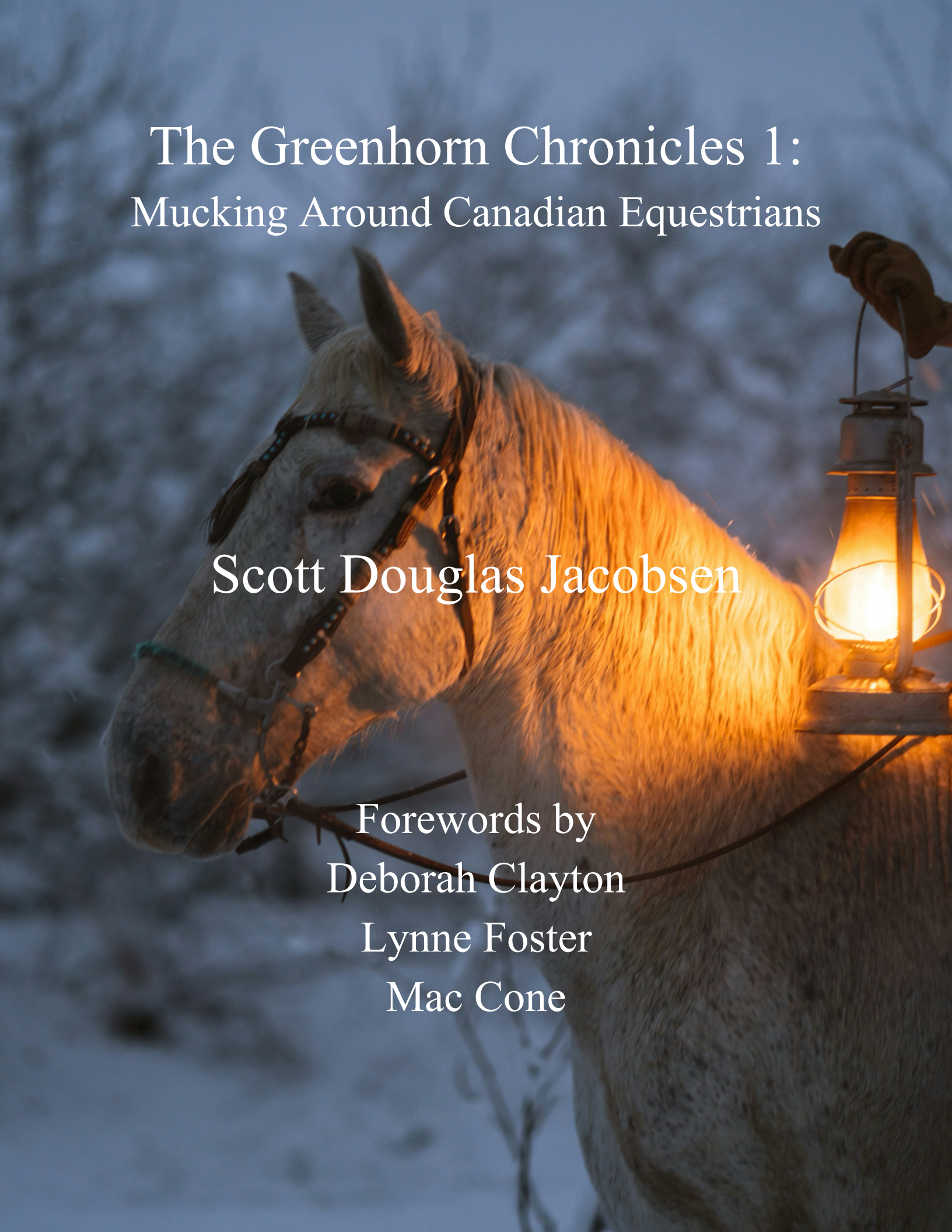


A photograph of a white horse in a snowy field at dusk. The horse is wearing a dark halter with blue and green accents. A hand holds a lit lantern up to the horse's neck, casting a warm glow. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and white.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 1: Mucking Around Canadian Equestrians

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Forewords by
Deborah Clayton
Lynne Foster
Mac Cone

In-Sight Publishing

The Greenhorn Chronicles 1: Mucking Around Canadian Equestrians

IN-SIGHT PUBLISHING
 Publisher since 2014

Published and Distributed by:
 In-Sight Publishing
 Fort Langley, British Columbia, Canada
www.in-sightpublishing.com

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 Cover Image Credit: [Wes Walker](#) (Unsplash)

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This first edition published in 2025.

Independent Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Names: Jacobsen, Scott (author)
 Title: The Greenhorn Chronicles 1: Mucking Around Canadian Equestrians
 Author: Scott Douglas Jacobsen
 Description: Fort Langley, British Columbia: In-Sight Publishing, 2025.

Identifiers:

ISBN (EPUB/Apple Books): 978-1-0692343-2-2

Available at: www.in-sightpublishing.com

Disclaimer:

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Design and Implementation:

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

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Acknowledgements

To the Baliskys and Tidballs for taking in a stray Fort Langleyite, and their employees for training me and being decent varied colleagues over 27 months, and Adelle Stewart, Alicia Gadban-Lewis, Annette Case, Beth Underhill, Betty Asseiro, Bob Marshall, Cindy Waslewsky, Dana Cooke, Deborah Clayton, Deborah Stacey, Dr. Julia Jane Stanley, Erynn Ballard, Gail Greenough, Hayley Mercer, Hyde Moffatt, Joelle Froese, Kailin Howard, Kathy Asseiro, Kimberley Martens, Melanie Rempel, Miriam Alden, Lauren Rempel, Leann (Pitman) Manuel, Lesley Daldry, L.J. Tidball, Lynne Denison Foster, Mac Cone, Moya Byrne Merrin, Nadine Bollig, Quentin Judge, Rachael Dent-Flynn, Sandy Bell, B.Sc., M.A., Sean Jobin, Steve Waslewsky, Wes Schild, and Will Clinging, for the interviews.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Introduction by Scott Douglas Jacobsen

My first experience of a horse was walking with a childhood friend in the outskirts of town—Langley, B.C.—around variegated farms, including Christmas tree farms, up to a fence. A horse came over in a little prance. It peered gently over the fencing, inviting a pet. I brought my right hand forward under its chin and stroked it. Immediately, the horse sneezed in my face as if a booger blaster shotgun—point-blank. Pow! Splat! Ew! Life has much goofiness to it, often at your expense. Years later, I worked in the restaurant industry during the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected the world, including peculiarly Canada. Near the end of that streak, I worked in 4 restaurants and did janitorial work in 2 of them 7 days per week. The money plus tips were good. The work was hard. The hours were long. The work was invigorating, though dynamic, tiring, and stressful. Cleaning up the poop stains of heavy drinkers at a pub is not glamorous, but you learn valuable life lessons from it. The things you find in the bathrooms that *are not* excrement! As John, the owner of the pub at the time—unsure now, when he took me on a drive once said, “Farms are good to grow up. You learn about life and death.” That is true. I took that to heart.

The routine became monotonous. I was not learning anything new in skills. The restaurant-janitorial period seemed to be capping out. So, I decided to look for newer opportunities for something more invigorating. The farm notion came to mind. ‘Langley, the Horse Capital of British Columbia!’ was in the sub-culture of the area too. I would read and hear that, but I only had horse boogers from many years prior attesting to it. As with most of these items, I decided to take another leap of trust into the unknown and applied to many horse facilities and farms to transition—leaving those skills and incomes behind for the uncertainty of an entirely new industry with zero experience. Somewhere else I did not belong. I did one job interview at a horse farm purchased by a wealthy individual who was transitional ownership. It was pretty good. I never met the owner. The barn manager was a nice lady. The horses were interesting. Then I got the number of one woman, Laura Balisky (née Tidball), who responded to a text inquiry about Thunderbird/Tbird—a well-known and respected brand and show grounds in British Columbia, certainly. I did not know this at the time. I knew—literally—nothing. Balisky concluded with something to the effect, ‘Sure, let us give it a shot.’ That is about the correct tone, then *and* now—recalling “often at your expense.” Kindness with a higher-end equestrian facility sensibility, ‘Sure, we’ll put your ass to work.’ And they did, for 27 months. I had no right to be there.

Fast forward to two Workers Compensation Board back injuries later, but learning a lot—thanks to the training generosity—from highly experienced gardeners, landscapers, tractor operators, stall muckers, water bucket cleaners, grain bag organizers, aisle blowers, course setters, and the like. Everyone there, then and now, knew more than me and was a source of data. These seem like basic tasks, but they are not when done correctly. There are *few* right—so more than one correct answer, certainly—and *a lot more* wrong ways to do these things to optimize both quality and time expenditure. Labour is one of many overheads in a financially constrained and pressured industry. I did one horse lesson while working with the Baliskys and Tidballs, but at a different facility—do not tell Laura, Brent, and L.J., please! I did not want to mix work and leisure too much. In hindsight, it probably was a stupid move. Think about how many laughs we all missed on me trying to ride a horse! I lived there, worked there, shared sentiments and struggles with the girls there, made a small family there, learned janitorial cleaning of human waste is not much different from mucking horse shit, and—indeed—learned a little about ‘life and death’ in a way.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Foreword by Deborah Clayton

In a world where stories often go unheard Scott has tasked himself with being a voice for the voiceless. He is a talented journalist and most recently an embedded reporter in the Ukraine. Now in his latest work, *The Greenhorn Chronicles* Scott takes us on a different journey - one that gallops through the captivating and intricate world of equestrianism.

Scott's passion for storytelling and a keen ear allows us insight into the elegance and grace of the equestrian world and its many facets. *The Greenhorn Chronicles* is not just a collection of anecdotes, it is a deep dive into the lives of those who dedicate themselves to the art of riding, training, and showcasing these magnificent horses.

Through his thoughtful questioning and heartfelt narratives, Scott reveals the profound connection between humans and horses and brings a fresh lens to this beloved sport making it accessible and relatable to both seasoned equestrians and newcomers alike.

Join me in celebrating this remarkable journey into the equestrian world as Scott invites us to explore the beauty, challenges and triumphs that lie within. *The Greenhorn Chronicles* are a testament to his talent as a storyteller and his unwavering commitment to shedding light on the passions that define us.

Deborah Clayton

Lead Buyer/Vendor Relations, Thunderbird Show Park

Foreword by Lynne Denison Foster

Greenhorn Chronicles is an insightful and enlightening exploration of the foundational influences within the world of equestrian sport. Through interviews with individuals deeply involved in the infrastructure of this unique sport—where two athletes, a human rider and a horse, must work in perfect harmony—Scott offers readers a perspective that is often overlooked.

As the mother of a Canadian show jumping athlete who has represented her country in three Olympic Games and held the title of leading lady rider in the world rankings on more than one occasion, I've had a front-row seat to the challenges and triumphs of this extraordinary sport. My daughter's journey, from humble beginnings with minimal financial support to reaching the highest levels of competition, has been nothing short of remarkable.

When Scott approached me to share my perspective on the pivotal role parents play in helping their children achieve such lofty dreams, I was intrigued by his curiosity and dedication to uncovering the often unseen aspects of show jumping—especially in Canada, where the sport doesn't always receive the spotlight it deserves. His genuine interest in this world led me to contribute my story to *Greenhorn Chronicles*, and I'm proud to be part of this fascinating project.

I believe that when you read the interviews Scott has conducted with the many dedicated behind-the-scenes people who support this sport—just as much as the riders and horses themselves—you will be both amazed and inspired by the depth of commitment, passion, and hard work that goes into the world of show jumping.

Lynne Denison Foster

Former Aviation Professional & BCIT Instructor

Foreword by Mac Cone

As a child, I learned a Bible verse, 'Only fools despise wisdom and instruction.'

Scott Jacobsen has gathered 62 interviews from various people who are involved with horses in many different capacities. Their different visions into their world of horses give the reader an opportunity to gain Wisdom and instruction from the backgrounds of many people.

Scott's interviews do not attempt to be a manual of horse riding or training, but a more overall view of living a life around horses. Anyone considering becoming involved with horses as a professional will find many little clues from Scott's work that might tell them if horses are where your professional effort should be applied. Whether an amateur or professional horse person, Scott's interviews will provide both knowledge and entertainment. Enjoy the read!

Mac Cone

Former Olympian, Canadian Equestrian Team & United States Equestrian Team

Southern Ways Equestrian Ltd.

In-Sight Publishing

The Greenhorn Chronicles 1: Joelle Froese on Abbotsford, Bradner Hills Farm, and In Stride Equestrian Training

***Joelle Froese** has been riding since 7 years old. In 1999, her family moved to Bradner Hill Farms. She has been riding and caring for horses for a long time. She has competed in show jumping at HITS Desert Classic, Rocky Mountain Show Jumping, Sonoma Show Park, Spruce Meadows, The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, and Thunderbird. She won Bronze at the North American Young Riders (senior division) on Condor, her first grand prix horse. Condor and Froese, in the same year, won, as champions, at amateur jumpers and third in the National Talent Squad Finals at the Royal. In 2013, she founded In Stride Equestrian Training. She won her first grand prix in 2016. It was on her mare, Romeos Child, for the \$15,000 Kubota Grand Prix at Thunderbird. Also, she and Romeos Child won the BCHJA Luigi Grand Prix Horse of the Year award in 2017 & 2018. Froese trained with Olympians Jill Henselwood (Canadian), Buddy Brown (United States), as well as Susie Hutchinson (US Nations Cup rider) and Kate Perrin (British team rider). Froese has competed in Third Level dressage and is an Equine Canada certified Competition Coach Specialist. Froese shares her deep-rooted passion for horses, beginning with childhood toy horses and first riding lessons at seven. Growing up in Abbotsford, BC, near Thunderbird Show Park and Langley, she had ample equestrian opportunities. Her family's move to Bradner Hills Farm supported her training and competitive journey. Joelle highlights the extensive process of training horses for show jumping and values her first Grand Prix win and her partnership with Onyx. She founded In Stride Equestrian Training in 2013 and credits mentors like Jill Henselwood and Buddy Brown. Addressing industry challenges, she emphasizes the importance of good coaching, networking, and balancing toughness with sensitivity in horsemanship.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Naturally, let's begin at the beginning, as I intend this as an educational series beginning with Canada and then moving into the international scene of equestrianism, I figure the narrative entering into the equine will be helpful. What were the first inklings of an interest in horses for you? Most of the equestrians with some facility or competing seem to have begun in the single digit ages. You started riding at 7.

Joelle Froese: Love of animals goes at least as far back as my grandfather. My mother is an animal lover and I have carried on the tradition. You typically think of little girls as playing with dolls. I didn't. I played with stuffed animals. And toy horses. *Lots* of toy horses. I owned one Barbie doll - it was the one that came with a horse, a truck, and trailer. When I was 7 years old, my piano teacher's daughter invited us to see her horses and gave me my first unofficial riding lessons. I was immediately hooked. My parents bought my first pony from her. My sister and I were supposed to share her. That didn't last long. As a kid, I played T-ball, figure skated, took painting and pottery lessons, but there was no comparison. While I liked skating, I hated waking up at 5am for Saturday morning sessions. But I never begrudged early mornings for horse shows. Spending time with horses was the most natural thing in the world for me.

Jacobsen: The Lower Mainland of British Columbia, Canada is an immense opportunity for any young, aspiring equestrian. How did Abbotsford provide the training grounds or the opportunities for growth as an equestrian for you?

Froese: I think I had two huge advantages living where I do. First is that I live half an hour from Thunderbird Show Park. T-bird is beautiful and has been moving steadily onto the international

scene. It gives local riders something to aspire to. It allows you to watch international and Olympic riders and competition up close. I live a stone's throw from Langley - horse country of BC. It offers access to horses, horse trails, show barns, trainers, and shows of various levels and disciplines, so there is something for every equestrian.

Jacobsen: Why did the family move to Bradner Hills Farm?

Froese: My parents came from the prairies. My mother grew up on a farm, where they raised nearly everything they ate. My father is a visionary. Neither of them is afraid of hard work. Their support is why I got to ride, train, travel, compete, and live on a farm. They are the backbone of everything I have done with horses.

Jacobsen: What is the process of working and training with - and loving - a horse from birth to full maturity for show jumping competitions?

Froese: Well, first of all, it is a long one. Horses don't reach their prime until around 10 years old. A decade of going to the barn every day in hopes of fulfilling a dream. Horses have to be taught everything: to halter, to lead, let them groom you, let you put on a saddle, bear weight, understand a rider's aids (cues). Some are spooky and have to learn to be brave. Some are hot (high energy) and have to learn to be calm. They need years of conditioning and strength training to be fit enough to compete in upper level jumpers. They are prey animals that have to focus on its rider and its job at a busy horse show. To gallop, not knowing where they are going on course and in a moment, without hesitation, to sight in on a jump, judge it and make the effort for you. It's amazing what they can learn to do. And, of course, part of that process is making mistakes. Training a young horse requires patience, knowledge, co-ordination, and a good attitude. I think you appreciate them so much more for the process, for realizing everything they do for us. It can be tough; a thousand pound animal is incredibly powerful. Yet sensitive. They are masters of body language and we have to be too. We have to learn to communicate in ways they understand. Each horse has its own personality. This makes each horse a unique challenge and opportunity to build a unique partnership.

Jacobsen: What facilities tend to garner the most positive reputation for competitive show jumping?

Froese: What I like about show jumping is that it is an objective sport. It is about time and not knocking down rails. People will always remember barns that consistently produce winners. But there is more. People also notice progress. Everyone has bad rounds. But you see the same people year after year, show after show, and you can see who can train. You spend a lot of time with the same people at horse shows. You are stabled beside them. You set jumps side by side in the warmup ring. You try their horses for sale. You see how people treat people and how they treat horses. People remember who was a good teacher, a good person, and a good horseman.

Jacobsen: Of the medals, ribbons, and positions earned at show jumping competitions, what ones make you feel most proud, as they were earned?

Froese: I will always remember my first Grand Prix win - the Kubota Cup at Tbird. There were good riders in that class. It felt fabulous to be among them. But I may be even more proud of what I accomplished with Onyx. He had incredible scope (ability to jump high and wide), but he was high strung and needed someone really good to train him. I had to become that person. It wasn't enough to be a good rider (get on a well schooled horse and pilot well); I had to become a trainer. I had to learn how to reach him, to communicate with him; something I discovered no

manual can teach you. He required feel: the ability to read and react with just the right pressure and right timing and right exercise to help him learn. He required me to find incredible horsemen and women who had feel and could teach it. I call him my best teacher. It took years of work, but he turned into a fantastic horse. I won classes, championships, a saddle with him. Not everyone believed in him when I first got him. But he had heart; he was always willing to try. And he always made me try hard. That partnership will always be special.

Jacobsen: What motivated opening In Stride Equestrian in 2013?

Froese: By the time I was 13, I knew I wanted to be a trainer. I don't know when I decided; it just seemed automatic to me. In 2009, I went to Young Riders of North America with Condor. He was my once-in-a-lifetime horse. The magic unicorn that makes the impossible happen. Horses with that ability are expensive and hard to find. I was thrilled to just be there. Winning bronze was more than I could have dreamed of. In 2012 Condor died. He was only 12 years old. He had sudden neurological symptoms that caused him to fall and break his neck. No one ever figured out why it happened. I was devastated. I knew I couldn't replace him; couldn't compete at that level any time soon. Maybe never. My options were give up or move on. I had spent the previous winter as Jill's barn manager and done a little bit of teaching under Jill's mentorship. I got certified in 2013. Opening a business seemed like the next logical step.

Jacobsen: What are the different types of competitions or show types for show jumping?

Froese: First of all, you can divide jumping into hunters, jumpers, and equitation. Hunters is subjectively judged on the horse, its way of going, the quality of its jump. It derives from fox hunting and uses naturally colored obstacles or mimics logs and brush you might jump on a fox hunt. Equitation is subjectively judged on the rider and how well they pilot the horse around the hunter or jumper ring. Jumpers, or show jumping is judged on time and faults, which you get for knocking down rails, going too slow, or refusing to jump a fence. Jumps are colorful and built very light, so they can be knocked down easily. The most common type of jumper class is a jump off. It has a first round, typically of 10-12 jumps, where the goal is to jump clean (occur no faults). There is a time allowed. If you go slower than time allowed, you incur time faults. If you knock down a rail or stop at a jump, you incur jumping faults. If multiple riders finish with the same number of faults, they jump off. In this case, you jump a shorter course judged on faults and time, so fastest round with fewest faults wins. Speed classes are also common, which is one round based on fastest time with fewest faults.

Jacobsen: Which show jumpers or hunters have made the most positive impact on the career in equestrianism for you - either as signifiers of the virtues to aim for or as individuals who have, simply put, impressive professional resumes?

Froese: The people who have had the biggest impact on me have been my family and my coaches. Those are discussed more in other questions. One rider that gave me something to aspire to was Kyle King. He rode Onyx for me for 2 years early on. To this day, I love watching him because of his brilliant use of track. He makes it easy for horses to jump clean. I wanted to ride Onyx as well as he did. Years later, when I felt like my progress with Onyx was stalled, I happened to be at the ring and watch Patrick Snijders on this one horse. I knew that horse wasn't easy. I was amazed how different that horse looked by the end of the week. Patrick turned out to be the person who could explain to me what Kyle did on Onyx that made him so successful. He put the final pieces into our partnership that enabled me to finally turn Onyx into a success. Patrick is an upbeat guy with a great sense of humor. He proves better than anyone that you can be

winner and have a lot of fun at the same time. Lastly is Sandra Verde Zanatta, she is my dressage coach. I dropped in for occasional lessons for years and she was extremely patient and adaptable with whatever horse, whether it was for competitive dressage or just making a jumper a little more rideable. She is like a walking textbook of knowledge, easy to understand. I began training for a dressage show during Covid; it really helped motivate me when there was little else to do. I am really grateful that I now love dressage.

Jacobsen: You have trained with "Canadian Olympian Jill Henselwood, US Olympian Buddy Brown, US Nations Cup rider Susie Hutchinson, and British team rider Kate Perrin." [3] What were the main lessons or takeaways from Henselwood, Brown, Hutchinson, and Perrin, individually?

Froese: I credit Jill for getting me through Young Riders. I had never jumped 1.50m before and neither had Condor. Talk about a longshot. The thing she said to me more than anything else over the 3 years I spent with her was, "Hey, missy, jump the jump *in stride* or *slightly collected*" (I was notorious for picking the long distance - leaving the ground too far away from the jump). That's where the name In Stride Training came from. Buddy is particularly special to me. He taught me riding theory - which I desperately needed at the time. He would sit down in front of a computer (this was before we all had phones that videoed rounds) and would watch my rounds; he would pause and point out where my horse's leg was at an exact moment in the canter stride and where it needed to be. That amount of time was well above and beyond what trainers typically do. Add to that, this was after Condor died and I was at my absolute toughest time with Onyx; training sessions were long, and, frankly, a mess. And he sat there pleasantly through it all. He helped me believe in myself again. Susie Hutch made winning easy. I always tell my students to do their detailed work at home and not overcomplicate it at shows; trust your training. The first thing I remember about Kate that made me sit up and take notice of her was that she set smart. She set courses at home that would do most of the work of schooling your horse for you. I still trot jumps to this day! For simplicity I listed on my website a few of my coaches whose resumes have an international success that is easy to convey to people who may not know show jumping well. There have been many more who are just as good, and each deserves their own paragraph about how they have contributed to my riding.

Jacobsen: What seems like the state of the industry in the Lower Mainland now? I'm told ALR and other definitional and bylaw restrictions make running a full facility difficult, as one example. Is there anything the municipal or provincial governments could do to help ease financial pressures on farms and stables?

Froese: Unfortunately, horses are expensive. Boarding facilities rarely make money. Boarding is not considered agriculture and does not qualify you for farm status. People try to buy or breed horses to flip (train for a short time and sell) to achieve farm status. Here's the problem: horses almost always cost more than you can sell them for. By the time you have paid the purchase price, upkeep, training, show fees, membership fees, you usually lose money in order to gain farm status. Allowing boarding to qualify for farm status would certainly ease some of that pressure.

Jacobsen: How is Canadian equestrianism viewed on the international scene?

Froese: I may not be the best person to answer this question. After Young Riders I was invited to compete in Europe but it was too expensive to go. My entire experience has been in North America. Spruce Meadows has long been a destination for the best riders and Thunderbird has

continually been growing and hosting bigger international events. EC (Equestrian Canada) has been working on developing team competitions for junior riders to help prepare them for a future in international sport. I think identifying talent, training and funding are areas that still certainly could be improved.

Jacobsen: Another socio-economic issue impacting the sport mentioned to me: The division, growing, between haves and have-nots in Canada. Apparently, it differs by sport, too. Dressage may be more out of reach for some than the world of jumper and hunter, as an example. Is this the experience and observation for you, too, or is it otherwise?

Froese: Yes, again, horses are expensive. And sadly, prices are going up. Horses are like houses; they cost what people will pay for them. Which does create a tremendous divide between the quality of horse that one can ride. If you have modest funding, you take a chance on a young horse, usually based on its bloodlines, and spend years developing it. Meanwhile, those with more funding find one that is already at, near, or even stepping down to the level they want to compete at. If that horse doesn't work out, doesn't get along with the rider, isn't quite competitive enough, or goes lame, they can replace it. The rich can constantly compete, which the modest spend most of their time training. And of course, there are those that can't afford to show at all. It's heart breaking to see young talent squeezed out of the industry. My understanding is that dressage is slightly less expensive, but I may be wrong. The word dressage means training. I went to my first dressage schooling show last year, and the judge wrote on my test paper that I showed correct training. It was really nice to be noticed and rewarded for working correctly. In that way, I feel it is slightly more obtainable than show jumping; although, I have never competed in upper level dressage, so I can't really compare them.

Jacobsen: How important is the sense and feel of working with a horse? I recall reading Ian Millar speaking to this as something anyone can develop, but I suspect this may be the hardest thing to make a refined sensibility after its basic development happens.

Froese: Absolutely, anyone can develop feel. I think it is a matter of how much feel they will develop, how far they will go. There are riders that you can see immediately have good feel; they're naturals and possess skills you never had to teach them. Those riders will develop quickly and be extremely competitive - if they are funded. Legends like Ian Millar. But work ethic can overtake talent, especially if the talented don't work hard. There is another aspect to feel, and that's character. It's a willingness to learn, first from your coaches, then from your horses. I have said this many times. Your horse has never read the riding manual. It's a good starting place, but trainers have to learn to listen to what your horse is communicating to you, even if it seems counterintuitive at times. To learn, you have to be ok with being wrong sometimes. And to be persistent when you're right. And experience to know the difference. And we have to offer that same consideration to our human athletes. People have different body types; what works for one may not for another. Being humble and adaptable is hard. Talent is nice, but I suspect most coaches will tell you what they really want in a student is one that listens and works hard.

Jacobsen: For the facilities[4], the training is done by Bradner Hill Farms in Abbotsford with 14 stalls, paddock turnout, and "a heated indoor and a large outdoor arena," while the "indoor ring was built in 2018." Interestingly, the same company that built barns for Thunderbird built the ones for In Stride Equestrian Training, Spanmaster. Why select them for the construction? What was the design style kept in mind for the family at Bradner Hill Farms for the indoor ring?

Froese: Well, you guessed the answer. When we wanted to build, the first thing I did was talk to tournament manager, Chris Pack, at Tbird. We figured if it was good for Tbird, it was good for us. The idea behind fabric buildings is that they go up quickly and are supposed to cost less. They allow a lot of light in and create a bright, open environment.

Jacobsen: Another notable fact, "Footing was installed by Thunderbird Show Park"; this arose in some early conversations so far. The sharing of information, expertise, and capabilities, between equestrians in the industry. Is this sharing and camaraderie a common element of the Lower Mainland equestrian industry, in personal experience?

Froese: Networking is a crucial part of the industry. One of my students recently commented to me that there seemed to be a large oral tradition in the industry. So much of what trainers, riders, and owners learn is from talking to, watching, and working with people. For people who love horses, a lot of their friends were met, and friendships maintained at the barn and at horse shows. It connects people. Trainers typically get into the sport because they love horses, but really, it's a people job. Every horse comes with an owner, owner's family, vet, farrier, physiotherapist, etc. The ability to communicate well and get along with people is an advantage in the industry. Right now, I have a couple of clients that are taught by a different coach; the coach called me to ride the ponies regularly to train it separately from the rider. One because she was too tall the ride the pony (I am 5'1"); the other is an "old horsewomen" who no longer rides. I think these clients have a great advantage because their coaches were willing to work alongside someone else.

Jacobsen: There is an apparent gender split in the industry in Canada. Any hypotheses as to the gender disparities at different levels of the industry, e.g., clients, jumpers, dressage, barn managers, stable owners, etc.

Froese: There are certainly a lot more women in lower level sport than men. Years ago, a trainer (my senior) told me when he was a kid, the other boys made fun of him at school because he rode; I guess it wasn't macho enough. A couple of years ago a student (my junior) told me none of the other boys at school would come ride with him because they were afraid of horses. I don't know if these experiences accurately reflect the views of their generation or not, and anything beyond that would be complete guesswork on my part. I will say this. Horses are extremely powerful and extremely sensitive; as a result good riders and trainers also need to be both very tough and very sensitive. Decades ago, the value seemed to be put a more strongly on being brave or tough, likely stemming from jumping's military roots; the risk of that is that people can become overbearing or cruel (both to horses and humans). There has been a big shift towards respecting sensitivity, keeping people safe, and helping them feel good about themselves. Which is good but also poses a risk: people become wimps. They don't work as hard; they allow anxiety to control them and trainers can't push them to due to liability. But people are safer around horses if they are fit and skilled. And horses are safer working for humans if their humans know what they should do and be physically capable of doing it. It's a fine balance. Tending to one side or the other will affect what types of horses you will be most successful training. Regardless of gender, I think both qualities need to be valued highly.

Jacobsen: Any advice for younger people getting into the industry?

Froese: I can't stress enough that you need a good coach. A little time with a quality coach will make you much safer and more successful than many hours under poor coaching just because they are cheap, close, or you just can't imagine anything else. The hard part is you don't know

what you don't know. How does a beginner judge what is a good coach? Being a talented, successful rider doesn't automatically mean you are also good at teaching. Running a large barn might mean you're good or might mean you don't have much time to invest in each student. There are 3 things I think anyone can look for in a coach to help them get started: 1. Match the student's learning style with the coach's teaching style. Some students are visual and like demonstrations; some are auditory and need explanations and dialogue; others are kinesthetic and need exercises that allow them to feel and do. A rider will learn much more quickly if information is presented the way they most easily understand it. 2. Match personality type. A coach could be loud, quiet, high energy, calm, intense, laid back, competitive, etc. A loud, intense coach might be just the thing to motivate a laid back student. They also might give a timid, sensitive student PTSD. An ambitious student will want to be challenged; a weekend warrior will want to have fun, stay safe and be less concerned about results. 3. Watch for progress. There will certainly be ups and downs but overall there should be a trajectory towards the goal. If it stalls out, maybe that coach did its job, taught you what he or she knows, and it's time to move on.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Joelle.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 2: Sandy Bell, B.Sc., M.A. on Mature Equine Life and the Alberta Equestrian Federation (1)

Sandy Bell's personal biography states: *"Windhorse Retreat was born in early 2014 when I transitioned from the urban to the rural lifestyle to pursue my dream of living with horses and offering equine facilitated personal development. My goal was to establish Windhorse as a place where 'horses help us reach our full potential,' and that included my own life-long learning. At my day retreat in central Alberta, horses and humans come together in deeply meaningful ways for unique learning experiences. As well as providing equine assisted learning opportunities with horses as your guides, I host related workshops and clinics, so you can learn to help your equine friends or deepen your relationships with them. Community development and volunteerism is core to my lifestyle, so you'll find me volunteering on committees or boards as the opportunities arise. Currently, I serve the Alberta equestrian community as the President of the Board of Directors of the Alberta Equestrian Federation. I hold a B.Sc. (Psychology), a M.A. (Communications & Technology) and am an alumnus of EAL-Canada. I'm a member of the Alberta Association of Complementary Equine Therapy as a Craniosacral Practitioner and Energy Based Practitioner."* Bell began her equestrian journey at 47 after fulfilling lifelong dreams and responsibilities. Her transformative four-day pack ride led her to riding lessons and horse ownership within a year. Bell views horses as sentient, complex beings and emphasizes their healing qualities. Alberta's federation boasts 18,000 members, predominantly recreational riders engaged in Western and English pleasure and trail riding. As a not-for-profit organization linked to Equestrian Canada, it faces challenges like high costs and gender disparities, with efforts underway to increase diversity. Prominent facilities include Spruce Meadows and the Calgary Stampede. Bell highlights Canada's grassroots reputation, supported by top riders.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Today, we are interviewing Sandy Bell, who is the President of the Alberta Equestrian Federation. She also runs Windhorse Retreat. I want to take a narrative approach, as with most interviews in this series. What age did you start with horses?

Sandy Bell: I was 47, Scott. I came to it as a mature rider.

Jacobsen: How did you come to it, late? Or I should rephrase that, "How did you come to it later than most of the people whom I am aware of?"

Bell: As a girl, I had fantasies of having a horse in my life. It wasn't possible. Then I got caught up in getting a job, then having a family, then things happen. Time passed. During that time, I, perhaps, went on two or three trail rides. The nose to tail thing, they offer. That's great. Then a girlfriend said to me, "I do a trail ride. It is an overnight 4-day pack ride. Would you like to come?" I, knowing nothing, really, thought, "How hard could it be?" [Laughing]

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Bell: At the end of the four days, I had never been so sore, so dirty, but so happy. There was something about spending time all day with horses outside that really resonated with my soul. Within the week, coming back home, I booked my first riding lessons. It just grew from there. I learn to ride, bought my first horse within the year, and off we go.

Jacobsen: You have a quote, "The horse has the strength of 20 men, the speed to outrun the wind, and the grace to heal us, yet remains humble enough to let us ride upon his back. – source." (Unknown Source) What does that quote mean to you?

Bell: That quote summarizes my philosophy of being with horses. I evolved my understanding of them and how I want to be with them. At first, it was more directly related to horses being co-facilitator in horse-powered personal development. Now, for me, it has become more than that. Because I truly believe horses are sentient beings with complex social structures and individual lives as well.

So, it is an extraordinary relationship. If I tease it apart, it amazes me every time I think about it in depth because this being, the horse, can offer us so much if we're ready to see it and accept it. All the way from riding on their back and gaining that freedom that that grants us to interacting with them in ways that they are, actually, healers.

Jacobsen: What form of equestrianism is most prevalent in Alberta?

Bell: If we base it on the membership of the Alberta Equestrian Federation[3], it is recreational riders. Those are people who do Western pleasure, English pleasure, and trail riding. There is, of course, a significant industry component in Alberta with rodeo sport, e.g., Spruce Meadows, reining horses. That whole other competitions area, overall, I think, it is the pleasure horse or the trail horse.

Jacobsen: How many members are part of the Alberta Equestrian Federation?

Bell: Currently, we have 18,000 members. If I broke that down, I think recreational riders are about 80%.

Jacobsen: That's *a lot*.

Bell: It could be an artifact of people who get memberships in something. Because we haven't really examined that. But there are members who come to us, initially, through sport, because to go to a competition in Alberta, for example, you need an Alberta Equestrian Federation membership. That's because of the insurance component. Things like that.

Jacobsen: For organizations that are provincial or territorial for equestrians, are they, more or less, run in a democratic manner?

Bell: Yes, they are all not-for-profit. The major equestrian organizations are; I can't speak to the other horse organizations, e.g., Horse Racing Alberta, but, definitely, the major ones recognized by government as the major sport organizations, e.g., Alberta Equestrian Federation, Horse Council BC. We're all not-for-profit.

Jacobsen: How do they link to the national organization(s)?

Bell: Through membership, so, each of the provinces and territories can become a member of Equestrian Canada. That's the linkage there. Canada, that's how we connect. It's a fairly similar model, I believe, to other sports. Now, we are not a branch of the national organization. Each of the provinces and territories are independent entities unto themselves with their own separate structures and bylaws.

Jacobsen: Are most of the bylaws and structures similar and seemingly standardized to one another, though independent or autonomous?

Bell: I think, you could say they are similar. It is how boards are to be run, the structure of the board of directors. Things like that. I think there might be some significant differences. Perhaps, not in terms of bylaws, but in terms of operating policies, I think the bylaws at the provincial and territorial level are fairly similar or complementary.

Jacobsen: Which parts stand out as differences amongst them, between them?

Bell: I think it may be in terms of their membership. For example, in Alberta, the bulk of our membership identify as recreational riders. It may be different in other provinces. For example, Ontario may have a higher percentage or proportion of us. People interested in sport. I can't really say for sure, though, Scott.

It has been interesting, as an aside. I have been President for almost a year now. The whole time has been through Zoom. So, building relationships with my counterparts in other organizations has been hampered a bit, so, my knowledge, about who they really are, is probably limited.

Jacobsen: Are there common personalities or backgrounds of people coming into equestrianism? Or is it basically every personality type and background?

Bell: I think it's every background and personality type. That's the beautiful thing about it. [Laughing] Some people might say, "That's the frustrating thing about it." [Laughing]

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Bell: If you ask a group of horse people a question, perhaps, about horses, for the 12 people there, you'll get 20 different answers. That's a joke that is tossed around, very varied. I think what unites everyone is a passion for the equine.

Jacobsen: One common theme in responses, if not the word, then the concept behind what they're saying, is the idea of equestrianism as a "lifestyle." People who start in it. A foot in the door phenomenon, sooner or later, it becomes their whole life; or, they've been in it their whole life. Is that a common thing?

Bell: Yes, Scott, I think it's a common thing. Perhaps, the people who it doesn't become more a part of their day-to-day life. There might be some barriers to being involved with horses. Personally, I am lucky. My costs per horse are lower than someone who is boarding because I am fortunate to have my own pasture, my own barn. Things like that.

It is, definitely, not cheap to have a horse. Here in Alberta, we have been looking at numbers. We aren't quite ready to release a study of the economic impact of the equestrian industry on Alberta. But when we look at what people spend on a horse, it's quite a lot. \$1,200 per horse is a reasonable amount of money. That's not counting people with horses in competitive programs who need lessons and travel with their horse or who have special needs for boarding.

Jacobsen: Another aspect of some of the conversations has been somewhere between 11 and 18 years old. You find a lot more young women. Then as you move into the older ages and the international level of any area of equestrianism – dressage, eventing, hunting, jumping, etc., you find for men. But it's more balanced than the younger ages, particularly North America. Is this your observation as well?

Bell: Yes, I think, this is reflected in membership, Scott. I don't have the number off the top of my mind. But it is women of a certain age. Women who can have a horse. They are a primary or large percentage of our numbers. Now, we have identified that, as a board, as something that we would like to change.

Both to change at the entry level and at the age that kids can start to get involved, or would like to see kids involved in the sport – all the way up to retirement age, when people are leaving their

full-time jobs. The other aspect of that, Scott, and, maybe, you have observed it. We lack diversity. Why is that? We're not sure.

We are exploring that as well, trying to tease that apart, because it would be great to have other cultural communities involved with horses. Then we have the Indigenous people who have a very strong history and affiliation with the horse. We're not sure what we can offer them, what kind of partnerships. They should be more visible. So, it is not just women. It is, also, white women.

Jacobsen: What facilities have garnered the most prominent reputation for all of Alberta for equestrianism?

Bell: Spruce Meadows for sure. The Calgary Stampede, [Laughing] both are very different from each other. At one time, we would have included the racetracks. But they're kind of folding. The Canadian Finals Rodeo, it was, in Alberta, a source of pride. Then we had some pretty significant horse fairs, which have been discontinued because of Covid: Horse Expo kind of thing. Right now, worldwide, people know about Spruce Meadows and the Calgary Stampede.

Jacobsen: How is Canada's reputation internationally within the equine world?

Bell: That's an interesting one to think about. If we didn't have Team Canada, like Ian Millar, Eric Lamaze, people of that standing. I'm not sure we would even be known on the world stage, really [Laughing]. There have been a few key or extraordinary riders in Canada, who are household names, internationally.

Now, if you're within that community, so if you're riding at the FEI levels in Dressage, for example, you would know of the people in Canada, but, for me, that's not the circle I'm in. I represent more of the grassroots person.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 3: Nadine Bollig on Equestrianism and Reaching Strides Equestrian Centre

Nadine Bollig is the Owner – and a Trainer, Coach, and Instructor – at Reaching Strides Equestrian Centre. Her biography states: “Reaching Strides Equestrian Centre has been successfully owned and operated by Nadine Bollig since the spring of 2000. Nadine has been involved with horses since the age of 9 when she started to take lessons at a local stable, and within a year had her own first pony, an Appy mare named Sassy who is still a successful member of the school string at the ripe age of 24. Having nearly 20 years of horse experience, Nadine is a current certified Instructor, Equine Behaviourist and Trainer through the Nova Scotia Equestrian Federation and Equine Canada, a certified Level 1 Coach with NCCP Canada, and is currently working to achieve competition coach status. Nadine has been showing competitively since she was a child and showed in many disciplines including dressage, western pleasure, reining, English, hunter, jumper, driving, and even some barrels and poles. She was an active member of Pony Club and 4-H well into her teens. She uses her extensive experiences and her own training, and puts her heart and soul into the operating of the stable to bring out the best in all of the students and horses at Reaching Strides. Nadine has worked with several trainers throughout her career on the methods of non-resistance training through Natural Horsemanship and implements this into every horse or pony that comes through the training program at RSEC. Nadine acts as head coach and trainer for the stable and continues to enjoy competing, now mainly in the hunter discipline. She acts as competition coach and travels with students at all levels and disciplines to competitions from fun/schooling shows to Provincial Bronze and National Gold competitions. Horses and Equestrian are her business and her passion, and she is proud to provide to the stable an environment that is family-like, safe, and friendly, and treats all clientele - whether they are horses or people - with open friendship. One of her biggest beliefs is ‘you walk into the stable a stranger, but you leave as a friend’.” Bollig emphasizes the importance of ongoing learning, understanding each horse’s unique personality, and effective communication. She describes “feel” as achieving unity and trust with horses. Highlighting programs like Pony Club and 4-H, she stresses foundational horsemanship and horse care. Nadine also addresses the need for better horsemanship education on Canada’s East Coast and values equestrian organizations for their educational support.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Since age 9, you have been involved with horses. What was the first lesson in riding or working with horses for you?

Nadine Bollig: I loved horses all my life, it was the first thing I drew as a young child, I was hooked from the first moment. My neighbour in Germany had two ponies. I had my first pony ride on one of them. I used to walk all on my own to the local stables to see the horses. They didn't offer riding lessons, so my first actual riding lesson experience was once I moved to Canada.

Jacobsen: What is your best moment with Sassy over all these years?

Bollig: My best moment with Sassy aside from seeing all the smiles she put on thousands of lesson students once I started using her in the riding school over all these years, was the fact that my son got to ride her in a lesson before she passed away. I lost her last summer at age 36 and knowing that I gave her the best possible life a horse could have made the passing a bit easier.

Jacobsen: How does an individual in the Canadian equine industry acquire formal qualifications as, for example, an instructor, equine behaviourist, and trainer? How do the federations (councils, etc.) and Equine Canada set the standard for qualifications?

Bollig: Unfortunately, in Canada there is not a actual requirement to become certified in order to teach lessons. However, in order to be an actual certified coach or instructor, we follow the Equestrian Canada guidelines of completing the rider level program (10 levels in total, 8 of which must be passed to become a coach or 6 of them if to become an instructor). Following along with a mentor and taking training clinics both on line as well as in person, and always remembering that we must continue to learn no matter how much knowledge we acquire. With horses, you never stop learning.

Jacobsen: What can one never learn about horses, except through long periods of work with them?

Bollig: When it comes to horses, the learning never stops. They have their own individual personalities, and they are each their own unique character. What works for one, doesn't necessarily work for others. Horses communicate through body language and for those willing to open their hearts and minds and really learn to listen, the experience is something so profound, it'll blow your mind. They are intuitive, they mirror back our own emotions and force us to live in the now. Horses don't lie, being around them and really allowing them to open our hearts and soul, is an experience that is more rewarding and more eye opening than anything else I've experienced in life.

Jacobsen: In the interviews and in informal conversations with equestrians, they, often, talk about the "feel" of working with or riding a horse. How would you describe this? I recall Ian Millar speaking to this, too, in media clips.

Bollig: When they discuss the "feel" it can be as simply put as in us as humans learning to let go. Our number one goal as riders is to learn to work in unity with our horses. Humans are very much control freaks, for lack of a better word. We find it difficult to allow ourselves to get into a situation where we are not fully in control. Learning to have a "feel" is learning to trust your equine partner and move with them in harmony. What I mean by that is, we want to always control what the horse is doing and make them move and work in a certain frame or pace, etc. but if we allow ourselves to move with the horse and feel what that horse is doing under us, and staying out of the way and become one with that horse, your ride becomes a dance of you and that horse moving together, feeling what each other is thinking even before one of you moves in the direction of asking for it. That's feel!! Some folks are born with the feel and others have to work their butts off to get there. The one thing that is for sure is, the second you feel it, you'll never forget that moment.

Jacobsen: How were the Pony Club and 4-H helpful in developing as an equestrian?

Bollig: Both of these are excellent programs. There is always so much stuff to learn when it comes to horses. Both Pony Club and 4-H have a set standard of levels to go through where you gain the knowledge of not only riding, but also all the other stuff. In my opinion the biggest problem in the horse world is a lack of the basic knowledge. The off the horse stuff is way more important to learn than the riding portion. But of course, most kids, especially now a day, want to learn how to ride, but feel the rest is not as important. A lot of facilities are so busy that they skip these vital lessons of horsemanship, stable management and the basics of horse care. Programs

such as these, are an excellent way to teach our budding equestrians the importance of those steps.

Jacobsen: What is the method of non-resistance in natural horsemanship?

Bollig: So, when it comes to horse training there's your traditional trainers that work on breaking the horse, which in turn breaks their spirit and turns them into almost a trained machine, because they quickly learn that pain or fear happens if they don't cooperate. A lot of the time with this type of training, they rush through the process and don't give the horse a chance to learn at their own pace, forcing them to cooperate or else. Basically, the trainer is the aggressor and because horses are prey animals they tend to give in to the abuse. With Natural Horsemanship we work with the horse at their own pace, and we communicate with them through body language. We establish trust, respect and a bond, and move forward when we know they're ready to learn more that day, or we take the pressure off if they've had enough. The non-resistance part is that they are not forced to do something if they're not ready for it. It's all about applying pressure when needed, and backing off and releasing that pressure when they tell us. Reading their body language allows us to know when to apply it and how much of it to apply. In turn once you've established that trust, and the horse is not afraid that if they make a mistake that they'll get punished, they become a willing, loving partner.

Jacobsen: What inspired founding Reaching Strides Equestrian Centre in the Spring of 2000?

Bollig: I always knew I'd do something with animals when I grew up. I had thought about becoming a vet for a while and upon graduating from high school and after checking out several vet programs, I decided it wasn't for me. I worked at a few big stables and started teaching lessons at one of those. Doing this made me realize my passion was to teach people to become the best horse people they can be.

Jacobsen: As a head coach and trainer at Reaching Strides Equestrian Centre, how do you approach educating different students?

Bollig: Over the past 21 years I've worked with students of all kinds. Kids, adults, seniors, folks with physical and mental exceptionalities, troubled teens, Veterans suffering from PTSD etc. One thing I've learned from this and from working with horses is that patience is a virtue. Not everyone learns the same way, and certainly not at the same pace. If one way doesn't work, it's my job to explain it, show it, or approach it in different ways until it clicks in.

Jacobsen: What is the state of horsemanship/equestrianism in the far East Coast of Canada?

Bollig: Here on the east coast the horse world has become HUGE, especially in the last 10 years. I feel even though there's been such an increase in involvement, we are in a bit of a crisis when it comes to actual Horsemanship and basic horse care. There has been a lot of big, beautiful barns with expensive horses and tack that have popped up everywhere as well as some back yard stables that only teach a few etc. The biggest thing that has been brought to my attention, especially in the last few years is that there is a HUGE lack of proper education when it comes to the basics of horse care. Even just proper feeding, hoof care, a total lack of understanding of how important it is working with the horse on the ground to ensure their manners are in check before climbing in the saddle. I feel that we need to train students not just to be riders, but to be horse people that understand the importance of all the stuff it takes to look after these beautiful creatures, and not just learning to ride.

Jacobsen: What is your most proud moment of competing as an equestrian, or a moment - or set of them - of greatest accomplishment, to you?

Bollig: My proudest moments in the show ring have been showing up at these big competitions with our rescue horses and students and beating the butts off those with \$40,000 horses, that laughed at us as we got there. They soon learned it's not how expensive your horse or tack or horse trailer is, it's the proper training, and hours put in to perfect that training and our riders' skills that wins the ribbons. As an equestrian myself, I guess I can say some of my proudest moments is when I look up at the smiling faces of my students when they finally figure out a challenge they've been working on and when there's that lightbulb moment and you can see it all over their face. Also, working with rescue horses, my proudest moments is when I finally break through that fear and terror and see them for the first time in their lives allow themselves to trust a human. IT still gives me goosebumps every time.

Jacobsen: What is the importance of the provincial/territorial/national equine organizations?

Bollig: The importance of these organizations is that they are there to help educate folks. They offer programs and learning opportunities and do extensive research on the sport to improve our knowledge on an annual basis. Education is key! I always say, that the second we think we know it all, a horse comes along and teaches us otherwise. I've been involved with horses for over 30 years now, and I haven't stopped learning yet. If anything can be said about them, it is they truly ensure we stay humble and in the moment.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Nadine.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 4: Dr. Julia Jane Stanley on Physics, Show Jumping, and Grand Prix Dreams (1)

Dr. Julia Jane Stanley is a show jumper equestrian training under Laura Balisky. She earned a Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Calgary. Stanley has been passionate about horses since age five in Vancouver. Encouraged by her aunt, she began riding early and shifted to show jumping at eleven after recognizing her horse's jumping ability. Competing up to World Cup Qualifiers, Julia balances her scientific career with daily riding, training with Laura Balisky. In 2000, she founded Reaching Strides Equestrian Centre, focusing on teaching diverse students. She emphasizes continuous learning, understanding each horse's unique personality, and supports foundational programs like Pony Club and 4-H. Julia aspires to compete in Grand Prix events and advises finding supportive institutions to balance academics and riding.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When it comes to equestrians and equestrianism, one trend, certainly, of note, though preliminary in the research: A lesser educational attainment in the pursuit of a dream of becoming the next great Canadian equestrian, or the maintenance of a desired life(style) in the equine. I have zero survey or organization membership data to confirm this observation, but, in conversation, I have noted this - so preliminary, qualitative, and limited sample size. The series will be, and is in the process of, expanding outside of the remit of British Columbia and Canadian equestrianism. When talking to equestrians, and to you, I was informed of something. Your Ph.D. is from the University of Calgary in Physics. You have the highest education of any equestrian known to me so far. We will talk about this. However, as with every story, there is a "once upon a time..." Once upon a time, you didn't have a Ph.D. You simply had an interest in horses. When were the first inklings of an interest in horses?

Dr. Julia Jane Stanley: I have always loved horses and all animals and I started riding in Southlands, Vancouver when I was five years old.

Jacobsen: Who were the individuals who encouraged this interest in horses?

Stanley: I had to beg for riding lessons when I was younger. My aunt took me on a trail ride when I was little and after my parents finally let me take riding lessons.

Jacobsen: What has been the focus in horses, e.g., show jumping, dressage, etc.?

Stanley: I originally started in eventing and pony club. When I was about 11, I had a very hot thoroughbred off the track who wasn't suitable for the dressage phase of eventing but who would jump 1.40m and I switched to show jumping and have been focused on show jumping ever since.

Jacobsen: What has been the highest level of attainment in performance in equestrianism at the professional level for you?

Stanley: I currently ride as an amateur but the highest level I have shown at is the World Cup Qualifiers.

Jacobsen: How did you work with horses and then pursue an education in Medical Physics? Where was the undergraduate and graduate school (pre-doctoral level, unless simply jumping from B.Sc. to Ph.D. candidate)?

Stanley: I did my BSc in physics at Sweet Briar College in Virginia.

Riding was an integral part of life at Sweet Briar. My horse lived on campus with me and riding was a course scheduled into my day. I absolutely loved my time at Sweet Briar.

I did my MSc in Medical Physics at Duke University in North Carolina and my barn was an hour and a half drive from the university which was tricky. Luckily, there was another rider at my barn who let me stay with her when I didn't have to drive back for classes.

Jacobsen: What was the doctoral research question? What were the main research findings in Physics from the doctoral thesis?

Stanley: Quantification of Uncertainty in Stereotactic Radiosurgery.

I found that the highest amount of uncertainty was introduced into the process during the contouring stage.

Jacobsen: While working in Medical Physics, why decide to come back to equestrianism? Is it the lifestyle, the horses, the riding, some admixture, etc.?

Stanley: I rode the entire time I was in school. I was hacking at least 12 horses a day towards the end of my PhD. I can't imagine not riding. I love both the horses and competing.

Jacobsen: What are the current pursuits with horses now, e.g., leisure, competition, and so on?

Stanley: I compete in hunter/jumper shows.

Jacobsen: What are your plans with horses now?

Stanley: I would like to show in the Grand Prixs again.

Jacobsen: Why choose physics?

Stanley: I really enjoyed math and problem solving. Physics uses these skills.

Jacobsen: What other animals were an affinity for you, in earlier life?

Stanley: I liked animals in general when I was very young. But horses were my main interest.

Jacobsen: Who were the trainers or mentors in Southlands, Vancouver at five years old?

Stanley: I started out at Maynard's Pony Meadows.

Jacobsen: How long were the trail rides with your aunt?

Stanley: We went once to a dude ranch near her house and I believe it was an hour or so. The horse I rode was a grey named Hickory.

Jacobsen: For show jumping, are you associated with a particular barn, ranch, or equestrian facility at this time? Or do you operate independently?

Stanley: I train with Laura Balisky.

Jacobsen: In my whole not-even-a-year in the equine industry, pony club has been a term of conversation among some equestrians at work and in personal interactions with them, so far, for me. What is pony club?

Stanley: Pony club is an organization that teaches young people about horses. We had weekly stable management lessons and lots of fun activities such as mounted games, rally and quiz (a horse knowledge competition).

Jacobsen: How many days a week is riding an activity for you?

Stanley: I ride every day.

Jacobsen: If other women want to pursue science or medicine, while also wanting to continue to ride, what would be the advice for maintaining the balance of the two parts of life without losing healthy functioning in either?

Stanley: I recommend finding a university that supports and accommodates participation in athletics. I had a very positive experience at Sweet Briar. My passion for riding was supported and encouraged by my college and wasn't seen as taking away from my academic interests. I was able to travel to horse shows with my college and my participation in shows was seen as representing my college – the same as if I had been on the football team.

Jacobsen: Why the Grand Prixs rather than other options?

Stanley: The horses I currently ride are jumpers. I also enjoy riding hunters but I don't currently have a hunter.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 5: Leann (Pitman) Manuel on Becoming a Horse Woman and Riding 4 Life's Beginnings (1)

Leann (Pitman) Manuel's bio states: *"Leann was as good as born on a horse, and has been fortunate to work with them daily since her very early twenties. From Pony Club and 4H as a child, through national level competition and several World's Show qualifications with her Quarter Horse as a teen, to some Dressage tests, a few Cowboy Challenge clinics, and the daily operations at Riding 4 Life today, Leann's horsemanship practice continues to seek out anything and everything she may be able to learn or experience with horses. Leann is passionate about helping others realize the value of having horses in their lives – no matter the breed or creed - and she hopes to continue to grow and nurture the horsemanship community in her region well into the future."* Manuel shares her lifelong passion for horses, rooted in childhood memories of a backyard barn and her mother's influence. She began riding at 11, joining 4H and Pony Club, and quickly excelled in competitions despite financial challenges. After pursuing higher education and facing mental health struggles, Leann returned to her equestrian roots, founding Riding 4 Life to support individuals, particularly those with autism. Her business now serves around 60 clients with a team of part-time staff, focusing on specialized autism services and beginner lessons. Leann emphasizes the deep bond with horses, the importance of horsemanship education, and the growth of her equine business through dedication and community support.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Today, we are here with Leann Manuel. We will talk about equestrianism. It is another addition to the series. So, my first question, typically, is around the foundation or the history of becoming a horse woman, a horse person, in this industry. What was the earliest memory with a horse for you?

Leann (Pitman) Manuel: Gosh, there was always a horse in my backyard. Some of my first memories are as a toddler of a barn being built in my backyard, and my family helping. So, there are pictures of my mom as a 10-year-old on her first horse. It's in the genetic fabric of my immediate family, I guess. My mom's passion. Ironically, when I was a kid, she didn't think I would get into it.

She only had one horse. She sold extra equipment. Only kept around what she needed for her horse. Lo and behold, yes, it became my passion too. I ended up with my own horse, bought specifically for me when I was 11 years old.

Jacobsen: Typically, is this the trend with a single digit age and a familial line in it?

Manuel: It was, certainly, a trend for all of my peers. That I found myself in 4H Club with. I was in 4H Club, Pony Club, Quarter Horse organization, any kind of the communities in the horse industry. It was true of pretty much all of my peers. They came from existing horse families, especially if they stuck with it long-term.

For 4H, as it is government supported, it is a volunteer-based program with provincial and federal funding in it. That's where we saw more kids who didn't come from a farm background or an agricultural background, wanting to learn about horse. They would come to club meetings and learn a bit.

But when it came to participation of owning a horse, that's when we saw a lot of those folks drop off. Because their families were either too intimidated of owning a horse and everything that entailed, and couldn't financially support it, or there wasn't an easy inroad for them to continue.

Jacobsen: How did this continue over time and to the point of founding a business around horses? That's a big step.

Manuel: It was a big step, but a slow and inevitable progression as far as I experienced it. 11-years-old in Pony Club taking lessons. 13-years-old, my mom's horse passes away. My parents purchase another horse. I fell in love with it. This horse has a rescue story behind it. It was purchased for not much money at all.

I ended up with the kind of bond with that horse that took me from the little novice kid riding up and down the road to a few years later competing at Thunderbird when it was still at 200th Ave. with the Keg restaurant at the end. I was 15 years old and way in over my head, and out of my league.

But the bond I had with this horse. I was competing with pros in the open division and winning. I look back at that. As a kid, I had no idea what I was doing. I was just at a horse show with a horse doing my thing. At 15, you don't realize professionals up and down the coast from Washington State, Oregon, and California, watching me ride by and take their points, "Where did this kid come from?" [Laughing] I rode that horse for 8 years on the Quarter Horse circuit.

She was an American Quarter Horse. That was the association I was heavily involved with at the time because that's the horse that I happened to have at the time. Along the way, other projects come along. So, I had her that I was showing. I was in 4H. Someone gave me another project, "Here, Leann, another horse to ride."

Because my other now really accomplished show horse was way out of the league out of what was available to compete with in 4H. I took this Haflinger Belgian Quarter Horse cross 3-year-old not even halter broke really. It got out of the trailer and dragged me from the trailer to the barn where the other horses were.

That was my 4H project for the year. By the end of the 8-month project year, I was competing walk-trot-canter. He was doing cross rails. We were in some Western classes making it. We were bombing it. He went back to his owner and joined a lesson program. I had a project always cycling through that I was riding. By the time I hit graduation, which was this fork in the road, my dad was determined that there was no real way for me to make money in the horse industry.

Even though, I was competing at the professional level. The only next level to test me was to go to the World's in Fort Worth, Texas. I couldn't afford to go. I stayed back and mucked stalls at my friends facility while she went with her family to compete in my spot on the team.

So, financial barrier to really getting access to that community, that market, that level of competition. My dad insisted on my going to university. I got some scholarships and went to UVic. I left horses a little behind. They were what I did in the Summer time a little bit. I had another young horse, which I showed and developed a bit, ultimately, after a few years of university, coming back home in my early 20s, facing some mental health issues and PTSD from trauma, I realized; without horses, I don't have solid ground to stand on, for myself.

This is part of who I am. It is cellular. It is in my bones. My best self and healthiest is when I have horses to work with. It became the foundation for what I do today at Riding 4 Life. I came home riding horse, teaching a few, riding, lessons. Inevitably, if you have something to offer, and don't have money, when you're young and have horses, you teach riding horses, muck stalls, or ride people's horses to earn money to pay entry fees, to buy the saddle you need.

That's how I started. I taught my first beginner lessons when I was 14 years old, maybe 13. I was training a few other people's horses on the side for cash when I was 15, 16. It kept going from there. In my early 20s, I was teaching riding lessons in my parents' backyard property again when one of my long-time clients who bordered her horse at my parent's place when I was away at university; she was a foster parent.

She worked with special needs kids. She was starting a business. Getting out of being a foster parent directly and getting into being more of a supporter and foster of the community, she started a business with behaviour intervention and community support work with kids with various barriers. In particular, things like autism or developmental disabilities, or medical issues that made them very fragile.

She was always looking for things to do. She used funding to take them to riding lessons to help them with me, then this happened with 2 or 3, and then hit about 8 or 9. She had clients like that. She said, "You know, Leann, you should start this as a business." That's where that jumping off point happened with horses from passion, identity, hobby, skill set, to monetized formally.

It was pretty interesting because I've in my work life, never been as successful as when I am growing that. I grew that in my hometown for a few years, Port Alberni. Other life events made it impossible for me to continue. I fall off the radar a bit as an equine business operator. I still had horses. I fight to keep them, feed them. I head off to the Okanagan in 2008, which was my first brush with the restaurant industry. I picked up a job waiting tables in a restaurant in Osoyoos trying to feed my horses.

Tip money was the first money I had in my pocket when I crash landed here. I bought some hay and away we went. Here we are, 2022, I sent emails to all of my clients to see who wants to re-register for this year. There was over 60 clients on that list.

So, it's busy and growing. Things tend to grow to fill the capacity for whatever resources we have to serve those folks.

Jacobsen: How clients do you have now? How many staff do you have to meet the needs of those clients?

Manuel: Gosh, like I said, the actual individual clients on our weekly roster. We are at about 60 to 65. We operate a Spring, Summer, Fall session. Without an indoor session, we cannot run a Winter session. Myself, my husband, we have 3 or 4 part-time staff who have been interns. Young people who have come up through my program or gained experience. There's one who has gained experience and recently joined the program.

They help me teach beginner lessons now. They range from 14 to about 20. Then the other detail is roughly 50% of my clientele is on the autism spectrum, including some of my staff.

Jacobsen: How do people find out, by which I mean clients (or prospective), about Riding 4 Life, especially with the niche of people or individuals on the autism spectrum coming to you – at such overwhelming rates out of the proportion of the clientele, which is large itself?

Manuel: So, we specialize in autism services. We recently added beginner lessons as something we put front and center, because I was getting so many people requesting it. Even though, it was not my focus. It created this opportunity where I said to some of my teens who were looking for more, "Do you want to teach riding lessons?" We started an internship riding program.

I held my shingle out for beginning lessons to create work for them. Because we had the skill set here, the equipment. We had great horses. If I am teaching my lesson, and if there are two or three others with me with their students, "Let's see if it works." Out first crack at that was 4 years ago.

Of course, in the after school hours here last Summer and Fall, we had a 3 and 4 o'clock session with 6 or 7 horses with 7 instructors running out there at the same time. It offered training wheels. That's how I describe how I teach. You get somebody going. You get the training wheels. As you get someone going, and develop their confidence, you slowly take those training wheels away. Same for our instructors.

They don't think they can do it. I had one young woman. She moved away now. She was selectively mute. She came as a beginner, rider, client. She ended up as an instructor. Slowly push her out there, "You can do it." [Laughing]

If the wheels really fall off there, you can do it. So far, so good.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 6: Sandy Bell, B.Sc., M.A. on Windhorse Retreat, Horse Sense, and Resources (2)

Sandy Bell's personal biography states: *"Windhorse Retreat was born in early 2014 when I transitioned from the urban to the rural lifestyle to pursue my dream of living with horses and offering equine facilitated personal development. My goal was to establish Windhorse as a place where 'horses help us reach our full potential,' and that included my own life-long learning. At my day retreat in central Alberta, horses and humans come together in deeply meaningful ways for unique learning experiences. As well as providing equine assisted learning opportunities with horses as your guides, I host related workshops and clinics, so you can learn to help your equine friends or deepen your relationships with them. Community development and volunteerism is core to my lifestyle, so you'll find me volunteering on committees or boards as the opportunities arise. Currently, I serve the Alberta equestrian community as the President of the Board of Directors of the Alberta Equestrian Federation. I hold a B.Sc. (Psychology), a M.A. (Communications & Technology) and am an alumnus of EAL-Canada. I'm a member of the Alberta Association of Complementary Equine Therapy as a Craniosacral Practitioner and Energy Based Practitioner."* Bell discusses Windhorse Retreat's offerings, including equine-facilitated personal development and horse wellness workshops, which were halted due to Covid-19. She highlights the pandemic's severe impact on horse owners, mentioning the federation's emergency funds to support those struggling to maintain their horses. Bell addresses misconceptions that equestrianism is only for the wealthy, emphasizing financial barriers and the need for greater accessibility and diversity. She reflects on the historical role of horses versus their modern recreational use and underscores the importance of the horse-human bond and "feel." Bell advocates for increased inclusivity and recommends resources for aspiring equestrians.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What kind of activities are provided at Windhorse Retreat?

Sandy Bell: Currently, we are shut down because of Covid. Before then, we offered equine facilitated personal development for individuals and for groups. We also offered workshops that were related to horse wellness. So, for example, equine for first-aid or Reiki for horses. Things of that nature. We would consider special events. For example, if the Girl Guides wanted to come for a day to learn about horses, then we would set up something custom designed for them. All of those things, we found impossible to do with the changing landscape of Covid. We have just quietly shut our doors for now – so to speak, and are in the wait-and-see mode.

Jacobsen: How is Covid impacting the industry in the same way?

Bell: Yes, but, maybe, more of a negative impact than I've felt, I've always been able to have other income coming in, so I could feed my horses, for example. I think some people have had a terrible time in that regard. Last year, the Alberta Equestrian Federation set up a special emergency fund for horses. They supported people's requests for funds for short-term needs for food and medications in Alberta. Some of the stories of hardship were rather heartbreaking. People lost their jobs. They had a horse that they cared deeply about, and were wondering how they could keep them. We helped them a little bit to make that happen.

Jacobsen: What are some misconceptions about the economic feasibility of owning horses or having a facility for most people? Those who are not in the industry and don't know.

Bell: I think some of the misconceptions are based on what people see in the media, in terms of the Spruce Meadows kind of events. They might think everyone who has a horse is rich [Laughing] and can afford to show at that level. I think that's pretty common. I think that might even deter some people from becoming involved because it's like, "Oh boy, I couldn't do that. It would be costly, cost too much." There is a misconception that they couldn't learn to ride or to drive a horse. Those are the two that come to mind. "It's not for me because of my aptitude barriers, talent, or finances."

Jacobsen: How would you compare the equestrian world of a century ago compared to now in Canadian society? How is it different with the combustible engine being completely ubiquitous compared to a time when it wasn't necessarily so?

Bell: People knew horses then because they lived with them intimately. They worked with them every day. They were their partners in the economy. Imagine managing a city with stables right downtown and horses all over, people riding them, driving them, pulling wagons. People were very comfortable with horses because of that. Life was paced differently because it was by horsepower. Of course, then came the 1900's first World War, the horses were an integral part of the war effort. You read the accounts of how many millions of horses died in battle. So, horses were part of that as well. Very possibly, that's the reason why things turned out the way they did in the wars because the Allied forces could win with the horsepower behind them. The farms and the ranches here in Alberta who gave horses, shipped them overseas to the war effort, is an extraordinary thing to think about now.

For example, Bar U Ranch in the south of Calgary had, at the time, a world-renowned Percheron breeding program and Percherons from Alberta were a significant contributor to the war effort. After that, people came back home. As you say, the engine took over and slowly work horses on the farm were phased out for tractors. The world changed for horses. We thought of them in a different way. They became a day-to-day, not partners, companions for sport and for recreation. I'm fortunate to live in the country, where around me; there are still some people who use horses in their ranch work, still in very traditional ways. That's pretty neat to see.

So, they still have that kind of partnerships with horses. I think we might be missing something not having a broader intimate relationship with the horse, but I don't know that we can [Laughing]. I don't know if we can introduce them back into the cities [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing] Maybe downtown carriage tours in cities.

Bell: Yes. Someone like yourself who was recently thrown into the horse world. You, probably, are feeling some of that going, "Wow. This is interesting how I feel whenever I am around horses."

Jacobsen: It is fascinating, the feeling they give you. You can't, as someone new to it, put a word to it, yet. What's the word coming to mind for you as someone who has been part of it much more than me?

Bell: You begin to see them as individual beings and appreciate the wordless, or the unspoken, power that they have, and to humbled by their willingness to work with and put up with people. They're quite remarkable creatures.

Jacobsen: I'm surprised in the stalls how goofy some of them are.

Bell: Yes!

Jacobsen: They're like gigantic puppy-dogs. You clean the stall, put in fresh shavings, and they go hog wild. They roll around. It's very funny to see.

Bell: Yes, "The majestic equine, the majestic horse," has some very goofy sides, sometimes.

Jacobsen: The elegance of them comes when they are out of the stall and doing something as simple as lunging. Let's say they're doing a canter or a trot in circles, like a light jog, they're extraordinarily rhythmic in the innate pace that they have, then they get in the stall and do all these goofy things. When I first got into the industry, it was hard to put those two pictures together. It was like two animals in one.

Bell: They are complex, for sure. We should not underestimate them. Surely, we know their brains are different from us. They must have a different way of thinking and being. But it is quite a remarkable brain, nonetheless. I came across an article, recently, about the differences between the horse brain and the human brain are part of the magic or the foundation for the relationship that we can have with them.

So, if you're really connected with your horse when you're riding, and you can feel, if you can think that thought, "Let's canter now," the subtle changes in your body can communicate to them. You can get it. You can seamlessly, like a centaur, just fly on. The neuroscience behind the horse-human relationship is starting to fascinate me a lot. I need to read more about it.

