of photos taken over the years.*

*So, what's so special about these images?*

*Well to start with, paging through the albums and portfolios reveals a little bit of how Harry views the world. Anyone who has attended his clinic begins to realize the man's awareness is at a much higher level than most. It is how he can "read" a horse, enabling him to address a difficulty when it is small, rather than noticing it when the horse has fire come out both nostrils. He views clear communication as something meaningful and important. That communication bridges his passion between horses and photography.*

*Viewing the digital images he has captured over the years, you begin to realize, too, that this is truly Harry's story. You start to understand that life through his eyes is interesting, beautiful, humorous and hopeful. His portfolio is populated with family, friends and folks he has met along the way. It is landscaped with incredible fauna, flora, sunrises, sunsets, dramatic cloud formations and other images of the desert he loves. He has found some of the most unusual subjects in the oddest places, and his camera is usually handy, ready to capture that moment to share with the rest of us.*

*If you can believe that a picture is worth 1,000 words, perhaps there is a wealth of information to be discovered in these images. While the book hasn't yet been written by Harry that explains how he came to do what he does, and see what he sees, you may find that your appreciation and understanding of his gift can grow as you view his photography.*

*He leaves it to the viewer to take what they may from the image. Remembering how he sees and gets the smallest change in a horse, you may discover the tiny details that make up his photography art. While the subject may be what initially draws you to the image, closer inspection reveals how the details of light and shadows are captured in producing the final product. His work creates emotion.*

**Can your awareness be heightened?**

**Visit Harry's photography website at [harrywhitneyphotography.com](http://harrywhitneyphotography.com)**

"You've been at this a while, how do you keep it fresh (in your mind)?"

I was lying on my bunk reading *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell when Rita asked me this. She was one of the participants I met while spending three weeks at Mendin Fences last year. It was wonderful to be able to take three of my horses to ride for two weeks and audit the third.

Rita was one of my fellow students, all women (oops, sorry Tom and Jeff!) who save up time and money each year which allows them the ability to spend 1-2 weeks with Harry. This is a huge sacrifice for them, taking time off work, using up vacation days, leaving family and responsibilities behind. Wait, sounds pretty good, don't it?

What it does do for them, beside total immersion in the "Harry Method", is put a fair amount of pressure on them to make the most of that precious time and take it home with them.

So I've been ruminating on Rita's question over the past year. How do I keep the sights, sounds, feelings, skills, and processes "fresh" over time without outside guidance? Or, as some might say, without adult supervision.

First of all, I have been fortunate to work with Harry for over 15 years and this year will be my 13<sup>th</sup> year of sponsoring his clinics. I have had many opportunities to observe him working with a wide variety of horses and owners. Can't say I remember them all, but that exposure has helped me see the way Harry approaches and evaluates both horse and human. He often says how narrow-minded he is and I completely agree! Additionally, he is very open-minded and non-judgmental. Narrow-mindedness is akin to being particular and specific. The open-mindedness has to do with allowing horses or people to process and problem solve in a way that works for them. Those are the things I think of, subconsciously at this point, when I work with my horses, a student's horse or my family (where I fail epically!).

Some may want to adopt the adage "what would Harry do?" but that doesn't work for me. More to the point is: how would he think this situation through.

I'm not Harry ... I have to use my brain, my skills, and my confidence level (including a high fear meter!) to work through situations or problems. So, that leads me to.....what do I do to keep it fresh?

- I work with a variety of horses. I have that luxury since I own a few and teach as well.
- Watch my horses as they interact in the pasture and try to predict what may happen or figure out what did happen.
- Experiment, Experiment, Experiment! You don't know if you don't try.
- Pick your light bulb clinic concept and have it as your mantra for the year. From last year mine became "being particular". This covers everything from staying with me to going forward to yielding to pressure. Could be my tattoo!
- Borrow creative ideas from other people or trainers. A good example of borrowing a technique is using targeting. There is a system around that shows a "game" where on the lead line you encourage your horse to touch their nose on an object, once they do you move on to another object. Clicker training does it in a similar way with a food reward. The way I understand this concept is that it is like setting up a search, blocking other thoughts, promoting confidence and not overdoing one single task (if you move on).

All of these things have been worked on and discussed at length at Harry's clinics. If you look around there are creative "tasks" which; if your intent, approach and philosophy are for the horse, can be utilized and keep your clinic learning fresh.

## KEEPING IT FRESH

Suzy Fitzsimmons, Mankato, MN