



## Mechanicsville Riding Club

### The Hitching Post

Issue 68

JANUARY 2009

#### 2009 Officers

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

---

#### POSITIONS TO BE DETERMINED AT MTG

Club Editor- TBD  
Web Editor- TBD  
Ways & Means – TBD  
Historian – TBD  
Parliamentarian – TBD  
Publicity – TBD  
Show – TBD  
Special Events – TBD  
Activities – TBD  
Membership/Telephone Tree – TBD  
Parade- TBD  
Activities 17 & under – TBD  
Corporate Secretary- TBD

---

#### Notes from the President

A new year is underway and a new board for MRC begins. Karen and all her crew did a great job and we hope we can live up to their energy and enthusiasm.

I encourage everyone to participate in club activities and donate a little of your time to taking over a committee or helping on one.

IF there are any suggestions on clinics, new trail riding places, or things you want to see the club

do please let us know. In doing this, we can all help insure a great year and many memorable club events.

See you on the trail.

**Debbie Middleton**

Next Club Meeting will be Jan. 28th at the Mechanicsville Little League Bldg. Speaker will be Mary Rader. she will tell us about her trip "Out West". Social will begin at 7:00 and our meeting will start at 7:30. Hope to see everyone there.

#### CHUCK WAGON:

Determined by membership roster order

**JAN:** Jane B & Joan B

**Feb:** Jenny B & Theresa B

**Mar:** Judee C & Lorrie C

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

**January Birthdays: Jenny B, Joan C, Karen L, Mary R, Kathy R, Donna S**

#### Heads Up:

ANY MEMBER OF MRC MAY SEEK APPROVAL TO ORGANIZE AND CO-ORDINATE A TRAINING CLINIC OPEN FOR THE FULL MRC MEMBERSHIP. GUIDELINES WILL BE DISCUSSED AT MEETING.

If anyone would like to share their bio please send me your info...especially new members.

It'll help us get to know each other.

## MRC Membership bio guidelines:

- Name:
- What is your riding interest or discipline?
- How did you develop your connection with horses?
- Tell about your early experience with horses?
- What are your goals and interests for you and your horse?
- Tell about the greatest achievement for you and your horse.
- How has your riding experience enhanced your life?

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

PLEASE CHECK OUT OUR  
WEBSITE:

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



## MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

---

### CONTRIBUTED BY BARBARA H

#### A Simple Statement

~ I ride ~

That seems like such a simple statement. However, as many women who ride know, it is really a complicated matter. It has to do with power and empowerment. Being able to do things you might have once considered out of reach or ability.

I have considered this as I shovel manure, fill water barrels in the cold rain, wait for the vet/farrier/ electrician/ hay delivery, change a tire on a horse trailer by the side of the freeway, or cool a gelding out before getting down to the business of drinking a cold beer after a long ride. The time, the money, the effort it takes to ride calls for dedication. At least I call it dedication. Both my ex-husbands call it 'the sickness.' It's a sickness I've had since I was a small girl bouncing my model horses and dreaming of the day I would ride a real horse. Most of the women I ride with understand the meaning of 'the sickness.' It's not a sport. It's not a hobby.

It's what we do and, in some ways, who we are as women and human beings.

I ride.

I hook up my trailer and load my gelding. I haul to some trailhead somewhere, unload, saddle, whistle up my dog, and I ride. I breathe in the air, watch the sunlight filter through the trees and savor the movement of my horse. My shoulders relax. A smile rides my sunscreen smeared face. I pull my ball cap down and let the real world fade into the tracks my horse leaves in the dust. Time slows. Flying insects buzz loudly, looking like fairies. My gelding flicks his ears and moves

down the trail. I can smell his sweat and it is perfume to my senses. Time slows. The rhythm of the walk and the movement of the leaves become my focus. My saddle creaks and the leather rein in my hand softens with the warmth. I consider the simple statement;

I ride.

I think of all I do because I ride. Climb granite slabs, wade into a freezing lake, race a friend through the Manzanita all the while laughing and feeling my heart in my chest. Other days just the act of mounting and dismounting can be a real accomplishment. Still I ride. No matter how tired or how much my seat bones or any of the numerous horse related injuries hurt.

I ride.