Jacobsen: This is a new field, where, for a long time, it was more of an intuitive grasp of it rather than a formal empirical study of the human mind in relation to the horse mind.

Bell: They talked about this. Now, there is the neuroscience explaining it. It is not just woo-woo. These people are not just a little off [Laughing]. It's not, "No, this is real." [Laughing].

Jacobsen: When I first talked about entering the industry, people would say things like, "All horse people are crazy." I said, "Great! I'm crazy too. I'll fit right in."

Bell: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Ian Millar, actually, in some footage, some video footage, I don't recall the source of it, having source amnesia. However, the content was very similar to other things, which I've heard from equestrians. Which is, the idea of "the feel" or "feel." The idea of simply having an intuitive sense with a horse based on experience or innate talent of feeling animals, of just knowing how to work a horse, get it to go left, get it to go right, get it to do what you want, to have the relationship built, but based on the sense, that horse sense, developed over time.

Bell: Whatever you want to call it, is it intuition? Is it some gift you're born with? Are you feeling their body with your body and vice versa? Because it is all non-verbal. It's very complex. So, when we horse people get together and talk to each other, and non-horse people hear us, they think we're crazy.

Jacobsen: There is a symbiotic relationship there for sure. What was the feeling when you were elected president?

Bell: I was very honoured to have people put their faith in me to steward the organization. My goals were to strengthen government, governance, and financial accountability. That resonated with people. So, that was a nice endorsement of how I thought I could contribute to the organization. I previously held the position of treasurer. So, I had a solid grasp of the finances of the organization. I thought I could contribute to the governance structure. Yes, it was really an honour,

humbling really, to have people say, “Yeah, we believe you can lead the organization in this way.”

Jacobsen: Do you think a separation economically in Canadian society in some places at some levels can prevent entrance into equestrianism, whether founding a facility, owning the horse, or getting lessons?

Bell: Most definitely. It is something that I think all the equestrian societies or federations should take a look at because involvement in equestrianism is declining. The barriers to becoming involved are part of that reason. What can we do about that? From my own personal circumstance, though as a girl with a passion of horses, I was on the wrong side of the tracks to do anything about it. I’m very sure. There are inner city kids who would *love* to connect with horses. You have to figure out ways to make that happen. It is a good thing. I don’t know if you have heard of the Urban Cowboys in Philadelphia.

Jacobsen: No, I haven’t.

Bell: Yes, it has been something that’s been part of inner city Philadelphia forever, sounds like. It is people who actually board or stable and ride their horses in inner city Philadelphia. They are giving back to the community by engaging youth that would never have an opportunity to be with a horse. It would be really neat to do something like that, like in Calgary or in Edmonton. Not sure how we’d do it. They have such a longstanding history of being there physically present in inner city Philadelphia. It’d be pretty hard to move them out. We would just need to find a space in inner city Calgary to set something up.

Jacobsen: Would you recommend any books, documentaries, or interviews for individuals who would want to get involved in equestrianism in Alberta?

Bell: I would recommend all the resources on the Alberta Equestrian Federation website and to follow our social media feeds. There’s lots of entry-level and little bit above information, programs, at Equine Guelph – University of Guelph’s equine program. Personally, I like to read about horses. So, anything I can get my hands on from a book about basic grooming to something that’s a little more nuanced like *Zen Mind, Zen Horse* by Allan Hamilton who is a neuroscientist. There are lots of different kinds of books out there. So, go visit your library and talk to your librarian about whatever your interests are, at whatever level, people who have horses or have a collection books are always to happy share or pass them on.

They could even be exercises to do with your horse if you have one of your own, or more about understanding your horse. So, the body language of horses and communication with horses, that sort of thing. Movies and things like that, there are some good ones out there. You will find horse people watching a Western movie and critiquing the riding [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Bell: *Hidalgo* is an interesting movie about someone who did a race across Africa and their experience. Of course, for all the younger people, all the oldie but goldie ones, like *Black Beauty*, *The Black Stallion*, *The Black Stallion Returns*.

Jacobsen: Any final thoughts on the interview today?

Bell: I want to thank you, Scott. It’s been fun. I’m really excited for your personal horse adventure. How you’re growing and exploring, and figuring out what fits for you.

Jacobsen: Thank you.

Bell: So, thank you for giving us a ring and allowing me the opportunity to talk about my personal experience and the Alberta Equestrian Federation, and just horse stuff in general.

Jacobsen: It's been lovely, Sandy, thank you.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 7: Leann (Pitman) Manuel on Wisdom, Intuition, Disabilities, and Elitism (2)

Leann (Pitman) Manuel's bio states: *"Leann was as good as born on a horse, and has been fortunate to work with them daily since her very early twenties. From Pony Club and 4H as a child, through national level competition and several World's Show qualifications with her Quarter Horse as a teen, to some Dressage tests, a few Cowboy Challenge clinics, and the daily operations at Riding 4 Life today, Leann's horsemanship practice continues to seek out anything and everything she may be able to learn or experience with horses. Leann is passionate about helping others realize the value of having horses in their lives – no matter the breed or creed – and she hopes to continue to grow and nurture the horsemanship community in her region well into the future."* Manuel shares her deep-rooted passion for horses, stemming from childhood experiences with her family's backyard barn. She founded Riding 4 Life to support beginners, particularly children and individuals with autism and other mental health challenges. Leann emphasizes hiring familiar individuals, assessing horsemanship intuitively through long-term observation rather than formal criteria. Her program focuses on practical, hands-on learning, teaching leadership qualities like courage and leading by example. She addresses industry elitism and financial barriers that hinder broader participation in equestrianism. Additionally, Leann discusses the negative impact of Covid-19 on the industry and advocates for greater inclusivity and accessibility.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: When you're doing prospective employee interviews, how do you evaluate individuals knowing the difficulty of the job?

Leann (Pitman) Manuel: So, I have yet to hire somebody who I am not already familiar with. They have already been a client. I have been their foundation of horsemanship from the get-go. Or I've seen them with their horse or other horses and, at a distance, been able to see their horsemanship.

Jacobsen: Is it an intuitive sense when observing them over a long period of time?

Manuel: Some would say, "It is intuitive." It is not as if I have this conscious thinking template. Every time, my eyes are on a horse. I'm with a student training. It is this mindful awareness. I don't have to put words or language to understand everything. There are ways of knowing and being, and skills that I have; I don't necessarily have them written down. I'm trying to write part of my curriculum down because there are opportunities to get some course credit for some of the teens.

Of course, I have to play nice with the school system and demonstrate on paper. It is not my favourite thing to do. I would much rather drag someone out to the riding arena and the round pen, and let's do this thing. You are going to get better by doing. I can help you do that. So, yes, how do I really know? I don't know if I have adequate words for that. I can give people words if they really need them. Like any other funder, if I need to prove outcomes, show me the funder requirements, I'll get it done.

I don't know if you are familiar with any of Malcolm Gladwell's work. His book *Blink* offers something I appreciate. I appreciate many of his books. He talks about the thin, slicing look at something. Folks who become masters or professionals at what they do begin to trust their whole selves. That's a big part of what I have done over the years. It is a skill and a competence, and teaching people to trust themselves. I am actively pursuing this here.

Jacobsen: It's difficult translating wisdom and intuition based on experience to a formal curriculum. I could imagine the difficulty in that.

Manuel: Oh, man! Sometimes, staring at the screen, "How do I describe this in three well-written paragraphs?"

Jacobsen: What if someone doesn't have a lot of experience, though they want to become a part of riding for life? How do you make a greenhorn not a greenhorn?

Manuel: That's the bulk of what we do. I shouldn't say everybody. But client-wise, the vast majority of our clients haven't really ridden a horse before, maybe a pony ride. I almost do this on purpose. When I originally started in 2004, when I started Riding 4 Life formally, I made a point of not re-recruiting the same horse people. Those were not my clients. If you had already been a client at several other places, the ne hottest thing, I don't want you.

I want beginners, pretty please, because there is a lot of unlearning that has to happen. A lot of habits, preconceived ideas, "cognitive bias" would be one of the academic terms for it. I have got to do battle with a lot of that first. I think I have it easy as far as clients because most of the clients are 8,9, or 10, years old. They are open, curious, in school, skilled in growth and learning. It is their number one job in life.

So, it is super easy to get them started. Our curriculum, some of the core skills, I put under the heading, "Leadership." Four or five parts of that are abundantly important. One is lead by example. Courage is another one. Those are two things to go to in the curriculum. Never expect students to do things you are not willing to do; you can't teach something you can't do. We do it. I learn really well by seeing it, hearing it, and being in the environment, and letting it soak it, without having to focus on having to take the write notes, study, spit it out on the test.

I've been there, done that. Let's get them near a horse, on a horse. One of the other important things, I think, which works well here, anyway. We have the curriculum written down in written form with skills and expectations. Our staff know what the skills look like and what they can get you with a horse. But we are not going to make you read a text about it. We are not going to make you memorize it. We might not even mention that vocabulary.

Somehow, we will get you going through the motions of the skills. We might tell you later what we did. I have a newcomer to our staff who is a parent of a client. They have experience. They own a couple of horses. She is starting to teach beginner teachers with us. She has been certified as a beginner instructor elsewhere. She's like, "Leann, where is the book? What is the vocabulary? I need to teach them the right word for things." I'm like, "No, you don't." Some of our clients are non-verbal.

I don't care what it is called. I want them to learn it first. The way we encode, the way memory works, we memorize or learn things by hanging them on other experiences. It is useless to tell them what a billet is. "What is the point pocket on your saddle?" Is this useful to their horsemanship journey at this point? Well, no, honestly, the only time "point pocket" has been useful has been saddle fitting at a high-end competition with my fancy horse deciding if this saddle might be costing me a half-pointing on one point on my dressage test at medium level or in a Pony Club test.

Otherwise, I could go my life not knowing what the point pocket was, so we try to keep it down to earth that way. Also, remove those barriers of overwhelm, so many beginners hit them.

Jacobsen: What other developmental disabilities outside of the autism spectrum come forward for some of the clientele?

Manuel: Oh, gosh, a whole range, another thing, I should mention. Autism is such a high percentage of my clients because there is funding. As a social worker, in my past life, I am accustomed to dealing with government legislation, systems, and being able to do the language bit. So, I've been a service provider with the Ministry of Family and Children for a number of years. That's the most available funding pocket, which is autism funding. We get a lot of requests.

We struggle to get those kids' services paid for, sometimes. But I'd say, "If it weren't for funding, the number one thing is mental health." Kids and teens with, usually, anxiety disorders, depression, etc. There are all kinds of labels that come with this. Through my eyes, they come through trauma. They're all trauma related. Trauma growing up in a family that isn't the idyllic family, never need a therapist. There are so many people going through so many traumas in our culture.

Our society isn't good at recognizing them and healing them. Trauma is common. We could normalize it in a lot of cases. We don't, by and large. We fail at that. That's one of the things that I've been successful at here. "Oh, you have trauma. Welcome to the club! [Laughing] Here's how we incorporate that."

Jacobsen: Do you incorporate your narrative of trauma when talking to clientele or staff to normalize the conversation?

Manuel: When it comes up, yes, definitely, I have a staffer who I am thinking of in this moment. They are having overwhelming anxiety attacks. It tends to happen as a new client is showing up. They have to meet the client and be the superhero instructor. All these expectations and intrusive thoughts come, 'I am going to suck. I am like, "Yeah, you might. But that's okay. You are just starting and learning. I am here for you. If you suck and somebody complains, then I will have a conversation with that parent. I will remind them what it is like."

I want to normalize it and bring it back down to Earth. One of my criticisms for my own industry and my own colleagues in the horse industry. There is a certain measure of elitism running rampant.

Jacobsen: Is it worse in different sectors?

Manuel: No.

Jacobsen: It is a thread throughout everything?

Manuel: Yes. It doesn't matter if you are on the \$50,000 dressage horse. You're hoping to compete in Kentucky. Or you're on the shining spark show horse... it doesn't matter at that level. You run into elitism in every discipline everywhere.

Jacobsen: How does this change the industry's interactions with outsiders and with one another?

Manuel: I have a lot of thoughts about why that is. It would be an entirely different interview on colonialism and all that jazz. It is everywhere. I've worked in a lot of different disciplines, worked with a lot of different breeds of horses, been to a lot of different horse shows. After a while, they all start to look the same. So, here I am, in my muck boots, with very few brand name pieces of clothing anymore, which you could find at a tack store, most of mine come from Value Village because it does the same job at this level.

Once upon a time, when I was qualifying for the World's, it did matter that I had the particular piece of equipment for that horse doing that job. For the vast majority of people who want to compete in the industry, if it is, basically, safe, adequate, and not hurting anybody, I don't want to hear about it. There are more important things to worry about.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 8: Rachael Dent-Flynn on Flar Equine Experience

Rachael Dent-Flynn is the Owner/Lead Facilitator of Flar Equine Experience. Flar Equine Experience facilitates life skills and relationships alongside horses. Dent-Flynn's background is having a lived experience of trauma, coming out into the LGBTQ2+ community, & PTSD from volunteer firefighting. Knowing the lack of effective affordable resources for her own mental health journey, she wanted to be able to offer a healing experience that could help someone along their journeys. Dent-Flynn, owner and senior facilitator of Flar Equine Experience in Hubley, Nova Scotia, specializes in equine-assisted mental health services. Certified as an Equine Assisted Learning Facilitator and Personal Development Coach, she continually adapts to new methods. She highlights that horsemanship in Nova Scotia lags behind provinces like BC, Alberta, and Ontario due to limited education and awareness of horses' mental health benefits. Flar Equine Experience offers comprehensive horse care and structured programs to develop life skills and relationships through equine therapy, particularly aiding veterans and individuals with autism, PTSD, anxiety, and depression. Rachael advocates for greater inclusivity, funding, and accessibility in the equestrian industry.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What sorts of experiences and training were part of becoming a more mature and experienced equestrian?

Rachael Dent-Flynn: I got certified as an Equine Assisted Learning Facilitator & Equine Assisted Personal Development Coach; however, with horses, I'm always learning & growing as new methods are presented.

Jacobsen: How prominent is horsemanship in Nova Scotia? Most of Canadian equestrianism seems centralized in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario.

Dent-Flynn: It's way behind the other provinces you've mentioned...however for no other reason than education and awareness of the effectiveness on mental health being in the presence of horses.

Jacobsen: You are the Owner and Senior Facilitator of Flar Equine Experience. Did you create it, too?

Dent-Flynn: Yes.

Jacobsen: What are the tasks and responsibilities involved with the ownership and senior facilitation work of Flar Equine Experience?

Dent-Flynn: Absolutely everything from horse care, welfare, and maintenance to running all the programs/sessions and then all the business side of things.

Jacobsen: Flar Equine Experience is based in Hubley, NS. What is the state of the horse industry in Nova Scotia?

Dent-Flynn: It's in need of provincial or federal recognition just like the other provinces. We have enough organizations doing it all for the right reasons, and for the best life for the horses and humans alike.

Jacobsen: What resources exist in Hubley to help with the maintenance, even growth, of Flar Equine Experience?

Dent-Flynn: Not many at all.

Jacobsen: On social media, Facebook specifically, it is listed as a mental health service. Why focus on mental health as the equine-based service of Flar Equine Experience?

Dent-Flynn: Absolutely, because now more than ever everyone needs to know the true empowering effectiveness skills you can gain from being in the presence of the horse that can then transfer into your own challenges in struggling away from the arena.

Jacobsen: You facilitate life skills and relationships at Flar Equine Experience. How is this done, in a rather unique way?

Dent-Flynn: Yes, we sure do, through objectively driven skill based structured obstacles that you & your horse will navigate through together.

Jacobsen: If we can talk about it, please, the horses have helped with your anxiety, depression, PTSD, impatience, and building trusting relationships. How do animals speak to this for you?

Dent-Flynn: They have a natural ability to have us look within in the present moments as we navigate through the obstacles in the arena. While doing so, it brings all these challenges to the forefront where I couldn't hide or bullshit my way through it or shut down and try and avoid it. So, in those instant moments, I had to recognize what was going on with me, name it, and then navigate differently through the obstacles with the horses. When I did that, it was both successful for my own confidence of doing it with a 1,200lb animal, but it was instant validation from the horse's willingness to be right alongside me! Holy shit, totally empowering, and for me, that was my break-awake because years of talk therapy never provided that opportunity or feeling.

Jacobsen: How have horses, particularly, helped with working on the aforementioned personal difficulties?

Dent-Flynn: The skills learned alongside in the arena while navigating through challenges with a 1200lb teacher are able to be gained in a safe, non-judgemental, healing environment....which in turn transfers into challenging situations away from the arena, where I caught myself taking a second to breath, remembering how I dealt with it in the arena, and then navigating through it differently in daily life situations to live a more positive, confident overall better life.

Jacobsen: How can people become involved in the horse industry in Nova Scotia?

Dent-Flynn: Many ways, volunteering is always amazing, can never have too many hands helping around the barn. Fundraising for local equine organizations as we aren't funded currently, get the word out there by word of mouth and lastly is education and awareness of all the places doing phenomenal healing with horses.

Jacobsen: What is equine therapy?

Dent-Flynn: Simply, it is experiential learning providing life skills and personal development opportunities alongside horses that transfers into all other avenues of daily life.

Jacobsen: How does Flar Equine Experience apply this to assisting veterans?

Dent-Flynn: Call, email, social media or drop by!

Jacobsen: What are the statistics on veterans in Nova Scotia?

Dent-Flynn: 1,300 are war service veterans, 385,000 are Canadian Armed Forces, regular & primary veterans.

Jacobsen: What has been the clinical research and popular feedback on equine therapy from veterans coming into and out of Flar Equine Experience?

Dent-Flynn: That they have never felt so safe, not judged & that they can still be hyper vigilant, but it's in a different more positive way & they have something to continuously look forward to.

Jacobsen: Veterans remain an interesting portion of Canada. Both honoured and venerated, though neglected and impoverished in numerous ways. We honour them with ceremonies and days of celebration. We venerate them with medals and words of affirmation. We neglect them with lack of various resources. We impoverish them with lies about honour and dignity in, in truth, having them as hired killers for the State, who have PTSD, damaged bodies and minds, and tensions on their social and familial ties in the midst of service – even after service. How do you navigate these various narratives coming to Flar Equine Experience?

Dent-Flynn: We couldn't agree more & we love this question because we are doing everything we can at FLAR to be the “catcher” of those who feel they have been failed by everyone else. This is a common theme to this day and many times the first session conversation. However, the beauty of the horses that ends up most times in the vet becoming very emotional is that the horses can't lie (they aren't made up to) and they don't judge, which instantly is overwhelmingly positive because most haven't felt that supported directly or indirectly in many, many years.

Jacobsen: What are the more meaningful narratives of success coming out of equine therapy through Flar Equine Experience for you?

Dent-Flynn: When individuals can feel totally confident in articulating their once seen as weak challenged stories of struggles into telling their journey in hopes to help someone else not feel alone in their struggles.

Jacobsen: How can people support and/or become involved in Flar Equine Experience?

Dent-Flynn: Many ways, share all the social media things, volunteer, help fundraisers or find sponsors, help with marketing & promotions for awareness and keep the conversations going!

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Rachael.

Dent-Flynn: Thank you so much.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 9: Leann (Pitman) Manuel on Issues in the Industry (3)

Leann (Pitman) Manuel's bio states: *"Leann was as good as born on a horse, and has been fortunate to work with them daily since her very early twenties. From Pony Club and 4H as a child, through national level competition and several World's Show qualifications with her Quarter Horse as a teen, to some Dressage tests, a few Cowboy Challenge clinics, and the daily operations at Riding 4 Life today, Leann's horsemanship practice continues to seek out anything and everything she may be able to learn or experience with horses. Leann is passionate about helping others realize the value of having horses in their lives – no matter the breed or creed – and she hopes to continue to grow and nurture the horsemanship community in her region well into the future."* Manuel upholds values such as Community, Inclusion, and Leadership. She hires only individuals she knows and assesses their horsemanship intuitively through long-term observation rather than formal criteria. Leann emphasizes thorough horsemanship practices, focusing on safety and self-assessment rather than strict protocols. She critiques industry standards for lacking evidence-based approaches and highlights issues like insurance misconceptions and elitism. Discussing business challenges, Leann mentions high land costs and limited local support. She advocates for greater inclusivity, standardized training, and stronger industry advocacy to reduce barriers and promote growth in equestrianism.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: This raises questions about standards. This would, probably, be an analysis at two levels: 1) organizational, 2) individual. So, let's start with the one that's probably more straightforward, the individual level of standards. How do you embody the standards for the company to make individuals within it, or coming to it, align with it, inasmuch as possible? Also, what are those values?

Leann (Pitman) Manuel: So, I've listed values on my website. They're words. Things like "Community," "Inclusion," "Leadership." I'm looking for those words that will satisfy the world out there [Laughing]. Hopefully, it will orient them to my way of doing things. My standard is: I am open to anything. But if you're going to bring me something that isn't what we do, you should show its benefit and cost to us. We go from there. I'm open to explaining to people if there is a very certain way that I want everyone to put the bridals on the horses. It is a fairly complex procedure. It seems like overkill to a lot of people.

Until, they spend a half of an hour with me. Then I explain all the whys. Same with mounting a horse. I am very particular about how you use the mounting block, how you approach, how you ask your horse to come pick you up, how you stand, and how you get on. Because it is never about just putting the bridal on. It is never about just mounting up. It is horsemanship, warm-up, orienting your horse, a safety check. It is a really complex thing. The most important thing horsemanship-wise, I want all my clients to do is to assess themselves and their horse correctly. "At my skill level, is it safe for me to get on the horse like this?"

I've done certifications with the Certified Horsemanship Association or Equine Canada, have been in Pony Club, and all of these different organizations. They have different protocols for different reasons. I find them all lacking because none of them can address that piece. "How do you know if you as an individual have the skillset to handle the horse in front of you?" There is the thin slice again. All the things that can't necessarily be put into words.

So, what I end up doing with my clients is asking, “How do you feel? What is your nervous system saying to you?” That is really important. I have teens, for example, who are incredibly skilled. I would hand them all kinds of fire-breathing dragon horses. If they don’t believe that they can, that means that they can’t. Because they don’t believe that they have the skill, yet. As soon as I put the lead rope in that teen’s hands, their nervous system will be activated. They will be in fight-flight-freeze. It will not be good. It is hard to put into words.

My husband asked me this. I met him. He was a novice horseman. His mom had horses. He rode a pony as a kid. He hadn’t owned horses since. We were dating. He asked, “How involved do you want me to get into your horse habit?”

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Manuel: We were dating. He realizes this is pretty serious. It would be nice if I start competing again, etc., and some big deal thing; and you’re there to support me. He is a musician. When COVID hit, his whole world collapsed. Now, he is working full-time here. [Laughing] So, how involved are you, honey? He came from novice to a competent beginner instructor. He is especially good at ground work because he has been riding alongside me doing my thing.

He said the other day, “You always joke about when you’re connecting with teenagers and how the adults are talking, and the adult sound like, ‘Womp, womp, wah, wah, wah.’ I’m still in that stage. All these people are talking, talking, talking. I’m not listening to them. I’m watching where they’re at emotionally, their behaviour. Because behaviour is communication. Behaviour in this horseman world is much more meaningful as far as I am concerned.” So, I am teaching these young people, unfortunately, to ignore their elders sometimes [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Manuel: To get a good sense where they’re at and where their horse is at, horses are pretty safe over, under, around them, when they are relaxed, calm, at ease, even blind spots, spook spots, danger zones, are only dangerous if a horse is elevated. The same is true of humans. If I can give that skillset to people, then I am pretty sure I am giving them the skillset that doesn’t show up in a lot of books or a lot of standards that they can practice in a lot of ways. I tend to not care if they are not holding the reins exactly right, or if the equipment is mis-matched with an English bridle and a Western saddle, or vice versa. I don’t really care [Laughing].

Are they safe? Are they having fun? Are they able to pursue whatever the next question is? I am good with that.

Jacobsen: This experiential knowledge transfer is non-standardized in a way. How could it be standardized?

Manuel: Right?

Jacobsen: The thin line between the verbal and the non-verbal. In journalism, the verbal is everything when integrated with the non-verbal, but the presentation of the verbal is everything. In the equine industry, a greenhorn, myself, or an experienced person, yourself the non-verbal is everything, and the verbal, couldn’t care less, by the sounds of it. Same time, it raises questions to the other portion of that question, originally, outside of the individual into the organizational. So, Equine Canada was mentioned. There are federations, societies, associations, provincially and otherwise, in the country, or international with FEI, to try to set a standard, to attempt to set a standard. I have heard mixed opinions about these organizations.

Manuel: Yes.

Jacobsen: What are the efforts to make a standard teaching regimen, so everyone, at least, has an acceptable minimum when training?

Manuel: Yikes. I'm going to ask you. I've been working on this problem as long as I have had the formalized business because, as soon as you formalize business, then you have to contend with public perception, personal standards (and why), communication with the outer world (because there is a world beyond my herd), insurance (a massive one) and how do we do that. I argue all the time with insurance brokers every year when I have to pay that bill.

Yes, this isn't anywhere as dangerous as they purport because of the experience, because of my approach. They don't deal with it that way. They quote all this data and evidence. I say, "Yes.... No." [Laughing] I challenge the evidence because there is no comparison between overseeing Riding 4 Life and someone who bought a horse, who they can manage to catch, saddle up, and ride. Who invites their friend to get on it, they end up in the E.R.

These are different things altogether. As far as insurance companies gather their data, they don't distinguish between the two. Immediately, I have a problem with the data because those people will not purchase business insurance. I do. I don't want to suffer for their mistakes. That's one example of the organizational issues facing us. The other one, I talk about it, when it comes up. We compare the horse industry to other industries. Like healthcare, healthcare says it's evidence-based. It has a leg to stand on because it doesn't select data democratically.

There is scientific method behind it. There is a whole lot of education behind what data, how that data is collected, how that data is used. There are a lot of checks and balances. I have yet to find an organization in the equine industry on this planet based on postsecondary education who meets this criterion of evidence-based. These are all member driven organizations. There are very few criteria that you have to meet to be a member. In most cases, you don't have to own a horse or prove that you've ridden one ever. You just purchased the membership.

Jacobsen: It seems like a massive gap.

Manuel: My father-in-law, he takes pictures. He says, "You guys are doing great and goes home." He could purchase a membership. Now, he is a voting member. So, right there, stop, guys! These membership driven associations produce a standard, a watered-standard, unspecific standard that those who are exercising their franchise in that organization can't agree on, by simple majority. I'm like, "This is not adequate." I don't have a better answer at this point.

There are a whole bunch of cultural and historical things leading us to this place. Healthcare in the Western world has grown and improved for the – let's say – last 100 years. It is the best technology, best practice, professionalism, education, and standardization. Our government is involved in it. The notion of peer-reviewed, where there are folks who hold PhDs holding others accountable.

When I was a teenager coming up, there was a woman who ran a large ranch who sat on the committee for the curriculum and standards for Equine Canada's Western program. The advice given to me by my mom, when I was 10, 11, 12, 13, was: If you go there, don't tie your horse to anything, don't let it drink out of the water troughs, there were practices happening there. Even my amateur experienced horse owning mom knew, she didn't want our horses exposed to it. This is a person who was at the forefront in the '80s and '90s developing the standardized Western curriculum for Equine Canada. So, yes, there are big problems. How do you vet those people?

Jacobsen: This is the divisiveness (positives and negatives) in conversation on the record and off the record coming my way, even in the earliest portions of this series.

Manuel: What? I am not alone?

Jacobsen: [Laughing] It is extremely common.

Manuel: We cannot change the problem if we don't correctly identify it first.

Jacobsen: People want change. Then there are differential issues. So, not organizational, but survivability, so, you have a growing business. Others have a stale business, which is pretty good. It's stable. Others have declining businesses. Others have closing businesses. It could be weather issues. It could be hyper-rural problems. It could be rising land prices. It could be agricultural land reserve bylaws or restrictions that apply to farms and stables, and ranches, and so on, which create issues particular to that geography, then impacting the business. For Riding 4 Life, what issues are coming up for you, in Penticton?

Manuel: Land, the cost of real estate, land use availability, proximity of it to my target market.

Jacobsen: How far are clients travelling to you?

Manuel: To me, I operate on the Penticton Indian Band. The channel running through the Penticton River. One side of the channel is City of Penticton. The other side is Penticton Indian Band land. I could almost throw a rock and hit City of Penticton land. I couldn't be more ideally located. The trouble is, I just paid board to a larger facility. So, I operate on Green Mountain Equestrian Centre. There are probably 50 horses set up at peak.

It is not well set up for that at all. There are no resources, no help, no community planning on our side or acknowledging us. We are surrounded by industrial stuff. We are under the flight path of the airport. There's B.C. Hydro stuff coming through the property. We are really faking it until we make it here. The only win is our location to a fairly large urban population for the only facility located in Penticton that is accessible to beginners. So, land is a problem. I could probably lease some acreage in Keremeos.

That's 45 minutes away. Most of my clientele, their families cannot cope with that big of a drive time to get to their weekly session. I probably lose half of my target market. Would I survive? Yes, I could pick up different clients. I would be resourceful. I would be okay. It is not my passion. Also, it is not the biggest need that I see. I want to get more people into this industry because I recognize that it is a quickly shrinking industry.

It is not for lack of people wanting to get in. Horse people are horrible for advocating for themselves in the wider world. We really are. There is not a lot of political will or are not a lot of political agencies who know what to do with us. We are not really on the radar screen. Here's the other question, which you have probably already run into, "Are we part of the agricultural industry or the recreational industry? What are we?"

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Manuel: This whole business of trying to figure out what guidelines to follow. Are we an essential service because half of my clients are accessing me for therapeutic services? Now, Sport B.C. was the one I ended up following because they are the only ones returning my call [Laughing]. "Yes, we think you are with us, but nobody knows for sure." Even boarders who own the horses weren't allowed to go on the property and see their horses under COVID lockdown for a

month or two, part of the change there needs to be people who are in the horse industry down to one hobby horse.

We are not well-organized that way and need to advocate for ourselves in some organized fashion. Far be it from me to figure out how to do that.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 10: Kathy Asseiro on Symatree Farm (1)

Kathy Asseiro's biography on Symatree Farm's website states: "Kathy is an Advanced Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) facilitator and the Program Director for Symatree Farm. A lifelong respect for horses, combined with a strong belief in the value of experiential learning and an intense desire to help others, naturally led her to EAL. From operating heavy equipment, to earning a couple of university degrees, partnering in a three-generation family business, and achieving certification as an elementary Montessori teacher, she now draws upon her training, skills and experiences to head up the programs at Symatree Farm. Whether she's facilitating a session, tending the herd, working on curriculum design, greasing farm machinery, or swinging a hammer, it all comes together in fulfilling her dream... bringing horses and people together." Asseiro began her equestrian journey at age four and now owns 22 horses. She founded Symatree to focus on mental health through equine-assisted learning, offering programs for youth, teens, and adults with autism, ADHD, PTSD, and other challenges. Certified as an Equine Assisted Learning Facilitator, Kathy emphasizes experiential learning and the horse-human bond to develop life skills and emotional resilience. She manages horse welfare, integrates traumatized horses into balanced herds, and collaborates with mental health experts like Dr. Kelly Penner Hutton. Kathy advocates for inclusivity and standardized training in the equestrian industry, addressing financial and organizational barriers.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, today, we are here with Kathy of Symatree Farm. We will be talking about your background and then have a little bit of an introduction of the work of intrigue. Yourself, how did you get involved in horses, in ponies, in equestrianism in general?

Kathy Asseiro: So, this is going to be one of those stories to when I was 4-years-old! [Laughing]

Jacobsen: Every story! [Laughing]

Asseiro: It wasn't there, except for a few generations back on a home. I was 4-years-old being asked by my dad. He'd go on a business trip. I'd ask for a pony. I wouldn't get it. Fast forward 40 or so years, I have 1, 2, 3, and then 22. [Laughing] Also, the other side of it, I remember being 6-years-old and being really, really driven to do what I could to have people be joyful. I wanted people to be joyful and happy. Life choices and circumstances took me to the point where the horses and bringing the joy converged. I was able to get the property. Things fell in to place. With a little bit of work, this is what we now have today.

Jacobsen: Why decide to create Symatree in the first place? Because it's one of those industries that is plural. So, you can do a lot of things with it. A lot of people in popular culture will know dressage. They'll call it, 'Horses dancing.' There's show jumping. They'll know it as horses jumping over rails. Yet, why focus on gathering the types of horses and ponies that you do? Why focus on mental health and things on that nature?

Asseiro: I've got to say, "It is where my heart has always been." So many people who I run into over the years, they have needed something. There wasn't something always there for them. The rescues that we have brought in. They have so much heart and so much personality. They are deserving of a second, third, or fourth chance. Same with the people. I was wired to do whatever I can to help people find the place of joy in themselves. Then they can go on and be the best version of themselves.

Jacobsen: A lot of Canadian society, or, maybe, more, at least, has been focusing on the phrase “mental health” and its varying concepts and implications, particularly around young or the veterans or LGBTI communities. Who are individuals – youth, teens, and adults – coming to you, to work with your team?

Asseiro: It’s right across the board. Our team, we have a lead facilitator who is in charge of the youth programming. We have a lead facilitator in charge of team programming. I am in charge of the adult programming, which is something beginning to be developed in a unique way. We have taken the COVID years to transition a bit. We were working with a local school division. They would send 100 or so children a year. We’ve been an approved provider for Child & Family Services.

So, the children that we see are on the spectrum, have ADHD, etc. They have all these letters. We don’t focus on the letters. We focus on who the child is. Our youth facilitator is phenomenal. There is a lot of angst in kids nowadays. She loves to work with those because she sees beyond the angst. She sees what is behind it, which is fear or sadness. It is this remarkable human being doing the best that they can do with the horses to bring that out.

A lot of those behaviours that they were exhibiting before simply fall away. For teens, it is about identity. Who they are? Who they want to be? We will do overnight workshops with them as well. It is a lot of fun. We design to be fun. Nobody wants to do heavy work, especially teens. There is enough of that already. With the adults, I call them the phoenix.; The person who has been knocked down. The flame has not been extinguished. They still have a dream.

They are still seeking. They don’t know which way to look. Those are the adults that I like to work with. If the person is looking to better themselves in some way, we are open to working with them.

Jacobsen: You are Advanced Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) facilitator. What is an EAL facilitator?

Asseiro: So, my training was done at Cartier Equine in Saskatchewan. They were one of the first, maybe the first, approved by Equine Canada to do this type of training. It was about 12 or 13 years ago now, when I got the training. So, we would be equine experts. We understand horses really, really well. We create programming either one-on-one, to address specific needs, or groups, to gather and think. This age group, these are the typical challenges faced by them.” It will be a program based in a story that is imaginative and playful.

They are characters within the story. As they interact with the horses, they build their emotional vocabulary, learn to collaborate, how to problem solve, how to use common sense, how to make decisions. All these things that they struggle with in real life. As a facilitator, we are taught how to take that programming. For the delivery of the programming, it is not like teaching, where we are the ones with the answers. Facilitating is different, it is creating the environment with having the experience and the child, teen, or adult engaging in the experience, and finding their own answers.

Our horses are so used to all kinds of different energies and behaviours. So, if a person behaves in a particular way, and if the horse is uncomfortable with it, the horse will leave., They are allowed to do that. The person will look to us. We tend to look away at that point. You will find your own best answer. We trust everybody here that they will find that. They go back and try again. Then they find the success is theirs. Facilitators set the experience and letting it play out,

but making it safe. We have never had an issue with that. The prime role of the facilitator is to let the person have their experience, learn what they need to from that.

After that experience, we give a place for them to be aware of what just happened. They may think, "I took a horse over a barrel or under a curtain." We help them see their gifts in having that happen and how they can carry that into the world outside of the arena.

Jacobsen: What issues come with horses who may have been malnourished, may have forms of physical or mental trauma? How do you work with horses that may have those kind of issues in a herd.

Asseiro: So, the herd is the magical part of it. We keep between 3 and 4 herds. Horses have hierarchies, naturally, out in the wild. They have hierarchies here. We don't want to put them all together in one. We have natural herd bosses and natural herd mares. We make sure the composition of our herds is healthy. If a horse is creating trouble in a herd or having a hard time settling in, we will pull them from that herd and into another herd, shifting them until they are as comfortable as they can be.

When we first bring a horse in, there is a good chance it will have some challenges and difficulties. We brought in a 4-year-old, our youngest. His hooves hadn't been trimmed in 4 years, probably. Maybe, he'd seen a farrier once. The front feet weren't too bad. The back feet were terrible, really, really long. We have an outstanding farrier. She put the nippers to it, super carefully. She showed the worst. The bad feet had abscessed. We kept him in the stall for 7 months. Every second day, his feet would be soaked in Epsom salts. We would pack them with powder. We would have the farrier out every 2 weeks to trim them and working away at it. After 7 months, we got permission to put him into the herd. That's what we did. \When you put a new horse into the herd, they will get chased a bit.

We put him into the herd, made sure that he had a separate pile of hay. We knew the herd would push him away. We made sure that he knew the hierarchy and knew his place. We will keep them separated for as long as we need to get them well. The best we can do to get them well mental and emotional wellbeing is to get them into a balanced herd. We wouldn't take in 5 at a time and stick them in one herd. It is overwhelming for the herd. We take, maybe 2, at a time, and get them to that point. With this little guy, we put him into the herd. His presence in that herd created some angst within the herd. Some of the other horses, like Sawyer, were really unhappy. A couple of the mares were joining up with the little guy. The three of them were being belligerent.

I pulled this tiny out. I put him in with the bigs because the big herd is so well balanced. So, he spent probably a month and a half or two with the big herd. They really helped him because horses understand horses. We can understand them to a degree, but our communication is not as subtle or immediate. So, the big guys helped him to learn how to be a good friend. Now, he is back out. We are doing special treatment for his feet. He will go out into a new herd and will settle in really well. The first thing for the mental and emotional health is to get them into a healthy herd and let the horses help them with that.

Depending on how much their trust or respect has been shattered when they came, it will determine how long they stay in the herd without human interaction. We are in the herd interacting with them every day. So, the new horse will see us interacting with all of the others. They start to

see how the others are trusting us, and helps the new horse understand that this person is different other people who I have been with before. Some times, in some cases, it can take years before a horse is healed enough to let even us comfortably approach.

Spartacus is one of those. One of the most damaged we've ever received. His trust was absolutely shattered. Now, he is absolutely golden. He is such a good mentor for people. If you have a child with ADHD with the big energy, then he will leave. A child almost has the horse as a barometer. We don't have to do anything. They do it themselves. The child learns they can rate their energy up or down because they so badly want to get to that horse. So, it is pure magic.

Jacobsen: How attuned are horses, ponies, and so on, to people?

Asseiro: My goodness, it would be hard to describe it in words, I guess. I've got a number of clients who I am working with now. The client will be interacting with the horse, even walking. The horse is on loose lead line walking beside the person. All of the sudden, the horse will drop back and start creating a bit of tension in the lead line or the horse will push/move into the person I've got one horse that will speed up a little bit, turn 90 degrees, and stop in front of the person, creating a road block. This is with more adult people. I will ask the clients, "What happened in you right there?"

They will say, "I was questioning myself. Thinking you don't think I'm good enough." Their old stories come up. Every time their stories come up. The horse would walk in front of them and cut them off. I am 200 feet away. I have no idea what is going on, except I see the horse change. They walk more stiffly. Something changes in them. I mention this to the person. They start to watch the horse. Now, they are walking along, a horse cuts them off or walks back. The horse reminds them. "You can do what you want to do, but I am aware. I noticed a shift in you and am aware." It is remarkable.

Jacobsen: How is the coordination with Dr. Kelly Penner Hutton of Peace of Mind?

Asseiro: I have been working with her for about 6 years now. She comes out 1 day a week bringing her clients, who are children, teens, adults, as well. We have done a couple of group sessions together for nurses and that sort of thing. When she is in the arena, she is the mental health expert. I am the equine expert. We will be collaborating completely and allowing the person to interact. She will move in to processing something if it is a complex trauma. Or she will do her EMDR. She is phenomenal at it. She will help them with the coping skills on the psychological end of things. I will be on the equine end of things setting up the activities and the experiences.

Also, I will identify when the horse is telling us something.

Jacobsen: What are the main things horses tell you?

Asseiro: One of the biggest things is if a person is not being congruent. If their inside and outside aren't matching, then the horse will be really uncomfortable with that. If they are out of their body, too much out of their head, starting to replay old scripts and stories, then the horse allows us to know it. I'm sure you've heard of the Heart Math Institute.

Jacobsen: No, I have not.

Asseiro: They have done a lot of research on the electromagnetic field of the heart and of horses. They talk about the field put out by the heart of the horse, where the field of the heart is much stronger than the brain. They have small brains and big hearts compared to us, who have big brains and small hearts compared to the size of our bodies. Our electromagnetic field will extend

about a foot and a half or two feet, so they figure, from our body. I don't recall. It may 10 to 30 to 40 feet for a horse's EMF being detected. So, when a person is standing in a herd of horses, if they come in agitated, then the horses are generally okay with that.

What will happen, the person's rhythm will just start to fall into a relaxed rhythm being around the horses because the horse's modulates the human's. Even if they aren't doing that much around the horses, they will begin to experience that relaxation. What they tell us, if they lay down and roll, they will only do that if they are comfortable. Although, a client may feel angsty. The horse isn't worried about that energy. We will always know from the horse's behaviour if the horse is feeling comfortable or uncomfortable. I was working with the 13-year-old a few years back who was having issues with emotional regulation.

She wanted to get up to Spartacus. She walked up to him. He leaves. She looks back at me. She had some struggles. Every time, she had a "no" from a teacher. She would have a temper tantrum and would walk off. Because he was giving her a "no." I asked, "Are you feeling comfortable or uncomfortable inside?" She said, "Uncomfortable." I said, "Breathe in, until at a comfortable spot, see if you can relax it a bit." She did. I said, "Go ahead, try again." I have no idea what Spartacus is going to do, if he is going to stay or leave. She felt more comfortable. He allowed her to come up because, for him, you have to work a bit to get to him. So, he was letting her and me know. Something is about her that is not as uncomfortable as before. As soon as she sorted it out, he allowed her to approach.

Jacobsen: How did you form this partnership between Piece of Mind and Symatree?

Asseiro: It was interesting. A woman just joined our team two weeks before. She is such a go-getter, Barb. She is on our website. She asked me, "Would you mind if I started calling?" At that point, we were working child divisions and individuals. She asked me if I minded if she just did cold calling. I said, "Yes, go ahead." [Laughing] I didn't think much would come of it. Dr. Kelly was one of the calls. Dr. Kelly was one of the only ones interesting. She came. It has been a great 6-year growing relationship. Being at the right place at the right time.

Jacobsen: Would you say the majority of clientele are youth, teen, or adults?

Asseiro: The majority are children, still. We are looking to build the teen and adult more. We, naturally, fell into the youth because we were working with the schools and Child & Family Services. Children and through CFS some teens. That had been the focus for the first 9 years. It was natural for a lot of these children to be coming. When 2020 hit, and things slowed down a bit, it gave reason to pause. "Where do we want to go with this rather than simply taking any calls? Where is the passion focused?" Through that time, our team was growing. After we picked up a person who loves working with teens and youth, it freed me up.

I have been developing an adult program, always based on imagination and play and finding that in wisdom. Because a lot of the kids coming to us. They have said, "I don't want to be involved in talk therapy. I don't want to talk to anybody." Why don't they want to focus on problems that aren't theirs anyway?" So, at this point, youth is still the dominant one. Adults would be second. Teens would be third.

Jacobsen: Which of the bigs, the mids, and the littles, are more popular?

Asseiro: I really couldn't say because it depend son the person who comes. If they feel a fit... there is always one horse. Her name is Kitani. She is a good little pony. We always joke. She would not be the first one I would go to, but a lot of kids really, really love her. I can think about

every single one of our horses having a fan in somebody or in a group of somebodies. Again, people who are more extroverted are going to like the more rambunctious horses. The introverts will like the quiet horses. Those task-oriented will take the serious horses, just wants to get the job done. For those playful people, the horse that will let them put on clothes and paint them. They will be happy with that.

It is more about the person than the horse in that case. People tend to like the bigs once used to the smalls because it feels like more of a challenge for them. Yet, it is great to have the smalls, when working with as many children as we do. Proportionately, a pony is a good size for an 8-year-old compared to a quarter horse or something.

Jacobsen: How did the Sarah Guillemard - Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness and Uzoma Asagwara find Spartacus, Sawyer, and Kiwi?

Asseiro: [Laughing] Everything is pre- and post-COVID. I am thinking 3 or 4 years ago. Her people reached out to us as part of equine facilities because she had put forth the bill for service and animal day. So, we were invited down to the legislative buildings three years ago to participate in this day. Of course, we went down. They contacted us again this past year to see if we could bring some horses down. We said, "Absolutely, we love bringing our horses to people." We chose Spartacus because he had never been to the city because. We knew he was ready. Kiwi and Sawyer were the others that we took. They were on a television show too. They are pretty resilient, very smart and very experienced.

So, the three of them came together. Then Uzoma came up towards the end, said they never really touched a horse before. I said, "Here's your opportunity!" They came up and gave Spartacus a pat. It was getting towards the end of the time when trying to get everyone inside to see the police service dog there as well. So, I just said to them, "Are you ready for a challenge?" I love bringing people to those growth edges. I said, "Here is Spartacus, take him on the lead line." The smile was remarkable and off they went. I stayed close by in case anything. But there was nothing to worry about at all.

Spartacus was content and Uzoma was a natural - really good calm energy, helped him feel amazing.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 11: Kailin Howard on Horse Ownership and Care

***Kailin Howard** is a horse owner and assistant trainer at Reaching Strides Equestrian Centre. Howard has cherished horses since childhood, starting lessons at eight and purchasing her first horse at 21. She emphasizes essential horse care—ensuring adequate shelter, food, water, and companionship—and addresses challenges like vet shortages and financial responsibilities. Kailin advocates selecting horses suited to the rider's level and using ground training to communicate effectively. She highlights the social aspect of equestrianism, fostering strong connections within the small Nova Scotia community. Mentored by Nadine Bollig, Kailin competes in hunter/jumper shows and aspires to become a full-time horse trainer. She advises newcomers to research stables, be honest about their skills, and embrace their passion.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How did you get interested in horses?

Kailin Howard: I've loved horses for as long as I can remember. They were my favourite animal as a child and even as an adult I get that excited feeling when I drive by a field and see them grazing. The little girl inside me still goes "Look, horses!" My parents made my dreams come true when I was 8 and put me in lessons and I've been hooked ever since. I'm 29 now and the dream is still very much alive.

Jacobsen: When did you purchase your first horse?

Howard: I bought my first horses when I was 21. I had been leasing and showing one of my coach's horses for a few years at that point and he was the horse I had always wanted. I ended up purchasing him and his pasture companion, a miniature, as a package.

Jacobsen: What are the factors to consider when buying a first horse compared to a second, third, etc., horse? Things like financials, age, quality, breed, pedigree, etc.

Howard: Some major things to consider are just the environment you are providing. Do I have adequate shelter, food, water, and space for them to move? Horses are also a herd animal; they don't thrive when they are alone. So, when buying that first horse, you also have to consider the fact that you'll need companionship for it. Or will you board it at a facility? A huge issue we're having in Nova Scotia right now is that there is a major vet and farrier shortage. So, is there access to emergency medical care? Can my horse get regular trimmings? Finances are, of course, a big consideration; horses are not a cheap animal to have. The older they get the more care they'll obviously need so in the long term; can you support that horse through every stage of its life and through the problems those stages may have? Pedigree is absolutely something great to search through if you have access to that information. Medical histories, neurological issues you may encounter, all better to know that ahead of purchasing. Picking the right horse for you and where you are at or want to be is crucial. For example, I wouldn't purchase a horse trained for show jumping to be my cattle penning horse. Get the horse that's suited to your level of horsemanship. Consult with your coach, trainer, vet, farrier. Use the resources available to you and get those professional opinions.

Jacobsen: How do you get a horse to learn the basics of what a rider needs them to do?

Howard: The basics in getting a horse to understand what I need them to do for me always starts on the ground. Horses rely a lot on body language and reading energy. They're a flight animal, so training them to go against those natural instincts is not started by throwing a saddle on and

climbing up. They react to pressures and a feeling, they're extremely intuitive. You've likely heard the term "horse whispering," which is both comical and kind of accurate. You can say "go to the right" all day and a horse is not going to move, so you have to communicate with a language they understand, which sort of looks like you're 'whispering' to them. I use a series of exercises on the ground to get them to understand the give and take of pressure, so that when I get to the saddle and I ask them to go to the right with my body; they have an idea of what it is I'm asking them to do. That's very summarized! Training some takes longer than others, even the basics, can vary greatly from horse to horse.

Jacobsen: What were your earliest dreams with horses as an early equestrian?

Howard: Just being around these animals was enough for me, I never had specific dreams in mind. I was just obsessed with all thing's horses. My biggest goals once I started riding were mainly jumping related. I thought the older girls were so cool and had no fear when they were doing a course and I wanted to be able to do what they did. They were always riding multiple or different horses as well and I remember wanting that confidence and that knowledge to adjust to each horse just like them.

Jacobsen: What is the importance of the social activity and aspect of equestrianism? I notice this with women equestrians, trainers and clientele. When tacking up, just small chit-chat is huge, it's not only a hobby or preparation for competition. It's a social club.

Howard: It really is! My closest friends are all horse people. The equestrian world in Nova Scotia is fairly small, so everyone pretty well knows everyone; and it's not hard to get connected to others if you start asking around. You've got friends near and far so when we meet up at shows or events it could be the first time you've seen that person in years; and it's like you talked to them yesterday. It's very timeless in that sense. It's also a great way to bounce ideas around business wise or for your own personal equestrian journey. Horse people are a different breed; it doesn't really matter what might necessarily be going on in your personal lives, when equestrians get together you all have a huge common interest that connects you, regardless of even what discipline you are in. We also can't seem to stop talking about horses. You throw a couple horse people in a room and they're going to be going on and on for the next few hours.

Jacobsen: How do you build rapport with a client and with clientele as an assistant trainer?

Howard: Staying open, honest and friendly to questions, concerns or any discussions they may want to bring up. Having just as much patience to the learning experience with the clients as we do the animals, a lot of the clients I've met over the last few years need to learn the questions I'm asking the horse just as much as the horse does. We don't believe in just training the horse, but the clients as well. We can teach the horse how to carry the rider or work on whatever the issue may be but if the client doesn't understand how to ask the question, how does the horse know how to answer? Like having all the power tools you need to build a house, but no idea how to use them. If the horse has all the answers, but the rider isn't asking them correctly then that leads to frustration; and you could be taking more steps back than you did forward. Which then leads to an upset client, it comes back on the trainer. Having the client be a part of the training process is critical in my opinion, it sets both horse and rider up for a more successful relationship in the future.

Jacobsen: What are some of the more important lessons taught by the more senior trainers?

Howard: To have patience no matter how you're feeling. Your feelings don't matter, you have to leave them outside the ring. Horses can feel your emotions by reading your energy and body language. If you're already frustrated or anxious, the horse thinks they have a reason to feel the same thing, they mimic us. They look to us for security; this comes back to the herd mentality. If I'm worked up, then they think they should be as well. The old saying goes, "If you act like you have all day, it will take 5 minutes. If you act like you have 5 minutes, it will take all day". All horses have a learning curve, just like people do. One horse might catch on faster to what it is I'm asking than another horse will, and where one is better at math, the other is better at science, you know? You also may need to ask the question differently, because that horse doesn't understand even though the last 10 horses did. And just when you think you know it all or you've seen it all, a horse comes along to remind you that you haven't. Stay humble! The learning never stops, there is always something new to learn or a different method to acquire.

Jacobsen: For those who don't know, what is the bottom-up care required for taking care of a horse? I've most consistently heard of equestrianism as a "lifestyle." In that, one must live this day-in, day-out to properly care for the horse(s) and maintain standards as a rider.

Howard: There is more maintenance in taking care of horses than people realize but there are 3 basic things they need. Food, water, shelter. Some horses are what we call more easy keepers than others. Some just have that more fit physique no matter how much they eat and others just breathe on grass and they'll be on the thicker side. Having good hay or forage is the most important, horses are grazers, so they eat constantly, having access to forage 24/7 is the most ideal to prevent health issues, such as ulcers and colic. That's also considering a horse is getting exercise as well, because eating too much can also create health issues. You may need to supply a grain regiment if the quality of your forage isn't fantastic because they'll be lacking on a lot of nutrients and vitamins. Access to lots of fresh water, helps keep their guts moving and processing that food, so they don't colic. Finally shelter, horses are tough, but they need that shelter to get a reprieve from the elements. Depending on the climate of your location they may need to be blanketed if they don't grow the best coat. It's more desired to let the horse live as naturally as possible, but human intervention over the last 100 years has changed that and some horses are just not built for that 'natural' way of life. They need their feet trimmed around every 6-8 weeks, some grow a better foot than others, so depending on that and the level of exercise they are getting; they may need to be trimmed less or more often and some may need shoes. Medical check-ups every year for teeth and vaccinations. This is all just the base essentials that they need. The tip of the horse care iceberg.

Jacobsen: How does the industry look to you, at the moment?

Howard: The horse world can be sort of "cliquey", there are a lot of equestrians that think their equestrian lifestyle is the one and only lifestyle, but I find that's slowly changing. The world is getting bigger and there are more options for equestrians in NS to choose from. As in what kind of relationship or discipline they want to embark on, people are becoming more open to trying different things. I'm hopeful for what's to come in the future in that aspect. Something I'm seeing a lot of unfortunately are people buying horses with almost none or very little prior horse experience. It sounds like a lovely dream to own a horse, but it's not just a matter of giving them food and water every day. You could have a horse that is harder to handle and end up getting seriously hurt. You panic, sell the horse, and the next person gets hurt or the horse gets hurt, or that horse gets shuffled around for the next 10 years and has a very erratic life. It's a story I've seen too many times over the last couple years: Getting a horse is not like getting a dog. They NEED

training and if you don't have any, then you need training too. That's such a no brainer for me. To not only keep people safe, but to keep the horses safe as well.

Jacobsen: Also, how did you come under the stewardship of Nadine Bollig?

Howard: I've known Nadine since I was 11, when I started taking lessons at her stable just outside Antigonish. When I became a more advanced student, I rode a few 'green' horses for her to help them further along with their training, mostly putting some miles on them. I also worked for her as a farm hand from age 16-20. When she relocated to her new place about 10 years ago, I ended up buying my show horse from her and we stayed in contact even though at the time I couldn't be a full time student or employee anymore. In 2020 she asked me if I wanted some part time work putting some exercise rides on a couple horses for her and now here we are!

Jacobsen: How has your student-teacher relationship evolved over time?

Howard: We work really well together. I've known her for so long and she's been a friend to me for years; we really balance each other out and we pride ourselves on being honest with each other. Over the last year, we've been reinventing the business plan and the goal is providing a facility for what we're calling horse lessons as opposed to just riding lessons. Helping people build relationships with horses whether that's something they want to do in the saddle or just on the ground. Nadine's biggest passion is training and when I started riding those greenies for her at 15, I found a passion for it as well. It's come full circle, the horses taught me and now I'm teaching them. It's very rewarding! Nadine has been passing all of her knowledge onto me ever since I was little and we're also gaining some new skills together, she's given me this opportunity to learn more and she has pushed me to really believe in my abilities, so I'm very grateful for her.

Jacobsen: What have been some of the competitions you've taken part?

Howard: I've been showing since I was 12, mostly competing in local shows and fairs. I've done a few higher-level jumping competitions, but nothing seriously on the circuit. Mainly hunter/jumper shows. I have a healthy fear of jumping, but also a love for it. It's quite addicting holding on for dear life on the back of a 1500 lb animal running at obstacles.

Jacobsen: How do you intend to become a long-term horse trainer for a living?

Howard: Living in rural Nova Scotia and trying to live the dream of an equestrian takes a lot of balance. It's not easy. Stables are far in between, and every facility offers something different. Training and looking after horses is my dream job and I still have that, but living where I live you have to have a job that supports the dream job. Nadine's given me that chance by letting me become a part of her business, letting me work with a few of her clients and helping me build up my skills and methods. She wants to see me succeed and she's very supportive. She's always thinking of the horses and if there's another trainer out there available to the horses and the people who need them than she's happy to help me on my journey. I'm also always open to learning, you have to be, I think, to be a reputable horse trainer. There's ALWAYS something new to learn. I hope one day, further down the road, to open my own little barn and facility where others can come to learn.

Jacobsen: How can people get involved with equestrianism or with you?

Howard: Research a stable that has a program that works for you. Ask around, find out what different barns offer and decide based on your level and what you want to learn. Be honest about what you know and what you want to learn, even if you're starting from scratch, there's no shame

in it! Everyone starts somewhere. If it's something you really want, the enthusiasm is very appreciated. I operate mainly out of Reaching Strides, but I have travelled locally to help people with small issues out of their own backyards. I'm not an expert by any means, but I have a strong intuition. I've worked with many, many different horsey personalities, so I have confidence in my own skills and if I don't know the answer; I'm not shy to admit it, and I'll work on it and get back to you.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Kailin.

Howard: Thank you for the opportunity, Scott!

The Greenhorn Chronicles 12: Erynn Ballard on Canadian Equestrianism

*Canadian Show Jumping Team veteran **Erynn Ballard** is one of the top-ranked female show jumping athletes in the world. Her career began with great success in the hunter, jumper, and equitation rings as a junior rider, including becoming only the second Canadian to ever win the ASPCA Maclay National Championships in 1998. One year later, Ballard won the individual gold medal at the 1999 North American Young Riders' Championship. In 2006, Ballard made her Nations' Cup debut at the Spruce Meadows 'Masters' tournament and helped Canada win for the first time in the event's history. That same year, she was named 'Equestrian of the Year' by her National Federation. Since then, she has accumulated numerous wins at the five-star level. Renowned for her impressive catch-riding abilities, Ballard currently rides for Ilan Ferder Stables, an internationally-respected training and sales operation. Ballard reflects on her life-long journey in equestrianism, which began with her parents' business and living on a farm. Her talent emerged early, winning competitions like the Maclay Finals at 17, a pivotal achievement in her junior career. Influential trainers like Kim Kirton and Missy Clark emphasized individualized training, honing her natural ability and physical compatibility with horses. Ballard highlights the importance of repetition and feel in mastering horse movements and tailoring horse-rider matches based on physical and psychological compatibility. She emphasizes the uniqueness of each trainer's style, underscoring the diverse approaches to success in equestrianism.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Let's start from the beginning, naturally, what were some of the earlier experiences for you, which stood out in terms of becoming interested in equestrianism?

Erynn Ballard: I have been doing it for so long. I don't know if there is one thing that stood out over another. It was my parents' business. Before I turned 5, we lived in town, in a small house. Around my 5th birthday, we moved to the farm where I grew up. That was probably the turning point, which was living on the farm with the horses.

I grew up in Milton. It wasn't until 2005 when my parents moved up North. The farm that we owned was right on the 401. So, it was time to sell the land, then we moved North.

Jacobsen: Obviously, you're the number 1 ranked equestrian in Canada [Ed. At the time of the interview, now, one of the top-ranked women equestrians in the world]. You're highly accomplished in several platforms and earning awards in the industry. Was this precocity with horses noted early? Or were you an ordinary rider who worked very hard, or some combination of the two?

Ballard: I don't know. I don't know how you become good. I was always good. I won from a very early stage, but I don't know if people noticed me, at the time. Certainly, I never felt like I was any sort of prodigy. I was just a kid who liked to ride horses and won a lot of classes.

Jacobsen: What were the earliest articles written about you when you started becoming noticed? Do you recall any of those?

Ballard: Probably, the biggest most notable win was when I won Maclay Finals. I was 17 and just turned 18. It is a big equitation final in the U.S. That would have given me, for sure, the most publicity. It is one of the biggest accomplishments you can have as a junior.

Jacobsen: How many juniors take part in that competition in particular?

Ballard: You have to compete at the regionals before you go to the Finals. That year, it was at the Gardens, maybe 185. I don't know – around there.

Jacobsen: All these ~185 have gone through their own filtration to train, go through competitions, to compete at the ASPCA Maclay Finals. So, when you're getting trained early on and winning competitions, who do you mark as great mentors for you, trainers?

Ballard: I grew up with my parents. When I was quite young, I went on the road. When I was 10- or 11-years-old, I went on the road to ride ponies with Kim Kirton, who is a trainer in Canada. Then I went into equitation to do it properly in the United States. Missy Clark was my trainer. Still, to this day, those two people are very influential in my life.

Jacobsen: What would you attribute each individual's influence on you? What particular quality stands out to you?

Ballard: For both of those people, they teach a very individual style. They let each rider be their own selves. Some trainers, you can see. You can pick out that rider rides with that person because they pick up a characteristic of that stable. Missy, certainly, each of her riders; she works on their own strengths. She focuses on those. You become less uniform and more individual if that makes sense.



Jacobsen: Are there areas in which a uniform training style is beneficial?

Ballard: I'm sure. Maybe, people with less natural feel excel in a more uniform training environment, where everything is done the same way. You work solely on repetition. Basically, any good trainer works on repetition, but specific to body type. How you sit on a horse, the first time you sit on a horse; it will be the way you look on the horse, for the most part, for the rest of your life.

I am lucky for this sport. I have a shorter upper body, longer legs, and longer arms. So, it is easier for me to sit in the center of a horse. Missy would work on my individual style as far as how I physically looked on the horse rather than conforming me to a different position. That's where

you have to work on repetition for training, but how you sit on a horse for the first day is how you're always going to sit on the horse because it's your place of balance.

Some people with shorter legs and longer upper bodies may have a harder time staying in balance. They can become *heavier* at the top. People with shorter arms may have a harder time if they are riding lower with a low horse because they may be restricted in their ability to bend their elbows to go with the horse's balance. They may get stuck because their arm doesn't give them the freedom to go with the balance.

So, when you're working on training, and when you're working with kids developing, you have to focus on their physical build. You have to focus on a horse suitable for them, suitable for their physical build. Then you can focus on their abilities.

Jacobsen: You mentioned repetition and feel. What is the importance of repetition regardless of the training style in equestrianism, generally? What is the importance of feel? I have heard this term *a lot* as a greenhorn.

Ballard: Feel, you can't teach. It would be comparable to a golf swing. You can't teach somebody feel. That's where repetition comes into place. Feel, you would have to associate that with pure natural ability. Some people have more. Some people have less. You include the repetition. So, maybe, those with less understand how to work a horse's movements.

So, take, for example, I work on a pole line. Two poles on the ground, not even a jump, every time, I walk my own 22 steps. I do that so every single horse that I ride; I know how they make what should be 5 strides in between those 2 poles feel good. Then I can make 6 strides feel good. The repetition of doing that, making me understand the horse's stride, also helps with the feel. A feel for 5. A feel for 6.

What do I need to do to make it do 5 strides? What do I need to do to shorten it to make it do 6 strides? So, when I do it, I am, specifically thinking, "What do I need to make the horse do to make it feel good?" When the kids are doing it, the horse should already know how to do it. So, I'm teaching them how to feel how 5 feels good and how 6 feels good.

If I change the distance, if I make it 25 steps or 27 steps, you can still do 5 or 6 strides in between those two poles, but it is not consistent. The repetition of keeping it the same every single time, for me, when I am training a horse or when a kid is doing the same exercise; I am trying through exercise to teach them feel.

Jacobsen: The idea of picking a horse for the body build. I'm intuiting picking the horse with the psychology of the person, so understanding the psychology of the horse as part of the feel. Is that part of the feel?

Ballard: Horses have independent thoughts. That's a problem. We can't always control them. So, when I pick a horse for a kid, I do think their body types have to be suitable. If a person has shorter legs, I don't want to put them on a very wide horse. The shorter their legs are, the wider the horse is, the less comfortably their legs will sit on that horse's body. In a shorter person, I need to create more length. So, it would be more suitable to put them on a normal-bodied horse. So, from their hips, they have the ability to make their legs longer rather than wider if that makes sense.

If a person has short arms, I don't want to put them on a horse that has a very long neck. Because like I said earlier, otherwise, they don't have the ability to bend their elbows. Then they get

stuck. If they get stuck, a term we'd use is "hanging" on the horse's mouth. They can't take or give. They get stuck there. I do think in order to make a good match; their body types have to match.

They have to suit each other. You have to look at each other together and say, "Those two look good." If you look at a kid on a horse, and from the get-go it looks awkward, then it will probably feel awkward. It is up to the trainer and up to the person as well. They have to say, "I don't feel that comfortable on this horse. He is too big (or too small) for me." If the horse has a shorter front end, and if it is a taller person, they will not feel comfortable because they will be looking over its ears.

The taller person needs a horse out in front of it to control their upper body and help them with their balance. So, I'd say, "That's education." It is a feel for training and for finding a horse for somebody.

The psychology of it; we don't have that much control over the thought of horses. I've picked out horses for someone before. In that trial, with a horse, you have two or three times to try it.

Say, from the first day to the third day, the horse is jumping higher and giving more air, and looking more careful. You're thinking, "Wow! I'm doing a great job." However, what that horse, actually, told me, I didn't know. The horse was jumping higher and with more care because he was scared. That fear turned into a bad match. So, sometimes, we pick a horse that doesn't work. It isn't necessarily our fault.

That horse couldn't tell us, "What you see is not what I'm thinking." For the most part, if a horse goes well, for a rider, then you should be able to manage it in a program. I am always, when I sell a horse to a kid, there to ride it. If the kid makes a mistake, or a horse is green or makes a mistake, I have the ability to get on it and fix it. Even myself, the horse's I jump in the biggest classes; Ilan (Ferder) trains them. He is bigger and stronger.

He instructs them. Then he puts me on them for the final result. It is the same for the kids. We ride them. The professionals ride them. The bigger, the stronger, person manages the horse. The owner should be able to produce the horse. The better the owner gets, the more they are able to do on their horse. The one thing with equestrianism or horse riding, there is no one way better than another.

There are books on horsemanship, but there are no books on individual styles in training. Each rider picks a person that they want to ride with because they believe in them. Each person that they pick to ride with has their own style and their own program; that's what makes everyone a little different.



Jacobsen: How is this kind of upbringing, thinking about training, and suitability of a horse to a rider, different from Europe? I'm told in some conversations, though early in the series, granted, about the difference between the Western European and North American mindset about training and selection of rider to horse. It is a little bit different. Is this something that you note as someone more experienced in the field?

Ballard: In the last 20 years, Europe has, definitely, caught up to the North American style of riding. They, certainly, have an edge on the buying, selling, breeding, and the development. So, at your highest level, when you're talking about the best 100 riders in the world, I don't think there's much difference between your European training and North American style training, maybe below that.

The startup, our education is much more sophisticated with the pony-hunters and the equitation, and the customer service. A long time ago in Europe, there weren't customers. Even individual riders had their own barns, they weren't involved in a specific training program. Now, even in Europe, the biggest trainers, the biggest dealers, they all have people who work under them as trainers. They have developed our style of training the amateurs, the 1.20, the 1.30, the FEI children.

Even in South America, the best are the best; and it is comparable around the world. North America has a little edge on development. Everyone is developing very fast.

Jacobsen: What convinced them in the last 20 years to make the change (the Europeans)?

Ballard: They saw our success.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] Fair enough.

Ballard: Especially with the amateurs buying expensive horses, the U25 has opened a market for sales. The Europeans always had the horses. It was always the Americans going to Europe to buy

the expensive horses. Now, it is hard to go to buy the expensive horses because they are keeping them for their own U25 riders. So, they learned from us.

Jacobsen: Do these socioeconomic issues of haves and have-nots, increasing income disparity, wealth disparity, in many countries in the world, impact this sport from the bottom level and up, as a follow-up to that question?

Ballard: There are a lot of people who gain from it. A lot of professionals and dealers who gain from it, who can sell horses more expensive, who are able to have more opportunities because we are working with wealthier clients. Does it make it harder for the average, middle-class family to keep up? Yes. But I think the world always works itself out and always finds a balance. You take Palm Beach and Ocala. Palm Beach is the best of the best.

It is the most expensive. I could go on and on, and on. In Ocala, they have the World Equestrian Centre, which is - literally – the best facility ever made in all of the world. That man offers free stalls. So, you get to go to Ocala and show at *the best facility that has ever existed* at, maybe, a 1/3rd of the cost of Palm Beach.

You are gaining opportunity. Maybe, you are not riding against the best people in the whole world, but he is offering ridiculous amounts of prize money, beautiful stables. People can go there as a source of income because the overhead, for once in your lifetime, is less than the money offered in prize money. So, that is giving a huge opportunity to people that, maybe, can't be here. Maybe, if they win enough there, and if they get seen, and if they are in the spotlight, then they have the chance to go work for somebody or to come to Palm Beach for a week and show off what they have.

There is always a way. I am not really a believer in the idea that if you don't have the means, then you don't have the chance. I think there's always a way. You may have to work harder than some other people. But if you want it bad enough, then you are going to do the work anyways.



Jacobsen: What would you consider some of your career highlights post-Maclay?

Ballard: I mean, so many, but the biggest ones would be winning the Nations Cup in Spruce Meadows twice. For a Canadian team, it has only won the Nations Cup there three times. I was on the first winning team; I was on the third winning team. I was double clear in the Nations Cup in Lima for Canada at Pan Am Games. I got to show in Geneva two weeks ago.

I didn't have my best results [in Geneva], but it is one of the hardest shows to get into. I had the opportunity to show. Sometimes, it is not always based on results, but on opportunities. At the moment, I am the second highest ranked female rider in the entire world. That's massive. Every year gets better than the last. On Friday, I won the last Grand Prix in 2021. On Sunday, I won the first Grand Prix of 2022.

In three days...

Jacobsen: ...[Laughing] feeling pretty good.

Ballard: [Laughing] that's pretty cool. Not major classes, but to put that on your resume or to talk about, "I won two Grand Prixes in three days and in two different years."

