



## Mechanicsville Riding Club

### The Hitching Post

Issue 72

MAY 2009

#### 2009 Officers

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

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Club Editor- Bunny H  
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

#### Notes from the President

We hope the rainy season has passed for a while and everyone can get some riding time. I for one just got back from our famous Mothers Day Graves Weekend. My new horse did great. Back in the saddle again!

We are going to have a fun club meeting in May. This will be a hands on learning experience for everyone. Bring your lawn chairs and cowboy hats.

Directions will be posted in the newsletter.

**Debbie Middleton**

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Next Club Meeting will be May 27th at the farm of Steve Caldwell. It will be a Roping Demo. Pizza will be available for \$5.00 per

person. Social will begin at 7:00 and our meeting will start at 7:30. Hope to see everyone there. Directions on last page of the newsletter.

#### CHUCK WAGON:

Determined by membership roster order

May: Joan C & Carolyn D

June: Leslie D & Deb D

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

May Birthdays: Bev C, Donna J, Christy H, Patsy M, Patti N, Hannah N, Ginger R, James R, Christine 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.

#### FOR MRC PLANNED EVENTS

AND PICTURES FROM OUR PAST EVENTS

PLEASE CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:

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



## MRC MONTHLY PLANNED RIDES

Contact Maria S 307-6228 with any questions or details needed.

**May 17 (Sun)** York River State Park, ride time TBA

**June 4-7** MRC campout at James River State Park Campout - This trip will be at the usual Group Horse site. Contact Maria S. about stall rentals (limited availability).

**June 20** Club ride at Fulfillment Farms.

**June 21** Clinic with Kathleen Dill at Dorey Park

### Roundup News

**Welcome to new member: Lorrie Barnette**

**Message from Diane:** Members should add suggested charities they would like the MRC to consider making a donation to for 2009 on the Saddle Bag Blog on the MRC website. Deadline for doing so is the October Board meeting (10/14). If you do not remember how to log on to the Saddle Bag Blog (Member Only page), please contact Diane Trittipoe between 6 - 8 pm. (328-1472, cell 804-439-0880)

**FROM OUR FRIEND KATHLEEN:**

## **Keep the Faith, Baby**

Kathleen Dill, Copyright 2009

*If you expect the horse to believe in you,  
you must first believe in yourself.*

### **PART 1**

I learned over time that what I really wanted from the horse I was working with was good communication. Everybody wants this, right? Nope. Everybody does not want this. Most of

everybody wants the horse to listen to what they think they are saying (whether they are actually saying it or not) whenever they feel like saying it and to just figure everything out the way they want it to be or imagine it the rest of the time. My many, many students and the broken horses I have worked with taught me this, and in fact, I was pretty much in the same groove when I started. It seems to be a human condition.

This is not communication. Communication is when I say something exactly as I mean it in words you can understand, and you listen and say something back, which I listen to and respond to. We take turns talking and listening, and trying to be clear and honest with one another. It is never one-way, and never in a language only one of the communicators can understand.

In a sense, when we "train" successfully, we are not actually teaching the horse anything he doesn't already know. We are trying to show him that we want him to do something that he already knows how to do, but in a particular way, at a particular time, with a particular focus and energy level. We are trying to show him that we are committed not only to learning to say what we want to say in a way that makes sense to him and expecting him to listen and work to meet our request, but also to expressing our faith in his willingness to become ethical and obedient, because of his education by Mama.

In order to do this, we must learn to speak Horse. Horses do not by nature speak Human. The only language they bring to us is Horse. We either learn to speak it, or we never achieve true communication with them. If we are very astute, very determined, very observant and very respectful, in our interactions with **W** we will be able to pick up some of this language and to begin to understand some of the rules he lives by, which become the tools we have to establish a leadership relationship with him. Only after we make that initial connection, becoming predictable and clear and understandable and useful to the horse through our maintenance of good order and safety, will he trust us enough to try to understand our human peculiarities. Not before. So the onus is upon us in the beginning of this relationship to think our goals through clearly and make them meaningful to the horse in ways he can understand and which respect his basic way of thinking as a Horse.

How do we let the horse know that he has understood what we have said and responded correctly? The best way to answer that question is with another one: what is it that **W** really wants? The answer is simple, if you think like a horse does. He wants a release from pressure when he gets it right, and he wants you to have enough faith in the accuracy of your own communication to allow him to figure out how to do that.

Chief came to us a very hungry, nervous stallion. He was a four year old when we got him, a breeding stallion big in stature and thought, and very big in principles. His first owner had been woefully unable to deal with the high emotions of a young stallion, had offered him no outlet for his passion or intellect except for an occasional ride or trip to the breeding pen, and found himself completely overwhelmed by the resulting explosiveness of his young horse. To deal with this, he decided to starve Chief, a stupid and cruel attempt to lower his intellect and passions through hunger and debilitation. It did not work. Chief became weaker in body and desperate in mind, and gradually, as he suffered, he lost the will to be obedient and became dangerously unpredictable. His owner found that although he had made Chief skinny and weak, he had not made him compliant; instead, he was less and less able ride or handle him safely. So he sold Chief to a horse trader, who hoped to keep him as a breeding stallion. This man tried to force him into submission through the use of the stud chain and the whip, but Chief, having finally had enough, unloaded on him, bucking him off and stomping up and down on his leg. Once he could walk again, the trader decided to sell him, and he called us. The horse, while big and beautiful, was headed for a bad end, he said; were we possibly interested in looking at him? We had to go see.

