



## Mechanicsville Riding Club

### The Hitching Post

**Issue 79**

**DECEMBER 2009**

#### 2009 Officers

President	DEBBIE M
Vice President	DONNA S
Secretary	WANDA H
Treasurer	DEBBIE W

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**Web Editor- Diane T**  
**Ways & Means – Bethany M**  
**Historian – Judee C**  
**Parliamentarian – Gordon M**  
**Publicity – Theresa B**  
**Show – Barbara H**  
**Special Events – Bev C & Christine S**  
**Activities – Maria S**  
**Membership/Telephone Tree – Joan B**  
**Parade- Carolyn D & Nancy M**  
**Activities 17 & under – Deb D**  
**Corporate Secretary- Wanda H**

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#### Notes from the President

Once again, thanks to Christine Sweet, Debbie Downs, and all of those that helped to make our MRC Christmas banquet a huge success. The food was great, wonderful company, and great crafts for the children.

Another year has come and gone. We had some great events this year. The camping trips were well attended even if the weather didn't always cooperate. Once again the weather was an issue with our horse show, but we did make money.

We will need some positions filled, so think about what you may be comfortable heading or helping on. Activities will be one of the positions and we need to boost the trail ride participation. If you have some new ideas or suggestions this would be the time to try them out. We will also need a new club editor. Keep these in mind and any other committee you may like to take over.

Our club speaker for Jan will be Chris Wiley, saddle maker. Any suggestions for speakers can be given to our new vice president, Jenny Boswell.

Have a safe and happy holiday!!!!

**NEXT MEETING WILL BE ON JANUARY 27<sup>TH</sup> at the Mechanicsville Little League Building the social begins at 7pm. Speaker will be Chris Wiley (saddle maker and fitter)**

#### **CHUCK WAGON:**

**Determined by membership roster order**

**JAN: Donna Hines & Barbara Howell**

**Please let us know as soon as possible if you can't supply Chuck Wagon.**

December Birthdays: **Carolyn D, Susan E, Donna H, Debbie M, Jim R**

**FOR MRC PLANNED EVENTS  
AND PICTURES FROM OUR PAST  
EVENTS**

**PLEASE CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:**

[WWW.MECHANICSVILLERIDINGCLUB.NET](http://WWW.MECHANICSVILLERIDINGCLUB.NET)



**FROM OUR FRIEND KATHLEEN:**

**The Whoa-Go Connection**

KATHLEEN DILL, COPYRIGHT DECEMBER, 2009

When you consider it carefully, whoa and go have a lot in common for the horse. In Mama's world, both were required in order to comply with the wishes of the horse in charge. It was pretty simple, actually. If Whoa didn't want thumped, or worse yet, if he didn't want thrown out of the herd, he paid attention and he followed directions. If the boss horse wanted go, then Whoa moved. If the boss wanted whoa, then he didn't. When he listened, nice things happened, and when he didn't, well, then the results weren't so much fun.

The smaller he was, the faster he listened. If Big Bertha told him to get, he probably got, because Big Bertha was really big. But if Wally the Weanling tried to move him, he probably just flicked an ear and then watched Wally clack his jaws in that "I didn't really mean it; I was just seeing if you were really serious" baby horse thing.

Getting bigger changed things, though. Growing up, or for a horse, growing larger, offered some new opportunities. Whoa found out that his larger size meant more control of whoa or go, at least with his buddies, if not Big Bertha. The negotiation about space control almost always starts when two horses consider themselves relatively equal in the power, or size, department. That's when we see chasing, making teeth or tail, bumping, and general space grabbing. The who-says-whoa-or-go thing has to be clarified for simple peaceful

coexistence to re-establish itself. Once that is clear, everyone can relax and just obey or order someone else around.

If you look at it this way, you can see that for a horse, movement and non-movement are essentially the same response to conflict. They demonstrate submission to a higher authority. They are the result of a demand for order and an expression of power. Whoa is aware of this, and he is not immune to trying to use motion or non-motion to make a transfer from our power account to his. After all, it's when you ask him to stop and he keeps going, or when you ask him to get on the trailer and he says "No way!" that you are caught up in the activity at hand and distracted from the goal. Distracted from the goal? The goal? Yup, and it's not only about whether he gets in the trailer or not, or about whether he holds still for a moment. It's not only about controlling movement, as Whoa would have you think. It's about controlling focus.