Jacobsen: I asked some of the young ladies who I work with, some of whom compete. I said, "Is Erynn Ballard a big thing in your industry?" They paused, and then said, "Yeah." So... [Laughing].

Ballard: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Even bigger!

Ballard: Your background is not horses.

Jacobsen: 3 months into it, maybe, I'm working 7 days a week. Basically, landscaping, gardening, basic stable hand work, anything they need. There's always work to do. I transitioned out of restaurants because it was supporting the independent journalism. I was thinking, "I'm working ~91hrs/week in restaurants. I want to see what it was like working with horses."

I sent some resumes out. In a week or two, I was transitioned into working at a stable. So, taking a step back, if I am doing these interviews with the small ranches to trail rides to those who do dressage to those who do hunting or jumping, the whole range of equestrianism starting with Canada. I am sending emails out. In some of the preliminary conversations and interviews, including your own, people are in this industry as a lifestyle.

100%, they are in this as a lifestyle. Or if they aren't, they weren't intending it as such. It was a foot in the door phenomenon. They slowly ended up sinking into the industry. Now, they're here. Reflecting on it more, I am getting more information from different perspectives in the industry.

The issues of those running farms or stables. The issues of land cost, property costs rising; and this causing an issue for some being able to survive. For instance, Leslie Reid sold her property who was a big name in dressage.

Is this something on your radar or something who you have conversations with in Canada about some areas of Canada having rising property prices or bylaw restrictions preventing the full flourishing of the sport in their area of Canada?

Ballard: I think the sport in Canada is not in a great way. I think Ontario is struggling without having The Royal and the creation of this Silver Series. I have done an interview about it before.

I think the Silver Series offers more for less. As far as showing at the same venues, it costs you less money. Ontario survived for so long with the idea of The Royal.

Without The Royal, people are looking at different ways to spend their money. They may not be looking to buy a second horse or a better horse. I think the Ontario circuit is struggling. I am a little lucky because my parents own a farm. They have the farm in Tottenham. I am not there anymore because I am here full-time, at least while I have this job. This job could last forever. You never know with a job.

I hope it lasts forever. However, you don't know. Have there been conversations if their upkeep of the farm is worth having? I don't know the ultimate answer. We are fortunate. We have a beautiful farm. We can run a business off it. I don't know what the long-term is for ourselves, personally, or for the long-term of the industry in Ontario.

Without me as a full-time presence out there, will the business be enough to balance the overhead? There's a lot of businesses in Ontario doing quite well because they have nice properties and the locations. The Silver Series is making offers for lower-level stables to do more. So, in a way, there's growth, but I don't know if it is the growth that we are looking for to be stronger.

For a while now, the West Coast has had a stronger presence as far as the higher level of the sport. That's probably because of what Thunderbird has; they're so close to Washington state and offer the U.S. ratings. So, pre-Covid, I know it was a huge show for Americans to go to; the West Coast has Spruce Meadows, where Vancouver does quite well in the Hunters and Equitation because of their proximity to the U.S.

Spruce Meadows is Spruce Meadows. It is the coolest place to show and everyone wants to go there. I think the West Coast is stronger than the East Coast. I think Ontario is suffering.

Jacobsen: Do the higher ranked performers in hunter and jumper ever have sit-down discussions and meals to discuss these issues?

Ballard: Not really, we're quite a diverse group of people. We have our own strengths and weaknesses. I am not afraid to talk. People have asked my opinion. If they ask me my opinion, I'll give it. But some people don't want to hear it.

The supporters of Silver Series don't want to hear that, I think; it is doing more harm than good to the highest level of the sport. They'll come at me with disbelief, which is fine. Maybe, I'm wrong. But I do know there is a gap with what the Silver Series is creating. It is an industry. It is a business. That, I don't take away from it. It is thriving. I don't see them taking those riders and turning them into U25 riders and 5-star riders, and riders for Canada.

I see it like being in a club, like a camp. I've said many times. Ontario, when it was The Royal, especially, it was an exclusive riding camp. You went to x amount of horse shows a summer to go to The Royal. The way that the layout is in Toronto. Very few people have to pay hotels. They live in Toronto and the shows are quite close and their stables are quite close. They keep the overhead quite low. They know how much it will cost from April to November.

If they have the ability, they go to Florida from December to April, and then go back to camp for the Summer.

Jacobsen: Looking at 2022, what competitions, events, or speaking engagements if you have them, are you looking forward to?

Ballard: Right now, if you're talking about high performance, we're working backwards from the 2024 Paris Olympics. So, Paris is the ultimate goal in three years. The easiest way to qualify for Paris is to get a result at the World Championships this year. So, working backwards from Paris, we need to be good enough at the World Championships this year, so we can take some pressure off ourselves at the Pan Ams to qualify for the Olympics this year, and then build for the next two years for Paris.

So, this is probably the most important year moving forward, in terms of high performance. Past that, I simply really like showing. I am looking for more experience in Europe if that comes my way. Right now, I am an employee. I have a great job, but, at the same time, I have to do what I'm told. I don't necessarily not get to go to pretty cool places. So, I don't have any complaints.

Jacobsen: Hypothetical, in some future, if you had the freedom to not have to do what you're told, and only had to do what you wanted to tell yourself to do, what would you do?

Ballard: I'm not really sure if I would do anything differently.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Ballard: I believe you have to go where you are the strongest. You make a plan, accordingly, for the horses that you have with you. If you don't have the best horses in your string, you don't go to Spruce Meadows. You stay where you're competitive. If you have a 1.45m horse, you jump 1.45m. You win at 1.45m. If you have a 1.45m horse, and try to jump 1.55m, and if you're not making your result, you can't be mad.

You signed up to not be good. I think that that's something hard in our sport as far as wherever I go I want to feel like I have the chance to win. I never want to go in over my head. Even going to Geneva, I didn't have my best horse show, but I had my best horses. My best horses in 5-star, in Mexico, in Spruce Meadows, in Sacramento.

So, I went with my best horses and didn't have my best show, and that happens too. But I would never go to the biggest show of my life without my best horses. I'd pick another show. There are so many. There are five horse shows every single week. So, you have to make smart choices. Five years from now, it depends on the horses.

If I'm going to not have Grand Prix horses, then I go back to riding hunters. Then I want to ride the best hunters. I want to go to Derby Finals and want to be champion in The Royal in the hunters. The thing about me, I like riding so much. It doesn't matter where I ride. But wherever I go, I don't want to lose.



Jacobsen: What's the feeling of love while you're riding? Can you add more tone to it?

Ballard: I just don't think there's anything else I would do. You meet a lot of people in this sport who are good at riding or, ten years later, as you said, fell into this. Maybe, they are unhappy. Trust me, there are plenty of people. If you talk to everybody, everybody in the whole world, there would be more people who feel like they have to ride or have to be in the industry, because there's nothing else they can do, rather than people who feel lucky to be in the industry.

There will be a group of people who are lying if they tell you; that they feel lucky to do it every single day. Because not everybody does, but I do.

Jacobsen: My sense of you is two things. One is a pragmatism. Another is a realism. Where you don't go to a competition ill-equipped, ill-prepared, or with the wrong expectations, the expectations seem accurate and proportional to the reality of the situation. It's not pessimistic. It's not Pollyannaish. Have you noticed other riders who make it – so to speak – who have a different outlook, or are most, at this very high level of competitiveness, pragmatic and realist?

Ballard: I don't know, actually. I don't know. That would be up to you, to talk to enough people.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] When I finish with Canada, I will move to other areas to see about the findings. It's interesting. I am learning along as I do this series. It is very educational.

Ballard: Also, if you're only talking to people about horses, then you also have to have a passion for horses. It is not something you can understand if you don't like them. It's so foreign to a normal 9-5 job. Because it is a lifestyle. If you didn't have a sense of the passion people get when they're around horses, then you wouldn't enjoy this. Equally, there are people who start out with a passion and get burned out, or get stuck.

They thought that they really wanted to do this. Maybe, they didn't, but they don't know what else they can do. They got in over their head. It cost too much money. It is a hard industry to

make money, *very hard*, because the overhead is so high. You make \$25,000 a month. But it costs you \$35,000 to get to the end of the month.

If you're talking about a boarding stable, what is the right way to do it. How do you charge enough? So that, at the end of the month, you are not losing money. Where are you making your money? Where do you gain to make it worth your while? When does the lifestyle [Laughing] part kick in? There's not many Canadians who have the opportunity that I do.

So, I think that that, maybe, is something. I have seen both sides of it. I won my first Nations Cup at Spruce Meadows when I was 25. I didn't ride on another team for 10 years. I stayed home, made a business, rode hunters, and taught riding lessons. That's all I could do. That's all the opportunity I had. I couldn't go to the horse shows because my horses weren't good enough.

So, practice what you're good at and work on the opportunity given to you, it is not a job for the faint at heart. It is not for someone who doesn't work 24 hours a day.

Jacobsen: Every person who I met who competes and works in the stables, or as a full-time in the stables, have all been incredibly impressive in their own ways. Some have tragic personal histories and have overcome them. The work ethic is there.

Ballard: People are drawn to horses, maybe, if they aren't good with people.

Jacobsen: That's an interesting hypothesis, maybe.

Ballard: A connection with the horse that they can't have with the person. The turnover in my life, as far as clients who ride with me – and people who work for me, is very high, very. Grooms come and go, there's students, young kids, even riders. A lot of girls ride until they turn 15 or 16. Then they have a choice to make. Are they going to keep riding, to go skiing, to go hang out with boys, to go to university? At the younger age, it is mostly girls.

If a teenager sticks through that stage, maybe, they're not that social. They don't love going to the parties on the weekend. Or they struggle with being in a school, in girl gangs. They like horses. They hang out with horses. Then they create a friend group, which they didn't think they could have in school because they have a common interest with other kids in horses. Maybe, they don't want to go to university.

They have to work for a living, so they become a groom. Maybe, they want to go to law school, but they don't have enough money. So, they groom on the weekends. The turnover of people who work in the industry versus me is high, because not everyone is a lifer.

Jacobsen: What do you attribute the endurance to?

Ballard: Mine?

Jacobsen: Yes!

Ballard: I think I'm a crazy person. I just have more energy than most people.



Jacobsen: How many hours a week are you working?

Ballard: Oh! I don't even want to count!

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Ballard: October, November, December, all of October, all of November, first two weeks of December, I was never in the same place for more than one week.

Jacobsen: That's a lot.

Ballard: I was back in Florida for a week at a time before I went somewhere else. For three months, basically, I was never in one place for more than a week. By the time I came home from Geneva, I had 7 suitcases packed. I sent one home from California. I sent one home from Vegas. I sent this one with the horses. My garage was an explosion of suitcases.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Ballard: I unpacked every suitcase, but one. I don't know where all these clothes are going to go. We are gypsies. We live on the road. I went from California to Geneva. I had a bathing suit and the Lululemon puffy jacket that went to my ankles. You never know where you're going to be. You take your passport with you everywhere.

Because, at a moment's notice, you can go to Europe and not expect to, "You need to try a horse." We are high energy people in general. We don't need the structure of 9-5 and weekends off. We thrive on this crazy lifestyle. We get to see the world. But yes, most of us are a little bit crazy.

Jacobsen: In spite of the endurance and the affirmation of doing it, whatever "it" is at the time, what moments in your career have you ever felt a halt internally, almost as if, 'I can't do this,' or a feeling of "I don't have enough in me"?

Ballard: I think just the summer I got hurt, which was 2013. I broke my collar bone and my shoulder joint. I shattered my scapula. I was out for 16 weeks. There was a minute, where I was walking around; I was teaching riding lessons. I was going to the horse shows. It is the only time in my life where I hadn't.

There was a minute. I was like, "I don't need to ride to make money. I don't need ever need to get back on a horse to make money. I can teach. I can give clinics. But I don't have to do that. If I don't do that, then I won't ever be hurt like this again." That lasted a minute until I got back on a horse again. Then it was over.

I think, any time you're hurt. You're down anyways. I came back from that stronger than ever. I came back from the injury. Two years later, I was on a team. I hadn't been on a team in 10 years. Maybe, it was the reset that I needed to figure out what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I don't feel that, not yet, anyways.

Jacobsen: When you were a kid, as many Canadian kids do, they write careers that they wanted when they were younger, what they thought they wanted to pursue in the maturity of a child's mind. Do you recall what those career choices would have been for you?

Ballard: I don't think there was ever a question.

Jacobsen: Why did you focus on jumping, by the way?

Ballard: That's the sport that my grandpa was captain of the Canadian team. So, I guess, it is in my blood.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 13: Adelle Stewart on Horses, Hay, and Prime Equine (1)

Adelle Stewart founded Prime Equine in 2017. She has more than 25 years of horse experience. She has showed, competed, trained, and managed a stable. Stewart shares her lifelong passion for horses, describing it as an innate connection nurtured through childhood reading, summer camps, and eventually running a ranch. Stewart emphasizes the challenges and joys of equestrian life, defining a "cowgirl" as independent, gritty, and adaptable to unknowns. Seasonal weather, horse health, and nutrition, including risks like colic, shape her approach to horse care. Stewart's ranch prioritizes natural horse lifestyles, requiring strategic planning for resources like hay, monitored for nutritional deficiencies. Her vision for Prime Equine focuses on educating horse owners to ensure optimal horse welfare, balancing financial and environmental considerations for sustainable management.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, today, we're here with Adelle Stewart. This is part of an educational equestrian series. It's from the point of view of a greenhorn, myself. To start, what were some of the earlier indications of interest in horses or becoming active in equestrianism as a youngster?

Adelle Stewart: Yes, I have to say that it's like you're born with it, honestly, like it's this disease [Laughing]. I don't know. Some people call it that you're born with horses in your blood, horse for causes, or obsessive actions with horses. So, yes, I don't remember a time that I didn't love them. From a toddler, I would have to ride the merry go rounds and the carousels at the fair in the summer and things like that. And I was obsessed over horse books and all of those things. It always was an innate feeling or draw towards them for me.

Jacobsen: Is this common among the cohort for yourself? Even intergenerationally, is it a common thing?

Stewart: Yes, usually, absolutely. I had a mother who was wild into horses when she was younger, gave them up to raise a family, and then got back into them once the kids had left the nest and things like that. So, most of the people that I connect with, they have always had this knowing, as being from a young child involvement into horses.

Jacobsen: Did you have any mentors or exemplars that came to mind, like other than your mom, on the equine circuit as you were growing up?

Stewart: No, I was a farm kid trapped in the city. I was born and raised in the city and needed to, as soon as I was of age, buy my own place or whatever, as I got out to the country. So, it was always something. I didn't know anybody who had horses when I was a young kid growing up. I grew and navigated towards becoming a vet when I grew up. Anything that could get me more into horses. But it wasn't until I was about 9 or 10 years old that I started going to summer camps, and then those people there became my idols where I learned how to ride as a preteen and things like that. Those people at that barn became idols for me at that age.

Jacobsen: What do you do at the summer camps other than learning how to ride?

Stewart: Well, there would be like overnight camps. So, sometimes we would have day camps but other times we stayed in the bunkhouse. So, we had to get up early in the morning before we had breakfast. We had to take care of the horses and bed them down, clean their stalls, and pitch the hay before we fed ourselves. So, we learned how to be cowgirls.

Jacobsen: How do you define a cowgirl?

Stewart: A cowgirl doesn't have to ride horses. They have to be independent. They have to be gritty, have a lot of heart and a lot of passion for what they do. This is, I say, being an equestrian or being a cowgirl or a life with horses. People say, "Well, that must be a lot of work". And I was like, "You know what, it's a lot of work, it is, but it's a lifestyle."

Jacobsen: [Laughing] I've heard it so many times now. What are other pieces of common wisdom within the industry other than "it's a lifestyle," "you start young," etc.?

Stewart: Yes, it's like 'put your big girl britches on' or like 'put your boots on and deal with it,' really. It's that type of thing because you have no other choice. You are dealing on a daily basis with living, breathing beings that are 10-12 times your size with independent mind, body, and soul. So, every day that you wake up and you're thankful. The fences can be down, or horses can be down, or someone can have a laceration, or any of those things. So, at any time, an equestrian or cowgirl has to be ready to deal with every element of the unknown. So, it goes hand in hand with why it's a lifestyle. You have to be absolutely adaptable to any situation, but also rigid on your horse husbandry skills and things like that on a day to day basis.

Jacobsen: How do the elements of different seasons impact the way you work with a horse?

Stewart: Hugely. They impact them from what we can do with our horses. For example, we went through a big cold snap, where we can't work our horses. It wasn't conducive to put them into increasing the respiration rates and things like that in terms of a husbandry or welfare point of view. But then it comes down to everything from our exercise to the safety of it; when spring and fall come in, their footing becomes an issue if you're not riding indoors and things like that. We don't have an indoor facility. So, we work with whatever mother nature gives us. And then one of the ways that I gravitate more towards is the horse health aspect of it and weather swings. We had a 50 degree weather swing, honestly, from minus 50 with the wind-chill to plus 2 degrees today. That barometric pressure changes can cause extreme stress on horses' very sensitive digestive system. So, we're on what we call 'colic watch', which is a gastrointestinal issue with animals that they're so sensitive to that. So, their health is a big part of the welfare that the seasonal changes play as well.

Jacobsen: What does a horse do when it becomes colicky?

Stewart: Symptoms can be very mild. So, they can have a tummy ache; something as simple as laying down and looking at their stomach to pawing with their front foot. Some of them will try to kick with their back foot or back up, which is something that's weird. A horse doesn't normally in the wild or hanging out in the pasture, backing up is an unnatural gait for them. So, sometimes backing up will be a symptom of that at a very early stage, but then as the tummy ache progresses; it would be like laying down, rolling and thrashing, which is when things get dangerous.

Jacobsen: When it gets dangerous like that when they're rolling around and thrashing, can they actually worsen their own symptoms by doing so?

Stewart: Yes, absolutely. The rolling and thrashing can cause what's called a torsion colic. That's actually a twisted gut, which then is either only survivable by operation if it can be operated.

Jacobsen: What are other conditions for horses, where the only option for the horse owner is honestly to not have the horse anymore?

Stewart: Yes, the biggest one – I mean, anything can happen by determining the severity of it, but the next to major one from colic would be a leg fracture or a leg break. They're not like a dog, where they can get along well with three legs and amputate. They must have four pillars to stand on. So, a leg break or a fracture below the knee is usually a fatal injury in a horse.

Jacobsen: What is it about their biomechanics that requires four legs absolutely, 100%?

Stewart: It has mostly to do with what would be called a compensatory laminitis. So, a horse's hoof is a capsule like a fingernail; even more rigid, so it doesn't have a lot of breathing room. A horse puts 60% of their weight on their front legs even breaking that in half to carry all of that weight. A horse's shoulder is not connected by a joint; they don't have a clavicle like a human does or anything like that especially in the front feet. All the shoulder is connected by only tendon, muscle, and ligament. So, when you take a foot away from them, they develop that compensatory laminitis, which is a swelling of the hoof capsule or inside the hoof capsule, which is debilitatingly and cruelly painful to a horse. So, that becomes the secondary and most often factor that plays into why a leg break or fracture. It's not that the fracture can't heal. It's the length of time that it would take to heal that puts too much strain on the other limb.

Jacobsen: How long would it take to heal in irregular circumstances?

Stewart: Like, you're talking months of box rest or stall rest, probably, and then rehab from that.

Jacobsen: In the state of nature, would the horse survive?

Stewart: No, they would be left by the herd.

Jacobsen: How many horses are in a herd typically? What's the range?

Stewart: It depends from farm to farm. We have three horses in one pasture and six in another and other people will run 50 head together. So, it depends on land and acreage that a person has.

Jacobsen: How many acres of land would an average farmer have and will be the upper limit, really?

Stewart: I think hobby farmers in Western Canada or like across Canada are mostly in that, like five to 50 acres, would be a hobby farm. And here, where I run a little bit more of a ranch, so we're your 50 plus. So, 50-160 acres would be a little bit bigger like you're second tier. And then above that you're talking, that would be more cattle ranch sizes more than 100 or 160 acres. It isn't all that common for the general horse owner.

Jacobsen: What areas in Canada tend to be known as places for horses to live and live well?

Stewart: Hot spot in Canada absolutely is Alberta; has the most horses per capita, in every discipline, from English to Western and all of those types of things. So, Alberta is an absolute hot spot, Saskatchewan probably following that, maybe second or third, potentially with Ontario, with the capita of people that exist there.

Jacobsen: And what facilities tend to be known for jumper, hunter, for eventing, for dressage?

Stewart: Those are a little bit further reach. I'm a Western girl myself, but, in Alberta, you're talking like Spruce Meadows is probably the most famous or iconic place in Canada when we think about show jumpers and things like that.

Jacobsen: For Prime Equine, what was the vision when founding?

Stewart: I've always been a girl who wanted to make a living with horses. I wasn't a skilled enough jockey to ride my way there. I wasn't a skilled enough trainer to train my way there. So, I actually started out as an equine first aid instructor. I received my advanced certification for that in 2017 and it ended up blossoming and growing from there. So, we started carrying retail products, and then expanded and started creating our own course content and our own education. My real passion is helping the average horse owner, which I once was, become exceptional. So, pushing forward the care and the husbandry for our horses; they don't ask to be rode, they don't ask to be kept between our fences and things like that as wild creatures. My vision and my passion is helping horse owners create the best lifestyle for their horses in our captivity.

Jacobsen: How many acres does a horse typically need at one facility?

Stewart: It depends. I'm a big advocate of horses on full turnout. So, there are some places, who keep horses in like 12x12 stalls, or they may be spend the night in the stall and in the day in a 20x40 run called a paddock or a corral. And I don't love that. I love keeping my horses as natural as possible. So, a horse that was kept in that sort of facility needs to be on 24/7 hay as their primary forage whereas, I run my horses on a pasture on full turnout. So, they need to average. It usually depends on the rainfall and things like that each year. But for each horse to graze for our grazing season that we have in Canada, you typically need three to five acres per animal.

Jacobsen: How many horses do you have on site now?

Stewart: We have 11 horses and three miniature donkeys here.

Jacobsen: What's the capacity for you in terms of having donkeys, having horses? How do you differentiate between how many you want of each? Because there are resource limits, there's what you had beforehand or the previous year in terms of the finances, the clients, etc., putting limits on what you can do in the future. So, there's a historical context that sets boundaries on what can be done in the future along with what you're doing right now. So, what are the logistical steps around that?

Stewart: Yes, we're extremely weather dependent and very conservative. So, we are scaled back right now. And with human talent and resources but primary forage, having enough forage for the animals to graze on the grass and the pastures on their turnout for as long as possible. And then we start thinking for what our capacity is for the fall. We start thinking about that in July when we have or not had a significant amount of rainfall. So, we are watching the amount of snow we get. So, now from January till April, I am considering the amount of snow we get. Through spring, I am watching how fast that melts off because the faster it melts, the worse for us honestly, the worse that the hay crop is going to be.

And then through May and July, we're watching how much rain we get. And so, if we start not getting very much precipitation through those months, I will stop intake for horse boarders for the rest of the year because that means hay is going to be sparse. When it's sparse, it's more expensive. And then even at that, the existing clientele that we have here at that point in time when the end of July rolls around, and we're forecasting when we start making projections to increase board and things like their rent. It can have a turnover effect when they can find somewhere cheaper to go and things like that. So, that's how we start mitigating it. And then if you do get a constant hay supplier; I'm very lucky. I have a constant hay supplier that I am actually purchasing extra hay. So, for the last two years, because we've had more drought years, when I can get good hay, I bring in more than I need because it can last for several years at a time as long as it's

stored well. So, all of those things, it's a strategic and multi-year. You're talking one and three year plans for taking horses at that level.

Jacobsen: How do you store your hay?

Stewart: Our square bale hay is stored inside. And then when we do buy round bales, they are stored in rows outside in the elements, but they're net wrapped. And then when we feed them, we peel off those outer layers, so the inner parts that are still nutritious and palatable for the horses is what's fed.

Jacobsen: And what can typically ruin the nutritional value of hay rapidly?

Stewart: Yes, the biggest thing is knowing your hay supplier and understanding the moisture content that it was baled out. And the biggest thing that will ruin hay is hay that is put up with too much moisture because it will mold and rot from the inside out and hay with mold in it is something that will cause colic in horses. So, it's absolutely not able to be fed. And then other things like grains or the types of hay, whether it's a grass or legume like alfalfa; all of those types of things go into the nutritious value of it. The older the hay is the more you have to supplement. If the hay is a year or two old, I have a background in equine nutrition, so we can make up that difference if we're feeding two-year-old hay. Through both our forage analysis which we have done every year and then calculating for the mineral deficiencies that would continue with the length of time, we can make that up through a grain or a supplement.

Jacobsen: For some clients particularly, they want more specific types of hay or supplements, etc., for their horse and they're willing to pay a lot of money. How does this calculate into a ranch owner or someone who runs a stable, their calculations for food expenses?

Stewart: Yes, that's your major accounts payable-receivable types of things. So, I am lucky that I am probably one of the pickiest people when it comes to equine nutrition and balancing forage. Over the last 10 years that I have done testing of our hay, I have not found any hay; it can look as beautiful as you want it to and please any owner to the eye, but, unless you're testing it, you have no idea what is in it. So, we test our hay every year and I've never found hay that doesn't have some sort of mineral deficiency in it; it's normal. So, we understand what that is. So, then we can offer our forage analysis results up to our owners, so they can either take their own and build their own nutrition plan or I can consult with them about what their horse needs; because not only is there some major deficiencies in, maybe, the forage but each horse span as an individual, their age, their workload, all of those things play into the amount of supplementation that they may need for the winter that we're feeding.

Jacobsen: What are the major deficiencies found in horses in the hay?

Stewart: From the last 10 years that we've been testing a major imbalanced ratio of calcium to phosphorus. So, our hay here anyway is very high in calcium and very low in phosphorus. And that's a detrimental imbalance to have because too much calcium in a diet can turn your muscle- and tendon-like tissue into bone-like tissue. So, the stuff that we need to be very flexible for our athletes; those ligaments and muscles, can become too tight. And that can cause injury. So, you need to have that two to one appropriate ratio. And that's a major deficiency that we see here. And then the second major, it's not a deficiency, but it's actually way too much; we have way too much iron in both our water and our hay from everything that we've tested. So, we need to balance the copper, zinc, and manganese. You need to increase those ratios to correlate to the excess iron that they're receiving in their diets. And things like iron can lead to insulin resistance and

other types of diseases of that type in horses, there's a correlation there. So, off the top of my head, those are the biggest ones as well as sugar and starch. Horses don't need a lot of carbs if they are not elite athletes. So, that's another thing that can cause again, that insulin type resistance issue.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 14: Wes Schild on Dressage (1)

***Wes Schild** is a Professional Trainer & Coach for [Riverlands Equestrian Centre](#). He completed an internship at Landgestuet Celle (Hanovarian State Stud) in Adelheidsdorf, Germany. He has worked as a professional rider for McLean Reitsport in Tonisvorst. He has worked in Wellington, Florida for Alexandra Duncan and trained with Juan Matute Sr. Schild began equestrianism at age three, inspired by his mother's passion for horses. Initially focused on jumping, Schild later transitioned to dressage, which he describes as the art of training horses to achieve harmonious movement with their riders. Schild highlighted key factors in selecting and training dressage horses, emphasizing their character and physicality. He reflected on lessons from Germany's classical training systems and Florida's diverse equestrian culture. Schild noted North America's female-dominated equestrian demographics compared to Europe's gender balance, citing cultural and economic differences.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Today, we are with Wes Schild, a professional dressage trainer and coach. He comes from Riverlands Equestrian Facility; it's by Whistler, British Columbia. So, I want to start from the beginning, or near the beginning, in terms of the life of an equestrian for you, because of those who I know in the industry; they describe equestrianism as a lifestyle more than anything. Some prefer the term equestrianism. Some are for the term horsemanship, but in general they will speak consistently about it as a lifestyle. When was the earliest introduction into equestrianism or the equine for you?

Wes Schild: Well, it would have started at a fairly young age, probably when I was three or four. My mom had a passion for horses. She had a horse growing up. I always had a love for animals from as soon as I could walk, basically. So, she got me connected with one of our neighbors and a good friend of hers who ran a riding school and a boarding facility in the area that I grew up in, in Ontario. And pretty much from the time they sat me up on my first pony, I was instantly hooked with horses and from there continued to ride and train and get lessons. So, probably from the time I was three or four, I was on the horse.

Jacobsen: That's very interesting. Did you transition into any particular specialization before dressage, or did you jump into dressage primarily at first?

Schild: No, when I first started riding, I think most young kids that get into I would say the English discipline of riding, generally start out with jumping just because dressage tends to be quite a technical sport and if you don't really understand it, it can be somewhat confusing for people to understand. So, I started out jumping and did a little bit of pony club riding and that sort of thing. Then as I got into my young teenage years, I switched over to quarter horses, actually. So, I started showing within a breed association called [The American Quarter Horse Association](#) and focused my time on that. Then as I got into my later years in high school, I swapped back over to the English discipline again and was focusing really on dressage and jumping at that point.

Jacobsen: How do you differentiate dressage from the other disciplines within the equestrian world? I mean, there's hunting and there's jumping; how do you differentiate dressage in terms of a definition as a professional?

Schild: Dressage, again, it is in the English discipline of riding. Dressage is just the art of training a horse basically. So, a lot of people will describe dressage as horses that are dancing. The horses are trained to do such technical movements within their body and in the training that we

do every day. And so, to the untrained eye, it looks to someone like the horse is dancing. That's where you will see people who will say dressage is the horse dancing.

Jacobsen: And to a trained eye, what are you looking for in the moments when the horse is engaged with a rider in dressage?

Schild: Well, the end goal in dressage is always to have a harmonious partnership between horse and rider. So, when you look at a top-level dressage rider and horse, you want to see that it looks like it's so easily executed that you can't see any of the rider's aids to the horse. That they're really together as one partnership.

Jacobsen: Who would you consider some of the top dressage performers in Canada now?

Schild: There are lots of great riders in Canada. Some of the top riders that represented our country this year at the Olympics would have been Chris Von Martels, Lindsay Kellock, Brittany Fraser; those are some really top Grand Prix riders and that represent Canada really well.

Jacobsen: How do you go about selecting a horse as a rider by the way?

Schild: Selection of horses is definitely tricky. There's so many factors that go into making a top level dressage horse; character, the right ability, their confirmation, so, basically, how the horse is put together, their willingness to do the job, the attitude towards the rider; these are all things that would affect a top horse. And generally, a top horse, you'll hear a lot of people say that they can tend to be a little bit quirky or they have lots of character. So, they tend to be quite full of themselves, but they always are very eager. Once you can channel that quirkiness or their character into the job, generally, you have a spectacular horse.

Jacobsen: How long does it take to get a horse from no training to full training at a national competing level?

Schild: Well, for a horse that's going to do upper-level dressage, so let's say you're getting a horse that's doing like a Grand Prix, you're generally looking at a horse that's around the age of 10 years old. Most horses are started under saddle, so they start being ridden when they're three or four, and then just slowly develop throughout their years. But roughly around 10 years old, you're getting a horse that knows their job, is physically able to do the job, they're mentally and physically fit at that point in their life. They're coming into the prime of their life. A horse's prime is probably from 10 to 15 years old. So, if you were to look at internationally competed dressage horses, most of them that are doing the Grand Prix are in that age gap.

Jacobsen: What is the average lifespan of a horse who is performing in dressage? What is the breed of horse too?

Schild: The average age; that's really changed over even my lifetime because of modern medicine for them and the quality of feed and understanding of health that we have for the horses now. But probably, the average age is somewhere between 30-35 and most horses now are being retired anywhere between 20 and 25 years of age. They're not being ridden anymore. They've done their job. They get to spend some quality time just relaxing with their friends out in the field or a nice retirement life. And the breed of horse that tends to be used again in international Grand Prix or dressage; you'll see is a warm blood. There are multiple different types of warm bloods; Hanoverian is a very popular one and Dutch warm blood. Those are the two that you hear a lot. There's Oldenburg, and then also there are some countries that have very good success

competing the Spanish horses. That's the PRE and the Lusitano; you'll see those as well in dressage.

Jacobsen: You did some traveling in the midst of your career to Germany and to Florida. What were the lessons from the German and the Floridian context for equestrianism? What were the lessons that you could take from the differences? What were the lessons you could take from the similarities between the two contexts?

Schild: In Germany, it is a huge industry over there. The equestrian industry is very big and it's the epicenter for horses. So over there the structure was a very big one; they had lots of very classical riding styles, old school riding styles that have made very successful riders over many, many years. So, that was something that was very interesting for me. I learned a ton over there from some fabulous trainers that I could bring back to Canada and implement it in my daily routine here at the barn and with my clients and horses.

In Florida, it's less of an industry Florida-wise. So, in the winter, lots of people head to Wellington, Florida. That's the horse epicenter for winter and there's multiple competitions within a span of three months. So, it's a very busy season down there, many people come from all over the world. It's fun because it's like being at a resort with 10,000 of your equestrian friends. There are lots of different varieties of training; if one way is not working for you there's someone down the road that might have a different idea, a different way to fix the problem. So that was interesting as well. It definitely opened the door to a different type of riding. You'll hear a lot of riders say in dressage that they were trained either in the German system riding or the Dutch system.

So, when I was in Germany, obviously, I was riding with many German riders. That's where I got my background. And when I went to Florida, it just opened up my eyes to different trainers that were from around the world that had different ideas and opinions on how to get the horse to the same place, but with a different method. And I also got to ride with a wonderful Spanish teacher Juan Matute Sr. down there. So, I got to have many lessons with him, which was really wonderful because he was German trained - but he was also an Olympian for the Spanish team. He just had a different view because he trained also in Spain with some of the classical riding masters there, so he just brought like a new energy and a different way to see things, which is always nice.

Jacobsen: Within some of the demographic research, which I've had the time to do a little bit, there's approximately 7 out of 10 equestrians who are women compared to men. However, I remain uncertain if this is in the North American context or the Canadian, or the North American versus the European context. Regardless, there is a skew and from what I can gather based on reading interviews, there is a skew more in North America than in Europe. Why is this the case? How long has this been the case?

Schild: Well, I would definitely, probably, say it's the skew for North America or like North America to Europe, probably. It would be that 7 to 10 number, and as long as I've been working with horses. That's probably like 25-26 years now. It's always been that way in North America. It's always been a female dominated sport over here; whereas, when I was in Europe, I would say it's probably closer to 50-50, 60-40 over there. There's a lot more men representation, especially in dressage over here in North America. There's not as much. I don't really know why in North America there's not as much. My one guess would be that in Europe every little town has a riding school that every kid goes to. They have riding clubs, so from a young age boys and girls are going to these riding clubs over there. So, there's a lot more exposure to the horse industry over

there; whereas, here, not every town has the ability or has horse farms. Also, it's much more expensive over here to get your children into equestrian sports. Whereas, it's easier and much cheaper to probably just put your young children into like hockey or soccer. So, I think that's part of the problem as well too.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 15: Dana Cooke on High Performance Equestrianism (1)

***Dana Cooke** is the Director of Equestrian Activities at Kingfisher Park Equestrian. She was a member of the Canadian Bronze Medal team at the 2019 Pan American Games in Lima, Peru. She is an "A" level Pony Club graduate and an Equestrian Canada Level 1 Certified Coach. Cooke, a Canadian equestrian based at Kingfisher Park, began her journey with horses as a child, influenced by her family's exposure to pony clubs and rodeo. She transitioned to eventing, inspired by her love for cross-country, and set her sights on the Olympics early in life. Having earned a bronze medal at the Pan American Games, she now aims for the 2024 Paris Olympics. Cooke discussed the financial challenges of equestrianism, including rising costs, and the importance of syndicates in the sport. She highlighted cultural differences in equestrian industries, noting greater accessibility in Europe compared to North America.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Okay, so, I will begin at the beginning. So, you performed at very high levels in the equestrian world. You are at Kingfisher Park Equestrian now. So, there's obviously a story before the start in Kingfisher Park Equestrian. So, what were some of the earliest inklings of being around, or riding, horses for you because the people start at different ages and their paces of development are also different?

Dana Cooke: My parents originally were from Vancouver. They moved out to a little town called Merritt, which is about three hours north of Vancouver. My mom was a schoolteacher and I think my father was working. I can't remember who he was working for at the time when he first stepped out. They had bought like a little piece of, probably, a 20-acre piece of property outside of town and friends there decided to keep some horses there. People started a little pony club around the corner, so my brother started pony club. My parents just bought like two kinds of 500-dollar sale horses. They didn't know really anything about horses. My brother started this pony club. I started watching him ride and stuff. I was like little; like those photos of me with a pacifier in my mouth sitting on a horse and one of my brothers boarding for lessons. Once I was old enough, I also joined the pony club. My mom met my stepfather. He is, actually, a cowboy and literally chases cows for a living. He has worked for several different ranches like those in Nicola Valley. He likes to break horses and stuff like that. So, I got into a little bit of rodeo because my stepdad. This is what he did. I did a little rodeo. I did a little pony club. Then probably by the time I was eight or nine, I started jumping and just then stuck with the more equestrian side of things; English style and Western. When I was in kindergarten, I think, or my early elementary school years, we had to write what we want to do when we grow up. I said I wanted to go to the Olympics. So, here I am.

Jacobsen: You were on the Canadian bronze medal team in Lima, Peru for the Pan American Games. You have your eyes on the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, France.

Dana: Yes, absolutely.

Jacobsen: What is the feeling in anticipation of heading in that direction and being so close when you've been aiming for that for so many years?

Dana: Well, it's exciting, but it's also a little bit like disbelief because you work so hard for it. It's a dream for so long. It's still also three years away, so it feels like forever away. With the Pan Am, it's the same. In the Pan Am, it's a little bit interesting because the path that I took the Pan Am. I planned it out like three years prior: how to get her there and make sure she was qualified.

I was like, "I'm going to get this horse there," which I did. like I have a little bit of the same philosophy, same planning, but I'm, actually, hoping to have, maybe, two or three horses qualified as opposed to just having one. But yes, it's a weird feeling; you get excited about it, but you also can't really get hung up on just getting qualified for the team and just making the team because it can run your life, which is a great thing. Also, things go wrong. So, it's also a bit disappointing when it goes wrong. So, you've got to have other goals and other dreams and plans going on simultaneously if that makes sense.

It's exciting, but I try not to get too hung up on just making the team because it's disappointing when you don't make it. It's really disappointing when we don't make it. So, it is exciting, but there's a lot of pressure that comes with it.

Jacobsen: What is the selection criterion for the Canadian Olympic team in any of the three major areas of equestrianism?

Dana: Honestly, they, usually, come out what our actual criteria is; usually, it's the fall or winter prior, so usually the November-December of the year before we get a selection like they'll get sent out to all the high-performance riders, what you need to do to qualify to be on the team. Then we have to declare to our National Federation, which is Equestrian Canada, to tell them that we want to be selected or we want to be included in the selection process. So, it's just for the Olympics, which is run at a 4-star level, at least across countries 4-star level. Usually, you and your horse have to be qualified at the fourth CCI 4-star long level. Actually, being qualified at the CCI 5-star long level is the highest level of sport; it's actually a level above the Olympics. To have the best shot at it, you would like to have a great result out of 5-star going into it. But I believe that in this past Olympics we had to have a qualification at the 4-star long level.

Jacobsen: What would count as a 5-star? What is the contextualization there for someone without the expertise in the field?

Dana: So, the 5-star is the highest level in in eventing. It would be... trying to think of one good equivalent would be in like a different sport... It'd be like doing a full ironman, like it is compared to doing just a triathlon. It's the dressage. It's more technical and the test is longer. The cross country, the jumps are bigger, of course. It's also more technical than the levels below it. The course generally takes significantly longer, and then the show jumping again. It's more technical. It's a larger show jumping track than you know the levels below it.

Jacobsen: How did you get into eventing versus jumping?

Dana: Well, pony club is actually based in the eventing. That's where they started with everything. When you're in pony club, you can go down different avenues; you can go down just the dressage avenue, or you go down the show jumping avenue, or you could go down eventing one. Whichever avenue you choose, it used to be like an all-around type. It's an organization, but it's also a bit of an education as well. So, you could focus on the whole thing and eventing would be like an all-around type of thing. So, that's where it started. Honestly, I love the cross country. Which if you ask any event clutter, they'll all say the same thing that they're in it for the cross country. We have to do all the other things, but we learned to enjoy the dressage, or at least get good enough at it. We learned to love the show jumping as well, but the cross country is really why we do it.

Jacobsen: For the sport, especially at the higher levels, I have come across some commentary of financial barriers to it. Is that a common thing, or is that more an urban myth?

Dana: No, it's common. Horses are expensive. Everybody says, "Oh, you have horses." There's so much money in horses and the money is literally in the horse, like the care of it, the feeding, maintenance, the veterinary, the farrier, competing; it's expensive. I tell people all the time the cheapest part about owning a horse is the purchase price. It doesn't matter whether you get it for free or you spend 500,000 dollars on it; that's the least amount of money you're going to spend on that horse. And after that, it's expensive. That's why a lot of us, especially the upper-level riders, have reformed syndicates because most of us can't afford to do it on our own. I'm lucky enough that I have the owners of Kingfisher to support me, but they could only support me so much. So, trying to bring other people into the sport and to want to be a part of it, there's a lot of people that want to be a part of your team and your sport and your journey, but they also can't afford to own the whole horse, so they have the option to own a share of the horse and pay for a share of the expenses - which makes it actually a lot more affordable to them and to us as riders. So, it is expensive.

Jacobsen: Are the prices going up?

Dana: Yes. The horse purchase prices, some of them. Yes, it's going up. I wouldn't think that it's changed in the last two years. It doesn't change that much, but absolutely the care of them and competition costs and travel costs, absolutely. That has definitely gone up.

Jacobsen: For the industry to become profitable for an individual, or for a syndicate, or for a business, or for farmers, stables, etc., how do North Americans make the bulk of their income to sustain themselves versus Western Europeans?

Dana: Well, most have teaching businesses. We teach a lot of lessons. Europe, there are a lot more equestrians for disciplines, all of them. There, it's definitely part of their culture; whereas, that's not here in the US, so it's a lot easier to get owners in Europe, but it actually is a lot more competitive. Because if you're not doing a good job with that horse, they'll take the horse and give it to somebody else. So, you have to stay quite competitive with those horses. So, here, you'll find a lot of people start out getting the thoroughbreds, which are fine. You can find some really good thoroughbreds, but majority of them are not as competitive in the dressage. They'll, maybe, have a little bit of a flatter jumping style. So, they might not have the best show jumping records. They generally are great cross-country horses, but not always the most competitive in the in the other two phases. But they're more affordable to buy. So, you definitely see a lot of people starting out with that.

In Europe, they do have teaching and riding businesses like they do here, but I think probably a little bit easier to build up a little more clientele because it's part of the culture. I haven't spent that that much time actually living in Europe; not that I've lived in Europe, but I haven't been there long enough to actually really see the difference. But my coach is Australian. He lived in England for a long time. He had a teaching business, but it was more of a riding business. He had competition horses, so it's just a different style. He would have 12 horses going at any given time. So, you don't see that as much here in the US or in North America in general.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 16: Wes Schild on Expense, Show Jumping's Appeal, and the Industry (2)

Wes Schild is a Professional Trainer & Coach for [Riverlands Equestrian Centre](#). He completed an internship at Landgestuet Celle (Hanovarian State Stud) in Adelheidsdorf, Germany. He has worked as a professional rider for McLean Reitsport in Tonisvorst. He has worked in Wellington, Florida for Alexandra Duncan and trained with Juan Matute Sr. He discusses the economic barriers to entering the equine industry, noting that while middle-class people typically engage in horse riding, the upfront costs—such as acquiring a horse, equipment, and boarding—can be significant. Schild explains that disciplines like show jumping attract more participants, especially younger riders, due to its excitement and visibility. He also describes the process of building a partnership with a new horse, which takes about a year. Schild touches on the typical drop-out age of 17-18 due to commitments like post-secondary education and work. Additionally, he discusses the costs of boarding and training, emphasizing the importance of quality care for horses.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Are there economic barriers? Although, I don't know if that's necessarily true because the demographics note the incomes of people who ride horses generally are about middle class. They are ordinary people in general. But getting into the industry, getting a horse, getting equipment, paying for boarding for the first little bit, etc. is that a barrier at the outset for getting into the industry?

Wes Schild: I think it depends on when you're probably getting into the industry; I think it might be a little bit tougher as a child or a young teen to get into it just because there is a greater expense. Then again if you were just to go and be on some other sports team, there's a lot more to owning a horse. Then you have to have someone that can help care for it or you have to board it out. So, I think that also slows down, why people don't do it.

Jacobsen: How do you find the demographics per discipline within the equine - dressage versus jumping versus hunting, etc.? What tends to attract the most participants in Canada?

Schild: I would probably say jumping definitely would be your number one.

Jacobsen: What might be the reason for that?

Schild: I think if you go from people that are getting into it at a younger age. Show jumping has more appeal to it. For someone that's just standing back and watching it; you get the idea of what's going on. You see that someone's riding the horse. They get to gallop the course. They're jumping fences. It looks fun. It's exciting. Whereas if you are looking back from a distance, again, and watching a very basic dressage test happen, you might not understand exactly what's happening. So, someone to see the jumping is definitely more interesting. So, I think that's where people lean to first; they want to get into jumping first. And then, maybe, once they're in riding for a while and have a better understanding of it, they start to look to dressage because they understand that actually dressage is the basics to all riding. They need a really good solid foundation in their flat work and in their dressage work to be an excellent jumper. And then, of course, you would find out that if you're riding with someone reputable or your trainer. Those top riders are all working on good flat work and dressage to make these top jumping horses.

Jacobsen: How long does it take for a horse to become acquainted and comfortable with a new rider?

Schild: I always say to my clients here when I've helped them in the past look for a new riding horse and there's a new partnership being started up; I always say about a year. It takes a while for you to learn the horse and how they think and how they act and how they react to different situations. It's a partnership, so it's about building trust with your new partner and that that takes time and patience and help from a coach or a trainer.

Jacobsen: Is there a period at which people will enter into the industry and then drop out? So, hypothetically, a young teenager, parents put them into some equestrian discipline. They have a horse. They train, take part in competitions or some casual events for five years, and then they drop it at 17. What is a common scenario one would expect in a decent hunk of the equestrian world in Canada?

Schild: I would say that's right. I would say if you were to look at a lot of the young riders that, maybe, ride from the time they're 10 to 18 or whatever; they do that while they're in high school and have the time, the ability, and, probably, their parents support, hopefully, to be able to do the sport. I would say around that age is when you start to see people fizzle out of it. I think it's mostly because they're going off to start post-secondary education. Or they need to start working full-time. They just can't afford to do both things. There's not enough time to do both things. So, I would say that's probably when most fizzle out of the sport, but I would also say I know quite a few who have stopped riding then, and then maybe go on to post-secondary education, and then start a family, or whatever, and then return to riding in their early 30s, and continue on.

Jacobsen: How many people are in the industry now in Canada?

Schild: That's a good question. I don't actually know the answer.

Jacobsen: Okay. How important are quality and cleanliness and orderliness of facilities for proper equine activities?

Schild: Well, I would say it's very important. That's actually one of the biggest things that I took away from being in Europe. Some of the facilities that you go to over there are almost like military. They expect very high standards of cleanliness and respect and order for horses and riders. And here at our facility, I do the same; I make sure that everything's very clean and organized. Everything's very proper because it makes for running the business and the horses and the clients and everything just such a way nicer atmosphere to come to work every day when everything has a place and is organized. People know where things are; and it makes the day just run that much smoother.

Jacobsen: Your stalls are noted as 15x15 and 15x20. 15x20 for the stallions. So, geldings and mares get 15x15 stalls and stallions get 15x20 stalls. Why do the stallions get slightly bigger stalls?

Schild: There's really not a huge reason why here we made them a little bit bigger. It's only because stallions sometimes tend to be inside a little bit longer than you would like a mare-stallion for turnout purposes anyways. Luckily at our facility, we have quite a few paddocks that are built correctly and tall enough and are safe enough to put stallions out in so that there is no risk of them hurting themselves or getting out and trying to get to another horse. But the person who designed our facility wanted to make those stallion stalls just a little bit bigger because, like I said, if you have times where the stallions might not be able to go outside, it's nice for them to have a big stall inside that they can move around and they're quite comfortable in.

Jacobsen: For boarding and room for a horse, so gelding, stallion, to mare, where most people have a small ranch to the upper echelons of standards of care in Canada or even Europe, what is the range of costs people want to be looking at here?

Schild: Definitely out in the West coast, now, you're looking roughly most places now about 1,000 dollars a month for a stall, and then that can go up or down depending on the facility and what the facility offers and what's included in your board. If you go down to - let's say - Florida, for example, I know lots of facilities down there that you're looking probably closer to like 1,800 a month to 2,000 a month. That's, of course, done in US dollars, but I would say at most good facilities now you're looking around a 1,000 dollars a month.

Jacobsen: What can be added onto those base costs for improved quality of life for the horse?

Schild: So, for example, at our facility, some of the add-ons, there would be different types of quality of hay that you can get. With your board, you have just local grass type hay that we grow here on the farm, but then some horses need more protein or more energy in their diet. So, we also can bring in straight alfalfa. We have timothy, so that would be an extra cost. We have an automatic horse walker, which is really good for horses that need rehabilitation. Or we use it as a strength and exercise program every morning. So, all my competition horses go on the walker before they go to their turnout fields, so that would be an extra cost monthly. Those would be some of the type of things some facilities have. Treadmills or water treadmills, again, that would be an extra charge that would add on. Also, we have a massage therapist and chiropractor that come monthly. So, if that's something that you want done for your horse, that's just an extra add-on to your monthly bill here, and then they get massaged. They get a chiropractor treatment done.

Jacobsen: How much is training with various individuals within the industry? So, they have the basic level of training to become a coach to training with someone who has been on the national Olympic team for a particular country?

Schild: You mean for a lesson price wise?

Jacobsen: Certainly.

Schild: Again, it totally depends on who you're training with; a lower-level coach, you're, probably, looking for around 75 dollars for a session. Then upper level stuff, you're probably looking somewhere around 200 dollars for a session.

Jacobsen: For a session, how long does that last?

Schild: Generally, 45 minutes to an hour.

Jacobsen: Okay. Does this include tack up?

Schild: No, if you are having a session, your session begins at, let's say, three o'clock. You'd be expected to be tacked up and ready to ride for three o'clock, and then you would ride with your coach from 3:00 to 3:45.

Jacobsen: So, let's say, someone comes to Riverlands for a lesson, what will be a standard pre-lesson lesson and post-lesson series of procedures for them?

Schild: Well, for most people that come for lessons here, they have their horse already here, so they're in a program with me. They would come. They would have their lesson time. They would get their horse tacked up and ready to ride. They would go into the indoor or the outdoor riding

arena and warm up for probably 5-10 minutes before I come into the arena, and then we normally would have probably a five-minute little chat about what they're feeling, what they want to work on, if they have any questions or concerns, and then we go into more of a detailed warm-up where I have eyes on them and the horse. We work through the warmup. Then we go into more of what I call the work for the day or the competition riding. So, we figure out what we're going to work on, and we put the horse through some type of lesson plan and then there's always breaks in that, of course, to give the horse time to recover and recuperate. Then we would do the cool down session and we always end the lesson with thoughts on how the lesson went; the good, the bad, and what we need to work on and their takeaway, their homework, for whatever. The next couple days until I see them again.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 17: Cindy Waslewsky on Operations at Twin Creeks Ranch (1)

Cindy Waslewsky went to Stanford University and competed on the Varsity Gymnastics and Ski Teams. She earned a B.A. in Human Biology in 1982. She earned a Diploma in Christian Studies at Regent College in Vancouver, and a BC teachers' certification from the University of British Columbia in 1984. She was the President of the Squamish Valley Equestrian Association. She is a certified English and Western coach. Waslewsky is co-owner of Twin Creeks Ranch. Waslewsky describes the facilities and staff at her equestrian property, emphasizing the importance of having on-site staff for efficient care and maintenance. The property features in-and-out stalls, large paddocks, and various weather-resistant shelters for the horses. Cindy highlights the challenges of maintaining horses' health in the Pacific Northwest's wet climate, including preventing fungal issues and ensuring horses have access to water. She also discusses the complexities of horse boarding, noting how owners treat their horses like family. Cindy sees horse ownership as a lifestyle, with many adult riders starting later in life, valuing proper training and matching horses to riders' abilities.

Cindy Waslewsky: We can hot walk a horse in a circle, so that the shedrow goes in a circle. So, you can hot walk your horses undercover. That's great if a horse is colicky or something like that. You need to monitor and walk the horse. You've got a space right there outside the stall to do that. So, we have crossties there and huge tack rooms that are insulated and one of our staff members lives in a suite that's off that same barn. She's a single girl. She worked at North Shore Equestrian Centre before she came to us, so a good experience that she's got into the vet tech program starting January. And then across from the barn, we have two suites there, again staff. One's a single fellow who does basic out maintenance. We have lots of equipment. So, he'll harrow the arena, clear the trails. He'll check the water lines, of course, with this cold snap, getting frozen lines working again and plowing snow. All that kind of stuff. Then to the left of his suite or to the right of his suite is a young couple, she works in the barn. Her partner is an IT guy and he works from home. So, when we had this bad weather, he was out helping Kira in the barn and then, as I said, Kayla who has the four kids. The partner was up helping the barn too, so we had extra help.

So, having everyone live on the property, they walk out. Because they're feeding at seven in the morning. They're feeding at noon. They're feeding at five. They're feeding at nine. So, to drive back and forth would not be very efficient, but you can go out there and feed at seven in the morning and then go in and warm up or have breakfast, come back out and start doing stalls and at 9:30, turn some of the horses out, some are in what we call "in-and-outs."

When people contact us, I would say about almost half our stalls are now in-and-out because what my husband did is he created more in-and-outs off the back of the bar, and tried to make as many of the in-and-out stalls. Every other stall is an in-and-out because you don't want the run, the pen, to be the same width as the stall; that's too narrow. They can get cast and things like that. So, what you do is if one stall has an in-and-out, the next stall that horse gets led out to a paddock outside the next one's in-and-out, where they can run in and out at will; and the next one we lead them out. So, we have good, generous paddocks. Every horse has a paddock. They get turned out no matter what. If pouring rain, they're out for half the day. When they have this freezing weather, they were out for almost one o'clock in the afternoon, and then we brought them in for their lunch because the water was freezing. Even if we gave them a bucket, it was

frozen before they needed it when they got fed their lunch. You cannot feed a horse without water available to them. They need water.

So, that was a limiting factor. So, we bring them in at one o'clock, and then have the lunch inside. Normally, we'll keep them out as much as we can keep them out and in the spring and the fall. In the summer, they could be out 24 hours a day. They have more room in a paddock than they do in a stall. They can see their neighbor, but they each get their own feed in a feeder that's on the rubber matting. So, the thing doesn't fall onto the crusher. The gravel stuff that they're living on and they have auto waters as well. We took out all the hog fuel and put in crusher which is a blend of different kinds of sand and fills so that it's firm. That gives the horse something firm and doesn't harbor fungus because we're living in the Pacific Northwest.

I grew up in California, didn't have rain and mud fever. All these other different kinds of fungus. You see on horses up here. But up here, you've got to be very careful that they have a blanket on; they're going to be out in the rain, so that they don't get damp and get a fungus on their back called ring sore. You can't even then put a saddle on if they get too sore. You got to stay on top of those things. So, anyway, we have staff living on the property. We have options of in-and-out stalls. Ones that you lead horses out to paddocks and back in again, and then we have a couple of what are called loafing sheds, which means it's a shelter. We have two Icelandics that love to be outside in the snow, rain. They love to be outside. They have a shelter where they can get out of the weather, but they'll be standing outside most of the time. We do have a stall for them if the weather is really bad or the water starts freezing. We can bring them inside if we need to do that. But they love being out, they're shaggy little guys and they love being outside.

On our property, we have the main indoor arena. We have dressage letters up. We have some jumps. We have show-quality jumps. We don't set up often because they're heavy to lift in-and-out. We have other jumps that are easily put in-and-out for lessons and for people to practice on, but we have a multi-disciplined barn. In other words, we have people who like Western and English. In Western, you might have reiners. You might have pleasure. You might have trail horses. In English, you might have dressage, hunter, jumper, and just simply pleasure trail horses. We tend to have more older riders with a few younger people who this is the first horse that they've brought in here. People, of course, are somewhat price conscious because it's really expensive owning a horse. It's getting more expensive because we've seen costs skyrocket. We have voluntarily just increased the rates and wages for our workers. We do the same thing in a *per diem*: this is how many horses you have, this is how much you get per horse to clean and feed them for the day.

Now, if you have 31 horses, that's too many stalls to do for one person, which it really is, then we say you get a secondary worker. Then they get paid for the stalls they do; and you get paid the primary wage. So, it all works out. Our staff have three primary stock barn staff people. They make up their own schedule. They talk together. They work it out. Some are at school. Some have kids. So, they work together and make up a schedule that works for them. They cover for each other. They make sure everyone's okay, and then we have another fellow, Hank, who does maintenance. Like you, he can jump into the stalls. He can do stall work. He can do buckets. He can bring the hay down for them. He does maintenance. So, he's there if anyone's sick, if anyone needs a hand, and if something happens like a pipe breaks or anything happens; they call him. So, they have that as well as my husband and I who live on the property as well.

Jacobsen: Is Steve available right now as well by the way?

Cindy: Yes, Steve's just upstairs. He's not a chatty person. If you had specific questions for him, he'd be happy to answer them. He, like I said, does a lot of the maintenance. We mix our own footing for the arena. We mix footing for our paddocks. We use crusher for it and for all the roads. We also have three and a half kilometers of trails, which he put in with his own GPS lining up through the woods and clearing out trails, putting culverts in and then putting landscape cloth and then crusher on top. So, a nice trail that you would see at Alder Grove Park or Camel Valley Park. We have some half kilometers of trails here on the property. So, as you saw on the web page, we have a round pen, a main indoor arena, a second indoor arena, which is like the lunging arena that we have. It's a 72 x 72, so it's a nice 20-meter circle with a coverall. Then we have three and a half kilometers of all-weather trails, so it's not muddy. They're a good footing. Trees fall down, branches fall, things happen with these storms we've had recently. We go out and clear them off. Then we have a half-mile sand racetrack.

Now, the racetrack is not what you would see for training race horses; the inside rails are out. So, it's basically a recreational track. We still harrow it. We keep it maintained. You can go out there. You can just walk around the track, trot, or do a little gallop. Sometimes, I'll take students out. We'll do a slow canter contest and then the fastest walk contest. We're trying to train our horses to have good gaits for us to be out hacking on trails and such, and have them in control. We do our hay storage, like this year there was a real crisis for hay because of the fires, the drought, Covid, and then, of course, the flooding came along. So, hay is difficult. We bought a B-train load, which is a truck and a big trailer following it. A B-train load in the Fall, and then we put a deposit on another B-train load from the same hay supplier up North because it's good quality professionally grown hay.

Steve with his background in animal physiology and nutrition will be happy to advise boarders on good nutrition for their horse, but, as you probably have found, everybody's an expert. Quite frankly, it's interesting. Even when he went to UBC, lots of feed studies on pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, cows, but not many good feed studies on horses. So, you still see kind of a backyard approach, "Oh, I'm going to get the beet pulp," or, "They'll get their weight up." The beet plants, just saw this cheap pulp stuff and get rid of it by giving it to horse people saying, "Here's some empty calories for your horse." It's great for hydrating your horse because you soak this pulp and some people do that to try to put weight on the horse, but I would question their more scientific knowledge of the digestive system of the horse.

We can advise borders. But if they want this, that, or the other thing, we accommodate them because that's not livestock to them. That's not even a pet. That horse is their child. You've seen that. Have you not? These women and guys, often, their kids are grown up and gone. These horses are their family. They're their children, very important to them. So, horse boarding is a very unique business. They really think you're taking care of people's horse; we're taking care of people by taking care of their horses.

Jacobsen: Talking to clientele while working, certainly, individuals who own one or more horses feel as if the horse is a part of their own family. Also, a common sentiment I find among those in the equestrian industry with only a few months out of my belt granted, is the sense of a lifestyle. So, you either dive into the deep end first; or it's a foot in the door phenomenon. Where, once you start getting into it, more or less, you don't leave. Unless, you're forced to leave due to finances or some other catastrophic circumstance. People love it. It is their lifestyle.

Cindy: I have adults coming to me for lessons who have always wanted to ride. Now, they're close to retirement. They now have the time. They have the money. Some of them don't have the health anymore. So, we make sure they're on a horse that suits their limitations. You'll see this all the time. People come to me. They might take some lessons. Hopefully, they do take a good number of lessons and really learn horsemanship, ground manners, training techniques, and then get a horse. When they get that horse, they get because the worst thing is to be over horse; to get a horse that's a little too much, a little bit too athletic, too high energy, too high maintenance, not as well trained and needs more training. If you don't get someone with that knowledge, then you get a horse that becomes somewhat dangerous for that rider. Unfortunately, that horse then doesn't always get a good chance with the next owner either. They get kind of labeled. They've developed some bad habits. I always say a horse is kind of like a dog. Get a dog and train that dog, an ill-trained dog, an insecure dog, or an aggressive dog is not a happy dog. Indeed, it could be a danger to a person, then you might have to put down the dog because an incident happens. I've seen that in the horse world as well with horses that are great animals, but have not had the best riding and training at some point in their life. It is human made problems in the horses that the good trainers have to go in and try to fix.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 18: Betty Asseiro on Symatree Farm (1)

Betty Asseiro is an experienced mentor. She has been part of the team, running programs, developing programs, taking horse pictures, facilitating events and helping to take care of the horses! A key member of the team, Betty helps keep us all on track both in and out of the paddocks. Currently studying addictions and youth correctional counselling, Betty skillfully applies her combination of experience and education to plan and run the variety of youth programs we have in the best ways possible. Asseiro shares her journey with horses, explaining how she grew up around them, left for university, and returned to work with them later in life. She works with youth, especially those struggling with anger and frustration, providing a safe space where horses offer non-judgmental companionship. Betty highlights how horses respond to a child's energy, helping them build healthy coping mechanisms. She discusses the emotional differences between boys, who externalize anger, and girls, who internalize it. Betty also believes horses are sensitive to energy, offering forgiveness and understanding, regardless of past interactions.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: This is Betty from Symatree Farm. The stories that I'm gathering are early life stories. People get started very early in life with them. Or they have been around them and then they rediscover them later in life. What has been your story with horses?

Betty Asseiro: I never left horses, but I definitely went on to a different path and came back to working with them. So, when I was very young, my mom loves horses. My mom is [Kathy](#), the founder of Symatree Farm. So, we had horses boarded. We were always around them, and then when we moved out to the country. Obviously, it was around them. I was living on the farm, and then I took a bit of a different path in university and was in the city a lot, and then ended up coming back and now working with them. I have my own horse and I am just really appreciating them and working with them in a new life not as a little kid.

Jacobsen: What kind of horse do you have?

Betty: She is a just grey mare. She's a mix of a bunch, but an absolutely amazing mentor. I feel like she's really my partner in what we do.

Jacobsen: And what's her name?

Betty: Her name is Dakota.

Jacobsen: And is that named after North/South Dakota or something else?

Betty: Honestly, we have a naming kind of rule that we follow. So, for our newest horses and for the horses that aren't doubling as our personal horses, and just kind of equine mentors for the general public primarily, we let people on Facebook name them. They all vote. But with our horses, we find a name that we like for every single letter of the alphabet, and then we narrow it down to the top, like three or four, and then we'll ask the horse. We'll see which one in training and stuff they seem to respond to. That's how we choose our names.

Jacobsen: How long have you been involved with Symatree?

Betty: I have been involved with Symatree on and off. I was always there as a kid. I would help out, but I have been involved as a facilitator and really working on the farm for the last four years.

Jacobsen: How did you start at Symatree in terms of the positions and the responsibilities? How's that grown over time?

Betty: I came back to the farm as an assistant, so I was just helping out in the programming that Kathy and Barb were doing at the time and just found that I really loved it. I loved working with the kids. My interests started to grow. So, I asked to take on more responsibility. I started thinking about running camps with the kids that I was pretty passionate about working with, and then through school I started learning more. I got an education that really supported what we do here. So, I began working with all our youth and teen contracts that come through child and family services. So, that's how I stepped into the role as lead youth facilitator working with all those contracts and working with those support teams.

Jacobsen: Who are the majority population of youth with issues, whether addictions or otherwise, coming to you?

Betty: I primarily work with youth who are like 7 to 13. They all come through child and family services. So, normally, the youth is struggling or is not open to going to therapy. So, they're looking for a service provider who will make the child feel comfortable and who will get the child to think about their strengths and get the child a little bit more open to speaking to an adult and thinking about their feelings, and then usually enter talk therapy following that. I stay on the support team as a person they feel really comfortable with and a place that they feel really safe and they can kind of reset during the week.

Jacobsen: Now, as far as I know in psychology and psychiatry, and so on, individuals who are of mature age, after a time that brain is pretty well formed. So, any addictions or behavioral patterns or problems that they may have had up to that point may, more or less, be pretty well ingrained for the duration of their life without substantial intervention. For youth, up to age 13, you have sort of a very lucky and privileged position because the brain is still forming significantly, and so you get to see probably a lot more rapid change, a lot more flexibility cognitively and emotionally, in the young. What are some of the changes that you noticed in the youth coming to you and working with you over time?

Betty: I think that's a really great point. That's why I feel so lucky to be able to work with the youth that come, so that we can work together to get onto a path that's going to feel a lot more comfortable for them as they get older. A lot of the kids that I work with start out very much with a lot of anger and a lot of frustration about their situation and not being able to share their feelings or have a sense of safety. So, being able to provide a safe place with the horses who are completely non-judgmental, if the child is angry, they're allowed to say to the horse, "I'm feeling really angry today. I don't want to be your friend." The horse is going to say, "That's okay for today and when you feel better I will be here," and the child can come back to the horse the next week and say, "I feel like I can be your friend today. I'd like to be around you." What working with the kids is all about is building friendships because kids are motivated to be friends with horses, I found they see this huge animal. They think, "Wow! They're so cool."

As soon as they find out, they can be the horse's friend they go, "Okay, I'll do whatever I can to make that happen." So, the change that you see is the motivation and the real hard work that they put in to make sure their energy is right and make sure that they are really thinking about the words that they use and thinking about how if they scare the horse; they can make their friend feel better. I think that's the power of horses because they are so forgiving. It allows the kids to have a space to experiment with their energy and with their words and that healthy experimentation is how they're going to build healthy coping mechanisms for the future.

Jacobsen: The one emotion coming out in the last response was anger and those youth who are mainly dealing with anger tend to be boys. Is that the majority population of young coming to you?

Betty: I work with both. I find that the boys are a lot more externally angry and, oftentimes, the girls internalize that anger. Instead of lashing out to others, it's lashing out on themselves. So, it's a different way of feeling that frustration and feeling misunderstood.

Jacobsen: So, this internalization of the anger. Is this a manifestation of a depressive state in the girls when, maybe, it comes off in sarcastic comments or things of this nature?

Betty: It can definitely come across as very shut down, unwilling to even make eye contact, pretending to be disinterested in the horses, and kind of making sarcastic comments. In working with them, a lot of times, it can also come across as giving up really quickly. So, they're asking the horse to follow them, and the horse turns to eat grass. They drop the lead line. They say, "It doesn't matter. No, I don't want to do this anymore. It's not going to work." They give up, or they whine, and say, "Oh, I can't do this. I'm never going to be able to do this. Nobody likes me. Everybody hates me. The horse hates me..."

Jacobsen: Wow! That's a lot.

Betty: Yes, that's a lot of times how you'll see that expressed.

Jacobsen: You mentioned the horses being forgiving. You did not say forgetful. So, I want to clarify. I mean I've only been in the industry about eight months. So, are the horses forgiving because they are forgetful, or are they not forgetful and still forgiving?

Betty: I believe that the horses are not forgetful and still forgiving. I have absolutely seen kids come back as teenagers who came when they were eight years old for like a summer camp. They come back as a teenager with a school group. They come back to visit with their family. The horses remember the people just as much as the people remember them. No matter what their experience was together. If the person comes with a new energy, if the person comes in with positivity, the horse is going to respond to that.

Jacobsen: When I talk to horse people, a lot of the language is around sense, feel, experience; the intuitive nature of working around horses. So, are horses in general very sensitive and intuitive to the "energy" the person around people around them is giving off?

Betty: I definitely think so and I think that's something that's absolutely magical about working with them and working with kids because a kid can come in and they are angry, they had a really rough car ride coming in and they come into the arena with big energy. They want to work with a quiet horse. Big energy and a shy animal aren't going to work in a logical sense, but the kid is not their anger. The kid is not a bad day at school. If they come in, and they take a breath, and they breeze past their driver, and they breeze past me, and they go to talk to that horse more often than not, that shy horse will kind of look at the child. They'll wait until the child's energy is genuine. If the kid says, "I had a really bad day. I want to talk to you about it," they can walk up to that horse and talk to that horse about their bad day, they can raise their voice when they're talking about it and that shy horse will stay with them because they're not angry at the horse. They're simply expressing themselves and the horses realize that that's okay. That's not who they are underneath the anger that they're feeling in that moment. They're wanting to genuinely just be a friend. They're looking to have the horse as a friend. That's a relationship that they can share no matter if the child is sad in a moment or angry in a moment.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 19: Will Clinging on Canadian Farriers (1)

***Will Clinging** is the President of the Association of Farrier Trainers of Canada and the Vice President of the Western Canadian Farrier's Association. Clinging discusses his journey with horses, which began in childhood but was rediscovered in his 20s after a brief stint as a carpenter. He highlights the evolution of farrier education, noting that modern farriers have vast resources, including online tools like YouTube and webinars, making it easier to learn. Clinging reflects on how the farrier community, once fragmented, has grown into a more collaborative field, with farriers sharing knowledge internationally. He also emphasizes the craftsmanship and tradition of the trade, which remains rooted in manual skills despite technological advancements.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, today, we are here with Will Clinging, the Vice President of the Western Canadian Farrier Association and the President of The Association of Farrier Trainers of Canada, which is the National Association that's been newly formed. I'd like to start off with a narrative arc focusing on some of the background. You can only answer as much as you feel comfortable with, but it lets people know a little bit where you're from. So, were there any family connections to being a farrier?