When we got there, Chief had a wild look and a desperateness about him. His nose was scarred from misuse of the stud chains that had tried, and failed, to hold him. His ribs were sticking out and his hips were not much better. Despite his weakness, he was a volcano waiting to explode. JC looked in his eye, took his face gently in his hands, and opened his wallet. We loaded him up and brought him home.

For about a month, we fed him three squares a day, turned him out in between and let him

recover. It was clear that he was on the ragged edge of breakdown. To say he had a strong fear of human contact was an understatement; he had nearly lost his faith in human kindness or predictability. He didn't want to hurt people, that was clear, but he didn't want to be hurt again either. What he desperately wanted was just to be left alone. He was very hard to be with, dangerous, even, in his desire to remain safe; he had a great fear of confinement and human interaction, and a total terror of swinging arms, touching ears and being touched on the face. He would freak out at the sight of a whip. He was difficult to halter and unpredictable to lead. It required great care and tact to accomplish even the simple tasks of feeding and grooming.

After he gained some weight and his energy started to return, JC took him to the round pen to begin the process of rebuilding his mind and body. He removed the halter and the lead and chucked them out of the round pen, along with the lunge whip. He explained to him that from that time forward, he would do only his own job—to let Chief know what was expected of him—and that he would expect Chief to only do his own—to hold himself in obedient and respectful focus as he made an effort to perform whatever task was expected of him. Chief would be listened to, and JC would expect him to listen in return. In acknowledgment of this effort, JC promised to release him from all pressure and just leave him alone. The only thing that would bind them was communication, and nothing less than total respect would be offered or accepted.

There would be no ropes, no chains, no ear twitches and no whips, nothing to force him to excel except the inherent ethics Chief carried within himself from the lessons Mama had taught him as a baby. JC explained to Chief that he knew how strong he was, and that, since he could never hold such a strong horse, he would never try. He simply told him that he expected him to hold himself, and with faith in Chief's ability to discover how to do that, JC removed from him all physical restraint. He promised him as much time as he needed to rebuild his mind, but told him that he expected him to use that time to try. And so, in freedom from the fear of human touch, he released Chief to begin his new life. **(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT TIME)**

**KATHLEEN IS INSTRUCTING A CLINIC FOR US JUNE 21<sup>ST</sup> AT DOREY PARK. SHE'LL BE COMING FROM OUT -OF-STATE SO WE NEED A DEFINITE COMMITMENT FROM MEMBERS WHO WANT TO PARTICIPATE BY JUNE 1<sup>ST</sup>. THE COST IS \$100.00 FOR THE WHOLE DAY WITH THE CLUB PAYING HALF. HALF DAY SESSIONS MIGHT BE AN OPTION BUT SHE IS WORTH THE ALL DAY EXPERIENCE. PLEASE LET DEB W OR ME (BUNNY H) KNOW IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND.**

### **KATHLEEN'S BIO:**

#### **The Trainer's Journey: A Path to Willing Partnership**

Hi to everyone, old friends and news friends-to-be. My name is Kathy Dill, and I am a traveler on the path of horsemanship. I have been in love with horses since I was a child, and while I never had the pleasure of owning my own horse while living in my family home, I spent every waking moment not required by something else thinking about them, studying, pretending and dreaming of the day when I would be able to have my own. I was the true horse-crazy kid.

I learned to ride as a young girl by slipping under the fence of the old Dutch farmer's field across the street, rope in hand, climbing up on Old Lightning or Whiskey or Brandy, whoever would hold still, and taking off. I grew up thinking that all horses walked on two legs normally (perhaps the source of my fascination with the Airs Above Ground!) No bridle, no saddle, and no safety net. I learned by the school of hard knocks, but while I took a tumble or two, my lack of equipment made me realize very early on that I could not compel these creatures I loved to do something they did not wish to do, and I was challenged even then to figure out how to communicate what I wanted or needed in a way that made my pals want to comply.

I rode whenever I could get away with it. I am sure I gave my mother fits as I disappeared on the back of a horse over the hill toward the rocks and briars and asphalt road at the bottom of the field. I remember a time when the horse I was riding took off with me after hearing a hunter shoot nearby, galloping for the end of the field. I knew when I lost the rope tied over his nose that

I wouldn't be able to stop him before I was pitched head first onto the road when the field ran out, probably breaking at least my neck in the landing, so instead of waiting for certain injury and the fury of my mother's wrath, I rolled off over the horse's neck and woke up in an enormous patch of raspberries. My sister fished me out and my brother to this day will tell you that he has never seen so many little holes in one person, ever. I got back on as soon as the holes disappeared, totally undeterred by my adventure.

