

Top Hat

Building an Equestrian Community
Summer 2010



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Learning from a Master

We're fortunate that there seems to be many excellent clinicians in our area this year. I attended the Dominique Barbier clinic in Canfield last month and thoroughly enjoyed it—enough that, if it were possible, I would like to have him to my farm in the future. I really liked his manner, sense of humor, and kindness towards both the horses AND the participants. He also welcomed auditors' questions. I especially admired his manner—a gentle blend of humor and expertise.

Each horse was worked twice (morning and afternoon) for about 30 minutes. It seemed that in the morning, Mr. Barbier personally worked and rode most of the horses, which is not often seen at clinics in my experience. I believe that this is very valuable both for the auditors and participants in order to gain a clear mental picture of his teaching. The routine for every horse, with slight variation, was to begin with work in hand, proceed to a little lunging, and to finish with riding. The main focus was on producing a shoulder-in in hand with crossing of both the front and hind legs. The improvement in every horse's carriage was obvious, especially while Mr. Barbier was working them. He strongly emphasized lightness on the reins and with the rider's legs. The horse must be expected—and permitted—to carry himself. The exercises were simple and "nothing new" (at least not to those familiar with Classical Dressage) but the manner in which they were carried out left no doubt that within these simple exercises is the key to producing truly artful and pleasurable riding.

I thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Barbier's sense of humor, clear humility as a trainer, and the light and easy working environment that he created for horse and rider without compromising his message and teaching principles. I hope to have the chance to ride with him myself in the future.

- Shannon

An Evening With Charles deKunffy

Contributed by Beth Sidell

When I first saw Charles deKunffy step to the microphone to begin his clinic in Aurora, I leaned over to Marie and commented, "It's not fair! I can't do half the things that little old man can do in the saddle."

By the time the seminar was over, though, I came to appreciate just how much of an athlete Charles deKunffy really is. He is an athlete in the true sense of the word – as are the horses he trains.

One very distinct point that he emphasized was that as riders we must work with purpose - you do it right or you "kill the horse." This struck a chord with me in that I interpret it to mean that we must consciously decide how to work, ride, and train. When I first came to Shannon, I remember thinking, "How am I gonna get anywhere with this? Every few steps she stops me and repositions my leg." That's just what Mr. deKunffy meant though. It's not how long you ride, but the WAY you ride. It's not how much you train your horse, but the WAY you train your horse.

Quality not quantity—that's one of the things I took away from this clinic. If we make our horses run around in a hollow frame with their nose to their chest, we are setting them up for long-term injuries that cannot be fixed. When I first started taking lessons with Shannon, she told me to put my chin to my chest, hollow out my back and run as fast as I could without stopping. I never thought of it that way, but this is certainly NOT what I want to ask my horse, Kwintus, to do. De Kunffy is very well-educated when it comes to knowing how horses' bodies are affected by the way they

move. His strategies and exercises seem very simple, but are downright effective. He put into a completely new light the techniques that Shannon has shared with me.



Lynette Clodwick, Marie Shamberger, Charles deKunffy, and Beth Sidell at an April clinic.

He demonstrated many seemingly simple exercises on the lunge line that encourage riders to feel our horse's movement. He says, "You are not an object sitting on a horse. You must move with your horse all the time." He teaches that the ultimate goal is to be able to get on your horse and move so fluidly with him that he

is no more hindered by you than by his own skin. That also made me realize how lucky I am to ride with Shannon. Her commitment to excellence mirrors that of renowned dressage riders like Charles deKunffy. Instructors working within the tenets of Classical Dressage make us reevaluate our position and the way we ride in



the saddle. I am inspired to learn how to better my seat. I realized that it's a complete illusion when I see a rider who seems as though she is effortlessly sitting completely still on

her horse when in truth, she is balancing and adjusting every part of herself in symphony with her horse's movements. For me, this seminar was like another curtain being lifted and I look forward to working with Shannon and Kwintus to develop my riding in the classical method.



Introducing Cherokee

The horse for you?

Presently Cherokee is in training for resale. Cherokee is a 3/4 Appaloosa, 1/4 Arab gelding. Most of you know him by his unusual coloring. Cherokee is quite a character around the barn! He has the personality of Dennis the Menace for sure! Although Shannon originally purchased him for her boyfriend, they've since decided he's really a little too small and is probably most suited to English riding.

Shannon has been riding him over ground poles and small cross rails and outside. She says that Cherokee would excel with an active youth rider. A 4H or pony club rider would be a great match for him! He would also do well as a lesson horse in a busy program. Cherokee will go and go!

With regular work, he occasionally can manage a western jog but needs to spend more time

going forward than slow. He seems to really enjoy going over small cross rails and is pretty solid on the trail for a rider with some experience.



Looking for just the right horse can be a tricky proposition. Whether you're searching for your first mount, or you're an "old hand" at having equines in your family, you may want to consider an independent third party opinion. Feel free to contact Shannon if you would like assistance searching for or evaluating a perspective purchase or lease.

For information on other TNT horses available for sale or lease, please see Shannon for details.

Andy Update

The new palomino face you've seen in the barn belongs to Andy, a registered six-year-old Haflinger gelding. Shannon had been working with him for resale—and he's already found his new family!



"The more I work with him, the more impressed I am with his character. From day one he accepted pretty much everything in stride with no fuss." He will make an adult amateur or child an awesome trail or pleasure horse, and since he's registered, he can also be shown.

Shannon says it was a pleasure working with Andy since he has incredibly smooth gaits and a wonderful personality. Best wishes and congratulations to Andy's new family!





It's Showtime!

Contributed by Kris Speller

Show season is upon us and training at peak performance is top priority. The last thing we want to think about is the long list of things we need to do and what we need to take for the big day. So have no fear, your show list is here!

Show Preparation:

- Clean tack & polish boots
- Wash horse & braid mane (if necessary)
- Clean saddle pad(s), breeches, gloves
- Study tests & rules
- Check directions for show

Don't forget to bring your:

- Horse! (Just seeing if you're still with the list!)
- Breakaway halter and lead line with spares
- Shipping boots
- Hay nets, hay and feed
- Saddle, girth, bridle and change of bits (if needed)
- Saddle pad(s)
- Bell boots and splint boots (if needed)
- Show coat, blouse, boots and spurs
- Helmet, gloves and whip
- Brushes, hoof pick and fly spray
- Water bucket, wash bucket, sponges & rags
- First Aid kit

Horsemanship

Mondays at 7:00pm
Begins in June, TBD

The warm summer evenings are a perfect time to brush up on horsemanship techniques from simple to advanced. If you're interested in participating in the summer 2010 five-week series focusing on ground training, **please contact Shannon by June 14.** The series will be \$10/session, payable in advance, and all levels are welcome. Please let Shannon know if you will be trailering in.

Horsemanship 2010

Sign me up!

Name _____

Horse _____

Phone: _____

\$50 enclosed

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