Will Clinging: Yes and no, many generations ago... I'm from Ireland. I do have blacksmiths in my lineage on my father's side, but not that I would have ever net any...they were long gone before I was born.

Jacobsen: What about horses for yourself? A lot of people who are trainers or riders, a common story is starting when they were single digit age with horses or with the pony club, for instance.

Will: Yeah, I'm probably not too far off of that. My mother rode when she was young. When I was a kid, we had a couple of ponies and a horse. So, that's where I learned to ride. I didn't ride from the time I was probably 10 years old until the time I was 20. And then I rediscovered it.

Jacobsen: What was that feeling when you were first starting on a horse? Do you recall?

Will: As a child? No, I had no idea. Marginal terror, probably, and the total lack of understanding or control or knowledge, but just get on and go for it and hope for the best - which didn't always happen.

Jacobsen: Why did you decide to come back or rediscover in the 20s?

Will: That's a good question. I spent my teenage years growing up in Surrey. I wanted to be a carpenter, actually. I spent a couple of years building houses and hated every minute of it. And it was suggested to me that, maybe, I should go to college and take a couple of courses on agriculture because my dad was involved in agriculture, more from an agribusiness perspective. So, I thought, "Why not?" I took a couple of courses at the University of the Fraser Valley in Chilliwack. I really enjoyed it. Then I entered into a two-year diploma program in livestock production. That led me to working on some ranches in the interior and that kicked off my equestrian or my horse career. That was in 1994 and here we are in 2022. I'm still in the horse business.

Jacobsen: If you could take a moment to envision back to that period of 1994 to the time in 2022 now, are there any points in that career trajectory where you would have made a modification to pivotal choices?

Will: I just wanted to be a cowboy, whether that was sort of romance from my childhood reading Westerns or whatever. When I was a teenager in high school and graduating, I actually had no concept that being a cowboy was really a thing, and then having gone to college to study agriculture. You realize that actually ranching and beef production and cowboys do exist. It sort of just became this thing that I wanted to do. And, I guess, if I hadn't chosen that, I don't know where I would be honestly because I've really spent almost my entire adult life working with horses, probably, because of that first decision to take a course. I don't even know what it was, and then a night course at Fraser Valley College on agriculture. It just sort of opened all kinds of doors that seemed a lot more interesting than living in Surrey, building houses. Then getting onto the ranches, it was a whole different experience. One that I wasn't really familiar with, but I just loved it. You're outside. You get to work with livestock. It was a whole different perspective that I just kind of found easy and comfortable. It really guided the rest of my professional career in a variety of different aspects, but they all come back to horses at the end. I've been a cowboy. I've been a farrier. I've been a horse trainer. I've been a cowboy. So, I have kind of been bounced around back and forth between those careers, but, at the end of the day, it's still really all been about horses. This is going on a long time now.

Jacobsen: Do you notice any differences between the education younger farriers might get now compared to, say, two decades ago?

Will: I would. I would say that when I started, I didn't really have any education. It was just what I learned from other cowboys that I worked with; and there were definitely shoeing programs that you could go to, but they were all short in duration. A couple to three months, it was all sort of hands-on. If you didn't work with somebody, you didn't learn anything. And nowadays, with the internet access to information, the ability to travel, and the popularity of the horse industry, it's changed a lot in the last 25 years. Natural horsemanship, you've got horsemanship clinics. You've got more shows. It's had a far broader public image. It's got a lot more people into it. The education now, the colleges that teach farriery have expanded. The programs are longer, there's far more in-depth knowledge that's expected. Then the last, probably, 10 years with YouTube and the internet, webinars, and YouTube videos, the amount of knowledge that young farriers have access to is really almost endless.

It's mostly a self-guided path of education. But this is definitely a trade that if you're into it, it's easy to get into it because now you have access to things that you didn't have access to 25 years ago. But if you're not into, you don't last very long. So, I would say that now is probably the best time ever to be a farrier if you're interested in professional development, education, competition, and certification. There's an endless limit to what you can learn and how you can share that knowledge or use that knowledge. The farrier industry is quite regional and being where I am on Southern Vancouver Island. It's not like living in rural British Columbia or Alberta or other parts of the country. There's a real value placed on the animals here. There's a high expectation for care for the horses, but not such a high expectation for performance.

A lot of adult amateur riders here that have the resources and the facilities and the care and the love and all of those things that go into making good horse people. We're really fortunate here. So, there's a high expectation for knowledge and skills. In other areas, they don't have access to the same type of clientele. Therefore, the demand for knowledge or professionalism or education isn't as great, but, in this trade itself, really it often becomes a very personal journey on improvement and how good a job you're doing. There's a lot of heritage involved. There's still quite a few farriers that make all their own shoes. There's a real pride in the craftsmanship that they bring to

the trade handmade tools. It's one of the oldest professions in the world. We still make our living with a hammer and a piece of steel and heat. So, the technology hasn't affected the fundamentals, but the access to information, knowledge, science, research, imaging, and the study of mechanics and movement is really quite astounding in where it has come. So, if you're interested in becoming a good farrier, there's really an endless amount of information that you can access. If you're not, you'll end up probably not staying in the industry very long because it just becomes a hard way to make a living.

Jacobsen: Is there any historical knowledge of the first farriers in Canadian society? Where is an organization devoted to them? Is there a particular individual or school of people known?

Will: From an organized farrier perspective, the WCFA has been around for probably 40 odd years. There was a small group of farriers in the Fraser valley that sort of assembled and created this association, guys like Randy Blackstock and others. They just had this thought that, maybe, they should organize. They've helped improve the industry and the trade and really they were thinking far beyond their time because, historically, farriers have not worked well together. They've often considered themselves to be in competition with other farriers and only a limited amount of business. So, they didn't always get along. I would think that that dynamic has changed a lot. There are a lot more horses. They're used much more for recreation than they are for work.

The people that can afford horses in the Fraser valley or on the island or in much of Canada. They can afford their horses and those farriers that are of any good quality are all so busy that we're actually trying to give clients away rather than trying to argue with our competitors about pricing and service because 'I can do a better job cheaper if you hire me'; none of that really happens anymore. So, the farrier community has become a far broader community I would say regionally, nationally, and internationally. On my Facebook page, I have probably 500 farriers from all over the world that I'm friends with; and I message with, and I would think that most other farriers that are involved in the community would say the same thing. It's really astounding where I can message a farrier in the UK and ask for some advice and then get a message back fast within relative to the time zones, but the sharing of information is unbelievable. It wouldn't really have happened if it hasn't been for those associations that started out 40 years ago with the goal of trying to bring the community together. But in Canada, who did it first? I honestly couldn't tell you. It is before my times.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 20: Moya Byrne Merrin on High Point Equestrian Centre and Equine Labour Shortages (1)

***Moya Byrne Merrin** is the Director of High Point Equestrian Centre. Merrin shares her journey into the equestrian world, starting at age 10 with a \$500 horse, later returning to horses in her late 20s. She discusses the challenges facing the dressage industry, including staffing issues and the divide between professional and amateur riders. Merrin notes the struggle to find reliable, hardworking staff due to low pay, demanding physical labor, and limited career advancement. She highlights the difficulties in offering live-work opportunities due to local regulations, and reflects on the industry's gig-like nature, where workers often come and go, particularly younger staff seeking training opportunities.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, today, we are here with Moya of High Point Equestrian Centre. We've had a chance to explore the facilities and discuss some of the issues facing the equestrian world at the moment. Your focus is dressage. Although, this is one particular professional area of equestrianism. There's a wide range. However, each facet of equestrianism, I think, can provide a bit of a glimpse into different images of equestrianism as a whole. So, to get started, to give people an idea, what was your first foot in the door moment for the equine world?

Moya Byrne Merrin: My first in the door was my parents buying me a \$500 horse. I was, probably, around 10-years-old. It kept me out of trouble. Then there was a bit pause. I was 28 when I began picking up horses again with a retired race horse, which was quite young and quite athletic. That started. I did not plan or foresee – my husband and I – an equestrian lifestyle. Where, we have ended up owning a facility and running & managing it, which does events and focuses on education.

Jacobsen: How is the industry looking now, in terms of dressage?

Merrin: We have a lot of support in our area. We have amazing trainers and access to them. People from the Interior come down and are willing to train here with coaches that are allowed to come in. We also bring in trainers from all around the world. There is a lot of support for the education and the shows. We have a show series, which is a lower-level. It is called the schooling show. It is not rated. You are welcome to try your first ride. You are welcome to try the next level. It is a very fun atmosphere. We take the precautions and do the proper things.

We focus on the schooling and the education aspect of it. We sell out every show, prior to Covid. This has been something that we have been working on during Covid because there wasn't any access to the rated shows. We couldn't do this. We could do this safely on a smaller scale. We have had overwhelming response to our show series. It looks like the sport is thriving. But when you get to those bigger rated shows that cost a lot more, it thins out. It really does seem to be a divide between the professionals and the amateurs.

The amateurs used to make up the bulk of these shows. Now, it is about 50/50. People are finding out series more interesting, or cannot afford it.

Jacobsen: Staffing, this is an issue, not only in the times of the coronavirus pandemic, but also in the industry as a whole: Finding people who are willing to do the hard labour. So, the issue of finding quality labour in the midst of a pandemic and in a field requiring, simply put, hard labour.

Merrin: So, prior to the pandemic, staffing has always been an issue, finding reliable, hard working staff that are willing to look beyond the immediate. It is never the same day in a barn. There are always things that come up and happen, and people will sign up to stall cleaning. That's it. If you ask them to do anything else, they won't listen. It is not in their job description. I don't know if this people being more educated about or not, but people say, "This is not in my job description. I am not doing it"

Then you get these rare gems who either have horses and want to be here because they understand. They want to be a part of this. This is their long-term goal. Those are the ones that we have had the most success with; they're flexible, adaptable, and hardworking. Either their parents have instilled it in them, "This is what you need to do to get a horse," rather than simply going to Starbucks and getting a set course.

Yes, the barn work does offer more flexibility. But we tend to find a conflict between those who want to ride and compete, who really understand the sport, because those are the times where we need those people to work. [Laughing] That's been tough. What I have found works fast is if they don't actually ride, they want to simply be working with the horses, being around them, and in the lifestyle. They, sometimes, get the opportunity to take on someone else's horse. So, they get the fix that way.

Between pay and the type of work, they find it difficult. The pandemic, actually, had more people out of work. They couldn't go elsewhere. We had some really good people come in and just do it short-term because it is not a long-term profession. There's no room here, in this particular facility, to work your way up. Previously, you could have worked your way to a management position. We don't have that. We are very small.

Because we are a small operation. I don't think that we're alone in that. We find part-timers who are willing to come here for a few hours and to work hard. I am looking for a unique person.; So, it has been incredibly challenging.

Jacobsen: Is this a common experience in equestrianism among managers and owners (outside of dressage)?

Merrin: I have seen this on both sides. You can post for Fraser Valley barn help. Either the hours aren't suitable for them. There's not a lot flexibility for them. It, basically, comes down to pay. People want \$20/hr or more for a job that doesn't really require what a horse needs. But if it is only 4 hours of work, and if it only pays \$20/hr, there are people who are worth it. For here, you earn it. If you work full-time here, and if you get good benefits, you earned it. But now, with the number of horses, you are working part-time. It is, maybe, 4 hours of work during the day and another 2 hours at night.

So, it is a bit of struggle for us. Elsewhere in the industry, I see find someone working 8 hours challenging. It is a lot of physical labour. They burnout. Career advancement is an issue. We don't have it. You don't see it. Unless, you are a trainer. Trainers have the upper hand in that area. So, the labour thing will come back to life in this industry for sure. We have to pay more. That's the reality there. We have to look after them.

Jacobsen: Some issues for larger scale aspects of the industry. The separation between haves and have-nots, growing income inequality, and worker insecurity cause issues for the industry as a whole. How is this impacting Canadian equestrianism as a whole?

Merrin: I cannot speak for Canadian equestrianism because we are unique. What I find is, people want a place to live and to work. If we can offer live-work, some of their work can be done here, then they could work elsewhere advancing whatever they do. Some of that problem is directly related to the ALR (Agricultural Land Reserve). It won't allow some forms of secondary, etc., etc. If you own your own property, getting the permit to have somebody else above your barn is incredibly impactful, everybody wants a suite in a barn. Yet, we're not allowed.

It is getting the labour. Getting here, you need a car, and so on. A real advantage to have somewhere to work and live. A working student can live there and they will work for you. That used to be a very common thing. I don't know if that's so feasible anymore with the bylaws and the regulations. I can see it impacting our community. I don't know if the job security in our industry is keeping up with the payment and benefits for any of these things, or if it can, because a lot of this stuff is done contract. "I work for you. You give me a lesson."

"Training and skills, I get to be around your horse and learn how to do this." I don't know what the job security is; I know what our labour laws state. I used to be very careful. They can show up; they can quit. Here again, it is different. I really try to have communication and try to keep our staff very happy, etc. It is coming out and saying, "It is a crappy day. Let me help you."

Most barn owners are trainers. If they are really good, then they can pick who works for them and then they can set the demand, "This is what the job is, and this is what I expect." It is like interning. Which doesn't give much financial reward, and depending on the people worked for can be a bit of slave trade, labour laws caught up with that, so did the kids and their parents. The independent worker just looking to do stalls.

Generally, we find the young motivated. They are great. They are here for a short-time. They are off to school, to get that trainer, to get to the next level. They are, usually, short and sporadic. If you get the older, seasoned worker, they, usually, have a vice or two. They're immovable in their ways of working. You have to adapt to that. You to take your pick. I think that's the same in any industry. I worked in the restaurant industry. Some are great, but are going to school or something. Then they are out of here. Then the seasoned, "I like to do these things this way." They are honest, show up, and get the job done. "Okay, bye." I think it is more of a gig industry.

It depends.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 21: Lesley Daldry on Experiences with Horses (1)

Lesley Daldry is a client of Symatree Farm. Daldry shares her journey into the equestrian world, starting with a camp experience and later reconnecting with horses through Symatree Farm. Growing up on a family farm without horses, Daldry felt a natural draw to them, especially after learning about her grandfather's dream of starting a horse ranch. She describes the unique energy exchange with horses, noting that each experience with them is different. At Symatree, Daldry appreciates the supportive, respectful environment that encourages personal growth. She reflects on how horses adjust to human energy and environmental factors like weather, highlighting their sensitivity and adaptability.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Today, we are here with Lesley Daldry who is a client of Symatree Farm. So, when it comes to your background with horses, what were some moments of thinking about horses as a young person or having real-life experience with them, or ponies?

Lesley Daldry: I started off. My first experience was at a camp as a camper, eventually as a staff person. When I worked as a staff person, I also had a chance to spend a bit more time with horses. It was one of the first things to ride on the weekends. That was kind of my first experience, which wasn't super eventful. I enjoyed it. I didn't "ohhh" and "awe" over it. Coming out from there, I was looking to more of an opportunity to invest a bit of time in a new place. I had some life changes. I had a bit more time to do something different.

I was looking for something with animals and on a farm. I grew up going to a family farm and enjoying it. That's how I came across Symatree.

Jacobsen: So, the family farm, itself, how many horses were there? How large was this place?

Daldry: Oh! The family farm, we had pretty much every animal but a horse.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Daldry: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Were the horses something not needed at the time, or just something not part of the palette of the animals kept as a happenstance?

Daldry: They had horses once upon a time. It was before I was around. I spent time going there as a kid. They had horses before I arrived. I didn't get to meet those horses. I don't know why they switched out. I don't know why.

Jacobsen: So, what is the jump there from the horses there to finding Symatree?

Daldry: They were somewhat connected. I had a really good experience on the farm. I enjoyed it. I loved being around the animals. It was part of who I am. I learned that my grandfather had a real interest in starting a horse ranch one day. He never did do it. But it was something that he wanted to do, which made sense to me why I was so drawn to Symatree.

I was timid with the horses in the beginning because I hadn't been around horses in some time. Once I spent a bit of time with them, and felt more comfortable, which was great, I enjoyed the being outside and most of all the people there, and the horses. It has been a really interesting experience getting to know everybody and the horses, spending some time with them, and some of

the things already talked about (off tape) in caring about the horses. I was learning something new and different. Yes, they have a real special energy to them.

The people, everybody is just absolutely lovely and encouraging and very boundaried and respectful. I've been a true new addition to being part of a family. It has been lovely.

Jacobsen: When people come there, I am told that they are drawn to particular ponies or horses, and some are drawn to them. It is sort of a natural relationship that develops before they learn about the horse's or pony's history. Was this a similar experience for you when coming there?

Daldry: Yes, but I cannot explain it, there is a drawing that happened, but I don't really know how or why. But I think it changes with the person, and grows, as the person becomes more aware of who they are. I think different horses are drawn to different people, and vice versa, at different points in their life. Different emotions or different physically, I would say that I was definitely having experiences, where I was drawn to the horses. They were drawn to me, in different ways. It has evolved. I don't think it has stayed the same over time. It is something that changes over time.

You need the energy exchange between person and horse, It, definitely, keeps things growing and moving.

Jacobsen: When it comes to the kinds of therapeutic interventions people can have, or a healing environment one can have with animals, have you ever had any other experiences other than those with horses? A healing social environment with animals, is this something similar with other animals, or only something with horses, formally?

Daldry: Definitely, only horses, I would say, I think, all animals bring some kind of healing energy to people, for sure. I would say that that kind of connection is very unique to horses. I find it very difficult to articulate. The other animals, there is definitely something there in terms of that calm and that bringing the heart rate down, and feeling sort of more congruent with who you are at that particular time.

Horses, I would say, it is a very unique exchange. I found it difficult, in many ways, to say, "Yes," to this interview because it is hard to express it. Because it is such a unique experience. You can have it with other animals. For me, it is definitely the most potent energy exchange compared to other animals.

Jacobsen: When I was coming into the industry, I've been in it 8 or 9 months. Another interviewee referenced the idea of the unspoken power of horses, or ponies. That's the kind of sense that I'm getting from your response. It's not something that you can necessarily per terms to, but you can sort of give a reference to the inaudible. Things like "unspoken." Because they are so large that they should be in charge of the relationship, but they are, sort of, letting you relate with them. They are kind of gentle in that way.

Daldry: Yes, the horses at Symatree, there is a variation in size. So, most of the horses are quite small. There are three different paddocks. There are the smalls, the mids, and the bigs. They all bring something to the table, not just size wise, but personality wise. It is very difficult to articulate. I think people really need to experience it to get a full understanding, because I think the experience for each person is going to be different. I don't think it's the same for everybody.

For me, it isn't even the same every time that I am with the horses. It is different each time. I just think they are [Laughing] amazing.

Jacobsen: There's also a sensibility of working with either one of the facilitators or the owner with the horses as well. Do you think that greases the wheels with the relationship of the horse too?

Daldry: I don't really spend much time in a therapeutic sense, in a formal sense, with them. Definitely, the people who work there have a lot of experience in facilitating a relationship between a person and a horse. So, I would say that that is a very unique this to Symatree. I don't think it exists in a lot of other places. They have allowed a lot of people to go to their edge of comfort and try something different, try something new, in a way that is super safe and very respectful, and very boundaried. They let the experience happen in the way that it is meant to happen. The people that are there are good when asking questions, growing and learning something new. I'll just ask for guidance and go off and try it.

I find that really empowering because you have an opportunity to try something different and to experiment. You get instant feedback from the horse. It is never you independent because you are always in relationship, always in connect. Either with people or with horses there, it is even where you are standing in the yard or in a paddock. Wherever you are, it is like being part of a herd. Or where you move, so, the rest of the herd moves and adjusts to the move of the herd depending on its hierarchy and relationship within that particular paddock. You become a member of the herd in a way, which is really cool.

Because your movement, horses adjust and do what they need to do to be who they are, and to be part of the herd and to balance. It is a constant rebalancing that happens within the herd.

Jacobsen: How do you find their adaptations to their behaviour? Do you find them highly sensitive or more moderate in their body and behavioural tone?

Daldry: It really depends on the horse. Some are incredibly sensitive. You need to emit little energy for them to sort of respond to you. Other ones, it really depends. Most horses, it depends on my energy for that day, for my day, what I am bringing to that herd. They will respond, accordingly. If my energy is high or pretty low, for my happy place, everybody's energy is working together. If someone's energy is too high or too low, that's horse or person. There's a rejigging that has to happen to balance everything again. It really depends on the horse, the day, and the weather.

One thing that has surprised me over the years is seeing how things like weather really impact not only a person's mood, but a horse's mood, and their comfort level. That horses get irritable like people. They get happy like people do. There are a lot of parallels.

Jacobsen: How do you find Manitoban weather in particular? Because, for those reading this outside of Canada, parts of Manitoba are known for being very cold...

Daldry: ...[Laughing]...

Jacobsen: ...or volatile in the range of temperatures "available" to residents.

Daldry: Yes, it is definitely cold here in the Winter. That's for sure. Summers can be incredibly hot. So, yes, there's definitely something to consider there. Even just the way that the horses are, in the paddocks on hot days and rainy days sometimes, they will need to be inside the shelters. You need to go where they are to visit them. Some will come out. It definitely takes some adjusting. You have to adjust what you wear. I have to be very conscious.

When I am at the farm for half of a day or a full day the whole time, obviously, I have to dress for it and keep in mind how much I am moving, and adjusting for that. I'm sure some horses have some work to them. It is really interesting to see how much extra hair that they grow in the Fall and the Winter, especially, then they shed it all off in the Summer. It is amazing how they adapt to it. It really is. I used to think the cold was the worst for them. Actually, I think it is the heat, because they have so much fur.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 22: Deborah Stacey on the Origins of Horse Lover's Math (1)

Deborah Stacey is the Founder & CEO of [Horse Lover's Math](#). Deborah Stacey is the founder and CEO of Horse Lover's Math (HLM). HLM is an active website for kids ages 8 and up devoted to horses, math and science offering print and downloadable STEM resources and website posts and content that are free and open to everyone. Growing up horse crazy in the suburbs didn't allow Deborah much opportunity to spend time with horses. She had to find other ways to feed her passion, which she did through reading horse books, drawing horses and watching every program and movie she could find. While in elementary school, she and a friend organized their own horse school, taking turns teaching each other about horses. They even had a chalkboard and gave lectures and tests. The fascination with horses remained strong through high school. After graduating, an opportunity arose to take English riding lessons near her family home. One day at the barn her riding instructor asked if she wanted to work as a groom at a small, private hunter and jumper stable outside of Montreal. She jumped at the chance. Around this time Humber College in Toronto started up a two-year horsemanship program. Deborah graduated with an Honours Degree in Horsemanship in the mid-seventies and went on to work with hunters and jumpers, at a hunter jumper breeding farm, and boarding stables with a focus on dressage. Years later, she had a family of her own and a daughter who loved horses. In school, her daughter struggled with math. One evening, in an effort to help her daughter understand a math word problem, Deborah changed the context from shopping for a bag of flour at the grocery store to buying bags of grain at a feed store. The math operations remained the same; price, decimals and multiplication, but the context changed, now it was about the real world of horses. Her daughter became curious. How much does a bag of oats cost? How does that price compare with beet pulp or sweet feed? She was engaged and she started asking questions. It was an exciting moment for Deborah to see what happens when a child who is struggling finds their passion; they become motivated, curious and open to learning. Using the math worksheets her daughter brought home from school as reference, Deborah started creating math questions based in the real world of horses. She began seeing math everywhere in her work with horses, and Horse Lover's Math was born. You can find reviews on HLM [Level 1](#) and [Level 2](#), information on Teachers Pay Teachers on HLM [Level 1](#) and [Level 2](#) (Links). Leslie Christian, of Outschoool, has been a collaborator with HLM.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: We are here with Deborah Stacey from Horse Lover's Math. She is from Langley, British Columbia. Our meeting was interesting because I am doing interviews with equestrians. I started writing articles on equestrianism. One of them was on the horse capital in British Columbia called Langley, Township of Langley. I put a list of businesses, not complete, obviously, that I found. You contacted me and said, "You're missing one." [Laughing]

Deborah Stacey: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: "Mine!" I said, "Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry." So, I added it. "Why don't I interview you as well?" So, here we are today, in an aspect of equestrianism that I haven't seen anywhere else, which is the application of the equine to math education with children, so, I have to take a step back and ask, "How did you get interested or started in horses?" What is your background there?

Stacey: This is something I noticed that I had in common with many of the equestrians that you've already interviewed. I was a horse crazy girl growing up. How does one explain that? I don't know. But that was a passion of mine. I grew up in the suburbs. I didn't have a chance to take riding lessons or be around horses any more than, maybe, once a year to go on a trail ride or something. I graduated from high school. I was living in Ottawa at the time.

I decided to take riding lessons. There was a stable not far from where my parents' home. My home at the time, I started taking riding lessons. Probably just a few months after I started taking riding lessons, my riding instructor approached me, and asked if I was interested in working at a hobby farm, 10-horse barn, just outside of Saint-Augustin (Côte-Nord, Quebec), North of Montreal. I said, "Sure." So, I packed my stuff and took the train, and arrived to Mrs. Fleet, who owned the farm. I had an apartment attached to the barn, attached to the doorway and led away from the tack room, and from the tack room into the barn.

She sent me into the tack room to clean tack. The next day, we were going to the show. I didn't want to tell her that I didn't know how to clean tack. I went in. There was a saddle soap can. I read the instructions on the can and cleaned the tack. So, that's how I got going to actually living my dream. This was back in the '70s. At the time, I learned about a horsemanship course, a 2-year horsemanship program at Humber College.

I thought, "Okay, this would be a good step for me to take to try and catch up with people who have been with horses all their lives and already had this huge base of experience and knowledge." So, I was accepted and went. In between those 2 years, I worked at a hunter-jumper breeding farm just outside of Ottawa. After I graduated, I worked at a country club North of Toronto. Then, at a certain point, when I was still looking after other people's horses, and sharing an apartment with three or four other girls, I couldn't see a future for myself.

My life took a different direction. Then in the 90s, by then, I, and my family, had moved out here. "Out here" being the West Coast, the Lower Mainland, I had my daughter, who was also a horse crazy girl. Not far from where we lived at the time, there was a farm, a barn, called Sunnyside Barn on 24th East of the King George Highway. She started taking lessons there. One thing led to another, I ended up working there, and eased my way back into the horse world. That's where the idea for Horse Lover's Math came to being.

I was helping my daughter. She was in elementary school at the time. I was helping her with her math homework. It was one of those boring word problems about apples or whatever. I thought to myself, "If I just change the context of this question to be about the real world of horses, keep the math operations the same, maybe, she'd want to know the answer." It was like the light bulb went off. I began to see math everywhere in the world of horses. I started working on creating content. This was before InDesign, before individuals had the capability of creating their own website, before social media. Most of these things weren't happening then.

I was trying to interest a print publisher in Horse Lover's Math. I had accepted some articles and essays, and a short story of mine had received an honorable mention in the *Writer's Digest* magazine's annual writers competition. I had that interest and experience, but I couldn't interest a print publisher. So, I had to put it on the back burner. I never let it go. I knew it was a good idea. Then in 2011, I was at another turning point. I thought, "Okay, if I am ever going to make Horse Lover's Math happen, now is the time." As the universe would have it, a friend of mine, his daughter was a children's book publisher. I had an in.

She agreed to meet with me. I brought with me the work that I'd already prepared. She was very supportive. She said that she'd never seen anything like it. *But*, her company didn't publish this type of book. She encouraged me. She said if I had any questions, do not hesitate to contact her. When I left there, I said to myself, "Okay, you're going to go for it." I made WordPress courses to make my own website. I lean InDesign to lay out my own books. That's how I got started.

Jacobsen: The general observation is an application of mathematics in different disciplines or areas of horsemanship.

Stacey: My elevator pitch is: I've researched the math curriculum guidelines for grades 4, 5, and 6. I create math content drawn from the real world of horses to meet as many curriculum goals as possible. So, for horse crazy kids, the motivation to learn is built in. I don't organize the workbooks or the content around the math. It is around the horse information. So, in the workbooks for example, there could be questions about fractions in horse science, e.g., understanding horse height, or in sports, like the fractions around a thoroughbred racetrack.

So, what is motivating kids is their passion for horses, I've had comments. I did, as I've been working on this (this is before Covid), volunteer at my local elementary school to help out in the math classes, because my kids are adults. I wanted to be familiar with what kids are like today. I developed a Horse Lover's Match math club, where I would have a group of kids. I went to different classes in grades 4, 5, and 6. I gave them my feel. I described to them what I would be doing. Anyone who would participate, we would meet in the all-purpose room at lunch on Tuesday, say. I developed these activities. Not sitting down, this is one thing I learned in this.

One section of the level 2 workbook is about mustang brands. The BLM in the United States, when they capture horses; they give them a freeze brand. They use the international angle system of brand. It is like a code. If you know how to read the code, you can know how old the horse is, where it was captured, and what their net tag number is. So, I developed these materials to teach kids how to do that and gave them actual examples and real photos of brands on horses necks, asking them, "How old is this horse?" etc. I really love that. I printed out pages. I brought it in from the math club. Kids didn't really engage with it. They wanted to be standing up and moving, and doing things. That was a good lesson for me. I developed, at least, 10 activities for kids to do.

Then Covid hit, that particular part of Horse Lover's Math has been put on hold. I am hoping next year to be able to approach home school groups, local elementary schools, and equestrian barns, where they offer riding lessons to kids with a half-day workshop for Horse Lover's Math.

Jacobsen: How are you hoping to develop this into more advanced mathematics if at all?

Stacey: I'm not. I satisfied with grades 4, 5, and 6. Along with the workbooks, there is an active website. The posts are free and open to everyone. Another goal, I have, as I have shared with you; I was a horse crazy girl growing up. I didn't really have the opportunity to become a good rider. So, in my mind, I had, "In order to have a career with horses. You've got to be a good rider." You don't, actually. You can have an academic career with horses, as we have touched on already. There are all these universities and colleges now doing research, who have professors and undergraduates. So, this is another goal of mine. For this to open the door for kids, so many kids by this crucial age group, they start to become closed to learning. The joy, the excitement, the fun of learning, which, I believe, we are all born with becomes shut down.

So many kids, “I don’t like math.” I’ve had so many kids tell me, “I didn’t even know I was doing math because the focus is on horses.” I’m hoping. My market, my target group, is very much a niche group. That age group and horse crazy kids, it’s not all kids. It’s not in the high school. I’m hoping that those kids by getting excited by learning will open the doors to them, who knows where it will lead. One of the sections on the website is courses and careers. So, kids can see that they don’t need to be a rider. They can be an equine science researcher. So, that’s a little side there.

Jacobsen: When you went to Humber College in Toronto, how did the horsemanship program compare then from now?

Stacey: That’s a good question. There is much more variety now, like I said. I wasn’t aware of these equine science programs and all of this research being done. It was the only one that I knew of, at Humber College. I’m sure there were ones in the States. I would assume, at that time. Even now, there are even high school programs incorporating equestrian subjects and learning. I think you mentioned one, because there is one based in Brookwood, perhaps.

Jacobsen: Maybe?

Stacey: When I took it, which was back in the ‘70s, there were riding lessons. There was in-classroom work. There was learning about anatomy and lamenesses. That sort of thing in the classroom. It was just a 2-year course. So, I think I was much more basic back then, than what is the variety of availability now. There is this area, which I find exciting, now. An area, which can be referred to as, natural horsemanship feel, like Pat Parelli, Jonathan Field, Josh Nichol, and Warwick Schiller. Their approach to training horses and how horses think, is so much different than when I was involved. It was one of the reasons I got out when I did. It was because I didn’t really like what I was seeing. There are places, universities and colleges, that have programs focused on natural horsemanship.

So, it has really expanded over the years.

Jacobsen: When you were first developing this...

Stacey: Yes.

Jacobsen: ...you came across no other precedent for this type of program. Correct?

Stacey: No, and still now, if you Google “Horse Math” or “horses and math,” you should do that and see what you get. It still pretty well stands alone. As I have worked on it over the years, initially, I really tried to keep it restricted to math. I was having increasing trouble doing that. With the rising importance of STEM subjects, I, now, describe it as also being science. So, math *and* science, kids learn about math *and* science through their love of horses.

Jacobsen: Have you tried partnering with any other groups who, after you had done it, thought of doing something along similar lines?

Stacey: I haven’t tried partnering. One of the challenges things for me is it’s just me doing everything. Yes, it could be a reason to find a partner to help. Someone suggested, “Why don’t you try to find a publisher?” I could feel in myself. I didn’t want to lose control. You get a publisher involved. I didn’t want to give over that control. I do have a wonderful person who is responsible for the maintenance and backend of my website. I’ve had, initially, an illustrator because, along with photographs and some of my own graphics and drawings, each of the workbooks; I’ve hired an illustrator. I have partnered in that way. Beyond that, I haven’t found another group.

One thing I do is through my Google Alerts, periodically; I find different equine organizations. You mentioned equine therapy when we first started talking. I've come across articles of people who have an organization that focuses on at-risk youth or providing kids with the opportunity to be with horses in such a way that it encourages their confidence and competence. I will reach out to them and offer free downloads of Horse Lover's Math content if they would find it useful for their organization. One early organization, which I contacted, we've stayed in touch. [Laughing] It has a great name: Detroit Horse Power. This is a young man named David Silver who started this organization, who has been a pony clubber and is a teacher. He started this organization to help inner city youth kids, primarily black kids.

Jacobsen: That's fantastic.

Stacey: I don't know if that is what you were looking for, but that is one thing I am actively doing. I just contacted a woman in Ontario. So, she and I are communicating. She's excited about using some of the materials. She is going to let me know what she needs.

Jacobsen: At the periphery of the journalism, those tidbits of information become helpful for a journalist, as I do not have a team behind me, do not have institutional backing. This is not a paid position. These are things, I find, either intellectually interesting or consider important to present to a public intellectual audience. It doesn't have to necessarily be restricted to people paying for an article, as it is a free outlet. Yet, the grade reading level can prevent a full comprehension of the written material. That, in a very direct way, restricts the people who comprehend properly the intended content. So, the way to buttress the reader and help them is to have it as a conversational presentation as well.

Stacey: Also, storytelling, some of these anecdotes, they're stories. That is always an entertaining way of conveying information and draws people in.

Jacobsen: 100%, and also, this starts with, myself at, zero background knowledge.

Stacey: *I read that!* How did you get this idea that this was an area? I mean, now, you're out cleaning stalls.

Jacobsen: So, today, we were at the FEI barns. I was cleaning stalls, doing landscaping and gardening, came back to home base and did more landscaping and gardening. That was the day. Basically, it's whatever they need me to do. Yesterday, it was getting the sprinkler system set on 30-minute timers [Ed. Staff as the timers for some of the sprinkler systems.] and setting three on at a time while doing second pickings for the stalls while doing stall fronts. Wherever you are needed, you go there. One of the biggest lessons from this industry. It's a barn. There's always work. I was in restaurants. I was thinking, "Money is not an issue. What can I do?"

I decided something that would be interesting. For one, it is the horse capital of British Columbia. For two, I know people that talk about horses all the time, want to try working with or around them. So, why not? I decided to just take that jump. My work experience, writing experience, my education, [Laughing] none of it has any applicability to this industry. It has turned out fabulously because it has melded so well into the independent journalistic work by me, especially because it is in Langley. There is a lot of opportunity to write about, learn about, extend a hand to people in saying, "Hi, my name is Scott. I do journalism. Would you like to talk about horses?"

Most of the people, most of the time, are very open to these things. It's very lovely. Myself, I like this particular series because, as far as I know, this might be one of the first educational series of the journal, where it is *very explicit*: I am utterly ignorant and am going to have conversations with all facets and people, as much as I can, starting nationally, with equestrians. The conversations will be presented as follows: You'll learn about the people, and then the industry. You'll learn as I am learning in a lot of ways. So, the sophistication of my questions will develop along the way. Even in show jumping, names like Eric Lamaze, Erynn Ballard, Tiffany Foster, and Ian Millar.

These names meant nothing to me before. I had no idea who these people were. Now, I know. Now, I make the proper call for a horse, to move around a horse and not be nervous around them. Things everyone does. What are the differences between alfalfa hay, timothy hay, and local hay? Things of this nature. Or, simply, barns and keeping things clean for clientele. There is this whole aesthetic to equestrian culture. So, the short of the long has been what most people have been telling the whole time, basically. [Laughing]

Stacey: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: "It's a lifestyle." That explains most things because there are no transferable things, I had into this industry prior. You're either a foot in the door phenomena and slowly getting in, or in 10-fingers and 10-toes. It's all week. You don't stop. That's, more or less, without deep knowledge or presentation of the story; my mini narrative into the industry. I love it, despite the all-weather hard labour. I do love it. I am excited to see how the bits and pieces of knowledge and practical application begin to knit together with more full ranch work.

And, get this, I only (have) had a horse step on my foot, once!

Stacey: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: He was a boy, a colt in other words, no steel toe. I was lucky, in other words.

Stacey: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: My toe was completely mangled. I've heard of way worse. It took about two weeks to heal. You get used to that kind of stuff.

Stacey: Yes, it's going to happen, in one way or another.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 23: Gail Greenough on International Show Jumping and Equestrianism

***Gail Greenough** is the CEO of Greenough Equestrian. She teaches and trains out of Creekside Equestrian near Calgary, Alberta. She was the youngest and first rider to finish with zero faults to win the gold medal at the 1986 World Show Jumping Championships, and the only woman and North American to do so. She joined the Canadian equestrian team in 1983. She won gold for the National Cup, the National Horse Show, the International Grand Prix, the National Grand Prix, and the DuMaurier Grand Prix. She earned a Bachelor of Arts Classics, Arts History, and Sociology, from the University of Alberta. Greenough has been honoured with the Sports Federation of Canada Achievement Award (1984), Edmonton Sports Report Association Amateur Athlete of the Year (1986), TSN Female Athlete of the Year (1986), Alberta Achievement Award (1987), and the Edmonton YWCA Tribute to Women Award (1988), and entrance into the Order of Canada (1990), the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame (1994), the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame (1998) and the Jump Canada Hall of Fame (2006). Greenough, a distinguished Canadian show jumper, reflects on her early passion for horses, which began despite growing up in a sports-focused family. Her equestrian journey evolved through Pony Club and later, her drive to compete for the Canadian team. Greenough credits the growth of Spruce Meadows, where she competed from a young age, as instrumental in her success. She emphasizes the importance of family support, good horses, and strong coaches in her achievements. Greenough also discusses the evolution of the sport, particularly in training techniques, equipment, and safety, while highlighting the significance of building rapport between rider and horse.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: We are here with Gail Greenough. She is a distinguished international show jumper in Canadian equestrian history. So, to start, what were the first inklings of becoming an equestrian or interaction with horses in particular?

Gail Greenough: As a little girl, I did not grow up in a horse related family. I had two older brothers that played hockey. My father played hockey. I came from a very sports-minded family. I was one of those girls who loved horses and would do anything to be around horses. So for as long as I remember, I was always in love with horses.

Jacobsen: Was there a particular moment when you realized this could become an actual career and was formally a sport that you could compete in?

Greenough: Not really one particular moment, it evolved from Pony Club on up. I always wanted to make it my life. That was my dream. When I started jumping, all I wanted to do was jump for the Canadian equestrian team. I was very driven at a young age for sure.

Jacobsen: Do you think there's anything about Canadian society at the time, latter 20th-century, that was a fertile time to be an equestrian to get into show jumping, etc.?

Greenough: It paralleled the growth of Spruce Meadows. Spruce Meadows was at its inception when I was 14-years-old, which is a time in an adolescent's life where you choose directions. I was 14-year-olds at the first Spruce Meadows competition (13 or 14). I grew alongside with Spruce Meadows. As they grew, I grew. As a junior, I was able to compete in the international in Spruce Meadows and walk under the watchtower. They got international teams from Europe and England. I was able to watch the best riders in the world ride as a teenager.

That, probably, catapulted me. So, the parallel with Spruce Meadows growth would parallel my growth. I, probably, couldn't have achieved what I achieved without Spruce Meadows.

Jacobsen: Recollecting back, when you had the experience riding and jumping with horses before seeing the world's best, and then actually seeing them in practice, what was the experience of seeing very, very high-level jumping compared to what you had seen before?

Greenough: I was competing at lower levels. I was at the competitions at the same time, competing at a different level. I was able to absorb everything from the international riders and knew that that was what I wanted to do.

Jacobsen: For a lot of people who may not realize, you had a lot of success – gold medals and such – very early in life, in your 20s.

Greenough: Yes.

Jacobsen: It came rapidly, very tightly together.

Greenough: Yes.

Jacobsen: When did you realize, outside of the medals, that you were quite very good.

Greenough: I think as a junior jumper rider. I was fairly brave and fairly accurate. As we say in our sport, I had a pretty good eye for the distance to the jump. When I finished high school, I moved to California. I achieved a lot there. I learned how to go fast against the clock with Butch Thomas. I went to college. Then I moved back to Edmonton to go to university and work with Mark Laskin.

My last year of university was my first team on the Canadian team. My horses were back East because that's where everything was based. I was going to U of A. I really don't know how I did that. I was on the planes a lot. It was the days before the internet. I would do Madison Square Gardens and the Royal Winter Fair with the team and try and get home and write final exams. That was complicated.

Jacobsen: What do you consider some of the greatest supports in getting that achieved?

Greenough: My family, my parents, my mother, my father, they were behind me 100%, as long as I went to school [Laughing]. For sure, my family and my brothers, my two older brothers, supported me and my dreams. I had really good coaches. I had John Weir, Mac Cone, Butch Thomas, Mark Laskin. First and foremost, I was matched with really good horses that brought me along in the sport. You are only really as good as what you sit on and only as good as the match between horse and rider. Not that I had easy horses, I didn't. But definitely, I created really good rapport with the horses that I had.

Jacobsen: How do you develop that rapport with horses? How long does that generally take?

Greenough: It is a lot of time. It is a lot of time in the saddle and out of the saddle, and in the barn, knowing the personalities, establishing a relationship, a give-and-take. Every horse is different, just like human beings. Every relationship was different. You have to work together. It takes a lot of time. Some horses [Laughing], you click with quicker than others. Some relationships develop quicker than others. It is like human-to-human relationships or a human to any animal. You have to learn to listen to each other both ways.

Jacobsen: What do you think are the main ways horses tune into human behaviour and patterns?

Greenough: I think if somebody is nervous around a horse; they pick up on that right away. So, as we say in our sport, you have horse sense. You just learn to read each other in the stall, mucking out the stall, doing waters, feeding, hand walking, a lot of work on the ground – groundwork. You establish your rapport.

Jacobsen: What do you consider some of the more difficult aspects of horses' personalities to make that connection, where that horse is not easily making that connection with a horse or a rider?

Greenough: The horse would have a reason for it. It could be something from its past. If you take on a rescue dog, they have layers. Things you don't know that have happened to them in the past. So, you have to develop a trust and a language between each other. You just do that through handling and working away, taking away, so you have a trust.

Jacobsen: Of the gold medals that you have won in your history, what ones would you consider the most significant, personally?

Greenough: I'd have to say the World Championships. There have been other GPs that I have won that stick out in my mind. I won the Stuttgart Masters in Germany. A few double clears in Nation Cups, I am pretty proud of. I won the Halifax \$100,000 2 years in a row on a horse called Simon Says. I have been in 4th, 5th, and 6th, in GPs with horses that jumped so well where those are more meaningful than the wins. You have accomplished something, but you didn't get the red rosette for it.

But you really accomplished something in that round. That sticks out for me more than anything. Winning the Canadian championships on a horse called Lesandra in the early 2000s. I am pretty proud of that. I have been out of the top end of the sport for a while, built this young mare. She came along pretty quickly and won the Thunderbird Grand Prix two years in a row as a 7 or 8 year old, which is pretty unheard of. She was pretty phenomenal.

Jacobsen: Have you ever made use of the Bachelor of Arts in Classics, Arts History, and Sociology from U of A?

Greenough: [Laughing] Yeah, probably.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Greenough: I have an appreciation for it. In some social settings, it has come in handy for sure. You tend to be in those kind of settings among some pretty elite people in this sport. I'd say, "Yes, it has come in handy," but school in general gives you a methodology of thought. My writing skills are better for it. My communication skills are better for it. I'd say that I have used my degrees well.

Jacobsen: Who would you consider some of the more impactful or significant personalities in the Canadian show jumping world since its inception?

Greenough: Ian Millar, our sport wouldn't be where it is without Ian Millar. He has been the singlehandedly most impactful rider and developer of our sport in Canada, by far, *by far*.

Jacobsen: What would you consider his trademark trait or personality facet that makes him stand out?

Greenough: He never gives up until he solves the problem. He is a problem solver. He is so willing to pass on that knowledge to anybody who wants to listen. He is a great communicator.

He is a great passer on of knowledge. He is, by far, a great rider and also as a coach. I ran a coaching business for a few years. This is well after I won the world championships. I wanted to learn that side of things to become a better coach. I worked alongside Ian at Millar Brooke (Farm) for a few years to learn the coaching side of things. He is amazing.

Jacobsen: How do you see the system of building U25 riders into riders for Canada compared to other nations in the Americas or the other continental regions as well?

Greenough: I think we're catching up. I think it has not been as impactful as other countries. It is there. The system is in place. It is available to those who follow it. There is a ladder. There is a process. I think that is the most impactful thing, is that it is in place and available. Our numbers are smaller than other countries as far as riders. We don't have the same number of riders. But we've always been a small, but might country equestrian-wise. We've won a lot of gold medals for a country that doesn't have the same numbers of riders as, say, Germany or Ireland or even the U.S. For our small numbers, we do quite well. For shortages of good horses, we have many great riders in this country. It is just finding the good horses to match them. That's the hard part.

Jacobsen: Outside of the quality of the horse and the matching of the rider, what would you consider barriers to entry or aspects where the industry could improve to make those chances even better, to leverage the small population of talent even further?

Greenough: It's a dedication of quality of young riders earlier and the process of getting them going. Financially, it is inhibiting for sure. So, I think that's always an issue. Money is always an issue. It is to find the good riders and seeing if you can get them going somehow, being creative in your ways of thinking. We are getting better at the breeding programs, a lot better. That is starting to show itself, slowly. It is starting to show itself in Canada.

Jacobsen: Are there any areas where there are barriers when you were going through the process of becoming an international rider that are, more or less, not necessarily entirely equitable, but more evened out?

Greenough: I was one of the few females riding on the international stage. It was definitely a European man's sport at the international level. So, I was a bit breaking the glass ceiling for females to follow. "You can do it. We can do it. We can try." I think that catapulted more females into the sport at the higher level.

Jacobsen: Do you have any regrets in any achievements that you did not attain in your history?

Greenough: I never competed in the Olympic Games. Either my horses were hurt or I was hurt, that's a regret. I regret not having a family [Laughing], because I was focused on the next competition and the next year. I missed out on that phase of my life. Now, you see the girls doing both. It is hard. They do it. That impresses me. The top female athletes having families. It is very impressive.

Jacobsen: How do you think they achieve that balance between international show jumping fame and the intensity of the work there, as well as the balance with the family life? How do you think they're achieving that?

Greenough: Major team behind them.

Jacobsen: Do you think other riders who would want that same balance, who did not have support structures – people, resources, etc. – in place, that they could attain them?

Greenough: You make a decision. If your decision is to ride at the top level, then you find a way to make it work. It is difficult for any female like a top female business executive would have the same issues as a top athlete. You look at Serena Williams. She is stepping down to spend more time with her family. It's pretty hard to do both perfect. Females are strong, but, boy oh boy, it is hard to do both perfect. I think if you have achieved in the international sport as a female and then decide to have children. I think it is easier to let the international side go. If you have achieve many other goals, it is easier to let that part of your life go and attain that better balance.

Jacobsen: Of the international women riders you know, do you think most would like that balance?

Greenough: Yes, I think it's natural.

Jacobsen: What about the men?

Greenough: Oh, who knows? [Laughing]

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Greenough: A man's life is easy. But, typically, what happens in this sport, you marry within the sport and have children within the sport, and the kids grow up in the sport. We all become one big family. I'm auntie Gail to many, many kids. Because we spend so much time together on the road. We all get to know each other pretty well. It is a nice group.

Jacobsen: Based on a prior response, do you think that's even more exaggerated for Canadian show jumpers? So, per capita, we are punching above our level, but it is tighter because it is smaller.

Greenough: I think we punch above our numbers, yes.

Jacobsen: Do you think there is this faux familial feel more than other countries?

Greenough: No, I think it is the same. You are fighting for your country and fighting together. We have a large contingent of Irish people in Canada. They're a pretty tight group.

Jacobsen: Which country, in the 2010s, even in the 2020s now, has been the, certainly, most dominant international show jumping team?

Greenough: I think Ireland has come along gangbusters in the last 20 years. At the worlds, it was Sweden. It was in Denmark. The Swedes, oh my God, on fire! They are on fire.

Jacobsen: When it comes to the earliest riders, I think it was in Mexico, three guys, e.g., Thomas Gayford, etc. Do you think that the style of riding for show jumping, in terms of training thought and approach to the sport has changed to the present, or are the principles much the same?

Greenough: It has evolved, tremendously. They were incredible. That team was incredible, the Mexico team. The style of riding has changed dramatically. The courses have changed. The horses have changed. It's not even apples and oranges. It is apples and peanuts. It is totally changed. It is much more technical in every way. Even since my win at the world championships, the sport has evolved. If you don't evolve... I coach and source horses. If you don't evolve with the sport, you should pick something else to do; it has changed that much. Like any sport, it is continually evolving. You could ask the same thing about hockey in 1964 and hockey now. It

is different. The athletes are different. The equipment is different, much faster game. It is a much faster game in the equestrian world too.

Jacobsen: What principles do you think would be the most significantly changed since that time in '64?

Greenough: It is much more developed as a sport. So, principles, those guys had the same principles as us. They were determined and driven, as we are now. So, the principles have remained the same. The technicalities have changed.

Jacobsen: In terms of equipment and safety, those have changed too?

Greenough: Oh, night and day.

Jacobsen: What aspects of safety have changed?

Greenough: Safety cups for back rails and oxers. If the comes down on the back rail, they don't fall down, the rail falls down. That's a safety aspect. Different bridals have been developed, different mouth pieces, different boots, saddles, saddle pads. The care of the horses is extraordinary. We have acupuncturists, and chiropractors, and massage therapists. We have different care for their legs and different machines that we use, and ultrasound. Diagnostics has changed. We can tell right away if something is up with the ultrasounds, the X-rays, radiographs. The attention to detail is extraordinary. The horses get better care than we do: the feed, the hay, all of it.

Jacobsen: What would you consider some of the leading edge, the cutting edge, of the training, the equipment, the safety and care, of horses and riders?

Greenough: One thing that sticks out to me after what I just said is the training, getting the horses more rideable – broke, using a lot of rail work. I use a lot of rail work in my training instead of jumping a bunch of jumps. I do a lot of flat work over rails, establishing the connection with the horse that way, making them come forward and back, having them come off the leg, but not over jumps – just training over a flat, a rail, or different gymnastics.

Jacobsen: How do you identify a young rider with a lot of talent, a lot of horse sense?

Greenough: Somebody who is pretty relaxed in the saddle. Somebody who is coachable. Somebody who has a good comfort level around horses and confidence, dedication, determination, thinking in the long term and not the short term.

Jacobsen: Of those, what can you train? What can you not? What can you reinforce? What can you not?

Greenough: Certainly, it is easier to work with riders with more natural ability. It is a hard sport. If somebody doesn't have the innate talent, it is difficult, like any sport, like hockey players. If they can't skate well [Laughing], it is going to be tough going. Individuals, human beings are driven to, hopefully, to the sports that they excel in. I don't coach at the lower levels. I coach pretty much elite athletes. They are fine if I am not there. If I cannot make it to a competition, they are more than capable. It is more of a collaboration. I work with them in specific training at home to get horse and rider ready for competition to do what I do now. I don't really deal with the grassroots at all.

Jacobsen: Of those riders you have trained, which ones do you feel proud of, say?

Greenough: When I did train juniors, riders evolving, I'd have to say Amy and Jonathan Millar, Ben Asselin. Those would be the three. I've been under the saddle for quite a few years. I'm pretty proud of my coaching in general. I'm more excited than the riders are when they are successful. I take it pretty seriously. I'm pretty proud. I've coached the Olympic Games, young riders with the kids. I'm pretty proud of all that. Everything things of the World Championships. I've evolved with the sport since then. I also am on the High Performance Committee for the equestrian team. I've been doing that for many, many years. I'm pretty proud of what I have been able to contribute to that within equestrian Canada.

Jacobsen: Gail, thank you very much for the opportunity and your time.

Greenough: Yes, thanks! Thanks for the interview.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 24: Deborah Stacey on Math in the Equine (2)

Deborah Stacey is the Founder & CEO of [Horse Lover's Math](#). Deborah Stacey is the founder and CEO of Horse Lover's Math (HLM). HLM is an active website for kids ages 8 and up devoted to horses, math and science offering print and downloadable STEM resources and website posts and content that are free and open to everyone. Growing up horse crazy in the suburbs didn't allow Deborah much opportunity to spend time with horses. She had to find other ways to feed her passion, which she did through reading horse books, drawing horses and watching every program and movie she could find. While in elementary school, she and a friend organized their own horse school, taking turns teaching each other about horses. They even had a chalkboard and gave lectures and tests. The fascination with horses remained strong through high school. After graduating, an opportunity arose to take English riding lessons near her family home. One day at the barn her riding instructor asked if she wanted to work as a groom at a small, private hunter and jumper stable outside of Montreal. She jumped at the chance. Around this time Humber College in Toronto started up a two-year horsemanship program. Deborah graduated with an Honours Degree in Horsemanship in the mid-seventies and went on to work with hunters and jumpers, at a hunter jumper breeding farm, and boarding stables with a focus on dressage. Years later, she had a family of her own and a daughter who loved horses. In school, her daughter struggled with math. One evening, in an effort to help her daughter understand a math word problem, Deborah changed the context from shopping for a bag of flour at the grocery store to buying bags of grain at a feed store. The math operations remained the same; price, decimals and multiplication, but the context changed, now it was about the real world of horses. Her daughter became curious. How much does a bag of oats cost? How does that price compare with beet pulp or sweet feed? She was engaged and she started asking questions. It was an exciting moment for Deborah to see what happens when a child who is struggling finds their passion; they become motivated, curious and open to learning. Using the math worksheets her daughter brought home from school as reference, Deborah started creating math questions based in the real world of horses. She began seeing math everywhere in her work with horses, and Horse Lover's Math was born. You can find reviews on HLM [Level 1](#) and [Level 2](#), information on Teachers Pay Teachers on HLM [Level 1](#) and [Level 2](#) (Links). Leslie Christian, of Outschool, has been a collaborator with HLM. Stacey discusses her experiences with the equestrian community and the challenges of integrating math into horse-related activities. She notes that while the equestrian industry has many passionate participants, there is often little cross-collaboration between different sectors. Stacey also touches on the difficulty of attracting new farriers and veterinarians, especially with rising land costs. Her educational resources, including math activities related to horse care, aim to empower young people, especially girls, by combining their love for horses with learning. She emphasizes the importance of fostering a love of learning and raising awareness of the practical use of math in equestrianism.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I wrote an article, recently, looking at another facet. I was thinking about it while I was gardening: the injuries of equestrianism. That's a thing. As I found, [60%, according to government statistics, of injuries are just falling off the horse.](#)

Deborah Stacey: [Laughing] Okay.

Jacobsen: They are mostly in the teen years, mostly girls. Teen years make sense because everyone is learning. Girls make sense because that is, probably, the biggest demographic for the industry.

Stacey: I know! It is such an interesting phenomenon. People have tried to explain why that is.

Jacobsen: I have heard one explanation, which is: In Europe, you find more boys out there because over in North America, especially in Canada; there is a cultural nuance of safe, nurturing environments where there is observation, care, training, to guiding girls in a safe environment. Where, in Western Europe, it is more of a survival of the fittest or has been more so in the past. They throw you on there. The boys survive. They become decent to great riders. That's one hypothesis. I don't have data to back that up. It has a certain intuitive narrative appeal.

Stacey: That demographic holds for the English disciplines, but the Western is where the demographic changes. There's a lot more males involved there.

Jacobsen: That's also another nuance. The difference between dressage and show jumping versus rodeo. Those are big demographic differences. Canada produces the best women show jumpers in the world: Erynn Ballard and Tiffany Foster are two of the top women in the world.

[Laughing] I think, Erynn Ballard was #1 woman in the world for the first half of the year. Tiffany Foster will, probably, be the #1 woman in the world for the second half of the year [Laughing]. So, the injury research, minor, extraordinarily inconsequential to the injuries of the great riders. There are some data. I don't know how regular they are collected. So, they might be a little bit out of date from the Government of Canada or, at least, those who report them. Even the great riders, a decent hunk of them have almost had career-ending injuries.

Stacey: I would guess that that is more eventing and show jumping than dressage.

Jacobsen: 100%. I can't say the name. But a good friend of mine, her sister fell off a horse and died. She is doing dressage now. I suspect dressage is a safer context to pursue a passion without having to pursue the PTSD from when her sister died. So, people have a myth or a misconception about equestrianism in that sense. They think it's ultra-safe and just fancy people. But it's like the misconception around cheerleading. Cheerleading, it has a 100% injury rate. You're going to get injured.

Stacey: I believe you. I watched that Netflix series. I was blown away by that. I hear you. I can see how that is the case.

Jacobsen: So, we have these aspects to it. Anyway, for Horse Lover's Math, if you're thinking about applicability in a teacher context towards students, if they're using your resources, how has the feedback been from them? How large are the class sizes and cohorts that they're working with?

Stacey: I haven't really received feedback from individual teachers. In order for Horse Lover's Math to be officially promoted and featured by a school district, I have to approach the school district and make a presentation, which I have not done. So, individual teachers come across my resources and use them as they see fit. I can send you; I've got quite a few comments and reviews of homeschooling. It is a big market for me. With the pandemic, more families started homeschooling. So, that's a focus of mine. It is homeschooling families. Homeschool Canada carries my books, for example. Rainbow Resource in the U.S., which services homeschool families and educators in general, carries my books.

So, I also sell downloads on a site called Teachers Pay Teachers. There have been some teachers who have left comments. **[Ed. See links in the Abstract.]**

Jacobsen: How is the distribution through those other networks? You're not simply working through Langley.

Stacey: I've mailed books to Australia.

Jacobsen: Wow.

Stacey: I have print versions of the books. I sell downloads too. I sell more downloads than prints themselves, not surprisingly. I've come to the point where I let things grow organically. I am so grateful to have this project. It's meaningful to me. Not only because I love horses, but, as we've just touched on, there are a lot of girls who are horse crazy girls. There is still a message that some girls are getting that girls aren't good at math or STEM subjects. I've always been a feminist. Part of what I love about Horse Lover's Math, it combines those two interests and passions. It is empowering girls and a love of horses. I continue to learn doing the research that I do. You, probably, know this as a writer and journalist.

In order to write something clearly, you really have to understand it. I enjoy that process, and enjoy continuing to learn, myself. So, not surprisingly, the sales or the distribution slows during the Summer. In the Fall, it picks up again. Then I put out a newsletter that is growing, which is, now, over 1,200 people. That's not big [Laughing] for a newsletter in today's social media world. I understand that. It's growing. That's the direction I want it to go. The website is now getting around 5,000 visits a month. That's growing. So, I am glad about that. I just had my biggest order from Rainbow a couple of months ago. That was a total, between the Level 1 and the Level 2, of 135 books that I mailed out to them. That's been my biggest 1-time order.

Jacobsen: Do you get 1-time orders that are modest in size, but are to ranches, barns, equestrian facilities, around the area?

Stacey: No, I haven't. I think part of that is that they don't just know about me. When Covid hit, I had been planning on approaching, going and visiting, these barns. As you said, Langley is the horse capital of B.C. There are hundreds, probably, of riding stables and offering lessons. I was planning on brochures and marketing stuff. Approaching and them, introducing myself, off showing what I have to offer, asking if they would be interested in including, maybe, a morning, often, they will have a week Summer camp.

Maybe, for one morning or one afternoon, that could be Horse Lover's Math focused. I didn't go ahead with Covid when that plan hit. So, I feel like things are opening up again. Certainly, they are. That's on my future to-do list. So, my contacting you. That's part of my exposing more people, trying to get the word out. That the resource is available. On the website, as I mentioned, the content, the posts, are free and open to everyone. Along with the workbooks, there are also worksheets. Three or four pages for download. Also, I've created crossword puzzles. One is a horses and math crossword puzzle. Another is a horses and science crossword puzzle. Also, cryptograms around the theme of horses.

One thing that I have learned, math is not just arithmetic. It's reasoning. It's pattern recognition. It is mathematical thinking. So, these cryptograms, while they're not about numbers and plus-or-minus, it is mathematical thinking and reasoning. So, those are available for download. It's like a \$1.49 or something.

Jacobsen: Some of the areas of exploration in the first few months of doing this series. It is dealing with vulnerable populations, let's say. The young, they wouldn't be categorized necessarily as vulnerable and disadvantaged in a necessary way, but their age makes them properly under guardianship. So, vulnerable in that sense, but not in a mental degenerative sense or a physical incapability in another sense. It's just they're still developing. If we're taking a context of teaching and mathematics for specified grades 4, 5, 6, with regards to equestrianism, how might some of these industries within Langley, even, integrate with one another to have programs together? Because I see a lot of separation among different communities.

It has been noted to me after doing some interviews, "Thank you for starting the conversation. This is so necessary." It has me reflecting more on something that I didn't even realize was a thing. Not simply the formal siloing of the different areas of horsemanship, that I could see as an amateur or a greenhorn. One thing I didn't realize was the degree to which individuals who had been in the different industries for a long time don't talk to one another.

Stacey: Is that because they are too busy within their own group? Or are you suggesting that there is some competitiveness between these different disciplines?

Jacobsen: I think it depends. The competitiveness, for sure, would be between barns in show jumping, eventing, etc., but on a more or less friendly basis. There's, certainly, a lot of gossip. But I think between industries that have no necessary relation to one another or a competitive back-and-forth between one another in a formal setting such as FEI events. Maybe, as a consequence of it being a lifestyle, they are so enmeshed and dealing with the day-to-day maintenance, opening and closing of operations. Not having the energy or the focus to think creatively outside of their acreage.

Stacey: Maybe, part of that, too, is they don't see the benefits for making that effort.

Jacobsen: Yes, what is the cost-benefit analysis of thinking of ideas, starting programs, reaching out to people who deal with equine therapy or veterans or horses vis-à-vis math? These are not necessarily on the dossier for the day about what time is hay, which horses don't get hay and get cubes instead. These are much more immediate. Once that is done, by the time you're done your day, you're kind of tired.

Stacey: We all have a role to play. We're also talking here about human nature. It's not just within the equestrian community. You use the word "gossip."

Jacobsen: Sure [Laughing].

Stacey: There is just the quintessential egoic mind games world at play.

Jacobsen: Certain times, I have seen very immediate, legitimate cause for concern and people helping one another. The floods were a recent example. People offering barns, stalls, apartments on their site, which are usually for workers, to help them make it through because their basement flooded through and their drywall is all worn out. All those things are great. The more subtle, long-term things that aren't necessarily context dependent on the weather. Those sorts of networking. I think that's a core part of what they're saying about getting a conversation started because they haven't said much beyond that, but they have said that a couple of times. It has made me think.

Stacey: That's interesting, Scott. It makes me curious. I'm not expecting you to answer this right now. But it is another interesting question for *you*, to explore. What do they mean by that? What

issues are they touching on? Where might this go? What is the need that they're speaking to? I don't really know. So, I am finding that an interesting anecdote.

Jacobsen: One issue breaking into two immediately across the country, probably different degrees in different provinces and territories: Where are the new farriers coming from? Where are the new generations of vets coming from? If you have rising land costs in Langley, as we have all experienced, rent goes up. Mortgage payments go up. All of it. It makes it more difficult with a large plot of land, trying to run an equestrian business. Yet, with that rise in cost, you still have to pay your staff. All the other fixed costs are there. So, even good businesses might have to sell the land, move elsewhere, similarly for core service infrastructure like vets, they might, if new and trying to start a business, might simply move somewhere else if it is easier to start a business.

Stacey: You mentioned, "Where are the new farriers coming from?" Is Kwantlen in Cloverdale still running their program?

Jacobsen: I haven't looked into that, recently. I am aware of the program.

Stacey: I visited them a couple of times. I really enjoyed it. Off the top of my head, I can't remember the man's name who was running it at the time. They had a competition, where farriers from the States came up. They had a competition. He gifted me a box of different kinds of horse shoes, which I've used in one of my Horse Lover's Math activities. Measuring the size, weighing, math, these kinds of things with the different sizes of horse shoes.

Jacobsen: So, I wasn't aware of this until about a month ago. It took several months in the industry for someone, in passing really, mentioned that farriers have competitions. [Laughing] That's fascinating to me. The fact your math stuff being integrated into that is also another testament to your work because it is showing the general observation that math, even basic math, is used in all aspects of the industries.

Stacey: Yes.

Jacobsen: What are you hoping kids are taking away from these lessons?

Stacey: More knowledge about horses and a love of learning.

Jacobsen: Deborah, thank you very much for the time today.

Stacey: Okay, thank you, Scott.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 25: Moya Byrne Merrin on Horse Care and Dressage Horses (2)

Moya Byrne Merrin is the Director of High Point Equestrian Centre. Merrin, a dressage trainer, discusses the evolution of horse care, highlighting the importance of continuous learning, internet research, and veterinarian advice to maintain optimal horse health and performance. She emphasizes the role of shared knowledge in adapting feeding practices, using tested methods like steamers to improve respiratory health and overall well-being. Merrin also addresses the rising costs of land, particularly in areas where properties are being sold for more lucrative ventures, leading to uncertainty in the future of the sport. She contrasts dressage with other equestrian disciplines, noting its smaller, yet highly dedicated community, and discusses the ideal horses for dressage.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: I know what you're talking about. I've worked in restaurants. I am working at one stable. With this, I want to ask, more as the barn manager, about the care for the horses, e.g., the proper feed, the proper shavings, etc.

Moya Byrne Merrin: That is shared information over years of experience and also with what is available to us: The internet, bringing in people, asking them what they use. What can we get? What is best for the horse? We do constant research. There's always new stuff coming up. Vets, we listen to them. "Look at this," especially when learning with more horses coming through. We can up this or cut that.

When it comes to feeding, very motivated to find what is the best way to feed. What is in their food? How is it processed? That is a combination of shared wisdom and internet research, and constantly educating ourselves, taking in horses and anything new, i.e., papers that have been researched and published, and trying to adapt with what is available. Hay, it always gets tested now. Steamers, this is proven to work.

We have seen it not only in horses who are old and had issues. But we can see the differences in the horses when they are working. The seizing is less, the coughing that they blow out, same thing when it comes to the modalities for keeping them competition ready. Everyone has their favourite, but we can also see what's actually working.

We have the luxury of people coming in and saying, "Hey, I thought I'd get this into your corner." They will come to the show and get set. We get to try these modalities. The horses will tell you what works. We can tell we're feeding them right because their skin, hair, coat, changes, and also a change in attitude towards work and play. So, the same approach when it comes to keeping them fit and competition ready.

We share information with friends in different disciplines. "This works. This horse slept during it," couldn't be happier when it works. That's pretty much [Laughing] what we do in our spare time.

Jacobsen: Others have sold their properties. How does this change the industry?

Merrin: There are properties very tight in this area. It keeps getting more expensive. What you get, there is a sense of unease. We are losing a lot of places that were not just for dressage, but for horses in general, keeping horses in general. It is far more lucrative to turn it into blueberries, Christmas trees, whatever.

Horses are for older ages. You are not so much working on the ranch anymore. There is a lot of uncertainty about the future of our sport in general, horse sport.

Jacobsen: What do you think, in terms of dressage compared to jumping, hunting, eventing, the sport?

Merrin: Dressage is a lot smaller in this area. It doesn't attract a lot. It is deemed pish-posh and cold. That hasn't been my experience. My personality would, probably, be more jumper. I came into contact with ladies in the sport. People who are incredible mentors for young girls. These girls drive big trucks and huge horses, and have them trained to move off the slightest push of a leg or a cluck.

I think that dressage in itself is a smaller community, but incredibly dedicated. It is the foundation. It is the basic thing. I have talked to jumpers. This is just dressage with obstacles.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] I like that.

Merrin: It is the foundation. We just take it to a next level. I think it is a personality type that is attracted to it. There is adrenaline, but in a very different way. We are trying to avoid the adrenaline. We are trying to give the picture of harmony and piece. Trust me, there is adrenaline going there. Jumping gets the numbers, gets the sponsors, gets the "ooh" and "ahh."

Dressage, as a growing sport, is hard to get the young people in it. A lot of the ladies, maybe, that is part of its image issue when it comes to being stuck-up and detailed-oriented. They like things a certain.

Jacobsen: Is it also centralized in Europe, mainly?

Merrin: North America is pretty strong, but yes.

Jacobsen: Which countries in Europe?

Merrin: Germany and France, Holland, the Dutch are a very strong team. Again, it is the basis of all training, of anything you want to learn and do. There are strong dressage roots. It is just elevated, when you go past the basics. "I just want to stick in this sport." Dressage is Europe.

Jacobsen: What are the types of horses that tend to work best for dressage?

Merrin: It is arguable. Every horse should be able to do dressage. At the upper levels, at the Olympics, you will see mainly warmbloods, Andalusians are coming along. There have been horses bred magnificently able to do multiple disciplines, but, I would have to say, the warmblood. It is a generic term. The Hanoverian, there are a couple of breeds. Every horse should be able to do it. That's one of the bragging rights about dressage.