And I feel better for doing so. The beauty I've seen because I ride amazes me. I've ridden out to find lakes that remain for the most part, unseen. Caves, dark and cold beside rivers full and rolling are the scenes I see in my dreams. The Granite Stairway at Echo Summit, bald eagles on the wing and bobcats on the prowl add to the empowerment and joy in my heart. I think of the people, mostly women, I've met. I consider how competent they all are. Not a weenie amongst the bunch. We haul 40ft rigs. We back into tight spaces without clipping a tree. We set up camp. Tend the horses. We cook and keep safe. We understand and love our companions, the horse. We respect each other and those we encounter on the trail. We know that if you are out there riding, you also shovel, fill, wait, and doctor. Your hands are a little rough and you travel without makeup or hair gel. You do without to afford the 'sickness' and probably, when you were a small girl; you bounced a model horse while you dreamed of riding a real one. Now you are there.

I ride.

--Author Unknown--(although, many of us feel she is our sister)

## CONTRIBUTED BY JOAN C

### Your Horse is Your Gift

To have a horse in your life is a gift. In the matter of a few short years, a horse can teach a young girl courage, if she chooses to grab mane and hang on for dear life. Even the smallest of ponies is mightier than the tallest of girls. To conquer the fear of falling off, having one's toes crushed, or being publicly humiliated at a horse show is an admirable feat for any child. For that, we can be grateful.

Horses teach us responsibility. Unlike a bicycle or a computer, a horse needs regular care and most of it requires that you get dirty and smelly and up off the couch. Choosing to leave your cozy kitchen to break the crust of ice off the water buckets is to choose responsibility. When our horses dip their noses and drink heartily; we know we've made the right choice. Learning to care for a horse is both an art and a science. Some are easy keepers, requiring little more than regular turnout, a flake of hay, and a trough of clean water. Others will test you - you'll struggle to keep them from being too fat or too thin. You'll have their feet shod regularly only to find shoes gone missing. Some are so accident-prone you'll swear they're intentionally finding new ways to injure themselves.

If you weren't raised with horses, you can't know that they have unique personalities. You'd expect this from dogs, but horses? Indeed, there are clever horses, grumpy horses, and even horses with a sense of humor. Those prone to humor will test you by finding new ways to escape from the barn when you least expect it.

Horses can be timid or brave, lazy or athletic, obstinate or willing. You will hit it off with some horses and others will elude you altogether. There are as many "types" of horses as there are people - which make the whole partnership thing all the more interesting. If you've never ridden a horse, you probably assume it's a simple thing you can learn in a weekend.

You can, in fact, learn the basics on a Sunday, but to truly ride well takes a lifetime. Working with a living being is far more complex than turning a key in the ignition and putting the car or tractor in "drive." In addition to listening to your instructor, your horse will have a few things to say to you as well. On a good day, he'll be happy to go along with the program and tolerate your mistakes; on a bad day, you'll swear he's trying to kill you. Perhaps he's naughty or perhaps he's fed up with how slowly you're learning his language. Regardless, the horse will have an opinion. He may choose to challenge you (which can ultimately make you a better rider) or he may carefully carry you over fences - if it suits him. It all depends on the partnership - and partnership is what it's all about.

If you face your fears, swallow your pride, and are willing to work at it, you'll learn lessons in courage, commitment, and compassion in addition to basic survival skills. You'll discover just how hard you're willing to work toward a goal, how little you know, and how much you have to learn. And, while some people think the horse "does all the work"; you'll be challenged physically as well as mentally. Your

horse may humble you completely. Or, you may find that sitting on his back is the closest you'll get to heaven. You can choose to intimidate your horse, but do you really want to? The results may come more quickly, but will your work ever be as graceful as that gained through trust? The best partners choose to listen, as well as to tell. When it works, we experience a sweet sense of accomplishment brought about by smarts, hard work, and mutual understanding between horse and rider. These are the days when you know with absolute certainty that your horse is enjoying his work.

If we make it to adulthood with horses still in our lives, most of us have to squeeze riding into our over saturated schedules; balancing our need for things equine with those of our households and employers. There is never enough time to ride, or to ride as well as we'd like. Hours in the barn are stolen pleasures.