Think now, for a moment. When the boss horse tells Whoa to move away every time he gets near Whoa's space, how does Whoa get the message? Or when he says to stand over there by that tree and quit making trouble, or else? How does Whoa know what to do? By paying attention to him. It might take an "or else" or two from the boss to get him to do that, but it won't take more than that before Whoa knows exactly where old Mr. Muscle is at every moment. How does he do that? By paying attention. By using his mind. By giving focus.

Focus is the glue that makes your human-horse relationship work. It is the tool that allows you to use Whoa's natural response of whoa or go to your advantage. It lets you direct Whoa even before you present to him your current plan. It gets him ready to do what you want, where, when and how you want it. Whoa is perfectly comfortable using his mind to help him stay out of trouble. Mama taught him to do that, and Mr. Muscle helped him practice. Whoa just doesn't want you to know that, because then you will have an easy way to separate him from his endless game playing and his big-horse desires. To keep your relationship with Whoa simple, sane and safe, you need to keep him thinking....about you.

Thinking can replace flight and fight and create stability, ethics, and reliability. That

makes the most important part of your job as Whoa's boss person to get that focus going. Once Whoa understands that with you, as well as with Mr. Muscle or Big Bertha, he must use his mind to smooth things out, you will have a great tool for showing him how to conquer all of those desires which get him into trouble (like how to get home faster) and how to defuse those things which make him scared (like those plastic bag alive-thingys.)

I had to learn this the hard way. I spent a lot of years struggling with horses, reacting to them rather than channeling them, because I ignored the most important part of the interaction: focus. When I finally figured this out, and started using focus as the preparatory tool for movement or holding still, things got a lot easier. Once I started using my mind, Whoa had no choice but to follow suit. Best of all, I discovered that he didn't hate it. He actually loved it, because it made life more orderly and easier all the way around.

Focus works to make any whoa or go situation easier to accomplish. Focus, in fact, is the first thing both of you need to do to accomplish your goal. You need to focus on what you want to do, so when Whoa focuses on you, you can tell him exactly what that is. My husband often uses the example of turning the horse when he teaches riders this concept. What do you do when you want to make a turn on a horse? Most people will say, "I just slow the horse down, take the inside rein, and bring him around. Right?"

JC would say, "Well, it depends. Which turn do you want? The one where his shoulders pass the object and then swing around? Or the one where he bends like a hula hoop? Or the one where his hips pass and then he pivots like a bus? Or how about the one where he flexes the shoulders around and then leaves the hips sticking out? Or where his neck bends to your knee but the rest just slides over and pivots?"

The point is, for him to have something to focus on, you have to do your part. Whether you are doing a whoa or a go, when you expect consistent focus from Whoa, he learns that it is better to just pay attention and do it right the first time than it is to try to get you distracted and to change your mind. If you have decided that he will flex from nose to tail around the object, have a rounded back and comfortably tucked nose, ears pointed ahead and tail quiet

as you bend him, and then move smoothly around it, maintaining the same distance from the object as he passes it and the same speed he had when he first approached it, and then unbend and continue straight for several steps in the same speed and carriage until you give him a whoa at a specific place on the path, well, then you have given him a lot of things to do (just as you have given them to yourself) and he is so busy following your directions and keeping focused to avoid screwing up and getting a correction that he is totally involved mentally in making the physical responses right. You plan, he gets ready, you command, he does, you respond with the next part of the plan, he gets ready, you command, and so on.

The pieces of a job like this are very small. Each command is preceded by a focusing word, an "Easy!" or some other preparatory. Each command means one thing, completely and unalterably, and while he is responding to that, you have already made and communicated the plan for the next thing, so he is following you along your mental path, trying to keep up so he doesn't screw up!

Horses like to follow along paths. That is natural for them. Once you make the path clear and get them started on it, they will prefer to just have to decide yes or no, and leave the hard stuff up to you. That decision, based in focus, lets you build calm performance and stability and success and self-esteem., because you use Whoa's natural responses of whoa or go in a way he is hard-wired to do.