Jacobsen: Moya, thank you.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 26: Mac Cone on Horsemanship, Canada, and the Olympics (1)

***Mac Cone**, according to Starting Gate Communications, can be described as follows: “Mac Cone is one of Canada's most experienced riders having been a steady performer at the international level for over 30 years. In 1974, he married Canadian Brenley Carpenter and the couple has two daughters. Originally from Tennessee, Mac moved to Canada in 1979 and is one of only two riders to have competed on both the United States and Canadian Equestrian Teams (the other being 1984 World Cup Champion Mario Deslauriers). With the stallion Elute, Mac enjoyed victory in the \$100,000 Autumn Classic in New York in 1994. Although the pair was selected for the 1995 Pan American Games in Argentina, they were unable to compete due to a last minute injury. Elute made a strong comeback, however, winning the 1996 Olympic Selection Trials at Spruce Meadows. In his Olympic debut in Atlanta, Mac was the highest-placed Canadian rider, a feat he would repeat at the 2002 World Equestrian Games in Jerez, Spain, riding Cocu. At the 2007 Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro, Mac and Melinda were members of the Silver Medal Team. In his second Olympic appearance in 2008, Mac and the impressive Ole were members of Canada's historic Silver Medal Team. In addition to his own riding, Mac is active as an instructor and clinician. His personal style, which is very low key and easy going, makes him very popular with his students, who have included 1986 World Champion Gail Greenough and 2003 Pan American Games competitor, Mark Samuel. Mac operates Southern Ways Stable in King, Ontario.” Cone reflects on his unconventional entry into horsemanship, starting with a \$150 horse and developing a passion for jumping. He describes the evolution of show jumping, noting the improvements in safety, such as lighter rails and shallow cups, which make the sport more horse-friendly. Cone discusses his transition from a college student to a professional rider, under the guidance of George Morris, whose coaching style revolutionized equestrian training globally. He contrasts the 1968 and 2008 Olympic teams, emphasizing the grit of the 1968 riders and the success of the 2008 Canadian team, where Eric Lamaze's horse Hickstead played a crucial role in their success.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, this is round 3. Anyone reading this, so, my mistake in not transferring over to the new computer, which has newer software. I used older software. We did approximately 2 hours of previous recordings. I don't know what happened to those. One programmer says that those are corrupt and so lost to history. So, thanks to the grace of Mac, we are back. With respect to horsemanship or gaining an interest in horses, what were some of the earliest moments in life?

Mac Cone: I got started in a very – as opposed to now – unconventional way. I lived in Germantown, Tennessee. My father had bought a home in a neighbourhood, where there was some government land behind the house. The man who sold us the lot that we built our land on also kept horses on there with an agreement with the government. He'd keep the grass cut. He could keep the cows and horses out on the government land. My sister was always the horse nut. She talked my father into buying a horse and could keep behind the house. It was \$150 horse.

I would ride it once in a while. I wasn't crazy about it. A friend of hers brought her horse over also. We were riding in Western saddle. This girl had an English saddle. There were logs, poles, and jumps, out there. She would jump her horse over all these in her saddle. That was what got my attention, jumping the horse, “That looks like fun. I am going to start doing this a little more. I am going to teach this \$150 horse to start jumping.” I did. I was painful in a Western saddle, as

you might imagine. I talked my mother and father into buying an English saddle. I kept jumping the horse. Finally, I built a jump that, basically, consisted of two panels that were on two hinges.

I could make it wide at the bottom and not as high at the top, but, if I pull things in closer and closer, the height will go higher. When they were pulled all the way together, it was like 4 feet. I went on a goal. There were a lot of ups and downs, and more downs. Soon, I got the horse jumping 4 feet high. It was only about 6 feet wide or something. It was totally dangerous and stupid and everything, but I didn't know any better. All I knew, I taught my horse to jump 4 feet high.

Jacobsen: Is that much of the culture of people in the mid-20th century who wanted to jump a horse? They built something in their backyard with these heavy boards and started at it.

Cone: [Laughing] I would say it was a more rough-and-tumble area then, even the top pros were more rough-and-tumble. The horses that they were dealing with were racehorses, rejects, and stuff like that. We didn't have these Ferrari, Maserati, warmbloods everybody, and me, have now. No way! Also, the knowledge, we didn't have the coaching and the system. Everything of how to do it right. We did more things wrong than we did right. Everyone was struggling, struggling away. Some of the heroes would be professionals who were doing more things wrong than right, at least according to us now. It was a more rough-and-tumble time, for sure.

Jacobsen: The original team that went to Mexico for Canada. Compared to the team that's going in the most recent time, there are safety changes to a lot of the standards. The rails are lighter. The cups will be more shallow. How are these changes quite impactful and more of a gradual evolution over time rather than drastic changes?

Cone: Just a little bit of the history might be enjoyable to know, the '68 Olympics was won by the Canadian team. It was the only team medal that we have won in Canada until our group, my group, in 2008. We were silver in Beijing. That was a long span there. The rails back then were very heavy, very long. There weren't that many related distances. The jumps were huge because they didn't come down as easily. So, you had to make them big to get a rail on the ground. Therefore, no breakaway cups. It could get [Laughing] a little bit to the barbaric side to get the winner. I think the Canadian team won the Nations Cup and won the gold medal with close to 100 faults. And they were the winners!

Jacobsen: Oh-ho!

Cone: You can imagine the other scores.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Cone: Jimmy Elder, I just talked to him a couple of weeks ago at the Royal Winter Fair. Immigrant, the one he rode, was only 6 years old and was right out of a riding school.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Cone: He hadn't had that horse along at all. And he was the best one of the bunch. These are tough, tough people. Yes, it was totally different than what we are doing now. To your question about the history [Laughing], the cups came in on the back rails. The rails became much lighter. They became evenly symmetrical from left and right and right to left. Where, before, they were trees cut down, basically, and the branches taken off, maybe the bark taken off. They were thick on one end and narrow on another. The cups were deep. Now, the rails are as fine as a first grader's pencil. They are totally round, nice and smooth. The cups are much shallower. Everything falls down so much easier. It is very much more horse friendly for sure.

Jacobsen: How about the style of training? The way in which you were describing your earlier experience. You were, basically, just setting a goal and going for it.

Cone: Well, I'll add a little history first. When I became 16, 17, 18, I began to realize; I wanted to do the horses full-time. I knew I had to leave college, my friends, and the family. I had to get out of Tennessee. It wasn't going to happen there. I told my mother I was to quite college and do the horse thing. She said three words to me, "Get a job." I knew some people. I made one phone call to the lady who was involved with Conrad Homfeld and Joe Fargis, who ended up being the gold and silver medallists at the Los Angeles Olympics. She had those two guys. She didn't need me. I went to George Morris who was the premier coach in the United States. I called him up.

I did one clinic with him only a few months earlier. He knew I was a country boy who could drive a tractor, could muck stalls, could groom horses, and do all this. He was willing for me to bring a horse with me that he would give me lessons on in return for manual labour. This was fine with me. I am out of Tennessee and will learn from the best. At that time, you could tell what country people were from, by the way they rode. If they were German, French, Dutch, American, they all rode totally differently. As time road on through the decades, George became even stronger of a coach, even better of a system. His way of riding spread universal. Now, the sport is over 80 countries. It is all over the world now. That's no longer the case. It was, probably, 10 or 15 countries before. Everybody rides pretty much the same. That's because of George.

That's the style and the coaching that has gotten *so* much better than when I was a kid. These kids can't learn bad habits. They aren't allowed to have a bad habit because everyone knows how to do it right. It matters simply who teaches the best and who can bring people along and can stick to the system that we know is the best., if that answers your question [Laughing].

Jacobsen: You mentioned something, which I didn't really click in, in the first two sessions. In the '68 Mexico Olympics and the 2008 Olympics, the trend over time, there would be a substantial increase in the number of competitors and the number of countries competing in the 2008 Olympics. That leads to two questions for me. One, why the big gap? Two, what differentiated the '68 team from the 2008 team?

Cone: Well, let me tell you about that '68 team, they not only won the Olympics gold, but, two years later, they won the World Championships Nations Cup in France. These were great riders, even by today's standards. You had Jim Elder, legend, and a guy named Jimmy Day who rode as beautifully and classically correct in the 60s and 70s as you'll see anybody riding now. Tom Gayford, who grew up with Jimmy, he wasn't the most beautiful rider, but boy he could ride. He could ride anything and make a bad horse go good. These are hardcore, top talented people. At that top level, that's what you need. It's a little bit of an extra grit that shows up there. That you need to pull these things off at that top level. With the sport, things can go wrong, even when they go right. You need special people to be there. We've had some good teams, since then, but that was the beginning of the end – timewise – for, let's say in the U.S. when I was with the U.S. team, horse being donated. The horses were, basically, drafted. It was great for me.

I got drafted to become a member of the U.S. team. I rode the horses that had been donated to the team. For old Mac, that was great! To me, it was real sport. You do well. You get a little bit of a name. You have results. You get drafted. What happened, as more of this industry started going, and more and more grands prix were popping up around home turf instead of just in Europe. All these people said, "I'm not going to give the horse to the team if I don't have to. I'm going to

give it to my daughter or my friend. They didn't have to go to the drafted team riders anymore." We lost a little bit of the grit, I think; we lost the grit. We paid the price. There have been a lot of good teams for U.S., Canada, and everything. In Canada's case, I think, it was the first time in a long gap that we had four exceptionally gritty, seasoned, talented riders that all had a good horse at the same time. I think that's what made the difference.

Jacobsen: You were mentioning something in the first or second session about the team that was there for the 2008 Olympics. Three of the riders, the horses were pretty much on the tail-end, while one rider's horse was just setting off. They ended up winning individual gold and kept going on. When you won that team silver, and that individual, Eric Lamaze, won individual gold, how do you sort of frame or explain his continual streak with Hickstead following that?

Cone: The team we had in Beijing, I'll put it to you this way. We had three really, really top good, good horses. We had one superstar. That superstar was Eric's horse, Hickstead. Ole was only 12. That's my horse. Hickstead was 12. Ian's horse, In Style, was 14, and so was Jill's horse, Special Ed. Just the ages there are enough to understand what happened the next year, Ian's horse was going to be 15, so was Jill's. I'm close on these ages. I think I'm right. Hickstead and Ole, I think, were the same age. Ole got injured at the Olympics. So, he needed a year off, but Hickstead got through it unscathed. So, he was just able to march on and carry on what he got started at the Olympics. That's the luck of the Irish [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Ha!

Cone: He came through it unscathed. The horse was young jumping horse wise. He could keep going. We were running into age, into soundness problems. We left it all in the field at Beijing. That's life. But we came home with a silver medal.

Jacobsen: 'You don't lick it off the rocks', as they say in Ireland.

Cone: Yes [Laughing].

The Greenhorn Chronicles 27: Mac Cone on North American Show Jumping History (2)

***Mac Cone**, according to Starting Gate Communications, can be described as follows: “Mac Cone is one of Canada’s most experienced riders having been a steady performer at the international level for over 30 years. In 1974, he married Canadian Brenley Carpenter and the couple has two daughters. Originally from Tennessee, Mac moved to Canada in 1979 and is one of only two riders to have competed on both the United States and Canadian Equestrian Teams (the other being 1984 World Cup Champion Mario Deslauriers). With the stallion Elute, Mac enjoyed victory in the \$100,000 Autumn Classic in New York in 1994. Although the pair was selected for the 1995 Pan American Games in Argentina, they were unable to compete due to a last minute injury. Elute made a strong comeback, however, winning the 1996 Olympic Selection Trials at Spruce Meadows. In his Olympic debut in Atlanta, Mac was the highest-placed Canadian rider, a feat he would repeat at the 2002 World Equestrian Games in Jerez, Spain, riding Cocu. At the 2007 Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro, Mac and Melinda were members of the Silver Medal Team. In his second Olympic appearance in 2008, Mac and the impressive Ole were members of Canada’s historic Silver Medal Team. In addition to his own riding, Mac is active as an instructor and clinician. His personal style, which is very low key and easy going, makes him very popular with his students, who have included 1986 World Champion Gail Greenough and 2003 Pan American Games competitor, Mark Samuel. Mac operates Southern Ways Stable in King, Ontario.” Cone reflects on his unconventional entry into horsemanship, emphasizing the importance of learning from mentors like George Morris. He discusses the evolution of show jumping, particularly the shift to warmbloods, and the rise in horse prices due to global demand. Cone highlights the importance of grit and perseverance in top riders, mentioning figures like Ian Millar, Rodney Jenkins, and Michael Matz. He notes the distinct approach of Canadian and American riders, acknowledging the clash between the sport and industry. Cone underscores how classical riding techniques and dedication have shaped the success of riders over decades.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, now, back to some of the personal history, you are setting up these 4-foot jumps out of boards in your backyard, basically. You get picked up and trained by George Morris. As you were saying, there’s been either a homogenization or a universalization of the training methodology for all 80+ countries who are a part of show jumping. How does that affect the level of competitiveness of the sport when the training methodology is, more or less, the same, regardless of the country? So, there’s internationalization there. The quality of the horse might vary, but the proper age upon which to get a horse to start riding at different levels, and when young people are getting into the sport know when they can compete in certain things, and not - when they’re ready, in other words. How do these factors affect the sport as a whole?

Mac Cone: The biggest thing that has changed. The first person to bring over a fancy, fancy warmblood from Europe that was so different than any of the horses than any of the rest of us had at that point was Melanie Smith who rode Calypso, because we were still on horses off the track. She was on the gold medal team in the Los Angeles Olympics with Calypso. She had this winning record and had unbelievable success. As George Morris was her coach, he said, “It didn’t take long for everyone to say, “I want a Calypso. Something like that.” That was the beginning of trying to import the warmbloods. There weren’t any warmbloods in North America or Canada; they were all in Europe. So, that’s how the relationships began between all the riders here and their dealers, and their contacts - and it’s how they went about it.

Everyone has a different story. But everyone worked out how they could get some of their hands on some of these warmbloods. Then a horse came over named The Natural. I think Katie Monahan was responsible for that one coming over. I think Rodney Jenkins jumped in there somehow and got a hold of The Natural. It was the first horse sold for \$1,000,000, in the 80s or late 80s. I'm not sure. Those are the progressions of how things go. Then it went to that being the one person who would pay \$1,000,000 for a jumping horse. Then it went to just stand in line.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Cone: It's a long line of people that'll pay \$1,000,000. Now, it's gotten to the point that the \$1,000,000 will barely buy you an 8-year-old or a 7-year-old because there are so many people around the world who want top horses who can do the top sport. There are only so many out there. It is then the old supply-and-demand. The supply is low, the demand is high, and the prices go up. Do they go up? They are crazy up!

Jacobsen: This is the "elephant in the room" mentioned in one of the earlier sessions, by you. [Ed. Others in the industry mention this in conversation, in the field, outside of formal interviews.] Expenses of the horses have really gotten astronomical for rational economic reasons. But it sets a barrier for entry at that level.

Cone: That's all very correct. The elephant in the room: Horse sport forever has been associated with the sport of kings. I think they were talking - when that phrase was hanging starting - about racehorses. It followed us to the jumping horses. Once again, everyone has a different path. Where you start from is not your fault, your bonus, your negativity, it doesn't really matter. Where you start from is where you start, where you go with where you start is what's important, so, we're all trying to get to Rome, which is the high-level of the sport. Meaning: Making an Olympic team, making a World Championship team, we're all trying to get to Rome. Everyone's path to Rome might be different. Some might have a more direct, straighter, path. Others might have to wind around mountains to get there. Whatever path you take, that doesn't really matter. That's what you were given when you were born. You shouldn't dwell on that. That's nothing to dwell on. What could be talked about, and it probably isn't going to change, because it seems to be getting worse, with the strength of our industry, meaning, everything from the very beginner levels to the medium levels to the amateur levels to the hunters, the equitation, the jumpers, and so on; the industry is so strong. With the industry being stronger and broader, there are many people making a very good living in this industry. But industry and sport are two different things – two *totally* different things.

So, if we were totally doing nothing but addressing a path to the top, and it was all that were concerned with, the things people were doing and how they were operating would be totally different than what we see now.

Jacobsen: As you came from Tennessee, this was something noted to me, after the interview, by a good woman farrier friend. She noted: In fact, you were the only person, for a long time, to compete on the Canadian Olympic team *and* the American Olympic team. What is the story there?

Cone: Actually, I got drafted twice. When I went to New Jersey to train with Mr. Morris, I took a quarter horse with me. There was another quarter horse in Tennessee. Each one cost \$5,000. But they could jump. They were just quarter horses, but they could really jump. I brought these quarter horses and did very well with them, very quickly. Thanks to George's coaching. One

thing I will brag about myself on: I was always a really good student. Number one, I wanted to learn. I knew how to keep my mouth shut and my ears open. I was good at osmosis, soaking it up from the outside. I love being a student, especially when I was learning from very good people. So, he got me onto the team. He recommended me to Bertalan de Nemethy. He was one of the greatest coaches, too. He was the chef and coach of the American team. I was allowed to go there with my horses and to live and work with George and de Nemethy. That was an unbelievable experience. I started riding on donated horses and competed on the Fall circuit the following year: Harrisburg, Washington, and Toronto. That was fantastic.

I had great teammates. I had Michael Matz, who is a legend, and Rodney Jenkins, a legend, and Frank Chapot. Those are my teammates. We won all the Nations' Cups – surprise, surprise. That was an unbelievable experience for a 20-/21-year-old boy. So, anyway, that all came to end. I had to leave Gladstone and enter into business for myself. My journey took my wife, Brenley, and myself up to Toronto. I was a landed immigrant there. I got a job offer from Sue Grange, who was Sue McNamara up to that point. She wanted me to coach her. So, I came up to coach. I said, "I wanted to run a business." She built me a 15-stall barn. She said, "Run your business."

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Cone: This went on for like 4 years. During that time, Tom Gayford approached me. He was now the chef. He wasn't riding anymore, but Elder was still riding. He said, "We want you to ride for the Canadian team." I said, "Well, I'm American."

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Cone: No, I didn't say that. I said, "I'll look into it." So, I looked into the rules. It said you could only ride for the country for which you hold a passport. Gayford said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I love Canada. I love the U.S., but I am going to live in Canada. I'll look into changing my citizenship." I had a half-Clydesdale, half-thoroughbred Canadian horse owned by the Isbister family. Don't you know, we ended up jumping the big American invitational Grand Prix down in Florida in March. He said, "At the World Championships in Dublin, we want you on the team." So, it was Jim Elder, Ian Millar, Mark Laskin, and me. That was my first performance with the Canadian team, which was that year in Dublin. So, drafted twice [Laughing].

Jacobsen: He didn't have a choice, your honour. Who would you consider pivotal people within American show jumping and Canadian show jumping history? Those who stand apart for setting a consistent tone over decades for the industry, guiding lights.

Cone: Do you want to talk about industry or about sport?

Jacobsen: Sport.

Cone: Well, the first dominating rider of the U.S., and the most successful, was a guy named William Steinkraus. He was a cornerstone of the United States equestrian team for decades. He rode great. He won the gold medal at Mexico, individual gold medal. Because he rode so good, he got the pick of the donated horses. He was always really well-mounted. He was the guy that I, at 12 or 14 years of age, would read the stories of and would want to emulate. He was the guy. About the same time, there was a guy named Frank Chapot who was on many silver-medal teams with him. The other member of the team, at that time, was George Morris, then a girl named Kathy Kusner. She was a great talent and rider. Those were the four at that time. Neal Shapiro won bronze on Sloopy. Other ones came in, that's when things started. It was the beginning of the end of the donation of the horses, like I talked about before.

Then the industry and the sport had to clash, if you want to call it something. Hopefully, they'll learn to work together, which they're still trying to do – not always great, but, sometimes, they're doing okay. Then there was this guy named Rodney Jenkins. He had more talent in his pinky finger than all those riders that I've just mentioned put together. He was just amazing, natural. Talking about a guy who came from the rough, tough, and tumble, his father was a fox hunter. He kept his fox hunting horses. He, basically, had a string of horses that people would use to fox hunt and ride. Rodney was his son. He started there and started showing horses a little bit. Rodney's talent came to the forefront. He would ride 30 or 40 horses at the shows, because everyone wanted Rodney riding the horses. They didn't want the rest of us. They wanted Rodney. I remember a meeting that we had. A bunch of us were trying to ride in the grands prix in the U.S. The owners all wanted Rodney riding their horses. We were saying, "That's not fair. We have to spread these horses around. We have to spread these horses around, or we won't have a class. We can't have a class in a competition with just Rodney riding."

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Cone: It was to that degree. He was that good. As the industry made things spread out a bit, that's one thing it did. It gave Leslie Burr-Howard a place to go, and to teach her clients, which was the Ox Ridge Hunt Club. She started showing up. Katie Monahan started her business in Virginia. It all started spreading out a bit. Then Michael Matz, of course, probably, if there was anyone who had the natural talent who is a different sort of talent than Rodney was, he was gifted with quite a natural talent. He dominated show jumping in the U.S. for a long time, and well-deserved. Canada, on the other hand, as things went on from the '68 Olympics, I would say the biggest force that came in would have been Ian Millar. He would have started coming into play. He didn't intend this in a mean way. But he meant it. There's no bullshit there.

He said, "I came in. I saw who was on top. There was Elder. I said, 'I'm going to ride better than Elder and faster than Elder. And I'm going to be that all then time.' And I did that." Then he goes, "I looked at Rodney. I want to learn to ride just as good as him, and faster than him. And he did!" That's Ian. Talking about what it takes to be on a medal winning team at the top level, it is that attitude; that attitude, that grit that you need there. You need four people with that, to accomplish it. Then Mark Laskin came along, a great natural talent and beautiful rider. We were all sitting at the Hall of Fame dinner in 1980, I think, alternate Olympic team; we all boycotted it because of Russia invading Afghanistan. Can you imagine that? Getting upset over a country invading Afghanistan, isn't that weird?

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Cone: Anyway, we had an alternate Olympics in Rotterdam. That consisted of Mark, Ian, Michelle Vaillencourt – a new grit, and Jim Elder. We were watching the films from that. Laskin came on the big video screen at the awards screen. Watching him ride, he looked as modern and as smooth, and as beautiful, and as up to date, as any rider now. He was like that back in 1980. So, it is quite a history of the top, top jockeys that we have produced in Canada. I must say the majority of those jockeys came from the rough and tumble way. They found their way by reading, watching, and desiring, and wanting, and realizing that a more classical way was the way to go if that helps you at all in answering that question.

Jacobsen: It does.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 28: Hayley Mercer on Personal Story and Aspirations in Show Jumping

Hayley Mercer is a U25 show jumper from Langley, British Columbia, Canada. She has trained with Samantha Aird and Natasha Brash, among a number of other trainers. Her more formal equestrian training and competing on the U25 circuit began at Thunderbird Show Stables under the tutelage of Laura Balisky and Brent Balisky, and LJ Tidball, on the mount Crown Royal. Currently, she is travelling the North American circuit in California and Florida. Mercer reflects on her journey in show jumping, from early lessons with her grandmother to her professional career. Inspired by top Canadian riders like Tiffany Foster, Mercer transitioned from learning the basics in equitation to competing at higher levels, including Grand Prix. She emphasizes the importance of developing a growth mindset, learning from failures, and maintaining a love for horses. Mercer discusses the challenges of the sport, including the financial barrier for young riders and the competitive nature of the industry. She also highlights her future goals of coaching and competing in international events like the Nations Cup.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Okay, so, this is round 2 with Hayley Mercer. As with the Mac Cone and the Hyde Moffatt [Ed. Upcoming] interviews, an apology because of my mistake. I used the older system rather than the newer system for interviews. We will go over her narrative, work, and views, in show jumping, in the career of her choice. I am going to start as before. What were the moments when you were first getting an inkling of horses as an interest and a path for you to continue forward, in your life?

Hayley Mercer: Horses, as an interest for me, were since I was little. My grandmother moved to Vancouver Island when I was little. We used to go there and visit her. She would give us pony lessons as an incentive to keep visiting her. I was 5 or 6 when that started. When I decided I wanted to pursue it as a career option, I was in grade 9. I was 14 or 15 years old. I was training with Samantha Aird. That was when I started opening my eyes to the grand prix as an option. Mostly, at Thunderbird, I grew up there. I was watching the big players growing up: Ashlee Bond and Tiffany Foster. Eric Lamaze was big at the time. He still is big, but he's not necessarily jumping internationally, anymore. Team Canada, I was watching those riders growing up. I remember being 14, 15, 16, and 17, and thinking, "I want to do this." As I grew up, I fashioned how I wanted to go about it.

Jacobsen: How did you, originally, get connected with Samantha?

Mercer: Samantha, we met briefly. I was with Kelly Kennedy, as a little kid. Little pony club lessons, we ended up moving from her. We were going to go to Samantha Aird because she had a connection to Kelly. Kelly recommended Samantha to us. Samantha wasn't ready, at the time, for any new clients. So, we went to Andrea Strain. We were there for about a year or two. That was all great. After that, we went back to Sam, who was ready at the time. She really made the sport fun for me. I learned a lot at Andrea's. Although, Sam made the sport fun [Laughing], as a 15, 16, and 17 year old. It was all I wanted to do now. She gave me passion for the sport. It was all I wanted to do after school, which was go and spend time with her and the horses.

Jacobsen: What did she incorporate to make it fun?

Mercer: She took the stress out of competing. It helped me a little bit to this day. Where, you can put a lot of pressure on yourself. In this sport, when you get to 3*, 4*, and Nations Cup levels, you can get a lot of pressure put on yourself. She was really good. I wasn't at that level with her. However, she was good at reminding you: Have fun when you go out to the ring. You're doing this for the love of the horse, and to remember this when you go into the ring.

Jacobsen: Are there moments when you have forgotten that?

Mercer: Definitely [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Mercer: You get caught up in the sport, like any sport. What is happening next? What horse show is happening next? What thing do I need points for next? What do I need to qualify for next? It is such a difficult world to navigate that way. It takes one or two humbling experiences to remember, "I am doing this because I love these horses."

Jacobsen: How were you humbled once or twice?

Mercer: Everyone gets humbled. Every day in the sport is like that. It can be from winning a class on the Saturday to falling off on the GPO on the Sunday. It can be... I came back from Toronto. I did the CET Nationals there. I qualified for them. I came back in the Spring back to B.C. when the season started again. The first five or six classes of the CET; I didn't place [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Mercer: And I just qualified for nationals. I came back from Toronto at the Royal Winter Fair. I didn't qualify in the first 7 classes. It was humbling for sure. That was a small one.



Image Credit: Kim Gaudry.

Jacobsen: I am reminded of the first session, the lost session. You had mentioned - or we had discussed - that the rate of failure is much higher, regardless of the level of the sport, than the successes. How do you psychologically become a bit calloused to that or adapt to that to keep moving forward?

Mercer: I stopped viewing it as failure and more as development. I think that if you're always viewing your career, your sport, your job, your parenting skills, your life, as a success or failure, then it's very black-and-white, for lack of a better analogy [Laughing]. I don't think you're necessarily failing. You're learning.

Jacobsen: Would you frame your own mindset as a growth mindset?

Mercer: I try to keep an open mind to everything and in anything that I learn in life. I think the human mind should always be learning, and is capable of so many things, every day. You should be open to growth and stay humble and stay teachable.

Jacobsen: Do you think humility and teachability go hand-in-hand?

Mercer: Yes, I would say they do.

Jacobsen: Who did you move onto from Samantha?

Mercer: From Samantha, I went to Natasha Brash.

Jacobsen: What did you learn from her?

Mercer: Natasha changed my thoughts on the sport in the sense that I could have a career and make money in the sport. In this sense, she owned a sales barn. She made money through sales

of horses. I learned a lot about that with her, how to prepare horses for that and flipping sales of horses. If I had a horse that wasn't amazing, but was cheaper, you ride it for a few months, bring it up, and sell it for a bit more. You keep going. She opened my eyes to that.

Jacobsen: Are horses in show jumping a highly profitable industry or a modestly profitable industry in general?

Mercer: There are so many aspects of the sport and so many disciplines. It depends on how you work it. I think horse sales, at a certain level of the sport, might make you more. Maybe, at a lower level, you might make less. In comparison, at the higher level, if your business is based on prize winnings, then that might better for you.

Jacobsen: Who did you move onto from Natasha?

Mercer: After Natasha, I went to Laura Balisky, Brent Balisky, and LJ Tidball.

Jacobsen: Why them?

Mercer: They were the next step for me in terms of wanting to further my goals of pursuing equitation at the time, CET, and the medals, at the time, which was a massive goal of mine. Also, I viewed them as a team who I could stay with a long time. They could keep teaching me and propelling me in my goals. Now, I'm in my 20s. I learn from them every day. I will always keep learning from them. They are the ones I have stuck with the longest.

Jacobsen: What does each person in that 3-part team bring to the table?

Mercer: It's so interesting to have three different minds work together in a training business. Because you get so many different perspectives. Laura was an Olympian. So, there's that. Brent's mind is insane, how he breaks things down and explains them to you. It is so knowledgeable. I am never walking out of a lesson with Brent and never not learning something new. LJ is so relatable because she is jumping what I am jumping. She is in the same classes as me. It is nice to have someone in the class who is riding the same course as you, if that makes sense.

Jacobsen: Who inspired you the most, as you were a teenager?

Mercer: Probably, Tiffany Foster.

Jacobsen: Why?

Mercer: I viewed her as someone who always had such a kind personality and such drive in the sport. You can read multiple articles on her. She didn't come from a super wealthy family. I look up to her in what she has created for herself, in the sport, and her professional standards. I have always looked up to her. She rides amazing. She is so fast. She is part of Team Canada. She is a really big role model of mine.

Jacobsen: What does she represent for the country?

Mercer: That's a hard one. Because I think all the people who ride for Team Canada represent good pieces of our nation, not just one who rides for Team Canada. I don't know. I don't really know how to answer that.

Jacobsen: If we can now go and take a step back, Canada produces some of the best women riders in show jumping in the world, consistently. Why?

Mercer: I guess, we have grit [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Mercer: Maybe, it is in the cold air.

Jacobsen: Hyde Moffatt had a similar response. He said something to the effect of “because we’re tough”. We’re resilient. So, it could be the cold air from the Canadian Shield. Now, you decided to take a road trip south along the southern parts of the United States in California and Florida for half of a year. Why decide to make this move?

Mercer: This was my Winter of experiencing everything I could in the span of a few months, not in my own country, because I am reaching the point in my life where I want to figure out where I want to be in this career and in this sport. I am lucky to have a horse reaching a 3* and 4* level. We’re competitive in the U25. That is a handy class to travel around in. So, this was wanting to hold myself to the level of sport at WEF and in California, to see if I like it and if I want to do it.

Jacobsen: When you’re getting a horse reaching a height of 1.50m, how does that feel getting that extra leap compared a lot of other people who get to about 1.30m, 1.35m? Then they cut their career short and stay at that level and don’t proceed further.

Mercer: The first time I jumped a 1.50m grand prix. I was in awe that I had a horse that could do that. I was so in awe. I’m shocked. Like, why? Why do they jump for us? They are so willing. The fact that I have one; I am immensely grateful. The feeling was... I don’t even have a word for it. I feel like I could accomplish anything.

Jacobsen: Does awestruck exhilaration come to mind?

Mercer: Yes.

Jacobsen: Do you think this horse could reach 1.55m, 1.60m?

Mercer: I think he could get to 1.55m. If he wanted to jump 1.60m, then he will. I will leave it up to him if he wants to do that because I can’t ask anything more of him. He has done so much for me. I would love to see that of him. I think he would try his heart out. If he wants to, great; if not, he doesn’t have to do it.



Image Credit: Quinn Saunders.

Jacobsen: Why did you focus earlier in your career on equitation?

Mercer: Equitation was something all of my trainers valued. As you start out, before you start moving up, it teaches you really good basics and discipline, in my opinion. It is a major factor when you jump big jumps. The tracks of the equitation courses are as hard as all the grand prix courses. Although, the grand prix courses are bigger. In terms of technicality, they are the same. In terms of pressure of nerves, I have never felt the same nerves - to this day – as I have in the Royal Winter Fair.

Jacobsen: One of the myths of this sport, as you have alluded in some of the responses, is the idea of this as a solo sport. In some real sense, it is a bi-athlete sport. There is a horse and a rider. Many riders will reference the horse as another athlete, which is real. Do you have that same sensibility about show jumping, where there are two athletes working together to make these jumps?

Mercer: Yes, I do. I agree with that. Because this is a sport where you depend on another animal to largely factor into your success or your development; it makes it hard to create a path for yourself. So, I believe that that is a very big factor to someone's career choice, or how they want to play in the sport.

Jacobsen: About 12 months ago, when I first interviewed Erynn Ballard, she noted horses having independent thought as a problem, as a factor. In this sense, if you are in another high-octane sport, such as NASCAR or F1, you are dealing with a very powerful construct. It doesn't think for itself. It does what you want it to do, for the most part. Unless one of the parts is failing or falling apart, or there is a malfunction. With horses, everything could be perfectly fine. They

may just not want to follow your directions at that time. How do you deal with that level of uncertainty, at the level of psychology, of the sport?

Mercer: I think, for myself, you approach every day the same and don't make things a problem. You deal with things when they happen. For the most part, give them the benefit of the doubt, these are good horses. I agree that that makes it difficult. In our sport, that is the most difficult part. Our partner is a living, breathing animal. A lot of the time, they pull through for us. If not, try another day, again, it's not a failure; it's development.

Jacobsen: Another myth, as I learned in 14 months in this industry without background – before, the public will see horse sport as something soft, similar to the mythology around cheerleading. When in fact, in both cheerleading and show jumping, the injury rates are very high, and the injuries can be extraordinarily lifechanging in their danger. Have you had any injuries, major or minor, so far?

Mercer: No, I've been lucky enough to have minor, minor injuries. I think the worst thing I did was dislocate my shoulder once and a few concussions, knock on wood. I have never injured anything in a major way. I have been quite lucky.

Jacobsen: There have been deaths for some riders in the ring.

Mercer: Yes, it is scary.

Jacobsen: What is your worst fear in show jumping?

Mercer: That is a very deep question. In terms of safety, or in terms of... what?

Jacobsen: Both safety and interest in the sport. It could be a psychological thing. Some people could fear that they lose their motivation. Erynn Ballard noted this, when she had her injury. She had this one thought. Where, basically, she felt as though she could retire. She could just drop it, make a good living, and get on with it. That dropped pretty quick. But it can happen. Those thoughts can pass through the thoughts of someone, even performing at a high level of the sport. Those could be fears as well. The intrinsic motivation is gone.

Mercer: That's very accurate. My two biggest thoughts that came to mind when you asked that. Psychologically, if I lose motivation and don't want to do this anymore, what do I do with my life? I didn't go to university. In high school, I didn't really try in terms of academics. If I lose interest in this, where do I go, that's a normal thing to have; I'm sure lots of people feel this when thinking of their career. Another thing would be injuring a horse in the ring. Those videos of injuring a horse in the ring. That would be really terrible.

Jacobsen: What are your long-term goals in this sport? What are your hopes for it?

Mercer: Long-term, I want to have my own business in teaching and riding. Maybe, mid- to long-term, I want to be on the team, whether a Nations Cup team or a Major League team. Those are two big goals for me.

Jacobsen: What tends to set apart nationally great riders from internationally great riders? Those who rise above the circumstance of their country and perform as well as any other world-class rider.

Mercer: I think it depends on the rider. The determination and the grit to get there. It is a full-on sport. You talk about 10,000 hours devoted to any sport. I think about the amount of hours in the

saddle. I have spent way more than 10,000. So, I think when you're talking about who goes that extra step to the international level. It is who puts the time and the effort in.

Jacobsen: What do you see as problems in the sport, issues?

Mercer: I think funding can be an issue, especially for young ones coming up. Exposure: Wanting to get onto people in the sport's radar, for lack of a better word, to put yourself on the scene. It is something I have found to be difficult. Something that I have had to work at, for sure.

Jacobsen: I have noticed something in reaching to a lot of the Canadian prominent show jumpers. It is social media. They are on Facebook. They are on Instagram. Is there a reason for these media as a means by which they show off performances or communicate with one another over others?

Mercer: Instagram, you can share photos and videos. It is an easy way to attract a following, which is through posting memories of a show or a barn party. Same with Facebook. Facebook is massive. You can reach so many people. Everybody has Facebook, whether 80 or 18. I think it's different demographics for both. I think they both have the most outreach, in my opinion.

Jacobsen: Which country do you think is doing well overall?

Mercer: Ireland is on a hot streak. Switzerland, all the European ones are always on there. Switzerland is doing really well. U.S.A. is always at the top.

Jacobsen: Why the Irish and the Swiss now?

Mercer: Ireland seems to have really good riders and horses right now. All the good riders have found good horses with them. They ride really well. I think it is showing in their placings and their team competition.

Jacobsen: Do show jumpers have non-essential routines, superstitions, lucky charms that they bring to each event, to psychologically prep them?

Mercer: I'm sure they do. Lots of people do. I have a specific pair of pearl earrings that I have to wear. I know lots of people who do a certain prep the night before or the morning after. It all depends on who you are.

Jacobsen: What kind of prep?

Mercer: I used to know this one girl who had to have a bath every night. She would have an Epsom salt bath every night. She would get candles and everything.

Jacobsen: Why those pearl earrings?

Mercer: [Laughing] They were gifted to me on my 16th birthday. They were the same ones I wore to the Royal. The same ones I wore competing all over, same horse or different horses. I have a lot of good memories – good and bad. It is important to remember.

Jacobsen: Hayley, thank you very much.

Mercer: Yes, of course, thank you for reaching out and thinking of me.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 29: Kimberley Martens on Show Jumping, the Netherlands, Show Jumping Culture

***Kimberley Martens** was born in St. Albert on February 28, 1989. Her Dutch parents moved back to Holland when she was 8/9 months old. They lived in Canada for 5 years. They were going to stay, but her grandfather became very ill. She began riding at the age of five on a cousin's pony. At 7, she got approval to enter a riding school. At age 9, she acquired her first pony. She started full-time at the age of 16. She went to David Hopper in America at the age of 18 for 1 year. She went back to Holland and trained under Peter Geerink. At 27, she started her own stable. Now, she is based on the South of Holland with her husband, who is her trainer. Martens' journey into show jumping began at a young age, inspired by her cousin's barn. She developed her skills under the guidance of renowned trainer Peter Geerink and later her husband. She discusses the sport's equal opportunities for both genders but acknowledges the financial barriers, especially with the high cost of top-level horses. Martens emphasizes the importance of both rider skill and horse talent for success in international competitions. She also reflects on how the sport has evolved, with more shows but higher competition levels. Martens expresses concerns that show jumping might become increasingly exclusive and expensive.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, this is Kimberley Martens. My first question for most equestrians who are on the international scene or who have made a bit of an impact on the international scene. What are some of the earlier moments for discovering an interest in horses or showing an inclination in getting involved in riding horses as you were younger?

Kimberley Martens: My cousin had a small barn. I went to go and visit her, often. That's the only place I wanted to be at, since I was little girl. It was horses, just horses. I always wanted to make a living out of it. My parents thought it was a good idea. They are not horse people. They had no idea what it was, but, now, they are very supportive. They enjoy coming to the shows, watching me ride.

Jacobsen: How did you develop your skill set over time? Were there influential mentors or trainers, or was it a natural development over time?

Martens: I think I am naturally an easygoing rider. It is quite easy for me. I trained with a very famous Dutch rider, Peter Geerink. I worked for him. I'd say I really developed well there. Now, my husband is training me. He is making me a more consistent rider. He is really teaching me how I should ride and why I should ride my best. He's fine-tuning me [Laughing].

Jacobsen: One thing I have noticed, at least, within the discipline of show jumping. Show jumping, itself, is truly a gender neutral sport. In the sense that, men or women, if they have the skill set, and if they have a good horse, they can perform very well internationally.

Martens: Absolutely.

Jacobsen: It is one of those things that has a wider range of accessibility for age groups as well. People like Ian Millar is riding into his 70s before retirement and going to the Olympics in that time as well. If we are taking a perspective of a career focus around show jumping itself, what tends to be the longevity of show jumpers themselves?

Martens: For the sport itself, it's nice that the riders can stay in the sport for a very long time. It makes it difficult for the younger riders to step up and to do the higher level if that is what you mean. It is nice that the talented riders can do this job for a very long time.

Jacobsen: Even with the equal accessibility for men and women, and the longevity of riders to gain access in their teens and 20s, even up to retirement age and beyond, a cost of a really good horse (a 1.60m horse) can be prohibitive for most. They have to syndicate a horse. They have to get a backer for a horse who has a lot of capital. How do you see that barrier being overcome in many cases? How do you see it, in other cases, being insurmountable for others?

Martens: It is a difficult sport, I feel. You need someone who really supports you to keep the horse for you, in order to do the higher level. If you don't have that, and if you are really, really talented, then you don't have a chance to break through. I find that hard. We have a dealing stable. Now, I have one horse that I think can jump any class in the world. We are trying not to sell him for now [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Martens: It is difficult. We have younger ones. We sell. We buy some. If someone comes by and offers a lot of money, we can't always say, "No". I have one very, very good horse, which could do Spruce or whatever. When we sell that one, I will be mostly back to riding young horses. I might never ride a big class again if I never find another horse. I think some talented riders aren't out there anymore because they don't have someone who can support them and can keep the horse. For younger riders, it is difficult to find people who will support you. Because most of the time, if they have been in the horse world already, they have another rider or an older rider. I think there are only a few chances for the younger riders to get out there.

Jacobsen: In other words, in a sense, the financial backers are the people who come from people with money or those are the people who have developed a lot of capital over time in their own profession. They have an interest in show jumping and show jumpers, but they are already with people who they trust, respect, know they have a talent, and have worked with their horses. So, it sort of bars some people from getting entrance.

Martens: Yes.

Jacobsen: At the higher end of the show jumping world, is it more of a difference between the skill of the rider or the innate talent of the horse?

Martens: I think you need both. If you really want to do the highest level, you need both. The best rider in the world if he doesn't have a horse that's very talented. He can also not win classes. Maybe, once or twice. To stay at that level, you need a talented horse for sure and a talented rider. Even if the rider is not that talented and if they have an extremely good horse, for sure, they can go a long way. At the end of the day, the classes are so difficult, technical, and the time is so short. You need feeling and a bit of talent [Laughing], I think.

Jacobsen: Now, you're in your early 30s. Yet, you've been riding for a while. How has the sport changed over time, in your time?

Martens: At the beginning, there were not so many international shows. Now, especially in this area, there are 3 or 4 2* shows every weekend.

Jacobsen: Wow.

Martens: It is easier to get in, but the level got so high even on the 2* level. They don't want to have 25 clear rounds. They want to have 15. So, they are making the time shorter, the course more technical. Sometimes, the 2* are comparable with 3* here, because there are a lot of talented people here.

Jacobsen: Mac Cone in an earlier interview was noting this as well. He was saying that when he was beginning riding in the 60s, 70s, 80s. It wasn't too, too many countries. Now, you have upwards of 80 or more countries involved in it. He was making a similar notion. That the internationalization of the sport makes it more difficult. Also, he was noting George Morris' training style has become a common factor in most training styles, internationally, now. So, the training regimens are much the same. There are more people in the sport. So, the differentiating factors become more minute. It becomes more difficult to move up the ranks compared to before.

Martens: Absolutely. Because I can do most of the 2* shows, but to get to it is difficult here. You either need to buy yourself in or you need points. It's hard to get those points if you can't get to shows.

Jacobsen: There are aspects of equestrian culture, after approximately 14 months in the industry. I noticed a constant breaking of assumptions. Even doing this interview with Canadian show jumpers, I thought one had to be based on Canada. Yet, they can be based in France, the Netherlands, etc. I made some wrong assumptions. You are listed as Canadian riders. However, you'll be based wherever you need to be based to get the sort of training, access to competitions and horses, etc. I hadn't grasped that until reaching out to some of the Canadian riders. I noticed Canada produces really, really good women riders. At the lower level, there tends to be a very large number of girls and young women, not many adolescent boys and young men. At the top, though, you see mostly men. That's on the international scene. What explains this difference we see, over time, in the development of riders, where you see more men at the top in the later stages, internationally, but seeing more girls and young women at the lower end?

Martens: Also, here, at the lower level, it is mostly girls. At the higher level, certainly, in Holland, there are more men than women at that level. In the smaller sport, there are a lot of girls and women riding.

Jacobsen: How do you think that plays out over time in terms of the girls dropping out over time and the boys continuing on into the international scene?

Martens: I think it is a tough world. For the guys, I think it is easier. I think they are taken a bit more serious than the women to be honest: dealing wise, riding wise. I think it also helps that a lot of guys have a lot of confidence. I think confidence is the key in the end. You need so much confidence when you go into the ring.

Jacobsen: This sort of confidence. Do you think this is something acculturated with show jumping culture as the boys go along, or is it self-selected for that small category of men who are overly confident in themselves and their abilities?

Martens: Oh! [Laughing] That's a tough question.

Jacobsen: I don't know [Laughing]. That's why I'm asking.

Martens: I think they just have more confidence and are, maybe, a bit more outspoken. When they can find an owner who can keep a horse for them, they might step up to keep it. I think us women are more quiet. We wait until someone offers us a chance.

Jacobsen: Who is your current favourite horse?

Martens: In the long term or now?

Jacobsen: Oh! Good question, over the long term, your horses over the long term so far.

Martens: Kinmar Quality (Hero), the one I have now.

Jacobsen: That horse, which you mentioned earlier, that could jump any competition. How old is the horse, currently?

Martens: 9.

Jacobsen: If you are looking at a horse that is 9, which is that good, what is the longevity of a good horse in this industry, typically?

Martens: Some jump until they're 16. Some until they're 15. You need to get a bit lucky, of course. This one has a very, very good mindset. I think he'll try when he's 20. But you need to be lucky that they don't get injured. It depends on what they do. If he is going to jump 2* for the rest of his life, or if he is going to do Nations Cup or bigger shows, when you do the bigger shows, it is harder on the horse.

Jacobsen: How do you compare the dietary regimens in the Netherlands compared to Canada? I understand, in general, not just in the Netherlands or Canada that the care of horses has extended their performance life.

Martens: Over here, the horse, of course, needs scope. They need to be fast. Apparently, if you want to do the Longines *Global Champions Tour*, you need, in my opinion, a different kind of horse. You need a horse that has all the scope and is careful. It doesn't need to be the fastest horse. But if you look over here at Longines *Global Champions Tour*, for sure, you need a fast horse.

Jacobsen: If you look at the top times of this sport, they're within the same second with zero faults. If you have one second back or a fault, you are not even in the top 10, basically. Does this go back to the internationalization of the sport making it more competitive?

Martens: Yes. Also, the horses get better. There are not a lot of courses that cannot be jumped anymore by a lot of horses.

Jacobsen: Where do, typically speaking, the best horses coming from? I'm told, "Europe." But where in Europe?

Martens: I think Belgium.

Jacobsen: Why Belgium?

Martens: I think Holland was leading for many, many years. But I think they bred a bit too much towards quality. They lose scope. In Belgium, they just breed scope.

Jacobsen: What does that word "scope" mean in this sport?

Martens: That he can jump very big fences.

Jacobsen: What differentiates these 4* competitions from these 5* competitions?

Martens: The prize money.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Martens: [Laughing] The more stars it is, the more money you can make.

Jacobsen: When was this star (*) system put in place, approximately?

Martens: I have no idea, to be honest.

Jacobsen: Because if this was put into place to give a rough metric on the quality of a competition, the prize money, the difficulty, and so on, then this could be changed again to something like a 6* competition in some theoretical future, especially if the competition level is getting higher and higher and the number of people entering is getting higher and higher.

Martens: Because there are not a lot of shows that have as much as the Longines *Global Champions Tour*. It stops with the 5* and then the organizations can decide, but they do have to give a minimum of money to be a 5*.

Jacobsen: So, if you are looking at your career trajectory so far, and training with your husband to improve consistency of performance, how do you see your career progressing as the years go on? What are your goals?

Martens: Now, my goal is to, hopefully, represent Canada once in a Nations Cup. I hope this Summer because it would be good to do these shows, and to Spruce Meadows. I would love to do it. But for us to come over, it is very expensive. With all the horses at home, it all needs to be arranged. They need someone who actually supports us. Because, otherwise, it is, financially, not okay for us.

Jacobsen: I was also told many times. The cost for travel is simply a tremendous amount more compared to the past. I don't know what the cost is. How much does it cost to get rider and horse and equipment over to a competition, including the price of boarding at the competitions, etc.?

Martens: I think that is around 10,000 Euros a horse, just the way there.

Jacobsen: Wow.

Martens: Also, you need to go home [Laughing]...

Jacobsen: ...[Laughing]...

Martens: ...or leave it there.

Jacobsen: Most people will bring more than one horse, correct?

Martens: Yes.

Jacobsen: That is incredibly expensive.

Martens: Yes, it is. But it would be my dream to ride there. It looks amazing.

Jacobsen: What differentiates Spruce Meadows and some of these other competition grounds? Is it the kind of grounding, the presentation area, the development of the course, course design? What really makes them that much better?

Martens: For sure, the ring, the grass ring, the audience there, and Calgary is, for every rider, a treat to go there. It is a show everybody wants to go to. If you have a horse, you need a lot of scope because it is massive there.

Jacobsen: What riders did you look up to growing up?

Martens: Marcus Ehning, he's a fabulous rider. He has a lot of feeling. Christian Ahlmann, there are so many good riders. They all have a different style. I like the riders who all have a bit of feeling.

Jacobsen: What do you mean by that? For someone who has less experience in the industry, it is a strange phrasing.

Martens: Someone who can ride the horse and be one with them. Someone who is not fighting all the way through, who makes it look easy, loves to ride, and you can see the horse loves to ride, like Eric Lamaze and Hickstead. That was such a pleasure to look at.

Jacobsen: Why was the Netherlands, other than the horses, so on top for so long?

Martens: Here, we have all the facilities, all of the bigger shows quite close. I think Holland is a country with a lot of knowledge from a horse. I think for a very long time that they bred the good horses. Now, you can see the results. Belgium is getting very, very close if they are not already stronger than Holland at the moment. I think Germany is very close. I think there are so many horses here and so many shows. Here, the bigger riders can go to 2*, 3*, 4* shows every week-end.

Jacobsen: What does your typical work week look like?

Martens: We start with doing the boxes [Ed. "stalls" to North Americans], and the hay. Then we put the horses in the walker. We do everything ourselves. So, that gives us a better overview over the horses. We know when something is going on with one of the horses. So, we put them in the walker, put them in the field, then we ride. That's, basically, what we do for the whole week or one show until Wednesday. My father works in the stables. When we are in the international shows, he takes care of the horses at home. From Wednesday on, we leave to the bigger shows. Otherwise, we do the shows with the younger horses.

Jacobsen: I'm told that within Canadian show jumping that pretty much everyone knows everyone or knows of everyone because it is such a small sport community. Is this more or less true?

Martens: Yes. Because we travel so much to different shows. We see each other so often.

Jacobsen: That's also something I noticed. I was talking to a friend of mine who is a show jumper and then someone else who I sent a question set to; they were both in Thermal, in fact. [Laughing] I am getting this indication over and over again that this is true.

Martens: Social media, also, helps.

Jacobsen: Yes, most of you are on Facebook or Instagram. The travel and those couple of access points of social media that you're all, more or less, on. Do you think it is the visual aspect of it, e.g., the mechanics of watching a horse and rider go over a jump?

Martens: Yes.

Jacobsen: One last question for today, how do you think the sport is going to be evolving over the next several years into the future?

Martens: I think it is only going to get more difficult for the normal people because it looks – as with the Longines *Global Champions Tour* – like you cannot rely on one horse. You cannot do all the shows because you cannot rely on the one horse. And to do the competitions, you need to

pay a lot of money to get in. I am bit scared that it will go in the direction of becoming a sport for the wealthy people, even more than it is already.

Jacobsen: Kimberley, thank you very much for your time today.

Martens: You're welcome.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 30: Sean Jobin on Personal Story, Work, and Views in Show Jumping

Sean Jobin is a 29-year-old Grand Prix show jumping rider representing Canada on the FEI International circuit. After working his way up through the regional and national tours, he's quickly made a name for himself at the international level with six podium finishes and two wins in the last year. He credits much of his recent success to the use of innovative training techniques and advanced analytics, developed in partnership with Dr. Worden. For the 2022 season, he was signed to the Major League Show Jumping Tour as a member of the Northern Lights team, where he will compete at the FEI5 level, and hopes to win a World Championship title for Canada. He has placed 5th in the 2019 Canadian Championships and received the Baker Award, 2nd in the 2021 \$137,000 FEI3* Tryon International Grand Prix (First FEI 3* Grand Prix Podium), and 1st in the 2022 FEI4* Open Welcome at the Live Oak International.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: As with most professional equestrians, there was a moment or a series of experiences leading into the choice to make this a career. What was that moment or series of experiences for you?

Sean Jobin: Ever since I can remember, I've always wanted to be a Grand Prix rider. I loved old horse movies and stories, and my mom used to be a groom and eventer, so she introduced show jumping to me. Horses have this natural quality unlike any animal, where despite their strength and difference, they can connect with humans on a very real level. Basically, all through human history, horses have been helping humans.

Jacobsen: Who were the pivotal influences and inspirations for you, growing up?

Jobin: I grew up during a pretty special time in North American showjumping, being able to watch Eric Lamaze win the individual gold medal and the Canadian team win silver at Beijing was a really big deal. Watching Eric and Hickstead compete on the international stage and consistently be the best was a huge inspiration to me to keep going.

Jacobsen: What were some of the key opportunities and breaks for your career in show jumping?

Jobin: I was lucky in my junior years to work for stables like Mike Grinyer and Hugh Graham where I could get experience riding a lot of young horses. I never really did any major youth championships, but the opportunities afforded by stables like these willing to give me a chance to ride several high-quality horses was huge.



Jacobsen: Some professional equestrians will take a break to pursue postsecondary education. How did the postsecondary education help you?

Jobin: I completed my Bachelors at University of Guelph online, so I had a bit of a unique experience. I think it really helped me expand how I approached the sport, and it was where I first became interested in pursuing different professionals' point of view. On the other hand, I don't think I could have done it any way other than online. I needed to pursue opportunities outside of Canada to further my career, and there were no similar opportunities available in Ontario.

Jacobsen: In terms of winnings and performance, what have been the most meaningful successes in the career for you?

Jobin: We've had a couple great wins at the national and international level this year, but for sure my highlight so far is getting my first podium finish in the 5* Major League Grand Prix this

past month in California. It was only my fifth appearance in a 5* Grand Prix, and given it's the highest level of showjumping sport in the world it's the one that sticks out most.

Jacobsen: What technologies have you incorporated into traditional training regimens?

Jobin: We've used a lot of fancy stuff going from wearable technology that track biomechanics and biometrics along with more advanced video analysis. Combined with less complex methods like data tracking and training notes, it's really helped give us a chance to view our horses in a more nuanced way. Sport is inherently emotional, but you can't let your emotions drive your training or decisions when it comes to horses, you have to accept them for who they are, and this approach helps us do that.

Jacobsen: How have these complicated the training regimens while making them more modern and robust?

Jobin: Not much to be honest. There's the usual growing pains of adjusting competition warm up and cool down procedures along with the odd technical issues, but I enjoy it.

Jacobsen: What are the key lessons from warm-up to riding to cooldown for jockeys/riders to take into account for show jumping?

Jobin: I'd say mental preparedness effects a horse to a really high degree, a lot of warm up can turn into over training for a horse if the rider is too hyped up before a big class and essentially trying too hard in the warmup. It's best to save the jump for the ring and try to maintain the horses focus rather than winning in the warmup ring.

Jacobsen: What seem like the sources – the combination of attributes - of the high-level international performance for you?

Jobin: To me, cleverness and enjoyment are absolutely key in top showjumpers. There's no way around it, if a horse doesn't love jumping, they won't jump. The best horses also figure out ways to win even when in tough positions.

Jacobsen: How do you run Double Clear LLC, front to back?

Jobin: I'm in a great position right now where I can focus on my career competing at the higher levels, but I still train a select few clients and deal horses. I'm lucky to have a great team behind me that helps carry a lot of the load. My girlfriend Emily Rickert has taken over hunter and equitation training for me as well as riding my top horses when I'm away. My assistant trainer Heather Jarvis has really stepped up as a great high-level trainer, and we've had our grooms step up and perform at the 5* FEI level to be amazing support this year.

Jacobsen: For newer riders, what are the most important work ethic, and moral, lessons to get across to them about show jumping and maintaining high standards?

Jobin: I think working hard is a given in any high-level sport or industry, but it's probably not enough by itself. At the top level, pretty much everyone works hard, and you can't coast on the talent that hard work cultivates. An athlete needs to constantly re-invent themselves, because the sport is always changing as everybody looks to gain competitive advantages. When I look at the very best athletes in and outside our sport, they are always pushing every year to see their sport from different perspectives, trying different approaches and dropping standards that aren't working.



Jacobsen: What is the most controversial topic in the show jumping community at the moment – taboo topic? What could broach this topic amongst/between members of this community?

Jobin: There's probably a few too many to count, but I'll weigh in. There's the obvious issues at the top level about whether the new Olympic format is good or bad for the future of our sport. On one hand, it is incredibly difficult as a rider losing a drop score on the team and it can put you in very difficult positions, but I also understand that the previous format was confusing to new viewership. I also think the future of the sport needs to be taken into consideration. As experience with horses becomes less and less common, people start to lose understanding of horses and why they like showjumping. In turn showjumping becomes viewed as an elitist hobby that's prohibitively expensive, especially at the top level. I think this sentiment is true, but not cause for giving up, it's cause to look for different ways of succeeding than old paths.

In my opinion, you have to go really far to find someone who doesn't like horses, they are that special. And as much as I love history and tradition, there is a way to synthesize these customs while expanding the appeal of the sport and making sure the happiness and welfare of our horses takes precedence.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Sean.

Jobin: Absolutely, thank you.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 31: Leann (Pitman) Manuel on Equestrianism and Horsemanship (4)

Leann (Pitman) Manuel's bio states: "Leann was as good as born on a horse, and has been fortunate to work with them daily since her very early twenties. From Pony Club and 4H as a child, through national level competition and several World's Show qualifications with her Quarter Horse as a teen, to some Dressage tests, a few Cowboy Challenge clinics, and the daily operations at Riding 4 Life today, Leann's horsemanship practice continues to seek out anything and everything she may be able to learn or experience with horses. Leann is passionate about helping others realize the value of having horses in their lives – no matter the breed or creed – and she hopes to continue to grow and nurture the horsemanship community in her region well into the future." Manuel talks about putting in 60 hours a week. She trains both children and adults, focusing on equine-assisted learning for those with autism. Her program includes beginner lessons and "Lifers," where students bond with a horse. Manuel emphasizes the importance of proper horse care, including diet, and the role of horses in therapeutic settings. She discusses the challenges of funding and the elitism within the equine industry, particularly in competitive sports. With limited resources, Manuel aims to grow her program, provide boarding, and focus on horses suited for therapeutic work.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How many hours are you putting in a week?

Leann (Pitman) Manuel: Right now, my husband and I, combined, to keep this afloat. We, probably, put in 60 hours per week combined.

Jacobsen: How many are each part-time employee putting into it?

Manuel: None right now. Come March, 10 hours per week because they are all in school. I am picking up a half-time staffer, adult staffer, who is going to have a job created entitled Program Coordinator or something. An adult with experience teaching beginner lessons. Part of her work will include helping with the lesson planning, we do some group stuff, too, called "Barn Kids". They are taught about colic and de-worming and all of the other stuff needed to own a horse some day. Because that is where some of my clients are headed. Some come to ride and that's all they'll ever come for. Some come for a season; some are lifers. I have a program called Lifers. They have access to us. They have a horse that they ride and do a report on. They have gelled as a group.

Jacobsen: What is the next closest facility to you? How far is it, approximately?

Manuel: The next closest that boards, teaches, and stuff like that.

Jacobsen: Yes.

Manuel: 15 or 20 minutes away.

Jacobsen: That's a decent amount away.

Manuel: There are several like that in Summerland. There is one active in OK (Okanagan) Falls.

Jacobsen: Are there more women or men in the staff?

Manuel: I have a higher average of male participants because autism diagnosis tends to be skewed towards the male population rather than the female population. Although, that's shifted. We have more young women and girls diagnosed. Access to proper diagnosis is getting better.

They are realizing. There are far more females who have it. Because of the way women are socialized, it gets missed.

Jacobsen: If you have infinite funds, what would you do with Riding 4 Life?

Manuel: Ha!

Jacobsen: It is always the barrier.

Manuel: There have been a few pieces of property that have opened up for sale. A 10-minute drive out of city centre Penticton. Super close, as close as we are in terms of driving time, I would like one of those properties. We'd probably double out program capacity. I would probably set up some boarding. The other problem is people who want to buy a horse. I have a dozen in my program who want to own a horse, someday. I don't even know if I helped them find a horse; if I helped them buy one, I don't know one that would be a half-hour away. I would want to get an entry level boarding for the public. Maybe, for vetted members of the public who fit the flavour of what we're doing at our facility, we are mainly a non-competitive facility too. It is to protect the client base who I have, and their needs and wants. I am, personally, not going to coach somebody at a horse show right now. I will refer them to a colleague, instead. I would love to include some farm animals. Maybe, include another service provider that is similar, there are, certainly, a few more colleagues who are propertyless. They are trying to do their thing. But when you don't have the ability to give input or shape the facility that you're working on, it is really hard to do your thing and really offer what it is that you have to offer. I can think of a couple.

I would love to invite them onto the property and say, "You set up your program how you do it on the program." I'd have covered arenas and some farm to table stuff. Some farmed beef. Quarter horses are incredibly prolific. They are common. They are more affordable. Their mental health is supported by having a job or chasing some cattle around, sort of like a border collie.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] Some facilities will focus on warmblood. Others will focus on thoroughbred. What are the logistical reasons for the split?

Manuel: So, at the higher end of that economy, if you are a business owner, you are specializing. Maybe, most of your contacts are in that industry with those breeders. Or if it is certain disciplines, they have preferences for certain looks, breeds, or styles, of horses. If your skill set is in the dressage arena, you are going to be more keen to have the breeds of horses that are best suited or the trendiest. Personally, a horse is a horse. I can do horsemanship with any horse. I have a teen. We got her on a horse. My lesson horse is a bit spicier. So, she can learn how to work with her. I have an older bony Arabian who packs around some kids. We call him "The Grumpy Old Man".

Jacobsen: I saw that one.

Manuel: It is attached to certain kids. He would do well with just one person. It is something Arabians are known for; they are very loyal to their people. I have some thoroughbred and thoroughbred crosses. They tend to be more sensitive. They work well with our equine assisted learning program because the immediate response of the horse helps people learn the subtleties and get a handle on themselves. Thoroughbreds are a little bit more quick to respond. It is a good model for PTSD work because they're wired. When that adrenaline hits, they just run. As soon as a horse's fight or flight hits in the thoroughbreds, it requires more precise and quick acumen. Whatever breed of horse, you pick. It needs to do the thing you want to do. I never got to pick

the breeds of horses. Most of the breeds in my possession were rescues or were given, or were next to nothing. Nobody wanted them. So, I did what I could with those horses. It does seem to me: People either fall in love with the discipline and end up with the breeds best suited to the discipline, or if they are a stud owner, they end up with the breeds of horses that breed well with that stallion because there's some mixed breed stuff going on.

If you have a Lusitano stallion, some quarter horses will want to be bred with them. Then you have an Azteca. Some of it is market driven breeding-wise. Some of it is, unfortunately, ignorance. It is like racism. The idea is that this is the superior breed. Actually, if you take that horse and put it in this environment, then it will die fast. Because that is not where it was selectively bred for years. I mean thousands of years. For me, the true horseman of this horse world. I think there are very few who are consummate master horse men and women. They can tell you the values, the strengths, and the weaknesses, of each breed. They will say something similar. "What do you want to do? What's your dream? You want to chase cows. You want a quarter horse. You grew up in Portugal. Then you want a Lusitano or something." Culture and tradition go into it too. It is another piece of it.

Jacobsen: So, it is less about better or worse horse. It is more about suitability.

Manuel: For me, at least.

Jacobsen: What is the purpose? What is the suitability to this purpose?

Manuel: Totally.

Jacobsen: Some of the websites for the facilities list the horses as staff.

Manuel: Yes.

Jacobsen: What is the fun fact behind that?

Manuel: They are working.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] Fair enough.

Manuel: I feed them. They work. So, I am 'paying' them. I calculate my costs. The operating costs of the business. I am trying to calculate my time. It tends to be the first thing to fall off when I want to pay my instructors. There is a piece for the horse. So, it is a way of tracking whether a horse is earning its keep or not. The other thing some of us are guilty of: Accumulating horses and to what end. Do they have a purpose? Do they have a job? Why do you have so many horses? A very near to us, a gal who trains and teaches and flips horses. She has a habit of accumulating more horses than she can't get ridden and trained, and then sold back out into good lives. So, she accumulates a lot of freeloaders. It is a real threat to her business because she has to feed them. They are taking up space. She cannot put up a boarder to occupy that space. There's the, maybe not, making decisions that are business-based enough. The other fascinating fact of this industry is the rescues. So, really big hearts doing good work, if I am really pressed and someone says, "Would you slaughter a horse?" I would say, "I guess, yes." I cannot definitively agree with horse slaughter. It is a distinct problem. Something in the Okanagan that doesn't exist on the coast. We have feral horses. It is grassland. It is cattle country all the way up North into Kamloops. There are grazing lands and cattle guards.

Jacobsen: If a horse gets loose, it becomes feral, potentially. Because these things run 50 km/h, easily.

Manuel: They do. Apex Mountain, which is one side of the valley here, to the West as I sit here now, a few years ago, there was an aerial view of the area. There were about 500 head count of feral horses. They are not 'wild' horses. Good luck genetically proving that any of these horses were indigenous here. You go further into the Chilcotin. There is some genetic evidence of there having been some actual wild herds. But not so much in the Okanagan, it is a couple of hundred years of cattle industry and horses used for transportation. They end up turned out, get loose, and become feral. In the last 50 or so years, horse owners on Indian land or Penticton Indian Band or a few other places have turned their horses loose because they live like that. Suddenly, there is a feral horse population.

Jacobsen: Are these feral horses ever accepted into indigenous herds? Is this ever a thing?

Manuel: This is the thing. What constitutes an indigenous herd? There are some things on the Okanagan news lately. *The Penticton Herald*, etc., because a lot more snow has brought some of them down looking for feed and water. They have been right along the highway. It is a hazard for them and for traffic. Penticton Indian Band has mentioned this is a nuisance issue for them. They are equally as frustrated. Inevitably, there will be folks who want to rescue horses. "Oh my gosh, they are starving." Yes, living in the wild is harsh, our horses live better and longer because we meet their needs. Like anybody who was weak or not fat enough going into Winter, they'll look bad. We file their teeth. In the wild, the weak do not survive. If we want to help the larger community of horses, we have to make some decisions. There are some groups who work with the bands, OKIB (Okanagan Indian Band), the Vernon Jurisdiction, the Oliver-Osoyoos Jurisdiction, they are pulling some of the horses out of the herd. They are making decisions of who should go where.

A lot of the young horses, yearling, etc., just old enough to come off mom, are being run through rescues being born free. They will go, get started, and will get auctioned. The funds from auctions will go to feed the herd that they are currently training and trying to bring the horses into our human economy that can survive; that will find homes, be cared for, and be safe if handled by experienced people. Sometimes, they are pulling horses off these herds that have either been feral too long, are not trainable, have health issues, and whatnot. They are going for slaughter. Those funds buy hay, etc. This whole rescue world in the horse industry has become more and more of a thing. In fact, once in a while, Horse Council BC sends out a survey to its membership asking, "What part of the industry are you in: competitive rider, recreational rider, or rescue?" Rescue is a category. I'm like, "Oh my." [Laughing] There are enough folks involved in this now that it is a whole category of the horse industry. Yikes, yikes, I have a lot of thoughts about that.

Jacobsen: What are the parts of the equestrian industry in Canada that are highly politicized?

Manuel: Highly politicized, racing, it is where you find the most money, probably going to find the most politics.

Jacobsen: What kind of money are we talking here, as we are talking about an expensive industry in general?

Manuel: I would say the money that is, actually, measured from a business sense. If CRA, you pull numbers down from CRA in the horse industry. Horse racing is viewed as the most economically active sector and high-end competition, so Olympians. Those levels are highly politicized. When I showed up, a rusty trailer showed up with nowhere knowing how we got there.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Manuel: It is true. We'd pull up from Vancouver Island. If you took the ferry after 11 p.m., it was half the cost. We wouldn't arrive until 2 p.m. because we couldn't afford it. We pulled up in this rig worth more than my parents' house and property at the time. I'm sure. \$120,000 of rig in 1991. You're like, "Oh my God." [Laughing] I pulled up in this rinky dink rusted trailer looking like it is from a bad spaghetti Western in 1967. My horse comes out of that. I go compete the next day and beat some of these people. It is highly politicized, for sure. Because there'd be days when the judges alone; sometimes, things are double and triple judged. I go in a ring. I do the same obstacle course. One judge placed me first. Another judge places me second. A third judge doesn't place me at all. Meanwhile, every other placing, all of the other professionals are there in about the same way with a few switching places here and there. You cannot tell me that is not political. I was the only non-pro rider in the class. One judge just feels one non-pro doesn't belong there and will ignore me, very political.

Jacobsen: Is this politicization connected to a social elitism?

Manuel: Social elitism, I would say so. The judge might argue, "Why are you in a class with people who make their living? This is part of how they make their living. You need to go back into your division." They would say it is, probably, not elitism.

Jacobsen: How do they define it?

Manuel: They define it as respect for industry. I call it misogyny. I call it colonialism. The fact I was female and the rest were male professionals is a thing. It's pretty fascinating.

Jacobsen: How long has the equine industry, in its modern context or form, been present in Canada? So, the professionalization of equestrianism, broadly speaking, in Canadian society. Because, in years prior, a horse was a sign of being poor.