If it is in your blood to love horses, you share your life with them. Our horses know our secrets; we braid our tears into their manes and whisper our hopes into their ears. A barn is a sanctuary in an unsettled world, a sheltered place where life's true priorities are clear: a warm place to sleep, someone who loves us, and the luxury of regular meals. Some of us need these reminders.

When you step back, it's not just about horses - it's about love, life, and learning. On any given day, a friend is celebrating the birth of a foal, a blue ribbon, or recovery from an illness. That same day, there is also loss: a broken limb, a case of colic, a decision

to sustain a life or end it gently. As horse people, we share the accelerated life cycle of horses: the hurried rush of life, love, loss, and death that caring for these animals brings us. When our partners pass, it is more than a moment of sorrow.

We mark our loss with words of gratitude for the ways our lives have been blessed. Our memories are of joy, awe, and wonder. Absolute union. We honor our horses for their brave hearts, courage, and willingness to give.

To those outside our circle, it must seem strange. To see us in our muddy boots, who would guess such poetry lives in our hearts? We celebrate our companions with praise worthy of heroes. Indeed, horses have the hearts of warriors and often carry us into and out of fields of battle. Listen to stories of that once-in-a-lifetime horse; of journeys made and challenges met. The best of horses rise to the challenges we set before them, asking little in return.

Those who know them understand how fully a horse can hold a human heart. Together, we share the pain of sudden loss and the lingering taste of long-term illness. We shoulder the burden of deciding when or whether to end the life of a true companion.

In the end, we're not certain if God entrusts us to our horses--or our horses to us. Does it matter? We're grateful God loaned us the horse in the first place. Author Unknown

**MANY THANKS FOR THE  
CONTRIBUTIONS . KEEP EM COMING!**

FROM KATHLEEN DILL

## MONOPONY ARTICLE

### 8: Determination

You can run, but you can't hide.

It took me a long time to realize that if my horse was being real sweet to me and doing sort of what I wanted, that I was not "training." I was interacting, I was sharing, I was experiencing, I was enjoying--and I was, because it was so easy--but I was not training. Training is when the horse's behavior changes because you directed it to, not because he wants it to or because he doesn't much care. Sweet doesn't count (although it is nice) and "sort of" equates to "not." This is an important distinction to horses, and one that is pretty hard for humans to accept, since we all want to be loved and respected simply because we want it, and especially so by the animals we love so and admire.

Whoa has no intention of respecting you because you want it. He will only respect you if you earn it, and you have to earn it by meeting those basic needs Mama informed us of: clarity, leadership, consistency and direction. Most attempts to change horse behavior fail for one of two reasons: either you didn't communicate clearly about what you desired or you didn't respond consistently in a way that both makes sense to the horse and guides him, while supporting his psychological and biological well-being.

Horses were born to play Monopony. (Cookie knew this; that's why she started teaching Little Bit manners right away.) Every horse as he grows and matures will check the edges of someone's expectations to see how firm they are. This someone *might* be one of the other horses in his life, but it will *certainly* be his human. This assessment is very important for defining the power structure around him, and for ensuring that those who make the rules are well qualified to do so, by virtue of their consistency, clarity and good judgment, and their willingness to follow through and make the rules stick.

We had a large herd of horses, some of them breeding stock, some boarders, some in training and some in re-training. One of the horses that came to us was an older Saddlebred by the name of Gus. Gus was the ultimate gentleman, mannerly and obviously well educated. Though he was way past his prime, and probably had been a success in the show ring as well as a breeding stallion for a number of years, he was now a gelding, but he had a stallion's sense of responsibility and order. Chief and he got along famously, since they had similar mindsets about respect and behavior. Chief of course was number one in the herd, and Gus was usually number two, though it was a number he had to defend constantly against my horse, Blue, who coveted that job, but didn't want the work that went with leadership. Blue created many petty arguments with Gus, and finally they worked it out that Blue could be the water police and the line leader at dinner, and Gus could be the young horse mentor. Blue seemed content with this; it gave him some power but not much work, and that suited him fine. Gus was such a model of gentility that we all knew we could count on him to unrowdy some of the younger rowdies with grace and determination.