I got my first horse when I was 21, after graduating from school with a degree in Education and beginning my career as a teacher, and, very quickly, my second and third as well. It was then that I started studying horses for real. I married a farrier, so we had lots of access to cast-off horses, which, of course, I was loathe to turn down, regardless of their habits. I finally was able to practice all of those horse keeping tasks I had read about for years, and I loved every moment of the adventure. I learned to ride both English and Western, using local instructors to get me started, and spent 10 years riding and training the horses young and old who came our way. I made all the mistakes every new horseman makes, but I learned as well, and rather than my interest being sated, I became more and more convinced that if one could only figure out how to tell the horse clearly what was wanted, life as a horseman would be much easier. So I studied them all, trying to figure this out, and in the process, I learned to study myself, to see how I was influencing the things my horses were doing.

I dropped out of horses for fifteen years to raise my children. When I got back in, it was as part of my personal business Interpet Enterprises, a composite of endeavors ranging from raising hedgehogs for the exotics market, to presenting animal programs to school children in a series called "Spines, Scales, and Stickytoes," to doing pony parties and learning adventures, to developing a dog obedience training program called PuppyLove and eventually, to riding instruction for beginners. As I worked, the riding became most important to me, and my clientele grew, so I focused on that and eventually ran a private instruction program for 45 riders and 400 summer camp children. I taught children and adults of all ages, interests,

abilities and needs, and developed horses and programs specifically for use with my special needs riders. I met my present husband there, a Texan who had worked with and studied horses since he was a child, and my interest became focused even more. It was then that I truly began to seriously consider the art of communication between horse and human, and to apply the goals of willing partnership based on knowledge, understanding, consideration and respect to every teaching endeavor and every horse I was privileged to encounter on my journey.

When I moved to the foothills of NC five years later, my husband and I started a breeding program for spotted Walking Horses, and continued the work we had started earlier. We kept a breeding stallion and a small band of bred mares on our farm, brought up babies and trained young horses, fixed broken horses, and helped people learn the horsemanship and communication skills they sought in order to develop positive, productive and safe relationships with their own horses. At one point we had 29 horses on our farm, in all stages of growth and training.

Now, however, we have relocated to a smaller farm in central NC, where I keep only two horses, both Tennessee Walkers engaged with me in the pursuit of classical riding. I am privileged now to study the art of willing partnership for myself, with my horses as my teachers and my husband as their interpreter. My personal interest is in the discipline of classical dressage, an approach to training which develops accurate communication and well-balanced athleticism for rider and horse, and which offers skills easily transferred to any job a horse may be asked to perform. Through the acquisition of balance, flexibility, responsiveness and willing effort, the desire of the horse for expression of his physical and mental abilities is satisfied, and the horse and rider become one in purpose and accomplishment.

Safe, effective horsemanship is best advanced by developing skills which build relationship and mutual respect. This is most easily achieved through appropriate communication based on the way horses interact with one another. Horses, I believe, prefer a relationship with people which makes them *feel* safe, and they don't mind letting

us know that. To obtain their best effort, they require us to interact with them according to Horse rules. So, to do that well, we must understand their perspective and how they tell us what they need. If we can learn to see things through Horse eyes, to hear communications through Horse ears, and to impose order and purpose the Horse way, it is much easier to achieve our horsemanship goals, and our horses become willing partners in our activities.

Horses are generous creatures. I believe that any person who seeks knowledge of the horse with an open mind and willing heart will be able to learn to hear clearly what the horse has to say to us about his needs, his aspirations and his generosity. This is the attitude I try to bring to my own horses, and the gift from them that I try to share with others on the trainer's journey to willing partnership. Please join me in the journey; the horses will thank you for it.

Kathy

#### **FLUVANNA RECAP FROM DIANE T**

Members Diane Trittipee, Carolyn Davis, Wanda Hazard, Gordon Martin, Ginger Redmond, Joan Blackmon and former member Cindy Garrison took advantage of the beautiful weather and attended and/or camped at the annual Pleasant Grove Park Trail Ride in Fluvanna County recently. Diane reports that attendance appeared to be somewhat lower than in years past but the ride, food and Flash McCullin's hospitality were wonderful. Many of the trails on the East side of the park have been extensively re-routed. The stars at night were amazing and the horses thoroughly enjoyed the lush grass available to them after the ride!



### **Diane T News Scoop:**

Look out! No more Motel 6 or tent camping for the Hasbroucks. They are the proud owners of a 3 Horse Slant Dream Coach GN! Clyde and Annie will ride in style now!



### **May Meeting Directions**

The address is

**3146 Longhorn Drive Mechanicsville VA 23111**

360 East to Old Church Road (West Store)

Turn right on Old Church Road go 1.4 miles

Turn right on McClellan Road go 5.6 miles

Turn left on Peace Road go .4 miles

Turn left on Longhorn Gravel Road Go to the end of the road

Arena on left at end of the road