Manuel: It depended. It depended on what you did with them. If you did thoroughbred horse racing, that was a thing. If you did polo, it, absolutely, depended on what you did with them. Having mostly grown up with quarter horses, once in a while, I could borrow the fancy dressage saddle and could fake it at the dressage test, the local dressage test. I would beat all of them too. They'd be like, "You can't do that on your quarter horse." "You might want to check with your judge about that." There are cultural artifacts still floating through these disciplines as well. Dressage, jumping definitely carries some elitism in it. Horse racing, as far as breeders involved in it and the trainers that they hire, a lot of money goes into buying, training, selling, these horses. There is a lot of old money there. A lot of them look down their nose at those of us who ride in our Western equipment.

Jacobsen: There is a similar thing with shanty Irish and lace curtain Irish. Shanty Irish as the poor; lace curtain Irish as the poor.

Manuel: I came from the more blue-collar side of the horse industry. I competed a bit with the white collars. "Who are you?"

Jacobsen: What is a tell, to an individual in the white collar versus the blue collar? Is it not having the right brand?

Manuel: I have trouble – literally – understanding from the outside looking up [Laughing] or in. My guess is that it challenges a lot of things that they think are true. Then there I am, I am not following the rules. How can that happen? It creates a cognitive dissonance that they're uncomfortable with and don't know what to do with. It comes to the idea of what you need to do and to

accomplish to get where they are. “How can she at the ripe old age of 17 and 18 be able to ride like me?” Good question, I haven’t been able to figure that one out, except that it is what I did with every spare moment of my time from 11-years-old onwards. I rode anything I could get my hands on. I, probably, shouldn’t have. I fell off hundreds of times in my earlier years. That teaches you a lot about what not to do again. [Laughing] Then you try something else. “Don’t try that either, it didn’t work.” For a lot of them, it really challenged what they thought was real and true about their lives, and who they were.

Jacobsen: What needs to be challenged in the industry? What needs to be discussed in the industry explicitly?

Manuel: There are a few categories. One of the categories is that we almost need to be recognized: Horses’ impact on society needs to be honoured. The last 100 years, the internal combustion engine, horses went from everyday life for *so many people*, especially in North America because it is so big. If horses were not part of your life somehow, I don’t know how you survived outside of urban areas. 100 years ago, they were rare and extremely small as a portion of the population. It is almost like a mass extinction of some basic equine involvement or horsemanship practice. Then it has died off in a couple of generations. That’s pretty quick. Again, the writing curriculum, the good horsemen are in their 60s, 70s, and 80s, and they are talking about their mentors who were 20, 30 years their senior. We’ve lost that. So, that recognition by our governments and culture as a whole. We are really missing something.

I think that that longing, missing, or recognition, might be missing, or people may be unable to put their finger on it. But so many people when they ask me, “What do you do?” I tell them about Riding 4 Life and what I do. “Horses are so healing. There is something about them.” I’m like, “Yes, it is cellular. A generation or two ago, they were a part of everyday life. If you have read anything about epigenetics, it wouldn’t seem that weird anymore as to why you have that longing.” It is – literally – in the psyche of our human species and development for 1,000s of years. Our historians are still and researchers are still pinning down the debate as to when were horse domesticated. The more resources put into figuring it out. The further back that number goes. I think last I was listening and looking at it. Those estimates were at 8,000 and 10,000 years ago. It keeps reaching further and further back the more we look into it. To go back to Malcolm Gladwell needs to reach a tipping point, before we reach a value of horsemanship, not just agriculture, it is one piece. I think it is part of this equine therapeutic movement in mental health now.

Jacobsen: When did the therapeutic assisted development begin?

Manuel: There are a lot of different answers to that. In the 70s, there were some definitive evidence with a human on a horse stimulates the brain. It was some first evidence base in our Western world medical view of it. I think a lot of notable people have been commenting on that for decades before that. One of the famous quotes from Winston Churchill. ‘There is nothing so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse.’ It has been misquoted. I think we’ve known that. A lot of Indigenous populations have acknowledged the horse as healing in their mythology forever. Certainly, I am aware of some nations in the U.S., for example, who view the Dun horse as a healing horse. It happens that the colour, genetically speaking, is a “primitive colour” because those colours can be brought back to horses in Kazakhstan and Mongolia. The hippo-therapy one, the research about the human motor cortex stimulated when being on the

horse and the human pelvis aligning with the horse pelvis is the one most familiar to me. Because it is the one that gets access to me for funding for autism services. I am most familiar with that one.

But I am sure there are several. Therapeutic riding associations became more of a thing in the 70s and 80s. Some of them date back further to the 50s. It is not, exactly, new. But I don't think it started to happen on this scale until the last 10 or 20 years, at the most.

Jacobsen: Is this most a move towards an evidence-based foundation in some small parts of equestrianism?

Manuel: I'm sure. There are blips that are evidence-based. I'm so happy they happened. Then you will get these other practitioners starting their own thing. I think, "It sounds fluffy." Then I am frustrated again. It is a slow march forward and, hopefully, improves as we go. That's one. That recognition of the history of horsemanship and our human history. Honestly, I don't think that we would be the humans we are today without the horse. I don't think we would have made it. Land bridges and mass migrations of populations; I don't think it would have happened without the horse and other livestock like cattle and sheep, as part of people's survival. But the horse is what allowed us to move that far.

Jacobsen: What part of the industry seems to lack evidence? Those that can be considered, not a standard practice but, a practice and don't have the wherewithal to substantiate themselves. They're based on error.

Manuel: Based on error, again, there are quite a few of them. The first one is this Natural Horsemanship movement. To me, it is expert marketing. [Laughing]

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Manuel: It is fantastic marketing. In fact, it is most commonly attributed to Pat Parelli. He is not the first person to put it in a book. Several other notable master horsemen have used that term. Some of them were making the point that to say horsemanship is natural. It is false. We have to, as horseman, become familiar with and experts at horse's state to become experts at something unnatural. Evolution didn't necessarily lead us here, again, 10,000 years. Human history is a speck on the beach. It is really, really quite small. Then there's the argument of this natural and better way as opposed to the old way. Some of our proponents of this type of horsemanship are guilty of that. The old way just a pocket of it in a certain region of the world, which seemed like the whole world to them – speaking of North American culture, because this is on U.S. soil. The gentler ways, the softer ways... I would argue truly successful horsemanship has been non-violent the whole way. There are varying degrees of success that have shown up. You can get some success using methods that are, even by my standards, quite violent. I am not opposed to standing my ground as a horse, but I define violence a bit differently too. Natural Horsemanship, where did that come from? It is like Santa being in a red suit. It is like, "Do you realize who started that?"

Jacobsen: You mentioned that there were a few. Any others that come to the top?

Manuel: It depends on who you ask. The difference between the disciplines, dressage, often, like to see themselves as distinctly different. "We do it this way because this is the pure way or the way that matches with the horse." So, one of the comments that I hear from the average horse owner: Western riders were always gunning to ride on one rein with a loose hand to have a hand free. I do demonstrations where the bridle comes off the horse. I do not need a bridle on its head.

It's all my energy and body movement and everything else a horse can pick up from me to direct the horse. I have two hands free. But the one hand free comes from ranch work. I need to get a calf, need to open a gate. It's a horse that works. If I cross train a bit, and if I go to a clinic with a dressage trainer, good horsemanship is good horsemanship. Core skills are core skills. These are my people.

Then there are the other people who are like, "You sit crooked and your posture is wrong, because you ride with one hand all the time." I ride with two hands most of the time. But if I am on a finished horse at a competition, then I will ride with one hand. Those things. Then they try to tell me the dressage way is the better way; and I will get much better results if I do it that way. The Sun will shine, and the clouds will part. I have been at this a long time. I listen, listen, and listen, to the bits that I can take away that do improve the horsemanship. There are days when I need to vent about it. It is annoying and unfortunate. We cannot come together on the common ground pieces. Part of me wants to remind them where dressage came from, originally. It is a hangover from the calvary. I hate to break it to them all. Calvary riders in war rode with one hand because they had a weapon in one hand. You might want to do the research into the history of your own discipline before you go speaking about it that way. Not many people know that. For me, it outs them.

Jacobsen: You see them as fluffy.

Manuel: Yes, fluffy.

Jacobsen: It is someone in a business meeting coming in inappropriate attire. They look lightweight. They are not necessarily bad, but lightweight and seemingly ignorant in this domain.

Manuel: Sometimes, that term "fluffy". I run into it in those businesses that are therapeutic. If you want to have a therapeutic practice with horses, even more so, your horseman chops have to be there. Whenever you put inexperienced humans there with any horse, you are responsible for that relationship. If you don't have the chops to understand all the dynamics there, you are putting people in harms way. "But doesn't it just healing?" This is anthropomorphizing of horses.

Jacobsen: Sure, they're putting human qualities on a horse.

Manuel: It can read emotions well, but it can't think about what happened yesterday or what might happen and worry about it. It doesn't have that ability. It is only dealing with you right now in front of you, and all of the emotions that you're experiencing. It is only going to respond and react. If fight-flight, it is react. If calm, it is response. All to right now. Looking for professional development is tough for me because I pay some money and take some time off, and I will listen to these folks, "Oh my God, there were 15 things wrong with those beginners." Cringing, things I would not allow in my yard.

Jacobsen: These weaved issues. The issue of non-standardization is connected to the issue of poor understanding of the management of a trainer with an inexperienced person – let alone with an inexperienced human being with a particular condition that limits their scope of functionality in life.

Manuel: One of my assessment tools for folks. How far have they come in horsemanship? It is how readily they project onto the horse things that have nothing to do with the horse. Do they see the horse or something else? That's how you know they're skills are coming up.

Jacobsen: What can horses teach us?

Manuel: You don't grow and learn with horses without first getting a handle on yourself. Every time my horsemanship progresses, a key piece to that is I've healed, grown, or gained wisdom into me. Because if I don't run me well, I don't engage the world well. It is true for horses. True for so many things. All my relationships, it is true for horses, too. I can talk my out of a lot of things. You can't talk your way out of a horse. They will see you, how you are in the moment because they can't lie.

Jacobsen: If a horse is happy, what are the immediate tells? If a horse is unhappy, what are the immediate tells?

Manuel: I think happiness is more of a human concept.

Jacobsen: Positive affect as opposed to negative affect.

Manuel: The tells on a horse are either stressed or at ease is a better way to describe the spectrum of arousal on a horse because they are a prey animal. At ease, it doesn't matter what breed of horse. They tend to have a slack, level top-line. An alert or on alert horse will raise its head. How they carry their ears, it is part of the top-line through the ears. Relaxed floppy donkey ears are a sign of ease. Any sign of tension is a way along up the arousal continuum. Flat back is quite a ways down or quite a ways along the opposite of ease. "I have to fight or flee." With that comes all kinds of facial expression, as humans have recognizable facial expressions with our emotions, when you spend time with horses, hopefully, you will learn what those mean. I have some horses with some idiosyncrasies.

I know some horses who hold one nostril higher. It tends to coordinate with what back foot they're resting because it goes along the spine. Pain in a horse is difficult for a human to read because of how they hold their face. They are not alert. They are not fully relaxed either. They are a bit distant. They try to dissociate from their pain as well. Rhythm, anything a person doing a rhythm with flies in the shade. When they break the rhythm, something is going wrong. That's why, when we ride, if we have no rhythm, we will irritate the crap out of that horse. Rhythm is a soothing, harmonizing, connecting thing for them. The rhythm of their foot falls, a horse that is long and low. Its stride length gets lower or a slower beat, whatever gait they're at; there's a lot of relaxation there. When their feet strides get shorter and quicker, you see that a lot. This is when they're being ridden in particular. A rider is, in a big way, interfering way causing stress and discomfort. A horse that won't stand and rest at any point. If they need to continually move, pain, worry, loneliness, or if they don't feel safe in their surroundings, or if a horse never lies down and has some health issues or isn't in a herd where they feel safe, I run my horses in groups or pods because we work with beginners.

The herd has to be comfortable with each other. If they accidentally do bumper ponies, I can trust the herd's familiarity and respect, and dynamic of them, that no one gets hurt. If I go on my show horse, and go on a riding ring, and collide with somebody, it can get ugly pretty quick. Beginners who play bumper ponies can get hurt. I get my horses familiar with the whole herd together. Quite often, on a warm sunny day, there are a few standing and one or two sitting two. One or two standing watch while the rest are taking a rest. The boss mare is watching out for the herd. If we see out in the herd that there is a lot of movement, nobody is really standing around. Nobody is at ease. We know something happened on the property. Maybe, the bear in close behind. One morning, you couldn't see what happened. I looked at the property and the rest of the horses. We realized a horse a few packs over was colicky.

Jacobsen: Are there any aspects of equestrianism that we haven't covered, but could cover?

Manuel: The only thing I want to mention, for me, is a distinction between being an equestrian and being a horseman. The reason I think there is a differentiation. I can see people ride and can identify people who are great equestrians, not great horsemen. I can identify folks who are great horsemen, but, in the ranks of the equestrian world – which I view as the competitive world with the judges, are unorthodox. It is possible to be a great equestrian and a great horseman.

Jacobsen: Is it a similar difference between a horseman is more of a cowboy and an equestrian is more of a show jumper?

Manuel: No, I think I know some great horseman. Ian Millar is a fantastic horseman. Mario Deslauriers is also a great horseman, in my opinion. They are consummate professionals and masters at not only the riding and training of a horse – the horse's whole. When they take it home, its living environment and the psychology of the situation. Thinking of my own immediate horse community, there is a rider who can ride fire-breathing off the track thoroughbreds, but who can for a moment make them look wonderful. When she stops, it becomes every bit as dangerous. She is a great equestrian. She can ride anything. Kudos to you, and looking great doing it. She will compete and could go far and would be a rider who could compete at the Olympics and do really, really, really well. But she doesn't have the ability to change that horse in how it experiences life, how it views people. She is not affecting that horse's experience of people well enough to hand that lead rope off.

Sometimes, you meet horses that don't do that for people in a noticeable way. I think master horseman do and can tell you all about it. I think I put myself in the horseman category more than the equestrian category. I excelled at the events where you had to get things done. You have to do an obstacle course. The horse's maneuvers were fantastic. I looked at doing it as 5'2" pudgy teenager in an unorthodox way. But in the course where they score you, I beat them. How do you explain that, gentlemen? I made a career out of taking the fire-breathing dragon horses and change them, so I could hand the lead rope to others and make them more safe. Then advise people. "This is the horse's needs and temperament, and here's what you need to watch for and be a steward for this horse," and who might be appropriate, and who isn't. Sometimes, you meet horses who are so traumatized or neurochemical makeup is too sensitive. I have one here.

They will always be here. I don't know many people who could be successful riding him. He is too sensitive. He is a sweetheart. I can give a lead rope to him for kids. He is a great therapeutic tool, expressive, and responsive. But he is a big boy. If he is nervous when you are on, you are coming off because is just so big. So, equestrian versus horseman, a horseman describes a broader skill set.

Jacobsen: It sounds like equestrian, in your terminology, means the original meaning of a horse rider.

Manuel: Yes.

Jacobsen: As opposed to a horseman as someone who deals with the general arc of a life of a horse plus riding.

Manuel: It is one thing you do with a horse, riding.

Jacobsen: It is, probably, the smallest thing you do with a horse.

Manuel: I know, right? [Laughing]

Jacobsen: I mean, put it this way: How hard is it to find a good stall cleaner? Someone who can muck well.

Manuel: Surprisingly hard. I get so many emails, “I want to help and volunteer.” It is good nobody can see me when I read them, because I am awful, “Oh, hell no.” Because so much energy goes into teaching someone to go into a paddock and being with the horses and mucking.

Jacobsen: Not being afraid of horses is probably a big step in their favour in being decent at cleaning. Cleaning is an extremely hard job. To maintain a standard, to do it fast.

Manuel: One of my assessment tools for clients who want to be more involved is the Lifers program. “How much is it? I want to sign my kid up.”

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Manuel: That kid can’t even put their saddle pad away. The kid who wants to stay, wants to ignore the parent to get them into the car, and who picked up the poo in the yard, as many excuses as they can come up with to stay here. I am all for it. If the parent says, “How much does it cost for them to stay in? They’re in every time.”

Jacobsen: Leann, it has been a very lovely and educational conversation. I appreciate both the opportunity and your time today.

Manuel: Thank you, the questions were great. I don’t often get to talk about this stuff in detail.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 32: Hyde Moffatt on Getting Started and Rankings (1)

***Hyde Moffatt**, according to Starting Gate Communications, can be described as follows: “Andrew Hyde Moffatt had an unusual introduction to horses. When he was five years old, a girl at school brought in her horse for show-and-tell and Hyde was hooked! His top horse is Ting Tin, a son of the well-known sire Chin Chin, purchased in Belgium as a six-year-old. Hyde describes Ting Tin as a brave, intelligent and energetic horse who loves to play with people, but gets bored easily. Starting their Grand Prix career together in 2004, Hyde and Ting Tin have steadily improved with each outing, enjoying top ten finishes at several of the biggest horse shows in Canada including the Capital Classic Show Jumping Tournament, the Collingwood Horse Show, Tournament of Champions, and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. When he is not showing in the Grand Prix ring, Hyde competes with several horses in the Young Horse Development Series including Baron, who was crowned the 2006 Ontario Six-Year-Old Champion. In addition to his equestrian pursuits, Hyde also enjoys running. Although he is currently a middle distance runner at 10 to 15 km, he would like to work towards doing his first marathon.” Moffatt focuses on his early interest in horses and the challenges of developing his equestrian career. Moffatt discusses his introduction to horses at age 5 and his passion for individual sports. He highlights the importance of exposure to various disciplines within equestrianism and emphasizes the value of skill-building in sports like equitation and hunters. Moffatt shares his experiences with hard work, overcoming injuries, and finding his niche in the industry. He also critiques the rankings in show jumping, noting their flaws and the challenges of comparing events.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: This is session 2 with Hyde Moffatt. As a preliminary note to this particular session, as with the Mac Cone first sessions, this first session with Hyde Moffatt, basically, went through the old system, the older computer. The audio file as corrupted, unfortunately. I have a new 2021 iMac. It is much better and things will be much more functional. So, Hyde, I apologize more formally. Let’s begin again, starting more from the perspective of a boy and an adolescent getting interested in horses, what were some of the dynamics involved in developing that interest?

Hyde Moffatt: I was lucky in the situation in which I grew up. It was a little bit of a small town. My introduction to horses was when a girl brought a horse to show and tell in kindergarten at 5-years-old. That peaked my interest. As far as getting into it, it was a little bit random. I do not have a family behind me. I do not have a family that has a lengthy tenure in the horse industry or anything like that. I was the first one of my family to be involved. Really, that was more of a fluke. As I grew up, I guess, some of the dynamics and stuff. Your friends all play hockey and baseball. I was very much more of a person geared towards individual sports, the way I operated. I didn’t feel a lot of pressure.

Certainly, my friends saw this as a girls sport. Lots of stuff people would say back then. It didn’t bother me. In this whole sport world, all you had to do was go out in the barn a few times to know that. It didn’t bother me at all. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the responsibilities that came with horses and all of the accompanying stuff. For me, it was easy to figure out this was a sport that I really enjoyed.

Jacobsen: What about different disciplines within equestrianism at large? Things like horse racing or dressage. Were these in play in consideration or just show jumping?

Moffatt: I've done a bit of everything over the years. My basics included a bit of pony club. My area was not super dense in high-level horse activity, equestrian activity. Pony club provided me with the opportunity to learn things and access information. There is a lot of 3-day eventing. A lot of the horsemanship and all those things. There is a little bit of exposure to dressage, cross country, fitness and conditioning. Some of those people went on to become more involved in endurance riding and things. Certainly, the exposure to different disciplines was there for me. When I was 14 years old, I started to break horses. We would break and start 105 race horses a year, quite a large number, for the operation I was riding for in Lancaster. Eventually, I have done more things. My pony club was also associated with the Hamilton Hunt Club. I have field hunting too. I think the wide-ranging exposure is, probably, something that we, maybe, lack a little bit of, in the development of many riders now. We seem to be one sport focused very early. I think those same discussions are happening in hockey and football as well. Where, people are specializing in a sport at too early of an age. I think it is beneficial to play between the disciplines at a younger age.

I think there is something to be learned from all of them. It is also important to have an interest outside of horses. Those that can educate themselves in another sport also tend to excel later on. Some of that stuff that you learn in how to use your body, even how to think quickly while multi-tasking. Some of those can be learned in other sports as well and be applied to horses.

Jacobsen: What were some of the bumps along the road for you? I don't want to make the mistake in doing these interviews that those who do the sport nationally and internationally had an easy time all the time. Most of the time, people have to work a lot of hours and work hard, and overcome certain obstacles, even just injuries or things of this nature.

Moffatt: There's been a number of bumps. I wouldn't say any of it has been easy. My path, I was willing to do the jobs others were unwilling to do: Muck stalls, did all those things when I was very young. My interest in doing those things, probably, provided me an opportunity to ride some horses. When I took those opportunities, they weren't always the most broke or the nicest horse, but my job was just to ride them and see if I could make them a little bit better, regardless of whether it would be a phenomenal athlete or if it didn't have much of a future as a sport horse. By doing that, it gave me more opportunities. The thing was, everything built organically in my career. It was all through work. I was willing to work the horse that stopped or wasn't always behaving itself or the horse that was green.

In doing so, maybe, in the process, you had an opportunity to ride a better one that rose up. It was always one foot in front of the other in terms of show up and do the work. As far as injuries go, I've had my fair share. You don't survive this sport forever without getting hurt. Sometimes, they fall over. Sometimes, you fall off. I've broken legs, had surgeries, had ribs broken, and wrist issues, over the years. Fortunately, I've been lucky. Everything has healed up and nothing was a catastrophic injury. I, certainly, broke a leg badly, at one point, and had an 8" plate and 12 screws, and, probably, 18 months of recovery, of which 11 weeks were off a horse. It, probably, should have been more than that. There are, certainly, challenges. Then there are the challenges of finding your niche within the industry. As I said, I made my niche a little bit because I was willing to ride things other people weren't willing to ride. When I was riding, I was able to make a difference, or, at least, people thought I did.

Because they would offer me more horses to ride. That's how I got there. There was a prevailing fear, as well, speaking of speed bumps. That if you said, "No", to a horse, then they'd go ask someone else. I rarely said, "No".

Jacobsen: [Laughing] Hospitality mentality.

Moffatt: Absolutely.

Jacobsen: What areas do you think Canadian show jumping is focusing on very, very early? I'm told things like equitation and hunter are a big thing. Is this the trend that we're seeing over time?

Moffatt: Yes. If we are building riders for show jumping anyway, which is the one I can speak to the most, I think in the stages of development. I think there's a focus on the hunters and the equitation. In that, you're skill-building. There are good places to skill build, where things happen in reasonably controlled manners. Where, there is incentive to focus on how things are done, not just getting them done. So, it is definitely the focus of the youth, for sure. Hunters is such a good introduction, where people learn rhythm, balance, and straightness. All the important factors of getting horses to jump well, and the equitation focuses so much on that. Also, on rider technique, function follows form in this sport. If you can make the right things happen, then you stand a much better chance of having a good conversation with your horse.

Jacobsen: I'm told pretty much 3, 4, 5, decades ago. If you were to look at a rider from Germany, France, America, from Canada, you could tell the style of riding without necessarily understanding the nationality of the individual. However, after George Morris, there has been an internationalization of the methodology in the training and the ride. So, this homogenizing fact reduces the differentiating factors of high-performance on that factor. What does Canada do a little bit different if at all in terms of that methodology that's been taken over through copying of George Morris, if any?

Moffatt: I don't know if we do anything necessarily different. The sport contains more international travel, and with horses, became easier. We have more riders and different styles, and horses, became frequent. The search to become better at sport; we ended up adopting from each of those styles that which seemed more effective or competitive. We didn't morph more towards or the Germans, and the Germans didn't morph more towards us. It was a melding of all those things in the middle. I don't know if we necessarily did anything different. The one thing that we, maybe, have a little bit of a different – not necessarily advantage – is that with Canada being such a large country with a small population; no different from building infrastructure, everything is difficult in this country. It is always far, always hard, whether putting in telephone lines or trying to show across the country. It presents challenges that are present in some other countries. It eliminates some of those struggles. I think that, maybe, that helps to build the Canadian character a little bit. We have to really want it to get there. When you look at the 2008 games where Eric won, moreso, the team jumped off for gold.

You'd say, "We had a great group of riders and a great group of horses. We did." It's way more than that. Mac Cone's horse was unable to finish. We were down to three riders and no drop score. Jill Henselwood's first round in the team competition didn't go according to plan. She was able to pull magic out and make clean in the second round. Stuff like that. That deep desire to do good, to be able to overcome those difficulties. It comes from somewhere. I'm not sure what it is. Let's put it to geography and the Canadian nature.

Jacobsen: There's another facet of some discussion in different aspects of the equestrian world, which I've been researching in the discipline of show jumping. I have noticed January to July. Our rankings were very, very good. Then there is a slight decline July/August to the present. I'm told this is more of a seasonal thing because, in North America, you have to travel farther. There are fewer per capita competitions to take part in compared to Western Europe.

Moffatt: Most definitely.

Jacobsen: If anyone is looking at the rankings throughout the year, there's going to be a wobble in terms of how good a country is going to be performing depending on where the country is from, because it costs a lot of money to get a horse around and it is better if the place you're competing at frequently is 2 hours down the road.

Moffatt: Yes. I will say this. The ranking system is somewhat flawed. There's no perfect way to rank them. Any given horse and rider can be the best on any particular day. I try to avoid reading too much into the rankings because they can be quite skewed based on numbers of horses shown and the events available in a particular area. They are better, probably, as metadata rather than individually representative of any one particular rider's performance.

Jacobsen: What have been some other criticisms of those rankings?

Moffatt: It is impossible to make it perfect. So, I am hesitant to give major criticisms. Not all events are created equal. We have no way of really separating that. We say, "Okay, there is a 3*, 4*, 5*. That's great. It is, usually, based on money and jump size." There's a certain amount of money and jump size corresponds to that. A 5* is always difficult. Let me start there, a 5* where all of the top 10 in the world show up is, probably, a lot different in terms of how difficult it is to actually win that day, than a 5* when no one in the top 100 shows up. It's all relative. There's no way to quantify that. I'm not trying to quantify that. I'm just saying that it is not necessarily representative. If you win Geneva, like last week, you could be pretty sure this person really did something there because everyone shows up to it. It is one of the grand slam events. I'm not going to pick on shows. If you win a smaller 5*, as in it is less well attended, that's still fantastic and still extremely good for you. It may not carry the same weight as another one would. The rankings can be deceiving. The best rider in the world who only has one horse. You take a guy like Jeroen Dubbeldam. He consistently sits in the 400s and 500s in the world. It is not his priority. Yet, when he comes out, he can win the Olympics and the World Championships. He's got something figured out.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 33: Mac Cone on the Direction of Show Jumping and Its History (3)

Mac Cone, according to Starting Gate Communications, can be described as follows: “Mac Cone is one of Canada’s most experienced riders having been a steady performer at the international level for over 30 years. In 1974, he married Canadian Brenley Carpenter and the couple has two daughters. Originally from Tennessee, Mac moved to Canada in 1979 and is one of only two riders to have competed on both the United States and Canadian Equestrian Teams (the other being 1984 World Cup Champion Mario Deslauriers). With the stallion Elute, Mac enjoyed victory in the \$100,000 Autumn Classic in New York in 1994. Although the pair was selected for the 1995 Pan American Games in Argentina, they were unable to compete due to a last minute injury. Elute made a strong comeback, however, winning the 1996 Olympic Selection Trials at Spruce Meadows. In his Olympic debut in Atlanta, Mac was the highest-placed Canadian rider, a feat he would repeat at the 2002 World Equestrian Games in Jerez, Spain, riding Cocu. At the 2007 Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro, Mac and Melinda were members of the Silver Medal Team. In his second Olympic appearance in 2008, Mac and the impressive Ole were members of Canada’s historic Silver Medal Team. In addition to his own riding, Mac is active as an instructor and clinician. His personal style, which is very low key and easy going, makes him very popular with his students, who have included 1986 World Champion Gail Greenough and 2003 Pan American Games competitor, Mark Samuel. Mac operates Southern Ways Stable in King, Ontario.” Cone discusses various factors influencing the world of show jumping, including the importance of grit, training, and circumstances of birth. Cone emphasizes how a rider’s background and hard work, regardless of their family wealth, can lead to success, citing Jessica Springsteen as an example. They also explore how North American focus on equitation and hunters affects male participation in the sport. Cone critiques the industry’s financial barriers, comparing show jumping to other sports with clearer paths to success. He also notes the growing popularity of show jumping and its challenges in gaining mainstream recognition.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Over time, countries that tend to be well to do tend to become soft. They become comfortable. So, artificially, they value their lives more than other countries. The inverse for countries in war torn circumstances. Life is functionally cheap there. So, that aspect of grit in the newer crop may not necessarily be there as much per rider. Yet, the methodologies are pretty much fixed globally, as you were noting earlier. On the one hand, you have barriers to entry with cost of horses at the highest level, maybe, even at some of the lower level too, as well as with the training methodologies being figured out so far. Also, you have the aspect of things like resilience or grit. If people can’t handle the long work days and the constant criticism, and getting bumped around, or falling off a horse and having to get back up, they may not necessarily last very long. Old videos of Eric Lamaze, he really knew how to ‘put on the gas’. He took those risks in riding. What do you think are the factors outside of grit and training methodology that really set the great riders apart?

Mac Cone: That goes back to when you were born, what circumstance are you born into, and what you do with that circumstance. It is not your fault what family you were born into or circumstance born into; it is what you do with your beginning and where you build from that. Once again, everybody’s road to Rome is different. Now, yes, there are some very entitled people who are getting into the sport now. You wonder if the grit is there enough to really count on them. Even though, the more fortunate kids that have no financial wall to deal with make it. Hopefully,

because of the coaching and their attitude, and that they have grit, they are just as good as a hard knockin' person that came from a different path. I will talk about one person. I mean this in nothing but positive, positive ways before I get going here. But it is such a public person. Everybody knows the story anyway. That is Jessica Springsteen. Everybody knows about Jessica Springsteen's parent. It is Bruce Springsteen and Patti Scialfi. We know that. We know that they're a well-to-do family. But she came up through the ponies, the hunters, and the equitation. I'm telling you. That is one knowledgeable, very good riding individual who has come up through the whole system. That's all put into place. But the last Olympic games, she was on that team.

She was the anchor of that group because that is one tough, great riding young lady. So, there's an example of someone that did have a pretty nice path to Rome. But she took advantage of it, did not abuse her situation at all. She just worked, and worked, and worked. She is tough and talented. She has a silver medal in her bedroom or den. So, Bruce can look at it with her. That's one example of when you have a certain start that is beneficial. But it doesn't mean that that start will make you soft, necessarily. I understand that that is what you were getting at. Can it be that way? Yes. Does it happen a lot? Yes, but not always, not always, the ones that are tough and do make it. They should not be frowned upon because of the family they were born into. I guess, that's where I want to make sure that is where I stand quoted there. Now, there is the other side of the coin with the people because of their start; they may be just as talented, but they won't get the opportunities to go to Rome as quickly or, maybe, not ever. It is not because of a lack of talent or grit, but because of the circumstance and the industry having thrown the financial side of the sport way out of whack if that explains it well. I think that explains it pretty well.

Jacobsen: You mentioned something in one of the earlier sessions coming to mind, which are a couple of things Canada does uniquely in spite of the training regimens. One is the focus on hunter. The other is the focus on equitation. This effecting the paths of how many boys are interested and how many girls are interested, 12 to 17 years old. Something like that. So, to get a better balance, maybe, for that age group in terms of interest, what might be a change that could bring more boys, instead of going into a different sport?

Cone: Yes, since we talked earlier, this is a little bit of a stickler point for me. The equitation and the hunters were brought in to North America. Back in the days before George had spread the gospel about how we should ride, the system of riding was not universal. Everybody had a different style. It was just a mess. So, the U.S. and the Canada following, as we do often [Laughing] – being Canadian, a little tongue in cheek there – came up with the hunters and the equitation, which provided a way of riding that got to be more of everyone riding the same. It was one or two countries here, out two countries. I don't call that universal. But it did serve a great purpose in smoothing out everyone out, learning to do 5 strides in a 5 stride line, 6 in a 6, and not 7 or 8 in a 6. It made everybody start riding similarly and smoother, and nicer. The smoother and nicer that you're able to ride a jumper. The idea is the odds will go up in your favour to leaving the jumps in the cups. If you ride rough and tough, it tends to make jumps fall down.

That was the purpose behind it all. It was to smooth everybody all and will give the horse the chance to perform better. But, I think, because of the industry, we now have a lot of people in the industry that make a living off just hunters and just equitation. So, we're not going to take that industry and throw it out. It's just not going to happen. But if you look at the whole world now, we have just, I think, the equitation as far as preparing the jumper riders for the high level to a certain degree as outlived its purpose. There are other ways and, I think, better ways of preparing the jumper riders to get to the top. That gets to my other point. We have, let's say, 80 countries

over here by my right hand who do not choose to do equitation and hunters, but they could if they thought it was good for the development of their riders. Then we have Canada and the U.S. who still lean on that system for the development of their younger riders and think it's important. Where we stand right now in the world, I would say that we're behind a lot. We're barely in the top 10 in Canada. We're behind them. The U.S. is behind the top 10 now. Not always, they've had a bang-up record with Robert Ridland. He has done a hell of a job. But, I think, it is getting back now. We have knowledge. We have divisions that we can train these young people to ride properly in.

But on jumping horses, not equitation horses that jump flat and give you no feel, we need these kids to feel what a jumper feels like right from the start and how to ride an animal like that and how to do 5s in 5s and 6s in 6s and 4s in 4s, but smoothly on jumping horses and learning time for that from a young, young age. Those kids who know they don't have to go; I'm talking of the culture. The culture needs to be there. The boys can say, "I love soccer. But that running around in the jumper ring. Even though, the coach is hard on me. That looks like fun." If we are leaving almost 50% of our talented young riders on the soccer field because of our system that is totally different than the rest of the world who is not using that system, I begin to wonder if our system doesn't need to be addressed a little bit. We might get more boys involved if that answers your question.

Jacobsen: It does. Another facet discussed in the second (lost) session was staff and types of labour if you want to call it that or backgrounds of people in the labour force. In general, you see riders-trainers tend to be European heritage. If you look at those who are cleaning the stalls, raking the aisles, sweeping the aisles, and some of the care of the horses, typically, they are Latino or Hispanic background or blue-collar white background, more often men than women. Has this always been the case? Has it changed over time? Why is this the case at the blue-collar level of work?

Cone: Now, this is totally an industry question, which is totally different than a sport question. So, industry question, the history behind this. I would say: Picture the state of Virginia in the 40s, 50s, and 60s. The horses in Virginia would be fox hunting horses and slowly, maybe, some show horses. It was racehorses. It was a different atmosphere altogether. The sport of kings was still definitely a lot there. Most of the people who owned those horses and went fox hunting were traditionally white people. They had a little bit of money. You can't blame them for loving horses and wanting to do something with their horses. Now, some of those people, white people, would take care of their own horse. They would have their own barn, muck their own stall. That's the case now. It's not entitlement out there. But there would be stables, kind of like Rodney Jenkins' dad stable before Rodney got famous. He would have staff members doing mucking and grooming getting horses ready for the clients who would come to go fox hunting.

Those employees back then were mainly African-Americans. I want to be politically correct here in my statement. That's just the way it was. You weren't required to have a college degree. You weren't required to come from one side of the tracks and not the other. You were required to be a nice person, show up, and get a paycheque. A lot of them were African-Americans for sure. As time has gone on, you see fewer – and no need to discuss why, doesn't really matter why – or as many African-Americans now. You see more Latino workers. Both female and male, though, maybe more male, it is definitely more Latino workers now. In Canada, there's not as many Latino workers accessible to us, as they are in the States, especially the Southern parts of the U.S. We tend to get more young people who love the horses, possibly, want to bring their

horse in and get lessons, be working students, or, maybe, just young people who need a job before they figure out if they are going to go to college or not. It is a different sort of work pool, which you see in Canada as opposed to the U.S. I would say it is younger horse crazy people who end up working in the stables for a while for whatever reason.

Jacobsen: Which country do you think has had the greatest streak of success over the longest streak of time in show jumping, competitive-wise?

Cone: If you go back to when the Olympics first had show jumping in it, horse jumping, don't hold me to this, it was back in the 50s at some point, for sure. The horses back then for the U.S. came from the calvary. Talking about getting drafted.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Cone: You were drafted into the Army. If you wanted to ride horses, you could go and try riding. The next thing you know, you are riding into the Olympic games. The horses went out to the calvary. They needed them back then still or thought they did. They slowly phased horses out, as we know. Way back then, closer to your answer, it would be Germany. For sure, it was the strongest for quite a while. They rode. They had big powerful horses and had mainly big powerful men who were very talented: Alwin Schockemöhle, Paul Schockemöhle, Hans Günter Winkler, these are famous German riders who dominated the sport for a long time. I'll put it to you this way. There are many Olympics that the Germans were gold and the U.S. were silver. It seemed to be that was the way it went for a lot of Olympics. It wasn't until the Los Angeles Olympics that the U.S. won their gold medal. I was Canadian by then. They, the U.S., had Conrad, Joseph "Joe" Halpin Fargis IV, Melanie Smith, and Leslie Burr Howard. Now, there are gritty, hard nosed, spit in your face individuals who knew no fear and were talented beyond belief. For them to walk away with that gold medal, it is no surprise. How am I doing answering the question? [Laughing]

Jacobsen: Who do you think has been the biggest surprise in the 21st century in terms of its success, a newcomer?

Cone: George Morris and Frank Chapot shared the chef-ing of the U.S. team for quite a while after De Nemethy retired. They carried on a great, great tradition and did well. When they both got out of it, Robert Ridland had taken over and his success has been amazing. His results, I can't even tell you all that he has won. Now, him and I were together at Gladstone. We were both drafted at the same time. He is a year older than me. We were hard and fast friends. We still are; there's been many a sport competition that has been on television that we've watched together. Maybe, not even the nicest places in the world where we were watching them [Laughing] that doesn't matter, where we were watching them. We are good friends. He has done a bang up job there. Others countries that have popped in and out depending on the top. France has done amazing. Recently, Sweden has just taken over the entire world. Not only with their riders, but with these animals they have right now. My God, they're quite a big space between their animals and the rest of the world right now. It is pretty amazing with their group. So, I would say that right now. Depending on how their horse flesh holds up, like we talked about Canada holding up after Beijing, if their horses hold up, or if they come up with new ones, they're the new kid on the block. They've always been there knocking away. They have had good ones. Rolf-Göran Bengtsson, he sat behind Eric on the individual in Beijing. It's the whole thing.

They've had four hard-knockin' people all at the same time that last couple of competitions, the Olympics and, now, the World Championships. We'll see how they hold together. If you want to call them then new kid powerhouse on the block, them for sure. It shifts around. Oh! The Dutch were dominating for a long time. They had Jeroen Dubbeldam, Maikel van der Vleuten, Gerco Schröder, and Marc Houtzager, and a bunch of top Dutch riders, going back to Jos Lansink and Jan Tops. The Dutch are always there and always a real pain in the ass.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Cone: I always said, when we came to these Nations Cup, "First thing we have to do is take care of the Germans, make sure we beat them, but then we have to worry about the U.S." That explains it a little bit. [Laughing] Not that we could do anything, all we could do is jump our horses, but it made me feel better saying that.

Jacobsen: Is there a single horse that people regard as the greatest in the history of the sport?

Cone: That goes back to a history lesson. Like, who is the greatest basketball player? Is it LeBron or Jordan, or Chamberlain? Is it Tom Brady or Joe Montana in football? It gets down to opinion. But I can give you a history of some of the great ones I have known. Even if I didn't know them, I have seen tapes. The one that really comes to mind is a horse that came from a bit of a standard bred background, as I understood it. Halla that Hans Günter Winkler had. The longevity of that horse at the top level was amazing. Longevity, like when you're talking about GOATs, it does play into the discussion. So, I would say that is the case. One of the greatest horses I ever saw growing up was one of Rodney Jenkins' named Idle Dice. He dominated the U.S. scene. When Europe would come over here for the indoor circuit for the Nations Cup tour, he would take them all head on and almost win almost every class, including the top Europeans coming over. He was just simply amazing. Then Melanie Smith's horse, Calypso, he had a longevity of incredible length over and over again in wins, in the U.S. A horse named Gem Twist, longevity with several riders. It was great with his original rider, Greg Best, who took him from the junior jumper levels to the top. I am not a big Disney World story guy.

But that was a Disney World story horse. Frank Chapot bred the horse. Greg had the horse as a rider. He went through everything asked him. He did Olympic medals, World Championship medals, and same with Leslie Howard's story riding him. Those are some. Big Ben, I can't forget about Big Ben, of course. Longevity, two World Cup finals winner. Joh Whitaker's horse Milton. You can think of a horse like Jus de Pomme who won the individual gold and the team gold in Atlanta. Top of the world and by far the best horse there. But he died right after that. That was too bad. ET ridden by Hugo Simon. I can go on, and on, and on, if people could keep jogging my memory with candidates. There is not one answer if that helps you [Laughing]. Hickstead, of course, I can't leave Hickstead out.

Jacobsen: Where do you think the industry and the sport are headed?

Cone: It is getting more and more popular worldwide. The problem I have with it goes back to the elephant in the room, which are the finances involved with it. I don't mind the horses really costing that much if that is what is going to happen. I don't care that the prize money has gone up if that is what is going to happen. I like it that even if the television covers it more and more. I think the internet hurt us. You see the jumping on the internet, not necessarily on the television set. I don't know if that is a good thing. I really don't think that is a good thing, even if the audience is more. I think we need to gear the audience back to the family sitting in front of the T.V.

set and being sports fans all together. When you go to Aachen, Germany, arguably the greatest show in the world, that and Spruce Meadows; you have 80,000 people sitting in those stands and 5 strides away from the jump; you'll hear the whole crowd go [Gasp].

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Cone: They know the rider 5 strides away is already in trouble. So, how do they become that knowledgeable? By being together as a family and watching the sport together, the internet, your kid sitting there over the corner of the room and not even talking to anybody with his face buried in the computer or the iPad. I know that. I have grandchildren. I watch them. I don't know if that is a good thing for our sport. But the elephant in the room does keep, not all, some of the best athletes out on the soccer field, or it leaves them in a capacity into a stable where they never get a leg up to where they should go, and the horses that should be under them; and the people who should be back them. It leaves them out. There are a lot of people that do different paths who get to go there, but the money has to eventually come there and support whoever it is. It doesn't come around in equal basis to everyone. That doesn't make it a true sport, sometimes. People won't like me saying that. I'll say it again. If you're good at basketball, there's a ladder for you to go up the NBA and make a lot of money. The same in football and the same in soccer, the same in baseball, those are true sports. Money isn't a part of it. It is only talent and behaving yourself. You'll get drafted and make a lot of money and will go to the top of the sport if you're good enough. Unfortunately, I can't say that about show jumping.

Jacobsen: Mac, thank you very much for the opportunity and your time, once more [Laughing].

Cone: [Laughing] How many people are going to want to shoot me now? [Laughing] At 70 years of age, I don't care.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] That's part of the charm.

Cone: They could shoot me now. But I've had a hell of a go [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Thank you very much.

Cone: Alright, take care.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 34: L.J. Tidball on Growth as a Show Jumper, George and Diane Tidball, and Show Jumping (1)

Laura Jane "L.J." Tidball has been the Manager of Thunderbird Show Stables, an elite hunter and jumper facility, for 20 years. She is a shareholder and contributing partner to Thunderbird Show Park, which has been voted in the top 3 equestrian show facilities in North America. For Show Park, she has been important in advising on top level equine footing, site development plans for capital improvement, and competitor scheduling for National and FEI competitions. She has been competing at the Grand Prix level since 16-years-old. Since winning the Equine Canada medal (1994) and competing on the British Columbia Young Riders' team (1996), L.J. pursued equestrianism as a career with a fervent passion. Tidball shows multiple mounts of Thunderbird Show Stables and its clients in the hunter and the jumper rings. Through work from the pony hunters onwards with the assistance of Olympian Laura Balisky and Laura's husband, Brent, L.J. has achieved many years of success in equitation, and the hunters and the jumpers. In 2005, she returned from a successful European tour to operate Thunderbird on a professional basis. She has been awarded the 2014 Leading BCHJA 2014 rider in the FEI World Cup West Coast League Rankings and the 2014 BCHJA Leading Trainer of the Year. In her spare time, her hobbies include baking, skiing, and snowboarding. Tidball shared her lifelong passion for show jumping, beginning with early memories of lead line classes and dreams of a red show jacket. Influenced by her aunt Laura Balisky, an accomplished equestrian, and her family's support, Tidball developed her skills and intrinsic motivation for the sport. She emphasized the partnership between rider and horse, the importance of self-driven goals, and adapting to the increasing technicality and speed in modern show jumping. Tidball highlighted Canada's success in equestrian sports, her experiences training internationally, and her aspirations to compete on national teams while nurturing young horses.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, this is an interview with L.J. Tidball from Thunderbird Show Stables. Let's start from the beginning. What were some of the earlier moments in becoming interested in horses and developing a skill set as a show jumper?

L.J. Tidball: I would say my earliest moments of spending time with horses would have been going all the way back to the lead lines that my grandfather used to take me in. I had a pony named snowball. I used to wear my first set of tall boots and riding hat and show jacket, it was a big deal to have my grandfather lead me out in the lead line class. It is, probably, one of my earlier memories. I was 3 or 4 years old. From there, I grew up watching my aunt Laura Balisky show and compete for everything from the Olympics to the Pan-American Games to the World Cup Finals. I grew up with stars in my eyes with that being my ultimate goal. I went to bed as a 5-year-old dreaming of having a red show jacket. I, definitely, have pursued this as a career from a very young age. I was lucky enough to be able to take my childhood dream and bring it to fruition, which, I think, is rare. I appreciate the opportunities I have had to get to where I am.

Jacobsen: Was there any advice that your aunt Laura gave while you were developing your earlier skill sets?

Tidball: I think, they were very open to the idea that I would do whatever I was going to do with riding. My mom was a downhill ski racer. She always encouraged me to follow my path. She wrote me a letter in Grade 12 saying, "You have to follow and do what you believe is the most important, follow your dreams, and don't give up." Laura and Brent supported and encouraged

me, but they let it be my own drive. They didn't say, "You need to do this, this, and this, to get there." They gave me the tools and expected me to find my own drive and my own will to get to where I wanted to be, which allows you to find your own path. If people are dictating it for you, I don't think you find the path as easily.

Jacobsen: What do you mark as the intrinsic motivation for the sport for you?

Tidball: Honestly, when I get into it, I love being around animals. I love being close to the horses. The partnership that you have with your horse, when you come to an enormous jump is an incredible feeling. It is an adrenaline high, but it is a partnership at the same time. You are combining finesse, feel, and kindness, with adrenaline and a fierce competitive nature. It is such a unique set of rules that go along with it. I don't think you can replicate it. It has become a driving force. To walk in the ring and to jump a grand prix, it is why I wake up in the morning, and to train to get there. To make these horses better and to work with your partner to see how far you can go, with that end result always being to get into the big ring and jump that big class.

Jacobsen: How do you build that partnership with the horse? How long does that, typically, take?

Tidball: It can be different. My best horse to date, Concetto Son, was already jumping the 1.60m level when I got him. The previous owner created that partnership with that horse. I took it on and spent as much time as I could with Concetto, whether on the ground, at the stables, or on his back, to try to make him mine. I think the best partnerships are the ones where the riders are bringing the horses along themselves. For sure, that way you know them so well. You know when going into the ring how tight they can turn, how fast they can go and what their limits are, what limits are there. I feel if you take on a partnership a little later. You have to find those things out as you go. Also, you haven't created the partnership together. I don't think it is ever quite the same. I think you can win some rounds and some classes, but I don't think it's the same as when one comes up through the ranks with you.

Jacobsen: Erynn Ballard, this is 12 months ago, when I knew a lot less, had discussed things with a lot fewer people, and had done fewer interviews. She noted independent thought of horses as a problem, as a factor, in consideration of the sport. In some sense, it is a bi-athlete sport. When I talk to riders, it is entirely true. How do you deal with that level of uncertainty, psychologically speaking?

Tidball: I don't think this is necessarily uncertainty. As we grow with horses, we tend to know what their indicators are very quickly. I rarely get on a horse and don't know, whether it is wild that day or a little too quiet, or spooky of a Liverpool or scared of the water jump. You feel those things before they happen. You feel when your horse is not quite with you that day. Even something as simple as a soundness issue, you feel it, immediately. They are our partners. They are our teammates. If I walked in and said, "Hi", to one of my friends, and if their response was, "Fine, I guess", I know that they're not okay that day. The moment you put your foot in the strip, or pat them on the neck. You can feel that. I don't know if it is as much of an uncertainty. To me, it's knowing your partner, knowing their ins and outs. You know when you can push them and, also, when you can't. Some horses will never jump a water jump well in their lives. That's something you have to come to terms with; and the other side, some horses, you think to yourself, "I taught them a, b, and c. So, we can get through that next thing." They all come out on some days a little different, just like us. Whether something spooks them at the ring or they get upset before even leaving their stall. All of the sudden, they're spun on that day. So many factors come into

play, whether you had a phone call or a bad conversation that day. You have to push through it. You have to know yourself well enough to know what you can set aside, what you're okay with, and what you're not okay with.

Jacobsen: If you look at the work ethic 25 years ago compared to now, having that transition from young adulthood to now, do you think there's been a shift in some of that in this industry?

Tidball: I think the sheer numbers of what we do are higher now. Back in the day, you would be a 2-man show with 5 horses on the road. It wasn't as much about clients and coaching and buying-and-selling horses. I don't think the work ethic is different, though. For myself, I know. I work out. I stay fit. I work long hours at my job. I coach. I teach. I go teach clinics. I still compete at this sport at a high level. I don't know many other athletes in this sport who are not like that, who are not travelling constantly, not working constantly to be better. That don't have 100% drive to succeed at what they want to do. In my mind, the work ethic has not changed.

Jacobsen: Mac Cone noted George Morris produced the training methodology that has gone around the world. So, there has been an internationalization of that methodology. The breeding programs have been specialized and made very good. What are the differentiating factors, then, at the top level?

Tidball: I think looking at a top level. It is like looking at a top-level NBA player. How many people can make it to the NBA and be that #1 player? You look at Olympians. How many people make it into the 100m sprint or into the soccer team that goes to the World Cup? I think it's the same for horses. There are a few more who could have made it there, but who had bad luck along the way or were on the wrong training program. I think the elite athletes, whether horses or riders, that it's the same. You are looking for a top athlete for your partner, the horse. I would say back in the day, when Laura was riding; you could name the top 5 horses in the world at that time. As I said, the numbers have grown. In general, the amount of horses, clients, and people riding has increased. Nowadays, you may not be able to name the top 5, because it is the top 20 or top 30. I think there are many horses that are at that #1 level. That, I would say, is a big change. We are breeding horses to be faster, lighter, and more careful. The technicality of the courses in the sport has changed. So, I think that's a big part of it.

Jacobsen: Has the safety of the sport changed?

Tidball: [Laughing] Absolutely. There used to not be breakaway cups. We did not even have hard hats with chin straps. You get into the amount of concussions that would have gone on 25 years ago would have been astronomically higher than today. The cups fall down. The jumps are way lighter. Of course, it is still a dangerous sport because you are riding a 1,000-pound animal over a 1.60m jump. That's never an easy thing to conquer. There have definitely been huge improvements. Also, the courses used to be simpler. It used to be 1 jump, 10 strides to the next jump, and one triple combination. Now, you walk on course. It is bending 5 to the 2-stride to the 4-stride, and it carries on. The technicalities increase so much. I do think the safety has gone up, but the technicality has gone up with it.

Jacobsen: Has the speed gone up?

Tidball: Absolutely.

Jacobsen: Of those factors, what factors do you think are the most difficult to accommodate or adapt to?

Tidball: I am not the fastest rider. I have had fewer horses growing up than some. So, I need to preserve these horses. I need them to last for years, not for a season. The faster that you go. The greater the chances of scaring the horse or getting to a wrong spot because you are pushing the envelope a little more. You're trying to be the winner every day. Things can go wrong because you're working at top speeds. The most difficult thing for me to overcome is to be faster. I can jump a clean round and jump a technical track, but to beat Kent Farrington or Tiffany Foster. That's harder for me to accomplish.

Jacobsen: Do you think it is more important to have a skilled rider or a more naturally gifted horse at this point?

Tidball: I think it's both. It is a partnership – no matter what. You can have a completely untalented rider on an amazing horse. It will jump a few classes, but, eventually, it will stop succeeding. Because they are sensitive creatures. You can have an incredibly talented rider on an average horse. They might be able to get a bit more than the last person. But they will never make a 1.20m horse into a Grand Prix horse, and a 1.20m rider is never going to jump a 1.60m horse. The two things just don't work. I always think it is that partnership. You need a great rider and a great horse if you want to be at the top of the sport.

Jacobsen: Did Laura coach you at all?

Tidball: Absolutely.

Jacobsen: How so?

Tidball: Laura always coached with subtleties. It was something small that would make a big difference. One time, I remember riding up to this big oxer. I think it was the Queen's Cup. She said, "Make sure hind end meets front end before he leaves the ground, so he is pushing evenly off all four legs." It is not necessarily about "think about where your shoulder is, hand is, or eye level is". It was always small intricacies that always made a difference. She rode so much off of feel. She had so much natural talent. When she tells me things, it is, usually, something to do with feel, or something to do with a small part of a course. It is never a big lifechanging moment. If I haven't figured out those big moments by now, having gotten to this level, then I should have paid closer attention [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Sean Jobin noted the use of video technology. Certain biomechanical feedback systems to get a better read on horses with modern technology. Do you think these are more helpful or less helpful for most riders at that level?

Tidball: I, definitely, think going back and watching your videos and being able to see how you performed is good. What you feel and what you see are, sometimes, two different things, you can think that you were leaving at the right spot, but you were a little close. You can go back and watch a video and analyze, and see a horse leaving the ground, if the left front or the right front is lower. It gives you a little bit more information. You are looking for small things, not huge changes.

Jacobsen: One thing, I have noted. Canada is really, really good at producing great women riders. Internationally, and nationally, Canada produces some of the best women riders in the world for show jumping. Why, how?

Tidball: I, actually, don't really know. I know the way I was raised was to go off and get your dreams. I would say that is biggest thing that has led me to where I am, to be a great woman

rider. I grew up in a family where nobody ever told me, “That person is a guy. He is going to be better than you.” All I ever heard. It was, “That person runs fast. You should learn to run faster too.”

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Tidball: It was never, “But you’re a girl, so you can’t.” My grandparents were amazing that way. So was my mom, it was always about being the best version of yourself. I competed against myself, not really against others. I was always brought up to be the best version of myself, not to be better than so-and-so. For myself, that’s helped me become a top athlete. But I’m not really sure why Canada has so many top women equestrians.

Jacobsen: Show jumping is really a gender-neutral sport. If you are talented and have a good horse, you can go far. Many Canadian women have shown this, clearly, as we noted. Any commentary both on the gender neutrality of the sport and the longevity of the sport? People like Ian Millar were competing into their 70s and going into the Olympics into their 70s.

Tidball: I think show jumping is amazing that way. I love that we compete on an equal level, male and female. I think it’s great. I think it raises, like you said, “Why more female riders than males in Canada coming up?” I think the fact that it is gender neutral. It means you get to compete on an equal playing ground. Athletes in show jumping, we’ve been raised to be equals. It is a pretty incredible thing to be in this sport. I think society today is about equality. We are in a sport where it doesn’t matter. If you have the right horse and are a good rider, you can get to where you want to be.

Jacobsen: The team that went to Denmark was an all-women team.

Tidball: I think that was incredible. I give them such props. I think it’s awesome that we can produce strong athletes, a strong group of female athletes. I think it’s really good.

Jacobsen: Which countries do you think are doing the best in show jumping now?

Tidball: Holland and Belgium, and, probably, France, they have a high number of horses that they are breeding every year. In horse power alone, they have numbers. The U.S. has the population exceeding most of the other countries producing riders. They have that on their side. As Canadians, I think we’ve always been a little bit of an underdog. We’ve always had a smaller group of riders, not as many who jump the 1.60m level. But the ones who do, are good at it. We’ve always been able to produce good results. There’s been medals at Pan-Ams, medals at Olympics. With the size of our show jumping population in Canada, and the number of people who show at that level, it’s surprising that we produce the teams that we do. Canada has always been able to do it. I would give us credit for the programs that we’ve created here, for the level of riding that we’ve produced. If you look at Thunderbird Show Park, the fact that there are FEI in my backyard. It used to be: If you were a Western Canadian, there was nowhere to compete at other than Spruce Meadows. Now, we have a circuit on the West Coast. That is a huge reason we are producing riders.

Jacobsen: How did Langley become the Horse Capital of British Columbia? How did it get that appellation?

Tidball: There was Campbell Valley Park. That’s where it started. There were a lot of hobby farms. It came from the hobby farms. It is not, actually, from the show jumping community, necessarily.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] I didn't know that.

Tidball: Definitely, when Show Park moved to its new venue, it increased the drive for show jumping in our area. It has gotten bigger and bigger.

Jacobsen: Before, Thunderbird Show Park was, for anyone reading locally, where the Colossus grounds is, before. People would eat at the Keg, eat their steaks, and watch show jumping. It was a nice tie-in.

Tidball: My grandfather went to the Cow Palace in San Francisco and loved it! The Keg in Langley was a representation of that. He thought it was the coolest thing. You could be watching roping in the arena, cutting in the arena, and show jumping in the arena. It was used for many things. That was the start of it. He thought it was the neatest thing to be sitting, eating your dinner, and watching show jumping at the same time. That's where that idea came from. I hosted at The Keg. It was the hardest thing. People would come in and want a window seat. The wait would be hours and hours. It really created in our community an understanding of show jumping. Thunderbird became a known name. The Keg restaurant became a known name. It added to people wanting to come down to the shows and be a part of the culture.

Jacobsen: George brought McDonald's to Canada, in Richmond in particular.

Tidball: He went to school in Harvard. My grandmother was with him, obviously. They had three small children. She would take them to McDonald's, the kids. Because it was inexpensive and clean. Service was good. If something was spilled, somebody would clean it up. She loved it. After he finished at Harvard, he was working at MacMillan Bloedel. They wanted him to relocate to the United States somewhere. She didn't want him to relocate again. They'd been all over the U.S. at that point. She'd had enough. She said, "George, why don't you bring that McDonald's place to Canada?" So, he found Ray Kroc and got the rights to Western Canada for McDonald's.

Jacobsen: He was going to work directly with Milton Friedman.

Tidball: Yes, he was going to do his Ph.D. in economics at the University of Chicago with Friedman. They'd gotten into so much debt being in the States, being Canadian. My grandmother was typing papers for people at night to make things work. He went and was going to go to the University of Chicago. He opted out because they couldn't keep going.

Jacobsen: I recall one article with him saying that they were tired of being broke.

Tidball: They were broke. They had a Volkswagen bug with three kids and the two of them.

Jacobsen: It was time for a change.

Tidball: Yes.

Jacobsen: What I am seeing in this family history is entrepreneurial business-mindset of George, motivation and also co-entrepreneurial business mind in Diane, two of their children on national teams. National ski team for Jane. National equestrian team for Laura. For yourself, as far as I know, you have jumped in the Nations Cup. It's a strong trend in the family.

Tidball: Yes, my cousin went to the Paralympics for triathlon. It is a trend. The general trend of our family is to do the very best at what you choose to do, whether in school, in sport, or in life in general. It is to strive for the best. I would say that that has been the motto in our family all through my life. My cousin just got a job at Tesla. It's been ingrained in us. My grandparents did

an incredible in that. They didn't put a demand on what it was that you chose to do; they just wanted you to do something that you loved. Once you chose what it was, they supported you. Also, they remind you how hard it is to work for what you love. They instilled a work ethic that goes beyond. Because, no matter what, you can do what you love every day. Let's be honest, working in a barn every day is hard work. I wake up every day. I love my job. I love what I get to do. I don't go, "Oh, today will be easy. I will have coffee with three people, quit early, go to the spa." That's not my daily routine. My daily routine is 7 in the morning to 7 at night. That's the norm. I think if you're lucky enough to do something that you love; it means that you'll work harder to be able to keep doing it.

Jacobsen: Do you think the industry is weaker or stronger for show jumping in Canada?

Tidball: I think it's getting stronger. I think there are more people getting involved in show jumping. The number of people involved in riding with horses is going up. I think show jumping is a great individual sport. For kids these days, it really gives them something that is a perfectionist sport that you get to keep striving for. It teaches a sense of responsibility with an animal. When we walk into a ring, we are not just taking care of ourselves. We have a partner with us. I think that's a really important lesson. You will walk back into the ring. Maybe, you won the class. Maybe, you fell off. There is always something you could have done better, whether big or small. It teaches the sense of drive and work ethic that goes along with it. That's what I've been taught in my time on horses.

Jacobsen: What do you consider the area of greatest improvement in riding skill and style?

Tidball: When I got to travel to Florida and got to perform on the world stage, immersing yourself with the top riders in the world, you pick it up. You get to watch what they do, how they are training. No matter what, I think that has been the biggest thing. I got to get out of my bubble and experience more. Any time to experience the great sport, it really gives you an appreciation of what you're doing.

Jacobsen: You are considering Langley the bubble.

Tidball: Yes, Langley and California, I think when you get to go to Europe and Florida and can train with other people. There's nothing wrong with being in Langley. It's been great. We get two big shows a year. We have May and August, where the world stage comes to us. For sure, immersing yourself in those moments is huge, if you can have May and August throughout the year, your level will increase. With California and the Major League shows down there, it gives the opportunity to immerse yourself with the top riders. Any time that you can do that, and any time pay attention, you can learn.

Jacobsen: What did you learn in Florida immersing yourself with the top riders? What were the first things you noticed about how they conduct themselves?

Tidball: The biggest thing I learned was how fast they were. They go faster all the time. Their speed is at a different level than what I was used to when I got there. Also, their technique, it is little things. It is how they present something to their horses. It is how they are meeting a jump. It is the distances where they leave out a stride. Everything tightens up a little. That's the only way I can describe it. Your track, your distances, your time between the jumps. Everything gets that much tighter. Because you are doing it day-in and day-out. You get used to it. All of the sudden, you come home. "That's the line I should take." Because that's the line you've done for the last month. It was such a great experience that way.

Jacobsen: What are your dreams in this sport moving sport? Because taking the Ian Millar and Beth Underhill examples, you have a long career ahead of you.

Tidball: I would love to be able to compete on national teams and at the 1.60 level. I think it depends on if the right horse comes into my life. I do believe some of it is fate oriented. I think things happen at the right time at the right places. If a horse can come into my life to take me into those levels again, I would love to be on Nations Cup teams and do the Pan-Am Games. It would be a dream come true for me. The other side of it, I love training and bringing up young horses, and seeing what they can do. If one of them turns into one of those horses that can do that for me, that would be an ultimate goal. A horse you take through the levels into the top level. That is something that I would look forward to. I hope one of these youngsters that I have now can compete on the world stage.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 35: Cindy Waslewsky on the Equestrian Industry and Breeds (2)

***Cindy Waslewsky** went to Stanford University and competed on the Varsity Gymnastics and Ski Teams. She earned a B.A. in Human Biology in 1982. She earned a Diploma in Christian Studies at Regent College in Vancouver, and a BC teachers' certification from the University of British Columbia in 1984. She was the President of the Squamish Valley Equestrian Association. She is a certified English and Western coach. Waslewsky is co-owner of Twin Creeks Ranch.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What are some of those common human made problems?

Cindy Waslewsky: Okay. A simple one; people throw their saddles on their horse and then they tighten up their girth for English, or a cinch for Western, and they're worried about the saddle sliding. So they do it nice and tight and the horse starts to get what they say 'girthy' or 'cinchy'; you'll see people bring their saddles on the horse and the horse's ears go back. They even make aggressive gestures toward the rider as they're tightening up the girth and that is created by people when they tighten the girth too much. Otherwise, you put a saddle on. You snipe it up just a little bit to hold the saddle on. You finish picking hooks or whatever. You lock them into the arena, then you tighten it again, then mild, then tighten it again. So, in other words, you don't just suddenly sort of squeeze them tight because they learn to tighten the muscles in their sternum enough to split across their right behind the front legs. They can tighten those muscles to expand, so that you go and now the girth is really loose. So, they learn to do that. However, they are called girthy or cinchy; meaning, they get crabby, cranky, and can get aggressive when people are tightening up the girth or cinch. And that's created by people doing it too hard or too fast instead of gently tightening it as they get ready to ride like put the saddle on, snug it, then go and tighten it up just a hole and then maybe one more hole later, so it's not just all being put on at the same time. That's just one example.

Other examples are, I was teaching a student today that when you're turning the horse. Horses are followers, so you're the leader. You are in charge. I use the example with students that it's like their substitute teacher walking into a grade 7 classroom. You have about 30 seconds to take charge and be fair, firm, and be the leader. Tell that horse just like you would a student what is acceptable behavior; like, you can't swear to teacher. You can't make comments to other people. Soon, you have spit wads on the ceiling in a classroom and the same with the horse. If you don't right away say it's time to report now: Ask, tell, demand, get going forward, do it firmly, have tools and techniques to make sure the horse is doing what you need it to do without being cruel and understanding horse cognition, which is, again, a new thing along with these trials and studies being a little delayed from horses when you compare it to other livestock that we often eat, right? Then you look at horse cognition. Studies are now coming out where they get in a PhD on learning, which manure pile does the horse sniff first. Believe it or not, they sniff their own first. Then they sniff the dominant horse next. How many seconds does it take for a horse to change from fear to inquisitive behavior because horses have the largest amygdala of any domesticated animal, in other words, amygdala processes fear. The most fear-based domesticated animal that we deal with is a horse, and we ride it.

So, what we have to constantly think about is when something scares or concerns that horse, they typically need 12 to 15 seconds to switch from fear to inquisitive. Let's say they go by a tarp, and you start whacking on them to get closer to that tarp; I would question that. I would say I've

changed how I ride, so if my horse is like bulging off the wall, I might go back to that spot and stop them and wait those 12 to 15 seconds. You will see horses drop their head, lick and chew, relax and stretch the nose out to whatever's concerning them specific just to kind of investigate. They poke it with their nose. When they're relaxed, I carry on, and then when I come back to that spot in their trail. I've already given my horse a chance to relax instead of beating them past it and making it a higher anxiety location. The other thing or techniques such as you're coming to some spook zone in the arena where they tend to suddenly bolt away. For example, I was on a trail ride. There was a dog that looked like a bear, so the horse I was on had got just past the dog and scored ahead trying to get away from the dog. So, I asked the owner and if I could just go by there a couple of times. So, as I started to pass the dog; just when I started to pass, I stopped my horse and I waited. How long? 12 to 15 seconds, my horse relaxed with that dog and then walked on. So, the flight zone is right as they're leaving the object they're fearful of.

You might be leading horses out to paddocks. You're going to be handling some of these horses and when they're excited or hot, if you have fast feet for a long time equals fear for a horse. So, if you can slow their feet down, relax yourself, and slow your heart rate because horses' heart rates match ours. When they put heartbeat monitors on horses and riders, they match each other. It's interesting. So, we kind of have to relax ourselves to be the herd leader, but, if we get nervous, they don't think we're nervous with them. They think we're nervous about something in our environment. And we need to let them know there's nothing in the environment needs to concern you. But if we express fear of our horse, that's going to translate to the horse that my rider who is my herd leader is concerned about something around us right now, so I better be worried too.

And they'll do things like you can scratch the wither of your horse and their heart rate lowers and they did that with heart rate monitors. So if I'm going to reward my horse, I don't slap the neck like how they pat horses on the neck and sort of slap them on the neck. That's not much of a reward in the horse's mind. But if you scratch or itch or massage the wither just like horses mutually groom each other, their heart rate actually slows. So, you would go lead a horse. You go to catch them. You scratch their wither. It'll also lower their head a little bit, which is another long-necked animal. When a giraffe lowers its head, then the heart rate lowers; otherwise, you get head rush. Head goes up and it has to increase its heart rate. And so, a horse is the same, so when we lower their poll. That's the area between their ears, to the same height or lower than their wither, then their heart rate autonomically slows. They don't control that. It's autonomic. So, as you lower a horse's head, you're actually relaxing them and lowering their heart rate and keep getting them to be a little calmer for leading out on a windy day or something. These are things people are just getting into now. The horse has been viewed a little bit like a motorcycle to get on a ride, but, now, we know for our own safety and for a humane treatment of the horse; we need to learn more about horse cognition. We need to do a little better.

Jacobsen: What is the approximate mental age of an adult horse?

Cindy: In terms of comparing to people, if you multiply a horse's age by three, that's going to give you an idea of maturity. In other words, a one-year-old horse is like a three-year-old. A two-year-old horse is typically like a six-year-old child. So, in terms of reasoning and training and teaching, they can start to link things up on conditions to what we use with horse training. I have a horse here that is 30 years old, that's like a 90-year-old. She still did lessons. If she wasn't doing that, she probably would really seize up. So, arthritis and everything would just really bother her. So in terms of mental maturity, I sort of try to link it to a human age, so that we can think what this horse can do physiologically and what is a fair workload for a 20 year old horse. And I

think I'm 61, I can do just about anything back home, I can ride a horse. I can hike tough mountains with stuff if I stay in shape, but there are other 61 year olds that aren't in as good a shape or if they've had some injury that really impedes them. So, if I look at a 20-year-old horse, and if it's a healthy 20-year-old horse, they can still do they can still do some like jumping, they can do dressage, they can do lots of trail rides, they can work well, and they have maturity. They've got some experience. They're a reliable horse, probably a safer horse for most people. They may have had a variety of exposure to different situations. But if you have a three-year-old horse, that's like a nine-year-old. They're kind of still learning a lot of things are still new to them... "Oh! What's that? Oh, that's a dog! Oh, that's a plastic bag!" or "Oh, that's a different horse trailer than the last one I got in" or "I'm going on a trail!" "What's that big block?" So, you really expect to have to explore different things in a very calm and relaxed way.