Gus fell head over heels for Cookie, and with adoring focus, he became her protector and pal. She was a handsome mare, but not really feminine in appearance or behavior until Gus came around. Then she turned into a total foo-foo. She would bat those big blue eyes at him, arch that neck, wuffle softly, and make it clear that he, and only he, was her man. No way to doubt they were in love.

Gus put up with a lot of things, being older, slower and more gentlemanly than most of the younger roughnecks in the herd, but one thing he did not tolerate was trash talking. And trash talking about Cookie was more than he could stand. He was quick to throw a glance, an ear, a tail swish or even a step or two with bared teeth in the direction of the trash talker, and though we could never hear what had been said, we could watch as he clearly drew a line between good and not-so-good choices. Most of the younger horses came to accept that Gus would leave them alone if they took their trash talking elsewhere, and they were rewarded for making this choice

by being allowed to hang out with the old guy. But not all of them. Some were harder learners. Mack was one. He had both a strong sense of order and a strong desire to acquire a higher number. He was willing to enforce the rules with those below him in the herd order, and was not at all unreasonable in his interactions with them, but he was also willing to play Monopony with those above him. Since he was generally number four in influence, this meant that his immediate superiors were Blue and Gus. He didn't mess much with Blue; he didn't care much about who ate or drank when, and really, I think that they were more likely partners in crime than adversaries, with Blue, being older and much more sophisticated, sharing some ideas with Mack about how to rile things up. Mack, in his juvenile wisdom, came to the opinion that Gus was pretty much an old guy and that he, Mack, could do the mentoring job a whole lot better than his superior, so he often looked for ways to grab some of Gus' hotels and remove from him the ownership of Boardwalk and Park Place.

We were visiting with some friends one afternoon down at the barn, watching the horses hang out and swat flies in the corral. Nothing much that we could see was going on; the rowdies were snoozing and the old guard was nose-to-tail with their sweethearts, tails swishing peacefully. Mack was over near where Gus and Cookie stood, and neither human ears nor human eyes had an inkling of what was going to happen next.

Suddenly, Gus whirled and sent his teeth flying toward Mack's shoulder. Mack jumped, hooked up and took off at a full gallop up the hill into the pasture. Gus followed him; teeth bared, ears back, digging for all he was worth. Mack was much younger, but truth be known, Gus managed to stay right on his tail. They went round and round that field, up and down the hill, turning left and turning right, nose to rump in a desperate race. Gus would about get Mack cornered, and then Mack would break free and just miss those shining teeth, and off they would go again.

All of us, horses and friends included, stood speechless, watching this race to battle. Truthfully, we had no idea that Gus could move

that fast, and truthfully, I think Mack didn't either. After a few minutes, which seemed like an eternity to us, the pace slowed, and eventually, Mack turned left and went up the hill one more time, and Gus turned right, and came on back to the corral. He was totally lathered, breathing like a freight train, and knowing that he was not a youngster anymore, we were a bit afraid he would keel over. He stood quietly next to Cookie, panting and steaming with ribs heaving with every breath, but his eyes were shining and his head was held high. Everyone gave him a large berth, and except for the sound of his breathing, all was quiet in the corral.

Mack stayed up on the hill for a long time, and then after awhile he walked back down to the corral, and stood a respectful distance from the other horses. Gus looked at him and invited him back in, Mack walked closer, stopped and stood quietly, and that was that. To us, it appeared that neither had won, but to them, it was clear: Mack had underestimated Gus both in the determination and the speed department, and they both knew it.

Gus was stiff as a board for a few days, hobbling with every step, but he never gave in that it had near done him in to do his job. Mack clearly had had an attitude adjustment; he and Gus never had another disagreement that we were aware of, and from that day forward, Mack treated the old guy with a lot more respect.

**The moral:** training only occurs when behavior changes because the leader requires it. You don't win at Monopony when Whoa lets you; you only win when your determination to succeed and your effort to make it happen surpass his desire to resist. How much that is depends on the circumstances, to be sure, but if you are to succeed in building a respectful partnership with Whoa, you must be willing to make whatever effort is required for however long it takes to obtain the change.

To be victorious at Monopony, we need to remember Gus' lesson: you can run, but you can't hide. The rules are still the rules, and we either enforce them or we don't. No change ever occurs without as much effort as it takes to require it happen.