**MANY THANKS TO KATHLEEN FOR SHARING HER ARTICLES WITH US IN 2009.....AND FOR THE INFORMATIVE CLINIC.**

## “Barn Humor”

"Never approach a bull from the front, a horse from the rear or a fool from any direction."

"A bronc rider should be light in the head and heavy in the seat."

"Broke is what happens when a cowboy lets his yearnin's get ahead of his earnin's."

"Any cowboy can carry a tune. The trouble comes when he tries to unload it."

"When in doubt, let your horse do the thinkin'."

"When a cowboy's too old to set a bad example, he hands out good advice."

"Worry is like a rockin' horse. It's something to do that don't get you nowhere."

"Poor is having to sell the horse to buy the saddle."

### 10 THINGS YOU WON'T HEAR YOUR HORSE SAY:

1. Don't clean out my stall. I adore the smell.
2. No thanks, one can of oats is enough for me.
3. Doctor, may I please have a rectal exam.
4. I just love traveling in a hot trailer.
5. Mr. Farrier, please don't stop pounding on my hooves.
6. There's room for one more on my back.
7. I feel like galloping another 20 miles.
8. Low branch! Duck!
9. You can go ahead and leave, I'll wash myself down.
10. Can we do this again tomorrow?

### FROM EDITOR:

### IT'S BEEN FUN; I LEAVE YOU WITH TWO OF MY FAVORITE HORSE POEMS...

#### *It was Chance that Got Me Here*

By Adrienne Lake

**CHANCE** is the angel who gave me my wings

The wings I need to jump high.

**CHANCE** is the teacher who taught me to use them with wisdom

And I will to honour him.

**CHANCE** is the one by my side when I fly full tilt

Fly into glory, fly into the future, fly past my aspirations.

**CHANCE** showed me the true meaning of "friend",

Not one who is there half the time -  
Not one who is there for show.

**CHANCE** is ageless and will watch me bound into time

With **CHANCE** by my side in SPIRIT.

**CHANCE** will see from the clouds when I jump higher than ever before

**CHANCE** will be with me when I fly by myself.

**CHANCE** will be with me in SPIRIT  
when I win our prize,

And help chances all around this  
spectacular globe.

**CHANCE** brought me my biggest  
dream

The one I always asked Santa for

And when **CHANCE** came he  
whispered with his large liquid eyes,  
"I'm here."

**CHANCE** taught me to be myself, the  
beautiful person I am.

**CHANCE** taught me beauty and love

By being beauty and love incarnate.

**CHANCE** was with me when I touched  
the moon

**CHANCE** took care of me over  
obstacles I couldn't do on my own.

**CHANCE** showed me the SPIRIT of the  
beloved horse

With thundering hooves and flagged  
tail,

Or a lowered head, horse hugs and  
kisses

Gentlemen he was when I needed him.

**CHANCE** is and always will be in my  
dreams

**CHANCE** led me down my path

Picking the footing for me

Holding my hand, showing the  
possibilities

Leaping over them with me, racing  
toward the future,

For it was **CHANCE** who got me here

And **CHANCE** transcends infinity.

Adrienne Lake Feb. 20, 1998

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### ***When I Am An Old Horsewoman***

I shall wear turquoise and diamonds,  
and a straw hat that doesn't suit me.

And I shall spend my social security on  
white wine and carrots.

And sit in the alleyway of my barn  
and listen to my horses breathe.

I will sneak out in the middle of a  
summer night,  
and ride the old bay mare across the  
moonstruck meadow.

If my old bones will allow and when  
people come to call,

I will smile and nod as I walk past the  
gardens to the barn.

And show instead of the flowers  
growing,

inside stalls fresh-lined with straw.

I will shovel and sweat and wear hay  
in my hair

as if it were a jewel.

And I will be an embarrassment to all  
who will not yet have found the peace  
in being free to have a horse as a best  
friend.

A friend who waits at midnight hour  
With muzzle and nicker and patient  
eyes.

The kind of woman I will be

When I am old.

An old horsewoman.

~ *Anonymous*



**MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND A HAPPY NEW  
YEAR!!!!!!**