Jacobsen: It gives a comparative answer to human beings to give an idea about the maturity and the ability to think of horses themselves.

Cindy: And what kind of physical demands you can make on them too.

Jacobsen: Absolutely.

Cindy: So, even as they age, you don't want to just throw them out to pasture. That's actually not a good retirement for a lot of these horses.

Jacobsen: How do different breeds of horse deal with different types of professional performance, whether dressage, hunting, jumping, or eventing?

Cindy: They're all different even within a breed you will see different horses that are well suited conformationally to certain things. As a former gymnast, I would say I look at a body type, fast twitch muscles and flexibility. And then there's a mental ability to do things. Some of my gymnasts were very timid and others were very bold. Some have a need for a little bit of adrenaline. Some are very driven. Some were not. You see that in horses as well. So, we didn't breed just to generalize. You've got the quarter horse, which was named the quarter horse because it excelled in the quarter mile. It's a sprinter. If you imagine human sprinters with big glutes and very strong muscle, quarter horses have very strong hind ends. They can sprint well. They can run fast, but for short periods of time and they keep their muscle tone. Let's say they don't get worked really well or they didn't get ridden for a little while, they'll keep their muscle tone better than a thoroughbred would. They tend to keep their weight on a little better.

So, you have the quarter horse. The mind was bred for cattle work and trails. So, you see them in the Western world. Everything from reining, working cow, cutting, western pleasure, trail classes where you go over all kinds of obstacles that could really freak out some horses. They learn to go over rivers, over bridges. They do teeter-totter bridges and all kinds of things that these horses have been known to do very well. They make a great all-around horse. Now, their neck ties in conformationally within the quarter horses. You would see different quarter horses and some are more capable of certain jobs. Some of the reiners are very able to collect themselves, meaning to lift their backs up kind of like doing a pelvic tilt and squat on their back legs a little bit. That's what I would say I collected. If the horse is actually squatting on the back legs a little bit and lifting their back, lifting their wither, and stretching and telescoping the neck out, they're not just bringing a chin into their chest. That's a misunderstanding of what collection is.

So, when you compress these horses as compressing them like a spring and creating them with more energy and more athleticism, you're also increasing the longevity of a horse being able to

be worked because their musculature and the skeletal system is better designed for pulling a sled, pulling a plow. That kind of thing more than carrying a rider on its back. So, that's why you'll see all the disciplines of looking at collecting horses or compressing their body and lifting up their backs because then they will last longer and their gaits are better and are more athletic and more able to do everything. So, a quarter horse can turn on cows, a quarter horse can jump, a quarter horse can do some dressage. Do you really want to do the higher end dressage? You start looking for a horse that has a longer stride length and shoulder and then you look at thoroughbred, which was designed or bred to do the furlong or the mile. So, think of your distance runners, the long legs, the leaner build, they can really reach out. They have a long stride. Thoroughbreds have bigger lung capacity, so you see them in cross-country jumping a lot because they have to have the stamina for that. So, they have what they call their lung capacity and their nostrils are actually able to flare open wider than the quarter horse. They're elongated and can open up. Equine dentists will say it's easier to do the teeth of a thoroughbred because when you open their mouth there will be a bigger throat to work on their teeth because they have to suck the oxygen in to really do that at high speeds. And so, you have your thoroughbred.

Now, they're called as a more hot-blooded horse. It's a little more thin skin, the flies bother them a little more, could be a little spookier, and a little more temperamental. They are not quite as hardy a horse, not an easy keeper; meaning, they need more feed to keep their weight on. If you don't use them consistently, they start to lose their muscle tone, especially along their back. Their topline we call it. And then what you can do is, you can breed a draft horse, which is great. Calmer horses that we use for usually pulling wagons and people do ride drops, but they're a little bit wide for most people, especially women's hips. They're pretty big. But you can put a draft horse and say, "Oh, they're so calm and good natured." And then we have the thoroughbred, that's so athletic, but a little bit slidy. So, let's put them together. We have a cold-blooded draft and a hot-blooded thoroughbred. Most of the times, it's one-quarter draft, three quarters thoroughbred. You get this lovely horse that's usually a little calmer, still athletic, good muscle tone, and has that reach, the long stride of the thoroughbred to do some very nice dressage movement. It can also do some good jumping as well. So, you'll see a lot of people pivoting to these warmbloods, who go into all kinds of various warmbloods.

It's just a blend of the horses, and then you have the Arabs, which are small originally from, of course, Arabia. They have a little point to their ear, very pretty head, somewhat smaller. They have one vertebra less. So I think they're very difficult to ride in a very collected frame. They would not be my favorite. For endurance riding, you can't get a better horse for an endurance ride - small, hearty horses. And people who love Arabs love Arabs. They jump Arabs. They do pleasure. They do Western. They do English. There are specialized Arab shows just as there are specialized paint shows. Paint is a color, but it's actually a breed. So, you can say pinto for a color and paint is breed. So pinto is a color that you could have on a warm blood or something. But either you have paint; it's a specific breed that has thoroughbred in it, quarter horse crossed with the thoroughbred. So, you can have a quarter horse thoroughbred cross. Great combination because you have the calmer mind of the quarter horse with more muscle tone of the muscly quarter horse, and then you put it with the thoroughbred. So, what other breed have you come across that you're curious about?

Jacobsen: Well, I'd be curious about the Canadian landscape of horses as well in that regard. I mean, what breed of horse do Canadians work with the most, the riders, generally?

Cindy: It depends on what discipline you want to be in. We're unusual in the barn that we have Western and English together in one barn. Usually, as you've seen, there are a hundred jumpers, then there'll be Western. And they're all divided up. Now, these ones in an Arab barn just do Arab shows and there's paint here. This one's just a Western pleasure and some trainers specialize in just one area. That's, typically, because it's a big spectrum. There's a lot of time to think of another analogy. It's hard to think of something that splits up as much as this does. Because when you think of horseback riding, you think of it as being, "Oh, you're right. One rider can talk to another rider", but there are so many different disciplines for riding, and so the horse excels at different disciplines. Some horses can cross over to be a nice all-around horse, which a family might purchase. So, I see a lot of people buying quarter horses because of their temperament, which is great for younger people to get into; fairly safe and yet they can still do all these different things.

Now, conformationally, their neck ties in a little lower, so they're not perfect for jumping. The thoroughbreds will be able to out jump a quarter horse, typically. Yet, it depends on the build. I have two thoroughbreds. They're built differently. One thoroughbred is "very upright". I'll call it. The other one's built a little bit downhill if that makes sense. So, one's kind of more laid back. That one's a Secretariat lineage - Bold Ruler, really good lineage for racing, but he never won a race. He just laid back. He's great; perfect for me for lessons. The other one won his races, but had a bowed tendon, so even as thoroughbreds go, these two are built differently because their confirmation was a little bit different, you ride them just a little differently. So even as riders switch from one horse to another, like people like to own their own horses, but you actually gain a lot of experience riding different horses. Do you have an iPhone or a Samsung?

Jacobsen: I have an iPhone.

Cindy: So, what if I say, "You know your iPhone well." You're good with the iPhone. I'm going to give you a Samsung. You know that Samsung is able to do all the same things your iPhone can do, but the buttons are in slightly different places. It's a little frustrating. It doesn't build your confidence. But if you're ready to take on the challenge, and if you learn that Samsung, you now know cell phone's better. You can do an iPhone; you can do Samsung. Now, you're pretty conversant with your phone because you know both of them. My daughter who was a business major did that. She turned on both phones. She had a Mac and a PC because she needed to be conversant. She knew some programs are better one than the other. She wanted to be conversant with both because you never know what office system they're going to be using. So, just saying, that horses vary even within the breeds. I have a quarter horse at 16.1. That's on the bigger end of a quarter horse. She's very nice for lessons. And then I have another one that's 15.1, quite a bit smaller. They're very different too. They teach my students different things because they're good at different things. The one has a really good stop. He does this, does that. He can do some small jumps, but he's never going to be a great jumper. But he can do some really good Western turn backs and maneuvers, but he's a good all-around horse. Then when I get to my thoroughbred, they're more specialized. They can do jumping. They can do some dressage, and then I do take them out on trails. They're a little bit more lookie-loo at things on the trails, but the quarter horses are more relaxed on the trails. We put them in the front of the trail and thoroughbreds follow them. So, those are breed things, but within a breed; you'll see variation.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 36: Hyde Moffatt on the Meaning of Success (2)

Hyde Moffatt, according to Starting Gate Communications, can be described as follows: “Andrew Hyde Moffatt had an unusual introduction to horses. When he was five years old, a girl at school brought in her horse for show-and-tell and Hyde was hooked! His top horse is Ting Tin, a son of the well-known sire Chin Chin, purchased in Belgium as a six-year-old. Hyde describes Ting Tin as a brave, intelligent and energetic horse who loves to play with people, but gets bored easily. Starting their Grand Prix career together in 2004, Hyde and Ting Tin have steadily improved with each outing, enjoying top ten finishes at several of the biggest horse shows in Canada including the Capital Classic Show Jumping Tournament, the Collingwood Horse Show, Tournament of Champions, and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. When he is not showing in the Grand Prix ring, Hyde competes with several horses in the Young Horse Development Series including Baron, who was crowned the 2006 Ontario Six-Year-Old Champion. In addition to his equestrian pursuits, Hyde also enjoys running. Although he is currently a middle distance runner at 10 to 15 km, he would like to work towards doing his first marathon.” Moffatt highlighted the toughness of Canadian riders, rooted in a culture of resilience and overcoming challenges. He reflected on the tight-knit equestrian community in Canada and the importance of personal victories in learning and developing alongside horses, emphasizing the journey over accolades. Discussing risks, Moffatt acknowledged the dangers of show jumping, including high injury and fatality rates, underscoring the need for a deep love of horses. He praised advancements in the sport but warned against losing the grit developed through trial-and-error experiences, advocating for perseverance and learning from failure as essential elements for future success in the sport.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: One thing I noticed that is relatively distinct in Canada. I haven’t done a systematic review of this, yet. Although, preliminarily, Canada produces some of the best women riders in the world.

Hyde Moffatt: Because we’re tough.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Moffatt: I, actually, think that is the answer. I think it is because we’re tough. Maybe, that Canadian mentality that we’re always a little bit of an underdog. It is always a little bit harder. I do think it is because we’re tough.

Jacobsen: When I went through the Longines rankings for Canada, there were only 90 riders listed. This has been a very consistent thing in conversing with people. Everyone knows everyone or, at least, knows of everyone, it is a small world. Is it the frequency of the travel, being at the events for several days, seeing the names? Things of this nature.

Moffatt: Yes, there are only so many events in which ranking points are available. Invariably, you end up running into everyone from your country somewhere along the line. Certainly, we do become familiar. Those shows, there are only 50 or 60 riders at some of the bigger shows. You might have 90 riders down in Wellington, but you are not talking about a group that is hard to keep track of. We definitely know each other.

Jacobsen: What would you consider your most significant career win, so far?

Moffatt: Jeez, that's a good question. Honestly, I try not to quantify things with the wins. A lot of the wins that you end up with, from a non-competitive standpoint, are from learning and discovering on the journey to the wins in the ring; I think that that time that you struggle with teaching a horse something and, suddenly, feel all the parts come together. That is the kind of win that I do this for. I still remember jumping in Wellington. It was the first time I jumped a big CSIO. Nations Cup week down there. I was on a very green horse. They filled this course of jumps, still when Wellington had a grass field. There was a line. You jumped a vertical over the open water. It was unique in and of itself. You don't see that anymore. You did a number of strides. Then there was a vertical at 1.60m. Then there were 3 and a half strides. I don't know how else to say it. It was too long for 4 and too short for 3 into a huge oxer. One of the biggest jumps I had ever jumped in the ring in my life at that point.

I know how in theory how I am going to get this done. I am going to need to jump the vertical over the water with some rhythm. I am going to have to balance and curl over the vertical and land and make room in the 4 strides and put my leg up. In my head, I thought, "Is this even possible?" I went so late in the class. I got to sit and watch. This is before we were as limited in the number of courses that you could ride in, or the number of entries in the grand prix. I am watching these horses go. You see them do it. "Well, I know my plan. They seem to have the same plan. I am going to do that." I did it. When I got it done and put my leg on, and the horse jumped across the oxer, I remember being in the air, to this day, thinking, "I learned something." Because, theoretically, you knew it was possible, but you never felt it. All of the sudden, you felt it. You're like, "Man, horses can do things I did not know they can even do." It is wins like that that stick out rather than the actual win. For me, the win is the reward that comes at the end. But it is the journey that is, maybe, more important.

Jacobsen: As you were noting or alluding to earlier, injuries are a major part of risk in the sport. It is one of the myths, for those looking outside of the industry, which is, probably, similar to cheerleading. Where cheerleading has an extraordinarily high injury rate, same with show jumping. It has this reputation of being a gallivanting, gentle sport. It can be graceful when done at a really high level, as yourself, but it's extremely dangerous. Have there been deaths on competition grounds before?

Moffatt: Absolutely, by statistics, it is one of the most dangerous sports in the world. Concussion rates as high or higher than the NFL because you are always falling from speed. There is serious risk of spinal cord injuries, paralysis and death from that as well – for the same reasons. Not to mention, you are on something that weighs 1,200 lbs. and can, sometimes, fall down. Sometimes, when it falls down, it can fall on top of you. Yes, there have, definitely, been some terrible accidents and have been some deaths. Personally, I know a number of people who have had that happen to them. Both who have died and who have suffered lifechanging injury. We do not do this without risk. It is best to always remind ourselves of that.

Jacobsen: Back in January (2022), Erynn Ballard cautioned me. She said something to the effect, 'If you are going to do this series, you have to have a love for horses, or you have to develop that, because, if you don't, then you won't understand where these riders and trainers, and so on, are coming from.' After about 14 months into it now, I completely understand what she is getting at now. The riders are here for the sport, to compete. They have competitive blood. However, at the end of the day, they are here for just a love of horses.

Moffatt: If it was for a love of anything else, it is not worth doing. The number of overtime hours, the amount of work you put into this; you'd be better to work McDonald's or retail. Because, by the time you average out what we make hourly, it is, probably, not a great decision from a financial point of view.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Moffatt: It becomes a lifestyle. It is the way we live. It's what we do; it's who we are. All of it is centered around the horses. Certainly, I hope anyone pursuing this as a career is in it because of a love of horses. Because if you love the horses, then you will still like this on a bad day. You will always lose more classes than you win. It doesn't how good or are or how good you get. If you are only liking it when you're winning, then it is the wrong sport and the wrong career for you. If you love the horses and like doing things with the horses, then it becomes the right career.

Jacobsen: As things have developed over the last 50 years, individuals in the prior generations had a sport, show jumping, that was not necessarily quite figured out. Mac Cone recalls, basically, in Tennessee building jumps out of random boards and branches in his backyard!

Moffatt: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: The horse was bought for his sister. He ended up seeing her jumping. He said, "I want to jump 4' with that thing." So, he set a goal with these home-made jumps to get this thing jumping 4'. He succeeded. But he said, "It was stupid. It was dangerous." But he didn't know any better. Those things mark, in my mind, a much more rough-and-tumble, trial-and-error era of show jumping. When I am talking to people in the modern period, more aspects of it are figured out: How to ride properly, how to have proper form, how to develop a horse along, where to get your horses, what kind of horses to have. On the one hand, things are a lot more figured out. So, there is a lot less trial-and-error to do. Yet, there are other things to figure out. However, if you are looking at those trends over time, which again takes many, many decades, do you think that the loss of that trial-and-error can create softening of younger individuals who are coming into the sport to not have the continual battering with reality to really get that grit, so they can become those next great riders?

Moffatt: Absolutely, I think the struggle is necessary. I think that we are a product of our experiences. Those struggles that, sometimes, can be viewed as negative because they are hard, are difficult, are hard work. They hurt. Whatever the case may be, those struggles are what makes people, what makes individuals. I think that some hardship is necessary in order to achieve success. If it all comes for nothing, it comes with no work, no hardship, no discomfort, then did you really, truly get the experience? Did you really win it? I think that those things are what make you appreciate what you do have and do achieve. I, definitely, think that we have to allow people to make mistakes. We have to allow people to think their way through things, sometimes. I think that it is fantastic what previous generations have done in terms of being able to figure these things out. I am not saying necessarily that we have to take steps back. I think people need to not be afraid of failing, making mistakes. It is through failure that we get better.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 37: Deborah Clayton on Equestrian Fashion and a Respect for Show Jumping (1)

***Deborah Clayton** is the Lead Buyer/Vendor Relations for Thunderbird Show Park (2017-Present). She has been the Retail Store Manager for Tbird Clothing Co., a freelance designer, Sole Proprietor/Head Buyer/Designer/Merchandiser of Puddle Jumpers Fine Children's Clothing, Designer for Cutting Edge Designs, a professional model for BIP Daisho/Excel Models, Senior Customer Service Representative for Alders International Duty Free, a fashion consultant for Cactus. She is a graduate of KPU's Fashion/Apparel Design program. Clayton transitioned from law school aspirations to a thriving career in fashion, driven by her passion for fashion history and practical design. Educated at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, she learned comprehensive fashion design, emphasizing functionality for equestrian clients. Clayton integrates chic, practical designs for Thunderbird's global clientele while balancing affordability and exclusivity. She values the equestrian culture of humility, dedication, and teamwork, noting riders' profound respect for their horses. Thunderbird's boutique-style village exemplifies Clayton's efforts to maintain country charm and artistic appeal. Her future plans include rainwear and expanding vendor experiences to enhance community offerings.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Okay, so, let's start from the top, what gave you an interest in fashion? What were other options on the table for you – other than fashion? I am aware of some for you, now.

Deborah Clayton: It was a love of law. I was accepted into law school, but I loved fashion. More importantly, a history of fashion, designers like Chanel and Dior (Christian Dior), really an appeal of French designers as well as the Japanese. I chose a creative route. One of the best programs in the West at KPU, Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

Jacobsen: Was this around the time the wealthy couple opened the expansion? I forget the name.

Clayton: They opened the campus in Richmond. Later, they opened the school Chip Wilson sponsored, the Wilson School of Design.

Jacobsen: Was there an area of specialization within fashion, or was it fashion in general that was the interest for you?

Clayton: My degree was called Fashion Design and Clothing Technology. It encompassed everything from concept to design to construction to delivery. Ironically, because of Thunderbird, I am using every single thing I learned back in the 90s, currently. That's really, really super rewarding.

Jacobsen: How did you develop your educational experience and knowledge base as you went through Kwantlen Polytechnic University? What were some of the key pieces of information or theories of fashion and technology?

Clayton: We were taught everything from the drafting to the pattern making to the factory costing, the design, history, the processes. The program is second to none in Canada. It was hours and hours of doing it, and application, and mentoring. You had mentoring with a designer. I was with Feizal Virani in Vancouver for two months under his tutelage. I had researched the program. It was modelled after FIT in New York.

Jacobsen: What was that program in New York?

Clayton: The Fashion Institute in New York is the best in North America.

Jacobsen: What does it bear as its mark within the fashion industry in North America?

Clayton: With the case of FIT in New York and KPU, you have to apply. There is a lengthy application process. When I was accepted, I had to come down. I lived in Salmon Arm. I came down to Vancouver and did an interview. They made us do a math exam. It is important to know dimensions in drafting. We had to present a portfolio and also a garment we had designed. In the end, there were 35 of us accepted into the program out of what they said was 1,000 applicants.

Jacobsen: Wow. What was it like being part of that 35?

Clayton: It was hilarious. We were a tight group. It was friendly. We were in the old campus. If you have ever watched the show *Project Runway*, it was, literally, like that at deadline. People think that is dramatic for television. It isn't.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Clayton: We would be kept there until 11 o'clock. It was like a bell would ring. The janitor would say, "You have to go out." We would be like, "No!" They would say, "Time's up." The final exam, they gave us measurements of a fictional person and their occupation. They said, "Here is the fabric, design a dress for them." It was interesting. Everything came out differently for every student. You were given 8 hours to do it. From the measurements to designing to pattern drafting to sewing to finishing and costing and presenting, after 8 hours, there were people who didn't finish. The stress levels: It was the most stressful time in my life.

Jacobsen: What was the lesson from that 8-hour period for you?

Clayton: Now, I know. They made it so stressful so life would feel easier. Because, for instance, I am working the factory for Thunderbird's private line, the private collection. Yes, I designed it. On Monday, I approved dip samples, the colours. I'm not making the dips. I'm not making the clothing. I'm not putting our logo on. Someone else is doing it. I am managing it, but I have my role. Where, in school, you did every role. That wasn't realistic. When you're designing, you have a team that supports you.

Jacobsen: One thing I notice with horse people akin to what you're saying with fashion. It is nice to know some of the theory. However, you need to have the background in the field. You have to be on the ground working to really get a sense of, not only what each role is but also, the practical elements of how the systems relate to one another.

Clayton: I agree. You see that at the Show Park. There are so many people who go into a horse's success. It is a team. Horse people are very savvy. They are hard working. Sometimes, surprisingly, down to earth, at the same time, they demand quality. So, designing for horse people has been awesome, because, I know, first and foremost, you want things to be chic and inspiring, but we have a level of quality that must be adhered to.

Jacobsen: There are businesses like Miriam Alden's [Brunette the Label](#) in Vancouver. She has described, in a recent article in the *Vancouver Sun* (Harris, 2022) about her, about being a horse crazy girl or being a woman equestrian, where it is this idea of trying to keep the high fashion with the dirty barn culture that comes with it because you're constantly cleaning up. How do you orient to a challenging clientele with that sensibility?

Clayton: That comes down to fabrics, to textiles. I could design something and think, “I would love for it to have silk in it.” But realistically, it has to go in the washing machine. It has to be laundered. It has to work in the barn. There is a limit to how chic in can be, because it has to perform. When I’m buying as well as designing for Show Park, I have to look at a performance factor.

Jacobsen: What admixtures work?

Clayton: Instead of 100% cotton, we are doing a 40:60 blend in our textiles, so it can hold up. It can be handled and laundered. Also, the stretch, it has the performance element. Also, sometimes, a waterproofing because, as you know the area, the elements play into it. Funny enough, in California, down at Thermal, they are getting tons of rain right now.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Clayton: I am always looking to get things like a chic poncho because they can throw it on and it keeps them dry. Also, with equestrians, we want it to look good on a horse too, because it is a totally different challenge. When I look at a t-shirt, we did 1, one year. Where I did a design down the back, it went the whole length of the back. It looked good on hangers. It looked good in the shop. Right? But when they sat, it looked weird. Because you don’t, normally, worry about how things look sitting down. But I love to see the Tbird clothing on riders on their horse. I think it is fabulous when it still looks good. So, I am very mindful of the length and how it looks as they are warming up on the horse, which is, definitely, unique.

Jacobsen: How do you cater to the women clientele and the men clientele based on differences in the fashion tastes, aesthetic tastes?

Clayton: For the women, it is, definitely, fit. They tend to be a leaner lady. I, generally, design for the fit rider who is a little more petite in stature. For the men, I find they’re all striving to be in good shape too. They want to be comfortable. We are looking at stretch elements. Fabrics that have a nice hand. Performance, for sure. Honestly, they like a lean look. They are not looking for big, oversized, and boxy. It is not our client.

Jacobsen: A lot of the people coming internationally, they ride all the time and riding burns a lot of calories.

Clayton: They are body conscious. I notice that with the clientele. Even if they are thinking something, they want a close-to-body fit, but also flattering. It is a more tailored fit, generally.

Jacobsen: Now, I am aware, vaguely, that the red coats, probably, come from a historical trend of fox hunting with the little trumpets and the English aristocracy. Do historical trends of equestrianism play into how you form the fashion and the colour coding, outside of the Tbird brand?

Clayton: Definitely, there is that nod to the past. I would love to be able to get into that. But we’re very conscious that we are branding ourselves for the masses. Yes, we want the riders to purchase. We want employees. We want fans. Our base is very, very broad. We do ship worldwide. I just shipped to California. Two ordered this week. I ship to New Zealand, England, Australia, Ireland. There is a following for the brand. I will not say it is what I am designing. They want Tbird. It is a nod to 50 years. It is our golden anniversary. 50 years, people crave having Tbird. When you get into the tailored jackets, that is very specific. It has to fit well. A nod to past, as you say, to performance, I think we leave that to the manufacturers who have been doing it so well for so long. We can’t be everything for everyone. My background, my collection, when

I graduated, I did a very tailored collection. I really love tailoring. It is, probably, my favourite thing in the world. It would bring the cost up too much, too, Scott. Now, you're looking at \$600/\$800 jackets, as a souvenir from Tbird. It is making us too elite, too exclusive. We're trying to be inclusive.

Jacobsen: Is the attempt to sort of make some of the sport fashionable, but boutique?

Clayton: Yes, we're told that we're doing it well, as a brand. The feedback is amazing. I hear from people all over the world. I had a call with someone who was ordering. She said, "I travelled all over the world." She is an official. So, she is all over with equestrianism. She said, "My favourite things are coming out of Thunderbird." It is amazing feedback. We are doing something right.

Jacobsen: Tbird does have the international flavour to it. It was part of Major League, recently. It had two 5* events back-to-back in 2022. It is there. It is present on the international stage, certainly, especially in May and August. If this is the 50th year for George and Diane founding Thunderbird, how do you intend, if you do, to give a nod to their heritage with this particular larger business?

Clayton: I don't want to give too much away. We have a few exciting things. We will be giving a nod to the past in terms of merchandising. The line is under production right now, at the factory. I design the uniforms too, Scott. We've added a brand new beautiful logo designed by our team. A nod to 50 years. The only other thing I can say, I've got a couple of pieces that were inspired by it being the golden anniversary. 50 being the golden. So, it gives a subtle hint. There might be a touch of gold.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] I could imagine orange turning a bit gold.

Clayton: [Laughing] Yes. Orange is huge to us. That is a thing I should say; that's a colour. I love orange. Most of us do. Some people, it is not our favourite. What we do, we keep our staff in orange, predominantly. So, when you walk around the Park, you see the orange jacket, the orange sweatshirt, the khaki bottoms. We all wear it, from management down to janitorial. It unifies the team. So, that's really fun too. So, every employee has that. I try and bring orange tie-ins into the hats or some of the clothing. We're aware that if we sell an orange jacket and the staff wear orange jackets. It is problematic. People do ask for more orange. But we keep it exclusive to our team. It is our Tbird orange. We're adding some really great hats this year too. A new hat line, a straw line, from California. It was to have a nod to the 50th anniversary. Our hard goods... it is going to be really, really special.

Jacobsen: Does the business structure for income generation for Tbird clothing differ substantially from other fashion businesses, or is it taking much of a similar line to other fashion businesses? And if it is different, how so?

Clayton: It is the same. You have cost of goods and margins, and sales. So, it is very simple. I have been doing this for 35 years. That is the easy side of it. What is easy and different, how the village erupts during shows that can be thousands of people, they come back 2 or 3 times per day or, at least, every day. That is not a normal situation to even have someone visit your website every day, let alone come into your bricks-and-mortar store. Our sales are accelerated by the sheer volume of people.

Jacobsen: Now, I have heard the retail industry has struggled during Covid, since the beginning of Covid and onward. Does this impact the expected income generation for Tbird clothing, or do

you see a compensatory mechanism for more income online, or does having these vendors and this village make this impact null?

Clayton: I know how everyone is doing in vendor row. People want the upscale souvenir. It is not normal. I tell the team, “We have something really special going on.” Because I know what it is like to have a company during recessions and the door not open, but we have people coming and going constantly. We are so grateful. It is so lovely.

Jacobsen: What items tend to be the best sellers?

Clayton: Hats! Hats, hats, hats, and the sweatshirts, pullovers, we sell thousands of hats per year.

Jacobsen: Are those the souvenir items people can take home with them?

Clayton: Yes, it is a price point. You take it home yourself or to your staff back at home, or the barn, whoever looked at your animals while you were away, e.g., dog or cat. We sell thousands of units.

Jacobsen: That’s also true from personal experience. I know a friend who went to Thermal, brought me back a hat from Desert International Horse Park, went back to Montreal, dropped off her cat, got me a Montreal hat. Yes, I mean, it is, definitely, in line with some of the culture; I’ve seen.

Clayton: I can say that about the culture of equestrians. I knew it a little bit. I know it a lot more after 6 years. They are the most generous people I’ve ever met, bar none. I’ve been in sport, in hockey. They come in at the last hour and say, “We’re all loaded up, but we need gifts for this, this, this, and this.” It is phenomenal. We are very conscious of it being a gifting experience too. We want the affordability. I always say, “We are going to be inclusive for everyone.” I want everyone to be able to walk into Tbird clothing and to buy something. So, we need different price levels.

Jacobsen: People have been very hospitable to me, too. It has been the same with the interviews too. They say, “Yes”. Unless, they have too many time conflicts.

Clayton: I think they are generous in every way. I love when the shows are on. I love the family history of the Tidball family. I go back with them. They used to shop at my business for their children.

Jacobsen: That’s so funny.

Clayton: Laura and Brent were customers of mine in the 2000s with their son. It is really neat.

Jacobsen: This is a relevant point too. It is not discussed much in general culture. But I think it is an important point. You have a life outside of your business. You are a mom. You have successful children. They have gone to UBC, and so on. How do you balance making sure your children have standards of excellence for themselves, they achieve, as well as your own business pursuits and ambitions? What is your recipe for balance of those two? What is your recipe for success in both regards?

Clayton: That’s a good question. I know, for sure, I always evaluate a 5-year plan or a set of 5-year plans. After I had my children, as a designer, I was designing bridal gowns. That became complicated when you have three boys who are playful. I said, “This isn’t going to work much longer. I don’t have the time. I am worried where they are stored. I had a studio.” We stopped

that. We built a home, a custom home, too. That's the creative. Then I opened my business, which was open for 13 years. Then there was a break. I think, there are chapters in your life. My priority before coming to Thunderbird was the boys really needing me. They were in critical points of their boarding or education. They needed support and a cheerleader, and my husband as well. I wasn't bored. I was like, "I need something." I am thrilled that, in my late 40s, this chapter opened up where I am designing and merchandising, and growing the vendor operations at Thunderbird, working within the team. Also, I am working the factory on production. I am learning new skills, which everyone should want to learn until the day they die. The flexibility, I have flexibility. Family is first. That is universal at Thunderbird. If something comes up with family, that comes first. As much as I love the work, you have to set those priorities.

Jacobsen: Do you find Canadian culture is accepting and flexible compared to the past for working moms?

Clayton: Oh, it's amazing now. I know lots of people, where having that year off after you have a child and being able to work from home. It's just phenomenal for moms, and dads. The dads can have parental leave as well. Canada is the envy of the world in that regard.

Jacobsen: When I went to Iceland for an international congress and was running for an international youth organization, I won the election: Hooray. The president of Iceland gave a speech to 30 or 40 of us at the University of Iceland's lecture hall. He has 5 kids. They have equal maternity and paternity leave. Each time or most of the times, he took that time off to spend with his children. So, I think having that can be helpful to both moms and to dads, and the flexibility can be helpful for couple. I think you're definitely right about Canada being an envy of the world. Certainly, other countries are on that track or even a little ahead.

Clayton: It is different if you are self-employed. You do not have leave, but you do have flexibility. Creative people, designers, you work really hard. Like right now, I worked hard until Christmas. January is a little lighter. Come March, March to September, it is full throttle. That's the reality of our business, but that's okay. I enjoy work. I love what I do. I have been to Iceland too. We stopped there on the way to Germany.

Jacobsen: Oh, nice! How long were you there for?

Clayton: We did the 2-day stop over. We loved the quick flight. The airline was great, Icelandic.

Jacobsen: Yes, Keflavik [Laughing].

Clayton: I loved how efficient it was. They were like, "Sit down, we got your bag, here's your water."

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Clayton: Every time, we left; they were ahead of time. When does that ever happen?

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Clayton: I love efficiencies too. I should say that. That is my pet peeve, when things aren't run efficiently. We stayed at the Ion Adventure Hotel, like from a Bond movie. We were out by a geothermal plant, and it was cantilevered. It was so different, right? I like going to different places. That blew our minds. It felt like you were on another planet.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] My European friends are like, “They’re not European. Even though, they are European.”

Clayton: We were very intrigued. We will go back. Even look at the Icelandic horses, where we stayed at the Ion Adventure Hotel, there was this Icelandic horse on the wall. There were all these nods to horses. And I love horses. That’s the best part of Thunderbird. Pinch me, you see the most exquisite horses every day. People don’t appreciate the natural beauty and those animals. I think that’s a huge gift. It makes me very happy. We’ll go back. We’re going to Europe soon. We will do that stopover soon. Very cool, good music too.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] How do you find the 3*, 4*, 5*, events when international community comes to Thunderbird Show Park and makes purchases? How do you find that clientele different from the more local clientele?

Clayton: I don’t want to offend anyone. I don’t know if you can say that. *You know.* They are millionaires and billionaires. I wouldn’t say that I buy for them. I do go off to market when I do the high-end buying. I am at a point now, Scott, where I can think of specific clients. They phone me, directly. It’s something I pride myself in; I know this specific person would like this, including Jane. I would, probably, have her in mind when I buy the higher-end ladies’ lines, for sure. I think of Christopher Pack (President, formerly COO, of Thunderbird Show Park) when I am buying the men’s. It’s nice when you buy or design to think of specific people and what would please them. Let’s just say, they are very generous people.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] When you get these calls, how do you maintain a long-term rapport, speaking of 6 years at Thunderbird, with these high-end clientele important for the upper echelon of purchases?

Clayton: I don’t discriminate and want to keep them as clientele. The person who bought the \$24 hat is just as important to us. The team that works with me. I make sure that we remember something about someone. Be it, ultimately, their name or where they are from, how long they have been here; we have the luxury: They’re with us for 3 weeks, Scott, at least 2 weeks. So, if you don’t start to glean stuff about them and get that rapport, that is so unique. We do remember, but also build the database and get their client information. To be honest, we become friends with them. They invite us down to Desert Horse Park. We get standing invites to join them. It is pretty special. It’s great service too. It will make us memorable to them. It is not just the item. We have to deliver great personal service.

Jacobsen: What is your philosophy on customer service?

Clayton: It is paramount. You know that. I will deliver it.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] That is true!

Clayton: Whatever we can do to go above and beyond, to exceed expectations.

Jacobsen: What would you think of as a next area of expansion or of the clothing line?

Clayton: Rainwear.

Jacobsen: That is *such a good idea*.

Clayton: It is *in the works*. I’m looking at textiles right now. We are, probably, a year off.

Jacobsen: Have you teamed with any other businesses in your time there?

Clayton: At Thunderbird?

Jacobsen: Yes, so, working with another distributor to keep the Tbird logo and title while having some other expertise to bring about a new item.

Clayton: No, I must be control freak, hey?

Jacobsen: [Laughing] That's fine.

Clayton: It happens organically. We have Kingsley Footwear. She's got beautiful custom footwear. She brings in Canadian logos, Tbird orange colours. We have to be mindful. As vendor relations, I don't want to step on people's toes that do blazers really well, footwear really well. We are not going to ever be – and we have had meetings about this – all things to all people. We are going to respect other areas of the park that have their expertise.

Jacobsen: Where do you find the most difficult area of balancing? I do not mean work-life balance mentioned before. I mean balance between other businesses, clientele, keeping the business running. It is a very large ensemble, a very large dance, to keep going.

Clayton: Like I said, I want everyone to be succeeding in our vendor row. It is diverse. So, everyone has their niche. So, we set them up for success and we support each other. We are, definitely, becoming a community there. Where, through our social platforms, we will promote each others' things. Someone will say, "Do you have a saddle pad?" "No, we don't, but you can go a few doors down. And they do." Of course, we are proprietary on branding. It is important. But there is room for everyone, I believe. The other thing is, it is making sure we also manage expectations. I said, "Exceed." We have people say, "You have saddle pads. You should have tack. You should have this and that." You listen. Feedback is amazing. We want to make sure that we're not doing too much. That we do what we do very well. To me, sometimes, businesses grow too quickly. Right now, we are managing growth. I think we have to manage it very closely.

Jacobsen: Do other venues, such as the largest in the country, e.g., Thunderbird is one and Spruce Meadows is another, or large equestrian event centres or show parks, have similar businesses in theirs, or is this more unique to Thunderbird Show Park?

Clayton: It is unique to us. A dedicated village is quite unique. We have beautiful, handcrafted cabins. We are adding two. So, there'll be two brand new cabins; that we're taking delivery of and constructing in the next few months. I spearheaded an expansion. We're going to have a guest cabin experience. I feel like it will cater to artisan vendors who can guest with us for a week. We can ensure a way of having fresh vendors rather than a year-long lease. It is very exciting. That is happening this year as well.

Jacobsen: Do you remember in downtown Reykjavik the stone buildings? Everything, *everything*, is boutique. It has 120,000 people or more, which isn't many people for a capital city. Yet, it manages to keep a boutique appeal to it.

Clayton: I love that.

Jacobsen: That's the sense I get from attending the village and making purchases.

Clayton: That's awesome. That's what we're going for. We don't want it to feel commercial in any way. We want it to feel exclusive and unique. We are trying to keep a bit of country charm

too. We don't want to be a bit too chic. We are in the country and are a family business. We want to keep the charm. We are very conscious of that.

Jacobsen: What are those two other expansions, by the way?

Clayton: We are having Debra Garside, who is an acclaimed photography artist, amazing. You can look her up. We will have a full gallery, which is just amazing. I love bringing an artistic side. She has popped up with us over the years. Then this guest cabin and a concierge, a dedicated Thunderbird concierge. We will keep the guest of the guest cabin a secret until the debut. We will, probably, have 8 guest vendors.

Jacobsen: I've had 15 months in the industry. You've had 6 years. How would you describe equestrians, in particular show jumpers?

Clayton: I think they're focused, dedicated, adventurous.

Jacobsen: At the end of the day, it is all down to the horse for them.

Clayton: Yes, all of them.

Jacobsen: Just based on osmosis, they, constantly, talk about the horse not just as a horse, but as a partner.

Clayton: I've made so many friends now. I'll see them have a great ride. I just saw what they did to get that horse to jump. My friend from Mexico. She is tiny. She is on this massive horse. She is my age. I think she is so delicate with her reining. She is delicate, but she made it go clear. I'll say, "Wow, that was an amazing ride." She's like, "Oh, it was the horse." Right away, they shut it down. I agree with you. For them, it is all about the horse. They (the rider) are the accessory. They are trained to be humble about it, and the respect for the animal. When you come to Thunderbird Show Park and see the beginner jumpers and see the international pros, the 5*, the Major League, the Grand Prix Longines, you see people fall off horses, get thrown. It is not just easy. They make it look incredibly easy. Some are in their 30s, 40s, 50s. It is time spent and dedication to the sport. But the reason I use "adventurous", don't you think jumping over high obstacles is adventurous and brave? We'll see people hurt and then back there the next day.

Jacobsen: There are tons of stories of people with broken wrists, broken fingers.

Clayton: No big deal.

Jacobsen: Yes [Laughing].

Clayton: Yes, I have such a respect for the horse. It is so incredible and valuable to young people to do a sport that requires you to care for an animal at the same time. It is amazing.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 38: Deborah Clayton on Being a Show Jumping Destination (2)

Deborah Clayton is the Lead Buyer/Vendor Relations for Thunderbird Show Park (2017-Present). She has been the Retail Store Manager for Tbird Clothing Co., a freelance designer, Sole Proprietor/Head Buyer/Designer/Merchandiser of Puddle Jumpers Fine Children's Clothing, Designer for Cutting Edge Designs, a professional model for BIP Daisho/Excel Models, Senior Customer Service Representative for Alders International Duty Free, a fashion consultant for Cactus. She is a graduate of KPU's Fashion/Apparel Design program. Clayton emphasized the respect for horses across equestrian disciplines, whether in trail riding or high-level show jumping. She highlighted the immense logistical efforts, from transporting horses to maintaining a 5-star experience at Thunderbird Show Park. Clayton discussed the financial and physical challenges riders face, noting the dedication required in the sport. Safety advancements, like inflatable vests, are improving rider protection. Thunderbird, celebrating its 50th anniversary, plans special merchandise, including a "50th Tour" t-shirt commemorating its legacy. Clayton underscored the importance of fostering connections, enriching visitor experiences, and showcasing Thunderbird as a unique destination for equestrians and spectators worldwide.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: If you know, how does this compare to other domains of equestrianism, equitation, racing, or hunters, there will be subtle differences. There will be obvious differences between trail rides and carriage tours versus show jumping, but there might be subtler ones when you compare some of the other disciplines.

Deborah Clayton: I don't think it's that different, Scott. You have to respect the animal. You can't go on a trail ride and not tack them up properly and be disrespectful. You have to always respect the animal. It is interesting to see the high-level athlete's love of a good trail ride around Thunderbird. It's the thrill, or just walking them, reining them around. It is really cool. I think you see that in your work as well.

Jacobsen: I didn't realize, as a coupled note to what I'm about to say, the amount of work and thought that goes into the stuff around it: The landscaping, the gardening, the maintenance and cleaning work. Then there's just the groundwork: Keeping the stalls clean, doing waters, doing hay, and then there's all the riding, which I have no experience in [Ed. One lesson].

Clayton: Then there're the vet bills.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] Someone showed me the vet bill. That's a lot of money and a lot of sub-money when you add up the totals.

Clayton: We had a candle line this year. "Candles for Dirty Equestrians", which was pretty cute. It was made in Montreal. Beautiful candles, what do you think our #1 seller was? It was "Burn your vet bills".

Jacobsen: I could imagine the second one being "Pine-Sol".

Clayton: They were like, "Burn your vet bills. We'll take one." It is not for the faint of heart, for sure. Do you know what else blows me away? Maybe, because my husband is in logistics, the movement of the horses. I will have someone who drove from Grand Prairie by themselves with their truck and trailer. Like, I'm talking a 30-year-old professional lady. She loaded the horse and drove it from Grand Prairie to Langley by herself, and unloaded it. You'll see the horse haulers

come in. They're off to the airport to fly the horses to Mexico City or Europe. Logistically, it is incredible. That's been enlightening. I didn't know that that transport happened in such a big way. They have to be very careful that they are not injured in transport or get sick. There are so many moving parts at Thunderbird. I like to say, "We're almost like a 5-star hotel. We want to give the best experience from top to bottom. A high-end hotel that people come to, for two weeks, with their horses." We're always trying to make improvements. The food is high quality. The footing for the horses is high quality. The stabling is high quality. The first priority for Thunderbird is always the horses - #1. Then the other stuff is additional to the experience. If people didn't like it, they wouldn't be coming back.

Jacobsen: I feel as though the fun that people have at Thunderbird Show Park is in light of the fact that much of the rest of the time off, when they are not competing, is 6 or 7 days a week. Long, *hard* work, that takes a toll on people. Emotionally, people get tired, get frustrated. It is not necessarily the environment. It is not necessarily the people. It is more-so the amount of work can get to people. So, the chance to get to go to a really nice place to show is a nice treat. There's a woman named Kimberley Martens on the Longines ranking. She's in the Netherlands with her husband running a farm. She would love to come to Spruce Meadows because, for her, it was a real treat to show at places like that, but she said it's 10,000 Euros one way for one horse. It becomes incredibly expensive when you calculate that and all the other expenses. It's one of those things. When they finally get to do it, which they've had a lot of delayed gratification to do it, it is an enormous treat for them because it is what they love to do.

Clayton: I have friends who have gone to Wellington in Florida or Thermal in California. Then they just rented a horse from someone down there. People find a way. There are costs. But, maybe, they are on someone else's horse. Then they get the experience. That can happen. I think people are really generous with helping each other out. Not a sport for the faint of heart, for sure, it's tough.

Jacobsen: That's one of the myths; I've found. When I was doing, not interviews but, article writing on some of the sport and looking at different aspects of the sport in Langley, questions would arise. Then I would become a little curious about it. I tend to be a quiet person and intuit things, and try to reflect on it. I thought about it. What about the injury rates? It was hard to find governmental data on it, but very high injury rates. Obviously, you find more girls getting injured. It is just because more girls between 12 to 17 are in it in Canada. Mac Cone puts it down to the focus on equitation and hunters. But it's hugely injurious because you can fall off, get bucked off, get trampled on. Anything at any point in time.

Clayton: They are making strides. Obviously, everyone is in a helmet. The safety vests that are inflatable that can fit under a blazer. I think they are very well designed and will become common. You don't even see them on a person under a blazer. They protect your organs and your neck and back if you fall. It is like how in hockey no one wore helmets and now they do.

Jacobsen: Seatbelts in cars!

Clayton: Seatbelts in cars, now, players wear neck guards to protect the throat. I think it is coming, where they are just going to become standard because we saw a grand prix rider. She may have even won the class during the Summer when she had one on. That was not the norm at that level that they would be. That is going to start it, right? That's a good thing, keep the sport safer. It is a very safety conscious sport. But it is an animal. That's what I think is so brave. You can be

well-trained, can have the right gear. Ultimately, that is an animal. It could be having a bad day. It is in a way that you've never seen. I feel it is as dangerous as F1 racing.

Jacobsen: 100%, that's a common analogy. F1, NASCAR, similarly expensive at a high level, similarly dangerous, you're right.

Clayton: Transporting the horses, you can lose a lot of money. But it is thrilling. Nothing is more exciting than when someone goes clean and wins the jump-off. It is grand prix Sundays and finals. They are exhilarating. If people haven't come, they should come and experience it. Then they're like, "When can I come back?"

Jacobsen: Things that I see. On the international stage, obviously, there are more men on the Longines Ranking. Typically, Western European men, but in Canada, we produce some of the best – in, fact the best consistently – women show jumpers in the world out of the 80+ countries that are part of it. We are doing something unique with regards to training young women riders into adult women riders.

Clayton: Tiff had an incredible year this year.

Jacobsen: Absolutely, so, certainly, this is more of an outsider's perspective. It would be nice to see more women at the high end, so changing some of the systems in European show jumping culture and also seeing more balance in Canada. Very rarely do I see young boys riding at the 12 to 17 age range, you may have these boys who have an animal sense, a natural talent of horse sense, can ride on feel. The way it is structured, they are more attracted to things like baseball, soccer, or hockey as in your boys' cases. I have not done a formal analysis. It would require a little more research and conversation. But I think it would be interesting.

Clayton: Our top athletes in the sport were Ian Millar and Eric Lamaze for decades, though. There has been a shift. They ruled Canadian equestrian for so many years. But, maybe, it is in cycles. I love that it is men and women against each other, head-to-head, because it is really about the horse. Whoever is on top of the horse, they seem to think it is insignificant, but it is relationships, ultimately. I like when riders like her have such a special connection with the horse and everything is working for them. It is really beautiful.

Jacobsen: A lot of people will talk about the pleasure of watching someone in their heyday, like Eric Lamaze in late 2000s, early 2010s, riding with Hickstead. It was a very smooth, easy, but fast and accurate ride. It was very clean.

Clayton: Ian Millar and Big Ben, everyone watched it. It was Saturday television in Canada. Everyone would recognize the name. It was special. We're getting there with maturity. 50 years is a lot. Thunderbird has maturity with the history of the Park. We've had some really special moments. I am very excited to be a very small part of it. I am not a big part of it. It is really exciting.

Jacobsen: What do you find people do in the village? Do they walk and gander at things? Are they on their phones, mostly? Are they picking things up for other people? Are they gifting? What are some of the market behaviours?

Clayton: What we cater to in the village is if they have their food and drink experience, they have their technical apparel that they need or their tack; that they are gifting for sure. Sometimes, they are shopping to pass time for pleasure and connections, or social. Post-Covid, it was back to those lovely connections with people on the front rows of the shops reconnecting. Lots of hugs.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Clayton: Lots of reunions, it is really lovely, and plans made for later. People really do explore our area. Sometimes, they go to the island and down into Vancouver, up to Whistler. The whole coming to Thunderbird experience is really a West Coast experience. We try and facilitate through customer service. We will say, “Have you seen this? Have you been to Fort Langley? Have you made it to Stanley Park? Do you have time to go to Tofino or Victoria?” So, we have to be ambassadors. That is part of working at Thunderbird. You are helpful and an ambassador for all things. It’s good. We are going to try and add more food trucks and things as well. But that is part of the expansion coming later.

Jacobsen: Do you have any final or feelings based on the conversation today?

Clayton: No, it has been lovely. I appreciate it. I hope we can get, primarily, people excited to come to the Show Park this year. They can come to our website too, tbird.ca. The information is there. They can shop our goods. They are designed to be worn in your life, too. I would say an elevated souvenir, but I don’t like the word “souvenir”.

Jacobsen: A keepsake, a memento.

Clayton: Yes. It is really cool. You will remember it fondly with your experience, so you will have an emotional attachment. We are trying to make something for this year to be something for everyone: men, women, children. Also, something to commemorate for the 50 years, so something you can cherish. Oh! I have the best t-shirt. You need to know this, Scott. It is going to be the best t-shirt because it is going to be a concert t-shirt vibe. The back of it is the year, like you would see concert dates.

Jacobsen: That’s like 1973? That sort of thing.

Clayton: No! I am doing this year. I am calling it the 50th tour.

Jacobsen: Are you going to have all the show names and stuff like that?

Clayton: Sponsors, names, making sure to include the George and Diane Tidball legacy, I thought it was essential, because it was our 50th year. “Tour” came up. So, you are going to want it. It is going to come in 2 colours.

Jacobsen: I will order one in each colour. Can I pre-order?

Clayton: Of course, I’ll hook you up.

Jacobsen: Oh! The hook-up, that’s good, for year 2.

Clayton: I am going to get black-and-white images of things past in the Show, then have them mounted as part of the display of the shop. The shop was due to look different. So, there’s a lot of work ahead of me. But it is all very clear. I am intentional in what I am doing. I have amazing help. We will make it really, really special.

Jacobsen: I would love to see some of the old pictures of the Colossus grounds one.

Clayton: I’ve got family. Laura in her heyday, and Brent. It is really cool. Jane has dipped into the archives for me. And I have them. I am excited to get started. Alright, have an awesome day and stay in touch, bye!

Jacobsen: Bye.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 39: Alicia Gadban-Lewis on Show Jumping Development and Lifestyle (1)

Alicia Gadban-Lewis is a Trainer at Imperial Stables Ltd. in Delta, British Columbia, Canada. She was crowned the 2021 Truman Homes Equestrian Canadian Show Jumping Champion. Gadban-Lewis began her equestrian journey as a child in Vancouver, quickly embracing the lifestyle and deciding to pursue a career as a professional rider and trainer. Training with top mentors, including Tiffany Foster, exposed her to elite competition and re-energized her Olympic aspirations. She highlighted the critical connection between rider and horse, cultivated over time, as unique to equestrian sports. Gadban-Lewis emphasized resilience in a sport where wins are rare, the importance of a strong support team, and the joy of the process over results. She admires the sport's longevity, citing inspirations like Beth Underhill's enduring career.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, most of the riders who I have interviewed. They have a very early age of getting into horses. It starts very young. It is a make-or-break period a lot of the time. Sometimes, they will come back after their whole run like Mario Deslauriers. In general, once you're in it, they do it. It becomes a lifestyle. They continue on with it.

Alicia Gadban-Lewis: Yes, I had a typical start as a kid. I started in Southlands in Vancouver. It started with weekly lessons. It was called "Badge", which is similar to Pony Club. We did a lot of stable management. Then I joined the Pony Club. Then I had a *really* naughty pony. She was horrible. I didn't last long with her in Southlands. I moved out to Delta, which is where our farm is now. It is a bigger training facility. We were out here in a boarding facility until I was 12. Then my family bought the farm across the street from where we were boarding in 2009. That was when it took off for me. It was always a sport that I did full-time. It became our lifestyle. Not only for me, but for my parents as well. All through my junior career, I rode as well.

From the age of 12 when my family bought this facility, I knew this was what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a professional rider and horse trainer. My focus since, probably, the age of 17 has always been learning how to run a training business with clients. That is where I really put most of my attention. I always knew I was a talented rider, so I developed horses on the side. I didn't really know it was possible for me at the highest level until Covid hit. Tiffany came to Canada. I started to train with her. She exposed me to a different feel and a different level. I have a horse that is good enough for it. I got a taste for the higher level. It re-energized me. Ever since then, I haven't really looked back [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Lewis: I am totally invested. I want to go to the Olympics. That is the path I am on, the Olympics.

Jacobsen: There are two parts of the response. The trainer who really inspires you. That is something common among riders. Another thing that I haven't quite delved into is getting the taste at a more elite level of performing, of riding. So, what is the experience of working with someone who knows what that world is like, how to push you? What is the feeling of performing at that level the first time?

Lewis: Being with someone who has been inside and knows how to push you, I have been really fortunate to have a few really good trainers. It is not just one person for me. It has been several that have brought me along the way. When you have someone behind you, the feeling when they

know you can do it is essential as an athlete. I think any sport will tell you the team around you is your glue. You are as good as the team around you. With us and the horses, it is the vet, the farrier, and so on. You can't out-train or out-ride your team. For example, you have to have your groom; I am fortunate to have an amazing groom. It is open-ended for me. It is a really special thing to feel that support. I have had stronger teams at different points in my career and have had weaker teams. Right now, I feel like I have a really strong team. It's indescribable when you're in the ring with someone who believes in you and helped you create a good plan, and is there cheering you on; it gives you a heightened sense of comfort.

To answer the second part of the question [Laughing], it is the best thing ever. The adrenaline, the sense of accomplishment, we work for hours and days to live and breathe it for two minutes in the ring. The connection with the horse, at that level. You're connected with the horse. You don't only catch ride. I do catch riding with my training business at home. You get on a horse that is a sales horse. You ride it. You give it back. It's not the same. Competing at that level, you are, usually, with your partner, like the horse behind me, Beneficial [Ed. Points to photograph on the wall.]. I have had her since she was a baby. So, when I think, she thinks it, too. We have a strong connection. Doing it with her at that level, it is even more special. It is a supreme level of happiness.

Jacobsen: It is one of those sports. Of those sports that I have looked into, show jumping, any horse-based sport is interesting to me. On the one hand, you're dealing with the rider. Theoretically, men and women can compete equally because it is if you can handle a horse, basically. If the horse is too strong, then get a more manageable horse. However, it is interesting because equestrians talk about two athletes when they're talking about one person and one horse. They'll be talking about Jill Henselwood and Special Ed when they're talking about various performances that are pivotal for their career, make or break. To your point, when you're riding intensely with a horse for several hours, you seem to get that connection.

Lewis: Exactly, it is what makes our sport so unique. Also, we can have a show schedule and plans for our horse. I have a bit of a plan for the Summer. The horses tell us what our plan is.

Jacobsen: Ha!

Lewis: That is what is most important to me. There are moments that you push them for sure. For me, doing it can't happen without the horse, I feel, too, being able to work with the horse that works for them, individually, and day-by-day be aware of it, and flexible when it needs to be flexible. It is not just a linear path. We are dealing with an animal. Which is what makes it interesting too, you could be having your best day, but your horse might not be. If you're matching, you feel unstoppable. It doesn't happen all the time. It is unique to our sport. Also, it gives us longevity, too, as athletes. There are peaks and valleys in our career. You look at somebody who I am so amazed and totally inspired by: Beth Underhill. She has had an awesome career, including many years ago. We went to Barcelona to the Nations Cup Finals this past September. She said, "The last time I was here was the 1992 (or something) Olympics." That's so cool.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Lewis: She did that when she was my age now. She is having this second wind in her career. It is because she now has this opportunity with these amazing horses. It is *really* an interesting thing.

It gives our sport so much more longevity. With that comes, as a rider, being ready for the emotions of high times and times of having a training business or a sales business, it is rare to be all out, all the time. I have good horses now. You have to take the opportunity when you find it.

Jacobsen: A lot of the time in the sport, I have heard it said commonly. *Actually*, I had a conversation with someone here yesterday. They said, “90% of the time or more. You’re not winning.” So, when you get whatever position in the higher end of a class, take it, however, you need the resilience to bounce back because that will be more viable when it comes to those failures.

Lewis: Yes, we jump a lot of rounds. There are going to be mistakes. But also recognizing, you move up to a new level. I jumped my first 1.55m and 1.60m grand prix in Spain in October (2022) with a few mistakes. It wasn’t a negative for me because it is a building block to do it better next time. Both of us needed to get the experience at that level. You have to have a very open mindset. We’re all really competitive at that level as riders and competitors. You have to be careful not to get to obsessed with the end result. You have to love the process. Part of the process is dealing with the trials and tribulations of horses and the sport, and the ups and downs, and training: The whole process. If you are going to have longevity in the sport, falling in love with the process and life of it is important.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 40: L.J. Tidball on Staffing, Tiffany Foster, Brent Balisky, and Horses (2)

Laura Jane “L.J.” Tidball has been the Manager of Thunderbird Show Stables, an elite hunter and jumper facility, for 20 years. She is a shareholder and contributing partner to Thunderbird Show Park, which has been voted in the top 3 equestrian show facilities in North America. For Show Park, she has been important in advising on top level equine footing, site development plans for capital improvement, and competitor scheduling for National and FEI competitions. She has been competing at the Grand Prix level since 16-years-old. Since winning the Equine Canada medal (1994) and competing on the British Columbia Young Riders’ team (1996), L.J. pursued equestrianism as a career with a fervent passion. Tidball shows multiple mounts of Thunderbird Show Stables and its clients in the hunter and the jumper rings. Through work from the pony hunters onwards with the assistance of Olympian Laura Balisky and Laura’s husband, Brent, L.J. has achieved many years of success in equitation, and the hunters and the jumpers. In 2005, she returned from a successful European tour to operate Thunderbird on a professional basis. She has been awarded the 2014 Leading BCHJA 2014 rider in the FEI World Cup West Coast League Rankings and the 2014 BCHJA Leading Trainer of the Year. In her spare time, her hobbies include baking, skiing, and snowboarding. Tidball discussed the unique dynamics of show jumping, emphasizing the honesty of horses and the challenge of nurturing them to elite levels. She highlighted the financial and logistical demands of the sport, with most income derived from training, clinics, and horse sales rather than breeding. Tidball noted the importance of camaraderie within Canada’s small equestrian community and admired riders like Tiffany Foster for their dedication, kindness, and professionalism. She reflected on the influence of coaches like Brent Balisky in fostering adaptability and pushing boundaries. Tidball underscored the sport’s longevity, the bond between rider and horse, and the thrill of competition.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: You were noting in the earlier part of the interview about reading the horses. In the sense that, you can read them. You can feel what they are trying to tell you. Are horses a mammal that does not lie?

L.J. Tidball: I don’t think they lie. I think horses are very truthful. They’re not duplicitous in how they act. They do not ‘tell’ you one thing and mean another. I really believe they are straight shooters. I think as horses come up through the levels. It is very hard to tell when jumping 1.20m or 1.30m if the horse can make it to that top level. I think that’s a special animal. I believe once you jump 1.40m and 1.45m, you see where they will go. You don’t think, “That one can jump 1.60m.” When they are a foal, you can have the right bloodline and training program. However, it still may not do that. So, I would say that is the intriguing part of our sport. To see these young horses come up through the ranks, make these goals for them, and put your heart and soul into what you’re doing, and see where they end up, it is a unique process that we get to do as equestrians and as athletes.

Riding is so unique that way. We don’t age out. There is longevity in it. There is a whole business within it. I make my income from horses. Most people doing sport for a living, are not making their income from it and around it. Riding is not a hugely sponsored sport. We make our income in training and buy-and-selling horses. That is pretty unique.

Jacobsen: Where do you see most of the income generation, from the breeding, training, and sale, of horses, or more from the clinics and the training of clientele?

Tidball: I would say it's mostly from training clientele, clinics, and buying and selling horses for your clients. I think that's where most of the income comes from, not when we breed horses. There are horse breeders who make a good living from just that, but it's much harder. You would think of 100 kids. How many are going to be an Olympic athlete? That's what you're looking at with these horses too. Like I said, you can have the right bloodlines, breeding, and training program, you're not guaranteed the result. To bring the horse along, you can breed it yourself, then you have it for 3 years before sitting on it. Those expenses build up over time. It is more of a passion on the breeding side for us. If something comes to fruition out of it, that's just a bonus. Obviously, it is always our end goal, but it is very hard to predict. I love to think that each will be a \$1,000,000 animal. But that's pretty far fetched.

Jacobsen: Is staffing an issue across this industry?

Tidball: I think there will always be people who love horses. I think there will always be staff who come into our barns and our lives who want to work with these animals. They are pretty spectacular. We have amazing horses that we get to go on the road with. There will always be a niche of people who want to be a part of that. Yes, day-to-day barn work, as with the restaurant industry in our area, as with retail industry in general, is hard. Yes, there are shortages of staff. But like I said, because it is horses, I think there will always be people who raise their hand and want to be with them.

Jacobsen: I have read some articles of people who do not compete necessarily. However, they will ride and run businesses. Some free-floating cash they have; they devote it to their horse and their horse life. They will define themselves as a "horse crazy girl".

Tidball: Right.

Jacobsen: What are some factors common that are part of the identity of the people drawn to that culture? I know young girls and young women are, certainly, a larger population for younger riders. Internationally, we tend to see more men at the higher end, European particularly. What are some common factors, other than horses [Laughing]?

Tidball: [Laughing] Yes. I think it is the love of animals. I have to put it down to that. We love animals. Also, you have to have an innate sense of feeling. You have to want to understand the animal. Like you said, to have that conversation, if you walk up to the animal and have no desire to know what the conversation is, probably, you are not meant to be in this industry.

Jacobsen: Right [Laughing].

Tidball: If you walk up and don't really care... for example, I'm really allergic to cats. When I see a cat, I don't want to have a conversation at all.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Tidball: I'm sure there are people who feel that way about horses. You have to want to be around these animals and have to have a little bit of awe towards them too. A 1,000 lb. animal will listen to you and will jump over obstacles for you, because you asked with your heel. It is pretty intriguing. To me, it always gives the feeling, "Wow. How does that work?" Even to this day, I look at it. I'm like, "If they said, 'No', it would be a 'no'." The fact that we have this relationship, that they are willing to cantor into a ring and jump the biggest jumps I've ever seen because they want to do it with you. It is pretty awe-inspiring to me.

Jacobsen: What do the horses get out of this?

Tidball: It must be the same level of adrenaline that we feel. When you see a horse come out of a ring, they are hyped. When they jump a big jump, to me, it is the adrenaline that comes out of that; the will to be an athlete. It is easy as people to think that our horses have personalities like they're human beings. I know that they don't, but I think horses have an incredibly high sense of feel. When we have anxiety or are putting positive feeling behind it, or putting strength behind it, I think they can sense it and feel it. When we feel the adrenaline and the rush, I think our horse is feeling it. So, I think that creates the reward for them.

Jacobsen: The dangers of the sport. Those are very real. I have noted in conversation with people outside of the industry. They have a mythology around the sport itself. In that, it is a soft sport [Laughing]. It's very dangerous. The injury rates are very high.

Tidball: Yes.

Jacobsen: It was a struggle to find national data, which was only available, as far as I know, all the way back to 1996 (Government of Canada) for a national injury rate list. So, it's a very dangerous sport. Some of the best people in the sport have had serious injuries. Do you have any of those fears entering competition grounds?

Tidball: No. However, it is a dangerous sport. Like I said, you are riding a 1,000 lb. animal. If you are plagued by that, you should not ride. If being injured or hurt is all you can focus on, then you shouldn't be on the back of an animal. Because what we feel goes into the animals, if that is fear, you are going to be transmitting fear to them. When you look at race car driving, skiing, or many other sports, not many do you think, "That's not dangerous at all." It is a sport. It is not a hobby. I don't know many sports in the world where you can say the injury rate is incredibly low in the sport. I don't think it is part of it. Sport is always related to injury. Of course, we try to mitigate the risk as best we can.

Jacobsen: Who do you admire in this sport?

Tidball: I would say I admire Tiffany (Foster) a lot. She has an incredible drive and an incredible kindness about her. I think it is one of the coolest things if you can get to the top of the sport and can take time to be kind and be true to who you are; it is something that I have always prided myself on. I think she is one of the people who I would look up to the most. She has made it to the highest level and maintained who she is and her sense of who she always was. She always has a smile, always has time, to give to people. It is important as we get higher up we become ambassadors.

Jacobsen: What makes her a great rider?

Tidball: I think all people who are great riders are great because we practice. Like I said to you, when I was in Florida and saw how much faster people were, and immersed myself in it, I think Tiffany is immersed in it and gets the practice. You need some talent and dedication. You can't go practice and practice and think that will do it. She has talent and dedication and practices a lot.

Jacobsen: She has noted in some interviews prior that she "was not a natural talent" (World of Show Jumping, 2022). The idea of practice, practice, practice is akin to the real estate motto "location, location, location".

Tidball: Yes, I agree. I think riding is completely a practiced sport. The more time you spend at a high level with multiple horses jumping, the better you become. It is like a skier who spends

more time on the hill [Ed. Tidball's mother, Jane Tidball, was an Olympic skier for the Canadian team]. A black diamond run isn't so hard for you. If you are a beginner, if we put you at the top of the black diamond run, that is terrifying. The more time we spend at a high level, it becomes part of who you are, and second nature. It doesn't take all the risk away. It doesn't take all the danger away. But when you practice consistently at a high level, you become better and better at it.

Jacobsen: How do you decompress? I am aware of baking (Fédération Equestre Internationale, 2023).

Tidball: [Laughing] I find I work hard, honestly, I work long enough every day when we are at a horse show I decompress by simply being exhausted. I mean, baking is a fun thing that I do on the side. It really has nothing to do with relaxing. I would never bake, usually, around a horse show, because I simply never have time. I had a scholarship to Emily Carr, which is an arts school, when I got out of high school. Which I didn't take, I ended up going to the University of San Diego, instead. I definitely have an artistic background. I find the baking and decorating is letting my artistic side come out. That's, probably, the biggest draw to it, for me. I allow the creativity to flow.

Jacobsen: We talked about the advice Laura gave, and about George and Dianne. What was the advice Brent (Balisky) gave to you?

Tidball: Brent has been very interesting as a coach in my life. He always makes you feel like "I can do anything". When you walk up to the ring and he says, "You got this", it is as if it is ingrained in you, you know you got it. He is incredibly technical. He thinks outside of the box, constantly. As much as I say I am artistic, when it comes to riding, I am the round peg in the round hole and the square peg in the square hole. If it works, I will do the exact same thing that works every day. If I got ready for a class in the morning by flatting my horse, and walking the course twice, and then meditating before I got on, and I got a good result, I guarantee: I will do the exact same thing. I will not change the spurs. I will not change the boots. I do not change things well. If something works, I will keep doing it. What I appreciate about Brent so much, he gets me out of my comfort zone. He challenges me to not be the round peg in the round hole. He challenges me to try something different, to think outside of the box, to make something 5% better when I thought it was good enough. Without him, I think I would keep trudging along on the same path and not see the opportunities coming up beside me.

Jacobsen: There are some cases like Beth Underhill and Mario Deslauriers who had their career and had a second wind. Have there been any cases where it wasn't a second wind, but it was simply a late start for a show jumper - where they started in their later 20s, 30s, 40s, and so on, and became reasonably accomplished in the sport?

Tidball: You know what. I'm not exactly sure. I don't know anyone like that, to be honest. Everyone I know has grown up riding. I grew up with a great group of young riders, one of which was Amy Millar. Ian (Millar) took us to bowling nights when we all showed in Arizona. That group of us. We – literally – grew up on horseback. Basically, that entire group of people who I know that got to national team levels rode when they were young. I don't know the answer to that; I'm sure there is one.

Jacobsen: When I was looking at the individuals on the Longines ranking, there were only 90 Canadians on the listing.

Tidball: [Laughing] Like I said, there are not that many of us.

Jacobsen: So, an indication of the culture, of the sub-culture, that has come up. Everyone knows everyone or everyone knows of everyone, in some sense, with travelling all the time, seeing one another, seeing the names, and seeing the performances. How does that make the community feel, nationally speaking, for you?

Tidball: I think we have a really awesome community. When I go to a horse show, I just came back from California, you see people that you might not have seen for months at a time. It is such a high level of camaraderie. I don't really know any people that are close to me in the sport who wouldn't hope for the best for you. There is longevity. It is not like the soccer team where you're a team one year and then off the next, where as long as you are beating the person next you; you're fine. Riding is not like that. It is such a long-term activity, we encourage each other. My friends that I ride with, outside my barn, whether Tiffany or Kent Farrington. Whoever it is, they encourage. Kent has walked courses at Spruce Meadows with me, to help me out. You learn to appreciate each other. I think it is something unique in our sport. There aren't that many of us. I respect that and respect the fact that we spend a lot of time together. Besides, it is more fun if we get along. Isn't it?

The Greenhorn Chronicles 41: Cindy Waslewsky and Steve Waslewsky on Big Picture Operations, the Township of Langley, ALR, and Bylaws (3)

Cindy Waslewsky went to Stanford University and competed on the Varsity Gymnastics and Ski Teams. She earned a B.A. in Human Biology in 1982. She earned a Diploma in Christian Studies at Regent College in Vancouver, and a BC teachers' certification from the University of British Columbia in 1984. She was the President of the Squamish Valley Equestrian Association. She is a certified English and Western coach. Waslewsky is co-owner of Twin Creeks Ranch. Waslewsky discusses the challenges of operating Twin Creeks Ranch, a 125-acre equestrian facility, amidst rising costs and declining accessibility in British Columbia. They emphasize the financial burden of maintaining horses, including feed, shoeing, and dental care, alongside the industry's environmental considerations, such as manure management. Cindy highlights innovations like pelletized bedding for efficiency and sustainability. Steve notes the importance of farm tax status for survival and critiques labor costs imposed by federal regulations. They stress the strong emotional bond between clients and their horses, portraying equestrianism as a lifestyle sustained by passion despite financial and logistical hurdles.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Let's take a bigger picture within Twin Creeks Ranch as a whole, first, as well. With the indoor arena, the training center at the round pen, the racetrack, and the clubhouse trails, all of these combined into a package of 125 acres; how do you build this into an operational business? From what I'm gathering, a mild constricting of the environment for equestrianism, at least, in British Columbia a little bit, particularly in areas like the Township of Langley with rising property prices and, thus, a decrease in the number of people who can afford.

Cindy Waslewsky: No, that's a really good point. I mean we came in and there's hyperbole because they say the "horse capital of Canada" [Ed. I even wrote that.] or something ridiculous like that. I'm looking at it like this, "Yes, but it's shrinking rapidly", and the people who can tell me that are our feed suppliers. They're the ones that see it the most because they're seeing how much feed is being purchased for horses in our area. The land value is high, so I see a lot of boarding places. People come to us over "our boarding place is shutting down", or "it's being redeveloped", or "they're selling to somebody else", "it's difficult to afford lessons and a horse". It's fewer and fewer people that can afford that a hobby. I mean people say, "Oh, skiing is expensive." Well, skiing is cheaper than riding because when you're not skiing, then you're parking in your garage. You're not feeding your skis and shoeing your skis, and your skis don't go lame on you when you need them and get an abscess, or pull a tendon.

So, there's a lot of cost to horses to keep them well. You're shoeing them every six to eight weeks. You're getting dental work on their teeth once a year. Floating the teeth cost \$200 to \$400 depending on the horse. It costs about \$200 now for hot shoes every six weeks, and then your whole sport is going to start at 700 a month when you start putting up your feed in. Feeding and mucking and a place to ride, you're in \$700 at the bottom end. You'll see our boarding rates. If you look around, we're on the low end with two indoor arenas. But we have staff that live on the property. We bring our hay in by the B-train load. We do pelletized bedding for environmental concerns. They used to do straw way back in the day, and then they moved to shavings. Shavings are stored and you try to keep them dry. You put them in, but you still have to pull the shavings

out. You almost have to put lime underneath it because of the pee, which is now urea. You don't want that to build up in the stall.

And so, what has happened, they had to switch to pellets, which we used as soon as we took over the farm. We went to pelletized bedding, which are bags, and it is pellets. You split the bag open. You add hot water, and then pop the pellets back up, and then you spread them out there. They're made of pine, so you don't have any allergies in the horses. You clean it like kitty litter. So, you take out all the manure that you get used to doing that with your fork and then where these horses pee; they're usually peeing in the same corner of their stall. So, our staffs have gotten to know the horses; they pull back the bedding and pull out all the wet stuff and it clumps together like kitty litter. So, all the wet shavings come out in a clump together and then they spread the dry stuff back up to soak up any more pee and pull that out and then cover it up and then they might put one fresh bag on top and we might put a fresh bag on maybe every other day depending on the horse and how messy they are. They shred the manure in their stall in those shredders and then there's some that poop in one little corner. You go and clean it up. It's so much easier. You get to love certain horses that are cleaner.

So, we can then spread that. That manure goes in the pile within a year. It is broken down because it's essentially dust. By the time we're taking it out of the stall; we're only taking manure and only the shavings that have pee or urine in it. So, we don't have big chunks. We have dust that breaks down very quickly. It has mostly manure, a little urine, a little bit of dust, and then we pile it. We manure spread on our property. This disposal of manure. Some places bin their manure and have to have it hauled out. I think there are places making topsoil that buy the stuff or, at least, charge you to take it away for a somewhat more reasonable price, but it is a significant expense for some of the barns: manure disposal. So, the pelletized bedding, our staff go in there with one big wheelbarrow. They can do four stalls. You would fill up one wheelbarrow with the shavings and dump them out there. Now, it's about a quarter of the waste we have to spread. It's easy. It breaks down much more quickly. So, environmentally, far better, other than the plastic bags, which they don't take for recycling. It's driving us crazy. We want to recycle these plastic bags, but they won't pick them up at the curb. They won't take them at the recycling place. We're like, "These are plastic bags, recycle them, please." That's the only downside, so far. That may get worked out. I don't know how that's going to work out. However, we're not political enough and agitating for something there.

Jacobsen: What is a standard procedure in the industry within the Lower Mainland? That is costing a lot of money and causing unnecessary expense to the owners, to the environment, and to the horses that could be changed easily. What is another example of this?

Cindy: What's something else costing people or the environment?

Jacobsen: People who own ranches or facilities, individuals who are clients, or the horses themselves, or the environment.

Cindy: Some of the mandated manure management programs. My husband did agricultural science. We built a resort in Squamish. He had worms in the soil within a year. Then they're coming along and saying we need to build this concrete bunker and put all your manure in this concrete bunker that's covered from the rain and everything else. Then you have to spray it so that it breaks down. We're like, "We have a system that is working extremely well. You're wanting us to do it this other way that is very expensive to put in. We question its efficacy." They don't want things leaching into creeks. I get that. But if you have a place that's far enough from the creek,

which we truly do, out in by the trails, we don't understand why we had to go and set up a whole different system. That's expensive. Also, most horse operations, we're zoned commercial. So, our hydro rates are double what anyone else is paying. So, hydro rates are higher for any commercial operation as when you compare it to a residential.

You have people giving 'helpful advice' about things like manure management and animal care. We had cows in mud. We had someone report us to SPCA because our cows were in the mud. SPCA came out and looked at them and goes, "Well, this is how cows live!" It gets muddy when it rains for a while. Even though, we have pads around all the feed stations. We have cover places for them to have their hay and stuff. So, sometimes, people don't understand animal care. They're thinking about, maybe, their pets, what they their pets would need. I know horse boarding doesn't qualify when you have ALR land as, of course, the land reserves. You want your farm tax status. Horses don't count and boarding horses does not count as an agricultural operation.

Jacobsen: What could Mayor Froese [Ed. Former mayor, current mayor of the Township of Langley is Mayor Eric Woodward.] in the Council in the Township of Langley or other townships do to better serve the pragmatic needs of the equestrian community at large?

Cindy Waslewsky: Let me hold for a second, because this is something I would definitely like to hear from Steve on. So, Steve, there are two questions. The first question I want to think about it for a minute. What are certain restrictions or things that are creating unnecessary expense for equestrian operations and horse owners in Langley? And the second part of that question would be: Is there anything that mayor Froese or Town Hall could do to improve the viability of horse operations in this area because they are shrinking rapidly? Okay, I'm going to put on the speaker.

Steve Waslewsky: The problem would be the Federal and Labor Relations Act. It's very inflexible and very expensive. All the payroll deductions and such, a lot of our colleagues are being priced out by labor costs, which the government is creating. As for Langley, nothing really comes to mind. So, yes, because we take care of people's horses and we're not breeding, we don't get farm tax status. We do because we also raise hay and we had cattle until recently. That's how we got our farm status. Without farm status, we'd be shut down.

Jacobsen: What about particular bylaws that are helpful and in place now, or what could be proposed by the equestrian community to help themselves within their particular townships?

Steve Waslewsky: Well, probably, the number one would be that we ought to be included in it as a farm status. A lot of places simply can't afford to be open without farm status. That's why they're shutting down. Locally, they've become much fussier about enforcing farm status, not with the equestrians, but with everybody else. I know a couple places, where they lost their farm status all to the equestrian operations. Nothing else really comes to mind. I don't deal with them much because we operate under the table and try not to attract attention. Dealing with government is like being a nail. We're very quiet about what we do and how we do it. We fall into a little bit of a niche. We exploit that niche maintaining our farm status through actual farming activity. Without that, there's no question that we would be closed. Equestrian operations take far too much property and resources of an area, where the taxes and bylaws are really set up for more intensive businesses like lumber yards and such. So, that's where we fall into a little bit of a niche.

Jacobsen: What would that do to the industry as a whole in the Lower Mainland?

Steve Waslewsky: Well, it's shrinking because the whole lower middle class is shrinking. I've been told by people, feed companies and such, that since we took over in 2004, really the entire equestrian industry has been dropped by at least a half. So, we are in a dying industry because of a dying middle class. That's more of a federal/provincial issue than it is a municipal one.

Jacobsen: Who are the main providers of feed now?

Steve Waslewsky: On a retail basis?

Jacobsen: In terms of producing.

Steve Waslewsky: It all comes from outside the area here. Otter Co-op does produce some. I'm not sure if they actually produce horse feed or not. I think they probably do. I think there's another one called Ritchie Feeds. I think they do their own stuff too, but all the rest are bringing in from outside the area.

Cindy Waslewsky: We can hot walk a horse in a circle, so that the shed low goes in a circle. So, you can hot walk your horses undercover. That's great if a horse is colicky or something like that. You need to monitor and walk the horse. You've got a space right there outside the stall to do that. So, we have crossies there and huge tack rooms that are insulated. One of our staff members lives in a suite off the same barn. She's a single girl. She worked at North Shore Equestrian Centre before she came to us, so a good experience that she's got into the vet tech program starting January 1st. Then across from the barn, we have two suites there, again staff. One's a single fellow who does basic maintenance. We have lots of equipment. So, he'll harrow the arena, clear the trails. He'll check the water lines, of course, with this cold snap; getting frozen lines working again and plowing snow, all that stuff. Then to the left of his suite or to the right of his suite is a young couple, she works in the barn and her partner is an IT guy who works from home. So, when we had this bad weather, he was out helping her in the barn, and then, as I said, one woman who has the four kids. The partner was up helping the barn too, so we had extra help.

So, having everyone live on the property, they're feeding at 7 in the morning. They're feeding at noon. They're feeding at 5. They're feeding at 9. So, to drive back and forth would not be very efficient, but you can go out there and feed at 7 in the morning, and then go in and warm up or have breakfast, you can come back out and start doing stalls and at 9:30 turn some of the horses out. Some are in what we call "in-and-outs", where they can walk out.

When people contact us, I would say about almost half our stalls are now in-and-out because what my husband did is he created more in-and-outs off the back of the barn and tried to make as many of them in-and-out stalls. Every other stall is an in-and-out because you don't want the run, the pen, to be the same width as the stall; that's too narrow. They can get cast and things like that. So, what you do is if one stall has an in-and-out, the next stall that horse gets led out to a paddock outside the next one's in-and-out, where they can run in and out at will. The next one we lead them out. So, we have good generous paddocks. Every horse has a paddock. They get turned out no matter what, e.g., pouring rain. They're out for half the day. When they have this freezing weather, they were out until almost 1 o'clock in the afternoon, and then we brought them in for their lunch because the water was freezing. Even if we gave them a bucket, it was frozen before they needed it when they got fed their lunch. You cannot feed a horse without water available to them. They need water.

So, that was a limiting factor. So, we bring them in at 1 o'clock, and then have the lunch inside. Normally, we'll keep them out as much as we can keep them out, and in the Spring and the Fall

and in the Summer; they could be out 24 hours a day. They have more room in a paddock than they do in a stall. They can see their neighbor, but they each get their own feed in a feeder. That's on the rubber matting, so it doesn't fall onto the crusher. The gravel stuff that they're living on, and they have auto waters as well. We took out all the hog fuel and put in crusher, which is a blend of different kinds of sand and fills. So, it's firm and doesn't harbor fungus because we're living in the Pacific Northwest.

I grew up in California, didn't have rain, and mud fever and all these other different kinds of fungus on horses up here. But up here, you've got to be very careful that they have a blanket on. They're going to be out in the rain, so that they don't get damp and get a fungus on their back called ring sore. You can't even then put a saddle on if they get too sore. You have to stay on top of those things. So, anyway, we have staff living on the property. We have options of in-and-out stalls. Ones that you lead horses out to paddocks and back in again, and then we have a couple of what is called loafing sheds, which means it's a shelter. We have two Icelandics that love to be outside in the snow, rain; they love to be outside. They have a shelter, where they can get out of the weather, but they'll be standing outside most of the time. We do have a stall for them if the weather is really bad or the water starts freezing. We can bring them inside if we need to do that. But they love being out, they're shaggy little guys. They love being outside.

On our property, we have the main indoor arena. We have dressage letters up. We have some jumps. We have show-quality jumps. We don't set up, often, because they're heavy to lift in and out. We have other jumps that are easily put in and out for lessons and for people to practice on, but we have a multi-disciplined barn. In other words, we have people who like Western and English. In Western, you might have Reiners. You might have pleasure. You might have trail horses. In English, you might have dressage, hunter, jumper, and simply pleasure trail horses. We tend to have more older riders with a few younger people, who this is the first horse that they've brought in here. People, of course, are somewhat price conscious because it's really expensive owning a horse. It's getting more expensive because we've seen costs skyrocket. We have voluntarily increased the rates and wages for our workers. We do the same thing in a *per diem*; this is how many horses you have, this is how much you get per horse to clean and feed them for the day.

Now, if you have 31 horses, and that's too many stalls to do for one person, which it really is, then we say you get a secondary worker and then they get paid for the stalls they do, and you get paid the primary wage. So, it all works out. Our staff have three primary, stock barn staff people. They make up their own schedule. They talk together. They work it out. Some are at school. Some have kids. So, they work together and make up a schedule that works for them. They cover for each other. They make sure everyone's okay. Then we have another fellow, Hank, who does maintenance and, like you, he can jump into the stalls. He can do stall work. He can do buckets. He can bring the hay down for them. He does maintenance. So, he's there if anyone's sick, if anyone needs a hand, and if something happens like a pipe break or anything happens. They call him. So, they have that as well as my husband and I who live on the property as well.

Jacobsen: Is Steve available right now as well by the way?

Cindy Waslewsky: Yes, Steve's upstairs; he's not a chatty person. If you had specific questions for him, he'd be happy to answer them. He, like I said, does a lot of the maintenance. Like we mix our own footing for the arena, we mix footing for our paddock. We call it crusher because it's not that hard. So, we also have three and a half kilometers of trails, which he put in with his

own GPS lining up through the woods and clearing out trails and grazing them up, putting culverts in, and then putting landscape cloth and then crusher on top. So, a nice trail that you would see at Alder Grove Park or Camel Valley Park. We have some half kilometers of trails here on the property. So, as you saw on the web page, we have a round pen, a main indoor arena, a second indoor arena, which is like the lunging arena that we have. It's a 72 x 72, so it's a nice 20-meter circle with a coverall. Then we have three and a half kilometers of all-weather trails, so it's not muddy. They're a good footing. Trees fall down, branches fall, things happen with these storms, recently. We go out and clear them off, and then we have a half-mile sand racetrack.

Now, the racetrack is not what you would see for training racehorses. The inside rails are out. So, it's basically a recreational track. We still harrow it. We keep it maintained. You can go out there. You can walk around the track, trot, or do a little gallop. Sometimes, I'll take students out. We'll do a slow canter contest, and then the fastest walk contest. We're trying to train our horses to have good gaits for us to be out hacking on trails and such, and have them in control. We do our hay storage, like this year there was a real crisis for hay because of the fires, the drought, Covid, and then of course the flooding came along. So, hay is difficult, and so we bought a B-train load, which is a truck and a big trailer that's following it. A B-train load in the Fall, and then we put a deposit on another B-train load from the same hay supplier up North because it's good quality professionally grown hay.

Steve with his background in animal physiology and nutrition will be happy to advise boarders on good nutrition for their horse, but, as you probably have found, everybody's an expert. Quite frankly, it's interesting. Even when he went to UBC, lots of feed studies on pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, cows, but not many good feed studies on horses. So, you still see a backyard approach, "Oh I'm going to get the beet pulp", or "they'll get their weight up". The beet plants, it's great for hydrating your horse because you soak this pulp and some people do that to try to put weight on the horse, but I would question their more scientific knowledge of the digestive system of the horse.

We can advise boarder. But if they want this, that, or the other thing, we accommodate them because that's not livestock to them. That's not even a pet. That horse is their child. You've seen that. Have you not? These women and guys, often, their kids are grown up and gone. These horses are their family. They're their children, very important to them. So, horse boarding is a very unique business. They really think you're taking care of people's horses. We're taking care of people by taking care of their horses.

Jacobsen: Talking to clientele while working... certainly, individuals who own one or more horses feel as if the horse is a part of their own family. Also, a common sentiment, I find, among those in the equestrian industry with only a few months out of my belt granted, is the sense of a lifestyle. So, you either dive to the deep end first, or it's a foot in the door phenomenon, where once you start getting into it; more or less, you don't leave. Unless, you're forced to leave due to finances or some other catastrophic circumstance. People love it; it is their lifestyle.

Cindy Waslewsky: I have adults coming to me for lessons who have always wanted to ride. Now they're close to retirement, they now have the time. They have the money. Some of them don't have the health anymore, so we make sure they're on a horse that suits their limitations. You'll see this all the time. People come to me. They might take some lessons. Hopefully, they do take a good number of lessons and really learn horsemanship, ground manners, training techniques, and then get a horse. When they get that horse, the worst thing is to be over the horse; to

get a horse that's a little too much, a little bit too athletic, too high energy, too high maintenance, not as well trained and needs more training. If you don't get someone with that knowledge, then you get a horse that becomes somewhat dangerous for that rider. Unfortunately, that horse then doesn't always get a good chance with the next owner either. They get labeled. They've developed some bad habits. I always say a horse is like a dog. Get a dog and train that dog, an ill-trained dog, an insecure dog, or an aggressive dog is not a happy dog. Indeed, it could be a danger to a person, and then you might have to put the dog down because an incident happens. I've seen that in the horse world as well with horses that are great animals, but have not had the best riding and training at some point in their life. It is human made problems in the horses that the good trainers have to go in and try to fix.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 42: L.J. Tidball on Business, the global South and East, Injuries, and International Competition (3)

Laura Jane “L.J.” Tidball has been the Manager of Thunderbird Show Stables, an elite hunter and jumper facility, for 20 years. She is a shareholder and contributing partner to Thunderbird Show Park, which has been voted in the top 3 equestrian show facilities in North America. For Show Park, she has been important in advising on top level equine footing, site development plans for capital improvement, and competitor scheduling for National and FEI competitions. She has been competing at the Grand Prix level since 16-years-old. Since winning the Equine Canada medal (1994) and competing on the British Columbia Young Riders’ team (1996), L.J. pursued equestrianism as a career with a fervent passion. Tidball shows multiple mounts of Thunderbird Show Stables and its clients in the hunter and the jumper rings. Through work from the pony hunters onwards with the assistance of Olympian Laura Balisky and Laura’s husband, Brent, L.J. has achieved many years of success in equitation, and the hunters and the jumpers. In 2005, she returned from a successful European tour to operate Thunderbird on a professional basis. She has been awarded the 2014 Leading BCHJA 2014 rider in the FEI World Cup West Coast League Rankings and the 2014 BCHJA Leading Trainer of the Year. In her spare time, her hobbies include baking, skiing, and snowboarding. Tidball discusses the role of hunters and equitation in Canadian equestrian training, emphasizing their value in skill-building and inclusivity, contrasting with Europe’s jumper-focused approach. She highlights the growth of show jumping in regions like Morocco, Egypt, and the UAE, facilitated by tours like the Longines Global Champions Tour and Major League Show Jumping, which provide opportunities to compete at elite levels. Tidball reflects on recovering from a severe injury, overcoming physical and mental challenges to regain strength and confidence. She praises Ian Millar’s longevity and Eric Lamaze’s inspiring journey, talent, and historic achievements, notably his 2008 Olympic gold medal win.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Mac Cone noted Canada focuses more on equitation and hunters for training. Why?

L.J. Tidball: Hunters and equitation are a great way to raise your skill level. Hunter courses are simpler in the sense that there’s usually only eight jumps in a course. So, if you were just beginning in our sport, hunters are a good way to begin. There’s also the judged component in the hunters and equitation. I find some people thrive on trying to achieve that perfect score. In North America, hunters and equitation have their own niche. In the equitation where you were being judged on your position, I think it teaches you how to leave out a stride in a line, how to make an inside turn, and to do it with a skill set. It is one thing that we do a little differently in North America than in Europe. Not everybody comes into our sport with a goal of jumping to metre 60, it gives a place with the hunters and the equitation for our clientele to have more than one area to accelerate. I think the hunters and equitation are a great place to improve your skills. We teach everyone from beginners all the way up to the FEI level in our barn. There’s a place for everyone and like I said it’s a business at the end of the day and we want our business to be inclusive. In Europe, there are just jumpers. I think both ways work.

Jacobsen: Western Europe and North America tend to be the most prominent on the stage, internationally. How are the global South and East, themselves, coming into the sport?

Tidball: We were in Morocco in 2019. They, Egypt, Saudi Arabia & UAE have all been excelling on the show jumping scene in recent years. The Longines *Global Champion Tour*, has added to the ability of more people to get into the FEI divisions, in Europe, it is very hard to get into any FEI show, unless, you have enough ranking points. The Longines *Global Champion Tour* and the *Major League Show Jumping*, as well, allows people to get onto a team and to get to the 5* shows, get those ranking points, and have that practice. Without the ability to compete at that high level, it is hard to excel at the world stage. The creation of those tours supports the Southern, Eastern, and European and North American communities.

Jacobsen: Who brought *Major League* and The Longines *Global Champion Tour* into the system?

Tidball: *Major League Show Jumping* was Kean White, who is a Canadian. He rode on the Canadian team. The Longines *Global Champion Tour* was founded by Jan Tops. With the idea in mind, giving an avenue for people who want to get to the top of the sport to have a set of shows, that is really at a high level. They are well put on. They are technical and at the high-end of the sport.

Jacobsen: Many of the top riders in Canada have had their injuries. You have had your own. What were they? How did you cope with that recovery period to get to full performance level again?

Tidball: Yes, I got flipped over on and broke something like 23 bones. My ribs, my pelvis in a few places, my collar bone, I had rods and screws through a bunch of me. It was a hard period for me. It was hard. It was hard mentally to overcome what had happened; I had a horse in Mexico. I was supposed to leave the next day to jump on a Canadian Nations Cup team. My horse was already there. I was stuck in a hospital bed. It was tough. It was a hard road for me, mentally and physically. That was in 2019. I would say just now. I am at about 90% of my strength, especially my left leg. My muscles on the inside of my left leg didn't work for a while. I don't think I'll ever be as strong as I was to be perfectly honest. I have come to terms with that. I would say the hardest part is mentally allowing myself the grace to put that to the side and to not fixate on it, and to admit: I was scared. It was scary. I was in Morocco in October. I had fallen off and injured myself in April. I was competing on the Canadian team again in October. It didn't take long to get back to where I was. Now, would I have gotten on a young horse, where something might have gone wrong at some point? Absolutely not. My horse, I trusted really well. I felt I could carry on with that. There was a triple combination in Morocco, which was the same one I got flipped over on. It was a young horse I was riding, not my experienced horse I had in Morocco. I saw double as I was riding up to it. It, obviously, was still affecting me. It took a long time and a lot of rounds, and a lot of triple combinations. A lot of those triple combinations were the ones that scared me. Until, I got to the point where it doesn't cross my mind anymore. I am thankful for that. If fear and uncertainty top the list when walking into a show ring, you are not giving your horse, your partner, the right impression when you compete.

Jacobsen: Ian Millar set a record for the Olympics. He attended 10, which is more than any Olympian in any sport ever. What explains the longevity?

Tidball: I know Ian is incredibly dedicated to himself, what he put in his body, how he worked out, and how he trained. I think he is incredibly intelligent. He is a brilliant man. He worked things out with horses, a little like I said about Brent (Balisky). He could think outside the box.

He always found a way to get things done. He brought the best out of the horses. I truly believe that he is an exceptional athlete. He inspires me all the time.

Jacobsen: Ian has stepped down. Another athlete, prominent on the international stage, stepped back, but not down: Eric Lamaze. In 2008, in Beijing, the team won silver. Individually, he won gold. What did he represent to the sport at that time? How does the Chef d'Equipe position provide a nice transition for someone having to step back [Ed. The position has changed since the time of the interview again with a further stepping back, in a sense, for Lamaze.]?

Tidball: At the time, when Eric won those medals, he was, obviously, one of the biggest figures, in my mind, of our sport. We were jumping up and down. I remember watching him win the gold medal. We stopped at the horse show. We were at the edge of our seat watching. It was an incredible day to be a Canadian show jumping fan! Knowing him, knowing how hard he worked to get to where he was, knowing his background and upbringing...

Jacobsen: ...he came from nothing.

Tidball: He came from nothing. It was inspiring. He is, probably, one of the most talented riders that any of us will ever see ride a horse. He just had ability that oozed out of him. For sure, there is a level of respect for that that will last a lifetime. He had an incredible partner in Hickstead. It was the horse of a lifetime for him. He made everything work for him.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 43: L.J. Tidball on Great Riders, SafeSport, and George & Dianne Tidball (4)

Laura Jane “L.J.” Tidball has been the Manager of Thunderbird Show Stables, an elite hunter and jumper facility, for 20 years. She is a shareholder and contributing partner to Thunderbird Show Park, which has been voted in the top 3 equestrian show facilities in North America. For Show Park, she has been important in advising on top level equine footing, site development plans for capital improvement, and competitor scheduling for National and FEI competitions. She has been competing at the Grand Prix level since 16-years-old. Since winning the Equine Canada medal (1994) and competing on the British Columbia Young Riders’ team (1996), L.J. pursued equestrianism as a career with a fervent passion. Tidball shows multiple mounts of Thunderbird Show Stables and its clients in the hunter and the jumper rings. Through work from the pony hunters onwards with the assistance of Olympian Laura Balisky and Laura’s husband, Brent, L.J. has achieved many years of success in equitation, and the hunters and the jumpers. In 2005, she returned from a successful European tour to operate Thunderbird on a professional basis. She has been awarded the 2014 Leading BCHJA 2014 rider in the FEI World Cup West Coast League Rankings and the 2014 BCHJA Leading Trainer of the Year. In her spare time, her hobbies include baking, skiing, and snowboarding. Tidball reflects on her equestrian journey, highlighting the grace and precision of top riders like Eric Lamaze and Tiffany Foster, whose seamless partnership with horses sets them apart. She notes riders peak around age 30, as the sport requires extensive experience and technical skill. Tidball emphasizes Canada’s challenges in athlete funding compared to nations like the U.S. and praises equestrianism’s longevity and inclusivity. She discusses her family history, her grandparents’ complementary qualities of vision and work ethic, and her grandfather’s mentorship under Milton Friedman. Tidball concludes with gratitude for her sport, ongoing aspirations, and her role as an inspiring coach.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Kimberley Martens in Holland noted that it, similarly, was a real pleasure to watch Eric on Hickstead. In the sense that, he had a really good feel and grace in riding. As someone with a lifetime in this sport at a high level, can you put into more precise words watching someone like Tiffany Foster, Eric Lamaze, etc., at that level?

L.J. Tidball: They make it look easy. When you watch somebody who is great at something, it doesn’t look hard. When somebody watches Eric win the gold medal. They would, probably, be sitting on their couches as somebody who has never ridden horse and say, “Oh! I could do that.” It shouldn’t look erratic or forced. If it looks like you’re hooking them in the mouth or kicking them with the spurs, to me, that is probably not the best in the world. When it is seamless and the smallest aid is making the biggest difference, that, to me, is the grace and the partnership that you see in people at the top. When it looks easy, they’re doing it right.

Jacobsen: When do most riders hit their stride? Is there a range?

Tidball: I think, it is, at least, 18. Riding is such a hard sport. There are so many levels that you have to achieve to be able to jump the 1.60m height. I think it is rare somebody under the age of 18 is doing it. We really peak, in my opinion, around 30. Then you have enough knowledge. You have jumped enough courses. You have jumped against enough people and ridden enough horses. It’s a sport of longevity. It is not a sport of aging out and then it’s done. It takes time. It is such a technical sport. You have to have done enough to know what you’re getting yourself into.

Jacobsen: There are the organizations in the country's provinces and the national federation. How is the support from these organizations and the federation for the younger riders and for riders from Canada?

Tidball: I think our federation does the best they can with the resources they have. Canada is an odd country. There is not a lot of money to support our athletes, whether a soccer player, show jumper, or ice skater. The funding is not very high. We get the podium funding when we have medalled, which, my understanding, has run out now – from when Eric won the medal, there is a timeline. There is only so much Canada has to give back to its athletes. It is really hard. There is some B.C. athlete assistance, which you can apply for. But that got hard during Covid. I had been in Florida, I applied and they turned me down due to Covid. [Laughing] It is tough. I look at countries like the United States. There is so much more funding than for us. I don't know if there is a way to change that or to compete with it. I don't know the intricacies of their financial statements. So, I really can't get into it. But do I think it would be nice if there was more funding or more support? Absolutely.

Jacobsen: About 2016/17, there was a North American cultural moment, some European, of mostly men in mostly prominent positions with the MeToo movement and the TimesUp movement. These were bringing to light conduct of men in power. There was some justice, marginal in other cases, for victims. I am aware of SafeSport and allegations that have been made to some individuals. Do you think some of these outgrowths of things happening earlier in general culture have been filtered into equestrian culture?

Tidball: I think any governing body of any sport needs to have something in place to protect athletes that are being abused and mistreated. I think that is 1,000% something that we stand up for in Canada. Our governing body, my understanding, is that they come to you. You get to provide documentation. Then it goes to a committee for review. Then it comes back. In the States, my understanding is you're guilty until proven innocent. I think in our society if an accusation gets put there and if it is not true, it is very hard to come back from that. Nobody will want to put their child in a barn where there was a known accusation. Even though, it was proven to be false. I think what we do in Canada is appropriate. We need to protect our athletes. I think it is a very real thing. I think at this point emotions are very high surrounding it. People are new enough to it. They are talking about it. It is going to bring awareness to it. As coaches, we need to be appropriate how we coach. There are tons of courses out there that you can take to help you as a coach to know what the best ways are of training and explaining yourself.

Jacobsen: Related to that question, oddly enough, when I reached to a lot of Canadian riders, a lot of y'all are on Instagram and Facebook, which brings me back to the previous question about social media and the response about being a coach. Does this era of social media and being a little on egg shells, in terms of they're how walking, make coaching a little more difficult at times?

Tidball: Like I said in the beginning, I think riding is fantastic sport because no matter what. When you walk into a ring with a horse, the outcome will be very obvious to you. You will either succeed or fail. If you want longevity in the sport, when you fail, you will work harder to do things right. As coaches, we have to present a set of skills to the riders. We have to give them the tools to succeed. It comes down to an individual person's drive. When I send kids or adults into the ring and something doesn't go right, when they come out, they will ask for more skills. Which I can help them with, so the situation can get better next time, it is not the harsh words of

encouragement. Coaching has become softer. It doesn't mean that you cannot get the same thing accomplished.

Jacobsen: Brent in some prior interviews has noted post-secondary education can be quite useful for riders and trainers in the sport. You went to the University of San Diego. Do you think, for up and coming riding, that post-secondary education is an asset?

Tidball: I think education is always an asset. We have so many opportunities nowadays with the amount of technology out there. Anything is able to be learned if you are willing to put in a little effort into it. Post-secondary education is amazing. To me, the best part about that is it gives you a better worldview. It is very easy in our equestrian sport to get into a bubble and to live only in that bubble. You don't realize there is anything outside of it. We spend most weeks of the year riding, showing, competing, especially when you get to that top level. My mom went to Cambodia for Just World International. She loved what they were doing. That is a charity Thunderbird Show Park is still a part of; there are so many facets of life that we, as riders, can get involved in if we try.

For my post-secondary education, I don't know how much of that I have retained. I know the reading that I do on the weekly helps me have a better worldview and understanding of our economic situation and what is going on in the world. I think that that's all a part if you are going to be involved in this business.

Jacobsen: A common issue – not every rider, but a number of riders – raised has been financial barriers to something as simple as a purchasing price of a horse. Mac Cone called it simple supply and demand. When a certain amount of horses are born every year, way more people want to buy, it raises the price artificially for the best horses. How is that conversation had within the community? What are some other barriers to entry at the top end of the sport?

Tidball: I think no matter what elite level sport. It is always expensive. Whether a car racing team or a sailing team, or the top tennis players in the world, I look at what their coaching and costs of travel are. It is similar no matter what you get to doing. The purchasing price of the animals adds to it, and horses definitely cost more than tennis racquets [Laughing]. I think purchasing prices of horses have gone up, and up, and up. You breed 100 horses and only 1 of them could make it to the top level. That horse becomes quite expensive. The average horse jumping 1.20m and under I think those are still within a normal range. When you are looking to purchase something at a national team level, I think those are elite athletes. When you look at how much you pay an NHL player, per year, well that's kind of the same as buying a top horse. You are buying an NHL player or an NBA player. The purchase prices are high for sure.

Jacobsen: You are mentioning how personality-wise. You stick to your routines. Brent pushes you out of those 5%. I have noted certain superstitions or things that might be in some in the community. Do you note any superstitions?

Tidball: I have a tendency to become very superstitious. I refuse to allow myself. When I begin to think a riding jacket is lucky or a show shirt is lucky, I will force myself to wear something else. I can't allow myself to go down that tunnel being like, "Those are my lucky socks. What happen when those get a hole in them? My day is ruined." I definitely have the ability to do that and to go down that rabbit hole that I force myself not to.

Jacobsen: Is this common in the industry in your experience?

Tidball: Yes, absolutely, it is because we want to do well so badly. Like I said, even if something worked, I am the round peg in the round hole. If I morning flatted my horse, and getting ready for that class a certain way helped me, I will, probably, repeat the same steps. It is pretty easy to take it to the next level. “I wore those socks that day.” “I had that show jacket on.” “My necklace that my grandmother gave me.” Whatever gives you a boost, I think it is a dangerous avenue if you go down it too much and can plague you. I try not to make it a thing for me.

Jacobsen: Another aspect, I forgot to ask. We talked about the Olympic team family history, the Keg, McDonald’s, and Show Park family history. What about before that? I believe there is some information around Shanghai.

Tidball: My grandmother was born in Shanghai. She rode a little bit while she was there. It was when it was still under British rule. Her father worked for Lever Brother’s. She travelled back and forth to boarding schools in England as a young woman. During the war, my great-grandfather ended up in a prisoner of war camp in Shanghai. My grandmother, her sister, and my great-grandmother, fled and went to San Francisco. My grandmother’s sister had asthma. It got worse with it being so damp. So, they moved to the Interior and bought some land on Okanagan Lake, which turned out to one day become Sandy Beach Lodge & Resort. They had a vacation spot there, a hotel. So, that’s how that came to fruition. That’s how she met my grandfather. He was stripping the logs for the hotel.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] How did that relationship develop in the earlier days for him?

Tidball: I think my great-grandparents hated him, pretty sure. He was not highly educated. He was working for a living. He wanted to be a pro baseball player.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Tidball: He was the ultimate twinkle in his eye bad boy. She was the beautiful, perfect, English rose. They made it work. They set on their own and they accomplished a lot of things.

Jacobsen: What about their partnership was not a driver, but a major factor in being so persistent and successful?

Tidball: I think my grandfather was a dreamer. He, definitely, could always see the bigger picture or have these amazing ideas of what he wanted to do. My grandmother had dedication and work ethic. She could keep the wheels turning and make things happen. She was the woman behind the man. She made sure that he didn’t just have a dream and forget about it. She made sure the dream was to go and get it. That he pushed until he got it. I think that is what they instilled in us our whole lives too. You can have the dream, but you have to work really hard to get there. She instilled that work ethic in him.

Jacobsen: Did the mentorship and training under Milton Friedman provide a framework for him to look at economics and business mindset?

Tidball: Absolutely, he was reading journals and financials. He was so business smart. He could look at one thing and understand it, where it would take most of us weeks of reading and re-searching to figure out what they were talking about. He could pick it up in a snap. He was incredibly brilliant that way.

Jacobsen: He was originally a dropout at UBC. Then he became the top of his class at Harvard.

Tidball: Yes, like I said, he had my grandmother behind him and she gave him drive. She pushed him [Laughing]. He was incredibly intelligent. At Harvard, he was surrounded by teachers who inspired him to work harder. When you are inspired and respect that people that you are working for, you tend to be inspired. As a company, if you can inspire people to do their best, that's a good thing. As a coach, I hope from the bottom of my heart that I can inspire the kids and the adults that I coach to be their best.

Jacobsen: How do you identify early talent in show jumpers?

Tidball: Athletic ability is important, but I think it is mostly about practice. The more opportunities to practice, the better that you will be. Even if there is talent, if you don't practice, you want to get to the top. Everything is so technical nowadays. If you don't have the skills to back it up, you won't make it, even if you are talented.

Jacobsen: Any final feelings or thoughts in conclusion based on the conversation today?

Tidball: In talking today, it reminded me how much I love the sport that I am in. How many dreams I still have, I think that's pretty cool. I am 45-years-old and can still have dreams as to what I want to achieve as an athlete. I remind myself how lucky I am. This is my passion and the path I chose. It is unique. It is pretty special.

Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, L.J.

Tidball: You're very welcome, Scott.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 44: Lynne Denison Foster on Parenting Principles (1)

Lynne Denison Foster is the mother of Rebecca Foster, owner of the Bale and Bucket restaurant, and Tiffany Foster, a professional equestrian show jumper ranked the highest in Canada. She was an aviation professional for 48 years, beginning with Pacific Western Airlines in 1969 in the Edmonton Reservation office and moving to Vancouver in 1973. She helped with the implementation of the first computerized reservations systems for a regional air carrier in North America. Since 1974, she has been an instructor and in 2012 was awarded BC Aviation Council's Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to educating the aviation community. At Canadian/Air Canada, she trained CEOs, Pilots, Aircraft Groomers, and worked on training initiatives and programs for aviation safety management system, computerized reservation systems, corporate change, customer services, frontline leadership, human factors, interpersonal skills, management practices, and service quality. She taught at BCIT between 2000 and 2017. Foster was key in the development of the Aviation Operations Diploma Programs. She was Chief Instructor for 7 years. In 2015, she won BCIT's Teaching Excellence Award. Foster reflects on her parenting style, emphasizing perseverance, responsibility, and teaching life lessons. She instilled in her daughters, Tiffany and Rebecca Foster, the value of hard work and accountability, enabling them to pursue their passions—show jumping and hospitality. Lynne used creative discipline, such as making Tiffany face consequences for poor choices, teaching her to overcome obstacles independently. She humorously recounts enforcing responsibility by threatening to "help" with decision-making, a strategy she only had to use once. Lynne's approach, rooted in encouragement and resilience, helped shape her daughters into successful professionals while fostering self-reliance and strong character.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Today, we are here with...

Lynne Denison Foster: ...Lynne Denison Foster...

Jacobsen: ...who is the mother of...?

Foster: ...Tiffany Foster...

Jacobsen: ...and?

Foster: ...and Rebecca Foster...

Jacobsen: ...who are known for?

Foster: Tiffany is known for being a professional equestrian show jumper. She has been to the Olympics twice and won the Pan-Am gold in 2015 with the Canadian Team. Rebecca owns a restaurant at the horse show, at Thunderbird Show Park in Langley here. She has been offering food service for the last 11 years from her restaurant. Before that, she worked in hospitality with me and prepared food.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Foster: So, that is what she is known for, her good food.

Jacobsen: As you have shown me with great hospitality in your home, so thank you very much for that.

Foster: Oh, you're welcome.

Jacobsen: I enjoyed the apple cider vinegar with honey. It was good. I wanted to start recording some of the things that you were describing [Ed. extensively describing] of the earlier history of your role, self-identified role, as a mother, which was with Tiffany's child acting or being in film, in commercials, and the building of some life skills that would be important later on, especially given some of your background at teaching adults these business skills, interpersonal skills, at the Airlines and BCIT.

Foster: Right.

Jacobsen: These are more important than a lot of academic skills. As we are noticing in Canadian society and many, many developed societies, women are increasingly becoming the majority of the workforce. They are far more educated. The "soft" skills important for business and general social acumen are much, much more important than muscle, brawn, force, of voice or of body, to get things moving because much of the infrastructure of societies has been built. So, those skills that you were building at that time were, in fact, building character and skills for modern society. To me, this is one interpretation that I'm taking when I hear these stories when they are kids [Ed. Off-tape in the evening, Lynne's kids.] of building those skills moving into the present, where they are succeeding in restaurants or professional show jumping. I was taking those as principles of parenting with practical examples that you were giving. How do you interpret now, looking back, as a parent? You're making decisions about the progression of a child and giving some skills that will be helpful down the line.

Foster: First of all, I am very proud of both of my daughters. What I think has been really incredible for them is that they have been able to have careers pursuing their passion. That is a great accomplishment for them. Perhaps, the way they were raised might have had something to do with that. My family's motto on my father's side is "Perseverando". "Perseverando" means "by persevering". As you already know, both of these girls have worked since they were kids, and Tiffany, as I mentioned before we started the principles, was working from the time she was 7. She has continued to work until she is 39 now. From age 7 to 11, she was a principle in 32 television commercials. When she finished television commercials, she had to work for her horse board and her lessons. Approaching it from that perspective, what I have tried to encourage in them, I have it right here.

[Shows tea mug]

Jacobsen: "If you want the best the world has to offer, offer the world your best..."

Foster: This was given to me by one of the student pilots when he graduated from the polytechnic post-secondary school, BCIT. That was one of the things that I really wanted to instill in my daughters, is that if you have to work or do something for somebody for whatever reason, then make sure that you do the best that you possibly can with what you've got, so that when you leave; they will either want you to come back or will wish you never left.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] That's great.

Foster: I did that with my adult students who were coming to BCIT, British Columbia Institute of Technology to study for a career in Aviation. That is what I also told them until I found this quote, which is much more succinct. I posted it in all my classrooms. That is what I thought was important for my children to understand as well. When they were working, they were working for Brent and Laura, your employers. They were young. They were tired and wanted to go home. I said, "No, you stay here and do it right to the best of your ability. Otherwise, you are going to

have to do it again”. That was one principle of my parenting style for my children. The other one was... can I tell you a story?

Jacobsen: You can go right ahead.

Foster: When Tiffany was about 10-years-old, I asked her to do something. She chose not to do it. I asked her again. She just was not going to do it and ignored it. I said, “I am asking you to do this. If you don’t, I’m going to have to give you a consequence”. I didn’t believe in depriving my kids by saying, “No, you can’t have riding lessons” or “you can’t go to granny’s tomorrow”. I didn’t think that was an appropriate consequence. She was going to go to her friend’s place for a sleepover. I said, “You will not be able to go to Vanessa’s until you do what I am asking you to do”. She ignored my request. She was too busy. I asked her a couple of more times. She just didn’t do it. I said, “Okay, Tiffany, you have chosen. You have made a choice. You are not going to Vanessa’s tonight”. She got very upset with me. She was crying and blaming me. “Why? You are so mean! You won’t let me do this”. This kind of stuff. I said, “What do you think would have happened if you had done it? I don’t want you to be a victim”. I had a colleague that she knew. This colleague, every time something happened because of her own actions; she would blame our employers. I said, “Do you want to be a victim like Auntie Izzy?”

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Foster: “Do you really, really want this?” She said, “Yes, I do”. I said, “There is an obstacle, which is the consequence of your action. It is your responsibility. You created that obstacle. But now, you know that I am a reasonable person. If that is so important to you, then why don’t you think about how you can overcome the obstacle and get what you want, which is to go to Vanessa’s. But it is your actions that caused that obstacle in the first place. What do you think you can do? Go away and think about it”. She went away and came back, “Okay, how about I do what you asked me to do?” I said, “No, that is not enough. The obstacle is the consequence because you didn’t do it. Think about it again”. She went back and said, “Okay, I did what you asked me to do. How about I do this and if I...” I said, “That’s not good enough”.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Foster: “How about the consequence?” So, she chose her own consequence if she didn’t follow through with what she told me was the solution. I said, “Okay, that makes sense to me, because you decided your consequence. If you don’t do it, then it’s the consequence you have to live with. You understand that?” “I do”. We all make mistakes. We all have poor judgments. She had made a poor judgment. There was a consequence to that. But if it is something that you really want, then you have to find a way to get around it. That is what I believe. I saw it as a teaching moment for her. Again, I am not the one to blame... if I make a threat like a consequence, then I have to follow through. As they got older, I’ll tell you this story, too. When they were teenagers and doing things that they should not have been doing, or making mistakes...

Jacobsen: ...as teenagers do...

Foster: ...Yes. So then, I thought. I told them this. “As you get older, I know you want to be more and more independent and be able to be responsible for making your own choices. I think that’s good. Because you need to learn how to make your own choices and live with them. But if you make a bad choice, it’s my responsibility...” – and I laid it on thick.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Foster: "... as your mother, I want to be a good mother..."

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Foster: "...I want to be sure that I look after you and guide you. If you do something that you are not supposed to do, then I have to help you with that". As I did with that situation when she (Tiffany) was 10. "So, I have to take away that responsibility from you, and I have to take it on. Your punishment, or your consequence, is that you are stuck with me. So, it might be 24 hours. It might take 48 hours, depending on the severity of the errors of your ways. But I am telling you right now. If you don't do what you are supposed to do, then I have to take it on, as your loving mother". I laid it on thick. [Laughing]

Jacobsen: That's pretty vicious.

Foster: I said, "I will call work. I would ask for vacation time because I will be with you. I will be with you when you are sleeping to make sure you make the right choice. I will travel with you to school. I will talk to your principal saying, 'Rebecca or Tiffany can't make good decisions. So, I hope you don't mind that I am in the classroom and at school with them so I can help them.'. You will be stuck with me to help you make your decisions for a certain amount of time." And...I only had to do it once [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Foster: Rebecca, I never had to do it. Because Rebecca was always watching what Tiffany did and learning from her 'mistakes'. [Laughing] "Oh my God!" It was just so embarrassing, right? So, again, I don't remember what it was that required my interception. "Okay, Tiffany, I guess I'll just have to stick with you".

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Foster: At the same time, her friend came over to visit her. I think they were 15 or 16. Something like that. Her friend said, "Tiffany, come outside, I've got to tell you something". I was coming along with Tiffany, because she was stuck with her mom to help make good decisions. "Carry on, don't mind me, I'm just here to help Tiffany". We go outside. Her friend says, "Well, uh..." Finally, Tiffany goes, "Okay, mom! I get it! I get it!" And that was it. That was the only time I had to do it. Both girls weren't stupid and they knew I would do it again if I had to. That is the parenting I did. Tiffany tried to run away from home a couple of times too. [Laughing]

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Foster: I came after her. "We have to talk. Running away is not going to help. Let's work it out". Ask me another question, I get sidetracked. Punishing a kid for making mistakes doesn't work. So, I laid it on kind of thick. "I am your loving mother. I just want to help you make good decisions".

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Foster: Another question?

Jacobsen: Yes.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 45: Conversation with Beth Underhill on Upbringing (1)

Beth Underhill's biographic sketch states: "Beth Underhill's International Show Jumping career places her today as an impressive veteran of Pan American, Olympic and World Equestrian Games. Beth is one of Canada's top coaches for junior/amateur riders through to Grand Prix athletes. Beth's successful career and the knowledge she has gained allows her to guide, train and mentor both horse and rider from junior to world class competition level. Beth has a wealth of experience to share with students; as the Leading Woman Rider in the World in 1995, also the first woman to win the Canadian World Cup League as well as representing Canada in the Olympics and many Nations Cup Competitions across the world: Italy, Spain, Luxemburg, Germany, Equador, USA, Holland. Today Beth is still competing at the highest level and is a great asset to any rider who is looking for coaching from an extremely passionate equestrian. Beth is also successful in training riders and horses in the Hunter and Equitation divisions, guiding one of her students to win the CET Medal Finals at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. Beth was also the leading trainer of the Ultimate Hunter Challenge and has twice been named Coach of the Year in Canada. Beth has acted as Chef d'Equipe for the North American Young Riders Team and oversaw the National Talent ID Program. Beth identifies up and coming talent for Canada's future team riders. She is also a member of the High Performance Committee that selects our team riders for international and major games competitions. Canadian Grand Prix riders have elected Beth as their Grand Prix rider representative to the Jump Canada Board for the past 8 years as well as the FEI Competitions Approval Committee representing Canada. In October 2015 Beth was appointed Jump Canada's Young Rider Development Program Advisor, a position she held until 2019. During Beth's tenure with the team, Canada won an unprecedented number of medals. Including in 2017 when the Canadian Senior Young Riders team swept the podium individually, a feat that had never been done before." Underhill recounts her equestrian journey, starting with YMCA lessons at seven, inspired by her parents' encouragement to explore diverse activities. Her family's move to the countryside deepened her passion for riding. With the support of mentors like Jimmy Elder and Tommy Gayford, she progressed through Pony Club and later became a working student. Beth reflects on the sport's evolution, highlighting changes in safety standards and accessibility. Her path to the Olympics was shaped by perseverance, learning through challenges, and building partnerships with horses and supporters. Beth emphasizes bravery, resilience, and embracing the process in achieving long-term equestrian success.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Am I audible? Is everything good on my side for sound?

Beth Underhill: Yes, I can hear you just fine.

Jacobsen: What were your first moments of becoming an equestrian, riding horses or being introduced to horses?

Beth: I didn't come from a family with a history of horses at all, but my mother was of the mindset that I should have all different kinds of experiences. So when I was seven or eight years old, I had all sorts of lessons: singing lessons, piano lessons, and part of it was, "Oh, maybe you should try riding," because I always had an affinity to animals in general. So, she got 12 lessons for 12 dollars at the YMCA, which was my first. The first time I fell off the first pony, I had my riding lesson on, and my mother thought that would be that trial's end. But no, I went the next week, and by the end of the year, my parents had caught the bug of enjoying horses in general and the

country life sort of thing. So we ended up moving to the country, and my father bought an old, dilapidated stone house, and he spent the next ten years renovating it.

We got my first pony at an auction, a family affair. My dad built me my first couple of stalls for my ponies, and we used to look after them before I went to school and after school. It just grew into a family project. So, it came through very organically and without much professional help. We just learned as we went and read many books and then gradually got involved in the Pony Club. A local pony club in Toronto gave us a lot of support. Yeah, that was my first introduction to some professionals, and we're fortunate to have some top international riders: Christilot Hanson-Boylen, dressage rider, Jim Elder, Olympian, who helped the pony club and gave us support. That was how I got my start.

Jacobsen: What other things did your parents introduce you to besides ponies?

Beth: Other than ponies? As I said, I was firmly into singing and piano, tennis, swimming, cross-country running, you name it. It was crucial to my parents that I had an overall introduction to all kinds of things. Whichever way I seem to gravitate, they created those opportunities. It was mostly through school endeavours or just French lessons and like all kinds of things, and it was an education that gave me... I met lots of friends through doing these different things. I would say the singing and the piano were vying very strongly alongside the riding for five or six years. Then, gradually, I became more involved in the riding the pony club, and then I gravitated more towards the show jumping, and that's kind of where I started.

Then, it was just about navigating how to do that. Despite not having an education in the sport, my parents looked into local people who could help me. As I said, the Pony Club gave us lots of opportunities, and they were smart about asking questions and doing research and helping me find people who were beneficial not just in the education of the sport but also were good people and good mentors. So, I was fortunate with those who gave me that opportunity when I started.

Jacobsen: Who would you consider the people who were keystone individuals to your development as a rider?

Beth: Starting with a pony club, as I mentioned, I would say, Jimmy Elder, Christilot Boylen in dressage, Tommy Gayford, who went on to be the Chef d'Equipe for the Canadian team that we were involved with; he was accommodating, donating his time to the pony club when I was nine or ten years old. When I was on the team at 29, he was the Chef d'Equipe. So we went full circle. I was a junior rider, and Hugh Graham was one of my first instructors. Then, I was a working student for Mark Laskin, who was also ironically a Chef d'Equipe for Canada many years later, and we remained friends throughout that time.

And then Torchy Millar is again another Chef d'Equipe for the Canadian team. He offered me my first riding job, and that's how I was able to get the ride on Monopoly because my parents weren't in a position financially to purchase the horses I needed to get on the Canadian Equestrian Team, but, as I said, they were very good at helping me find people that could help me on my way. I was prepared to work hard, be a working student, and do whatever it took to get the education and experience behind the scenes as a horsewoman and rider. So, the people I mentioned helped me to be a mentor and trainers.

Jacobsen: Aside from Gayford, Laskin, Elder and so on, who are individuals not involved in your life personally and professionally but who were on the scene that inspired you?

Beth: I used to keep a scrapbook of all the Canadian team riders because I always aspired to represent Canada at the top level. So, I was always someone who, regardless of what I was part of, would take it to the nth degree and dig deep and learn as much as possible. Of the team members at that time, I was very much enamoured with and followed their careers. And go to the Royal Winter Fair and be at the warm-up ring and follow them, watch what happens behind this. I was very fascinated by all aspects of the sport. I dabbled a little bit when I was in pony club with eventing. So I would say I had a pretty well-rounded... And the good thing about the pony club in those days was, unfortunately, there's not as much of a pony club presence as there was when I was growing up, but we used to have these fireside chats on a Friday night, and they'd bring guest speakers in. So, we had the opportunity to meet a lot of the Canadian team members.

My parents are British, so I was also very knowledgeable and interested in the British team at that time. Marion Janice Mould, The Whitakers, Nick Skelton; all those people that were people that I idolized. It would be people that I wanted to emulate and that I wanted to be close to.

Jacobsen: And how did this develop more as you went professional in the sport as you basically pursued it as a career?

Beth: I would say I always aspired for it to be a career choice, but I also had become quite interested in acting, and it was ironic. Also, I've written a letter to Mark Laskin because he put an ad in the Horse Sport magazine looking for a working student and I've written a long letter about why I wanted to be a working student, and at the same time I was dabbling and acting and interested in workshops. I'd gone on an audition for a show that was coming on in Canada, and it was so bizarre because this one day, I got a call saying I got the part in this TV show, and the same day, Mark Laskin called me and said I got the job. I had to go to Edmonton. I lived in Ontario, and Edmonton was quite a long distance from my family. I was very close to my family. I asked my mother, "What should I do?" She said, "Honestly, this has to be your choice at this juncture." I was 18 years old, and I was considering going to University as well. These two other forks in the road presented themselves, and I had to really consider what direction I wanted my life to go in, and I chose the horses.

I had a junior jumper at the time. I couldn't afford to take my heart and my horse with me, so I just went to Mark's as a working student, knowing that I probably wouldn't have the opportunity to compete, but I was just so hungry for knowledge and was determined to experience that wherever it went. So, it was a difficult choice, but I felt very strongly that that was the direction I wanted to go. And I have to say my family gave me the support but didn't make the final decision on what direction to go. So that was very much my decision.

Jacobsen: How do you frame sort of the culture and standards of the sport at the time? I've been told multiple times that there's been a change in safety standards, the breed of the horse, and the style of the riding. How would you characterize that development over time to today?

Beth: The sport has become obviously much more sophisticated. It's also probably harder to break into. I would say in those days when I was starting, you had the opportunity to jump in all different venues. I mean, you had to learn to ride on grass, like what we used to do at Spruce Meadows; the derbies, the banks and the grubs and the ditches, and you don't see as many of those events anymore, so I think for sure it taught us to be brave. It wasn't a sport that you entered into lightly, and it wasn't for the faint of heart. When I started, there were pony jumpers,

and they jumped quite big, and again, you had to be prepared to jump in different venues in different environments. You didn't really start at the same level; you didn't start in 100 divisions and work up to the jumpers.

I started in the jumper division, and it was 4'3 - 4'6, and if you weren't good enough, you either learn to be good enough or you quit. I think that it was a bit of a trial by fire. Now, there are many more divisions like 0.8 even, 0.9 meter. So, it's become much more of a business than an industry. You saw more in those days the professionals; the riders that they taught, they would provide them with horses. There was definitely more access to horses for the professionals. It's become, I think, more difficult for professionals to stay mounted. It was not as many great riders for sure, but the ones that survived, the ones that were able to jump at that level, were very strong. We had a very strong Canadian contingent.

So, there's pluses and minuses. Like I said, the sport has become so much more technical and sophisticated, but I think there were definitely benefits in my day and that you've learned very quickly to survive to learn by experience, and those experiences were tough. Like I said, it wasn't for the weak at all. So I think we learned to be brave; you very quickly had to decide your path. It became very clear early on where you were destined to go.

Jacobsen: When did you make a decision to pursue the Olympics very seriously?

Beth: It's not like you say, "I'm going to the Olympics. That's what I'm doing." I think you have to be mindful that there is a process, there's a pathway, and you take it one step at a time. It's never going to be a smooth path upward. There's going to be plateaus, there's going to be dips, there's going to be moments when you think, "Oh, I've got this all figured out," and then horses quickly tell you that you don't. I think I aspired to be a top contender. Of course, the Olympics were my long-term goal, but it was never the exclusion of the process. I recognize that, as we all did, you need to have the experience. You have built through that process, and you're not going to skip steps, especially if you don't have the financial backing to maybe skip those steps. It was very much a matter of trying to find the horses, trying to create owners that would help me, and creating situations where I had the experience and the opportunities, whether that was competing in Europe, whether that was competing at Spruce Meadows and the Masters on the team, it was always a stepping stone.

You learned when you succeeded, you learned when you failed, and you were hopefully able to take those experiences and not have them break you but have them make you stronger and have people around you that would help you learn your craft, improve and mentally be strong enough to withstand the knocks that were inevitably gonna will come your way.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 46: Conversation with Beth Underhill on Longevity and Emotional Difficulties (2)

Beth Underhill's biographic sketch states: "Beth Underhill's International Show Jumping career places her today as an impressive veteran of Pan American, Olympic and World Equestrian Games. Beth is one of Canada's top coaches for junior/amateur riders through to Grand Prix athletes. Beth's successful career and the knowledge she has gained allows her to guide, train and mentor both horse and rider from junior to world class competition level. Beth has a wealth of experience to share with students; as the Leading Woman Rider in the World in 1995, also the first woman to win the Canadian World Cup League as well as representing Canada in the Olympics and many Nations Cup Competitions across the world: Italy, Spain, Luxemburg, Germany, Equador, USA, Holland. Today Beth is still competing at the highest level and is a great asset to any rider who is looking for coaching from an extremely passionate equestrian. Beth is also successful in training riders and horses in the Hunter and Equitation divisions, guiding one of her students to win the CET Medal Finals at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. Beth was also the leading trainer of the Ultimate Hunter Challenge and has twice been named Coach of the Year in Canada. Beth has acted as Chef d'Equipe for the North American Young Riders Team and oversaw the National Talent ID Program. Beth identifies up and coming talent for Canada's future team riders. She is also a member of the High Performance Committee that selects our team riders for international and major games competitions. Canadian Grand Prix riders have elected Beth as their Grand Prix rider representative to the Jump Canada Board for the past 8 years as well as the FEI Competitions Approval Committee representing Canada. In October 2015 Beth was appointed Jump Canada's Young Rider Development Program Advisor, a position she held until 2019. During Beth's tenure with the team, Canada won an unprecedented number of medals. Including in 2017 when the Canadian Senior Young Riders team swept the podium individually, a feat that had never been done before." Underhill attributes her longevity in equestrian sports to passion, resilience, and continuous learning. She values the sport's inclusivity, where experience enhances performance over time. Underhill credits mentors, like Eric Lamaze, for reigniting her career and providing opportunities with skilled horses. She emphasizes the importance of foundational skills, tailored training, and realistic expectations for young riders. Challenges include navigating financial barriers, limited Canadian competitions, and pressures amplified by social media. Underhill underscores confidence-building, mental strength, and the incremental process of growth in riding. She highlights consistency and adaptability as vital for achieving success in the demanding world of show jumping.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What do you attribute your longevity in the sport to?

Beth Underhill: Probably stubborn. We're fortunate that our sport 1) aids men and women who can compete equally and 2) that you get better as you get older and more experienced because you can become technically more proficient. It's a sport where the more experiences you have, the better you can apply those experiences to horses that come along. I would never want to do it if I didn't feel I was still mentally brave and as physically strong as I needed to be. I wouldn't just go unthinkingly forward if I thought it wasn't the right thing to do. I mean, I've been very fortunate that I've had situations and horses that have come along that have allowed me to continue and opportunities like what just happened with Torrey Pines and Eric the last year.

I've got a pretty good mindset in that I love what I do. I'm passionate about what I do. I enjoy every aspect of the sport, but I've always kept a healthy check with myself that you're still good

to do what you're doing. Is this still something you feel that you're still confident enough and still learning? And I think if you get to the point where you think, "I know it all, I've learned it all," you're done. I mean, I've always remained a student of this sport, stayed current in the sport, and always tried to stay connected with people throughout the industry to keep learning and stay part of it. I would say also giving back to the sport and being involved in different aspects has been important to me, whether that was starting the under-25 resurrecting. I should say the under-25 divisions and young riders and being the chef of that, whether it's being involved on the board of directors of the Royal Winter Fair or the board of the High-Performance Committee; all those things have helped me to stay engaged and continue to meet new people, have fresh ideas, keep pushing the sport to be better in Canada and learning by being associated with people in Europe and being where you're seeing the sport progress.

Jacobsen: How did this connection with Eric give sort of a nice boost to your longevity as well?

Beth: Well. I didn't have the horsepower a year ago to be able to stay at the Grand Prix level for sure. So Eric definitely and clearly gave me assistance that's in my career. I'm forever grateful for that.

Jacobsen: Okay, so with respect to Eric Lamaze, what has been sort of his contribution to this discipline, and how has this relationship with him, more recently, assisted in not only bringing about the second wind, as we've discussed before, but more sort of a passing of hands of skilled horses?

Beth: I mean, I've known Eric since he first came to Ontario when he was quite young. Right from the beginning, it was apparent he was a hugely gifted and unusual individual. He had a very unique modern perspective on the sport. He was always willing to be very courageous in the things that he did, which I admired very much. I would say he built a business very quickly and was very strong. Obviously, he was very successful at the team level in those early days once he got his foot in the door. What I also found very brave was the fact that when he was still having a very successful, strong business in Ontario, he made the move to Europe. Just with the understanding, knowledge, that for him to be the best in the world as he went on to be, he needed to set his sights even higher.

I thought that was a very courageous thing to do, and I think not many people are comfortable stepping outside their comfort zone and taking on new challenges to the degree that he did. So, he's someone that I always watched, and like I've mentioned already, I very much like to follow the path of what different people did because there are so many ways to be successful in this sport and so many things to learn from so many different people. I found Eric's trajectory and the way he navigated the pathways through the sport really fascinating and courageous. We'd always had a strong friendship. I've ridden with him on the team as a young rider when he was just getting started and then all the way up to when he was at the top of his game. He was always someone who was very generous to everyone, particularly Canadians, with his knowledge. Like I said, he always had a different perspective. So, he was someone that you had to be very open to trying new things, but they often worked very, very well, and he had an uncanny knack for understanding horses and understanding how to create the best partnership in a horse.

He was someone that I was very close to as a friend and as a colleague, as many of my Canadian teammates have been. We've stayed in touch and connected over all these many years, and he helped me with various horses over the years whenever I needed help or advice. He was always very generous with that. Just over a year ago, I went to his place to look at some horses for his

students, and he raised the topic of me being involved more in his business. I would say it's something that he had approached me with once or twice over the last ten years, and it was never the right time for me because for various reasons: I established my own business, I wasn't in a financial situation to just step away from the business that I created financially and just jump into a completely new endeavour.

But last year, I kind of was in a position where I could maybe take a little bit more risk. We started solely; I took my business and my clients with me to Torrey Pines and was able to create a natural evolution from my business to more involvement with Torrey Pines and Eric. The timing was just right for both of us, I think. He's given a lot to Canada as a rider, as a chef, and as a mentor for so many young people. His enthusiasm and passion for the sport I share, but he brings it to a whole other level, and I think it's galvanized me in my later years in my career and also young people coming along. So, I think as Canadians, we have to be very grateful and thankful for what he's given to the sport and his continuous speaking of someone who stays current and stays a student. I mean, he's always prevalent on the scene, and he's someone that has really made the sport and the horse life, his life work.

Jacobsen: Which horse do you feel in your own career has been the best partnership?

Beth: For myself?

Jacobsen: Yes.

Beth: I don't think there would be one. I think different horses come to you at different times. Often times I've found they came to me, and it almost seems like fate. Oftentimes, when I tried to force a situation or said okay, I have a group of people or an individual that we can go do something, and you try and create that perfect storm where you find the right horse to do all the things you want them to be and do, it often doesn't work out as well as when just that situation, those various people-horses situations come together to create a partnership. So, when I look at the horses that have been keyed in my career, like Monopoly, Altair, and Nikka, the horse I took to the World Championships, it all seemed to just be the perfect time where we found each other. Each horse has taught me many different things. Each horse has been an integral part of my career in my life, and I find that part of it fascinating how horses come together and how partnerships grow. So, each horse has a special place in my heart for sure over the years.

Jacobsen: What was on your mind going to Denmark this year?

Beth: Originally, Dieu Merci was the horse we had earmarked to be my world championship horse. He won La Baule; he jumped double clear in the Nations Cup of La Baule, and he jumped double clear with a one-time fault in the second round in Rome. He's a horse that had the experience. Clearly, we had a very good partnership established. Unfortunately, he got injured, and actually, Eric had always thought of Nikka as a World Championship horse, which I absolutely agreed with, but as a nine-year-old, it wouldn't be your natural consideration, and when I started with her this past year, she was still learning the ropes. She was still an inexperienced horse who was on a trajectory forward for sure and clearly had a massive amount of talent, but it was a matter of whether the world championships were too early in her career.

I would say that I became very confident in her going when everything became very easy for her. She was confident, and I felt that our partnership was growing. It was the right choice at the right time, for sure. So, I think she learned a lot from those games. I think it'll only make her better. Clearly, she was an inexperienced horse, but she gave her all, and she was spectacular. She

jumped in the first round of the Nations Cup. I was so proud of her and thrilled to have her there. You just never know how things are going to work out, and as much as Dieu Merci at the beginning of the season was the horse we expected to go, that's part of the sport; things change, situations change, as riders we have to be able to adapt and be able to make those adjustments in our career and that's something that I've learned to do and stay still mentally strong and able to give my best. So, as it turned out, I was a power there.

Jacobsen: How did you feel about going there with the different puzzle pieces of the team in terms of the logistics of putting a team together? How would you characterize the fit of Amy, Tiffany, yourself, and Erynn together?

Beth: It was really fun for us to be an all-women's team. I've ridden with all three girls for many years. I've known Erin from the time she was a junior and jumping way back in Maclay. Tiffany, I've ridden on many teams with, and Amy is a very good friend as well and someone I respect hugely as an individual and as a rider. So I mean, to me, it couldn't have been a team that was more strong and more wanting the best for each other. I would feel that way with, I mean, all our Canadian team riders are very generous, enthusiastic, and passionate riders and people, and I think the world of them. To be able to go with those three ladies, we definitely went there as a team; we worked together, we trained together for six weeks. Prior to that, they came to Europe while Tiffany was based here, but Amy and Erynn committed to being here and doing their best to be the best they could be, and I have a lot of respect for those women. They are the best of the best.

Jacobsen: How does Canada produce such great women riders compared to a lot of other countries so consistently?

Beth: We struggle because as much as we are a large country where the riders are far-flung, and there's a small group of us. If you look at the number of Canadian top-level athletes compared to other countries like the US and Europe, I mean, we struggle with the numbers. The riders we have are very, very strong, committed, and talented riders: no question about it. And we had some remarkable results in top-level competitions, and I think that speaks to our determination and our strength and our mental strength actually, but for sure, we're weak on horsepower. We have a very thin group of horses and riders at that top level, and I think we're very mindful of that, and that's why we're trying to support our young riders and team opportunities, but it's difficult. We don't have the finances in our Federation to create opportunities where the riders are funded in a way that a lot of them can afford to come to Europe. It just becomes a very onerous task for people financially to do that.

That's what worries me the most is being able to continue to create the level of experience required to jump at this top level, to create the horsepower that we need and to also have the opportunities for the young riders to compete at this top level. I mean, we have to really think outside the box and be creative about how we make this happen the next few years because it's thin at the top, no question about it.

Jacobsen: What do you consider the main barriers other than finances for the international level?

Beth: I mean, the finances are a big issue. I would say this: the board has become very weak in Canada as well, which is extremely worrisome. We used to have so many shows that were all

across Eastern and Western Canada, and those shows have shrunk. So what you're seeing is riders are forcibly having to compete elsewhere, whether it be mostly in the United States or those that can afford to come to Europe in order to stay and learn to be at the top of their game. That's a big concern. Our shows just have so many fewer opportunities, so we're not creating the top level of competition at the shows that we have. The shows, I believe, at Spruce Meadows are fantastic, Ottawa is great, and we have the Major League, which is terrific, but we're missing that level below the team level that is able to compete, work and get the experience they need in Canada.

So, it's hard to pinpoint. I think there are a lot of reasons for that happening, but it's not all just financial for sure. I can tell you that for riders at the team level who have their businesses and have clients and students' horses that they compete with and develop, they have to be able to stay in Canada in order to create and maintain their business. So for them to be able to drop that and then head to Europe for several months of the year in order to compete at those top shows and have those Nations Cup opportunities, that's a very difficult thing to do when you don't have the support financially of your Federation. That money has to come from either the individuals themselves or their owners, and that's a big ask. Most countries are able to support their athletes much more than Canada. So, that's a big issue in your question.

Jacobsen: When you're training newer students, how do you systematically bring them along to a higher level of riding?

Beth: I think it's very important that you have the right horse for the right rider at the right time in your career. I think also it's important to instill in young riders there's a process, and it takes time. Oftentimes, students naturally feel peer pressure; they want to jump into bigger divisions, and they're probably ready to do it because they see their friend doing it or they have aspirations to jump to that higher level. I think patience and understanding the process of that pathway are hugely important. What's been very good is having our under-25 division become a more clear pathway so that people understand this is how we create that pathway. So it will be starting in the pony jumpers and then the 20 Division and then the junior young riders, senior young riders, under 25s and then the team level, if that's where they aspire to go.

I would say riders have to be realistic. I try to teach my riders to be fairly mindful of what is the best competition for them to enter with their particular horse at their particular level. I'm very strong on the foundations and the basics of the sport, so I teach them the horsemanship and the management, not just the riding skills. And again, giving them the opportunities to compete at different shows so they have varied experience and learn from that. I love doing clinics because that gives me the opportunity to reach a wider audience that maybe doesn't have the opportunity to train with someone at a higher level. I think it's important as riders at the top level of the sport that we make ourselves available to help younger riders coming along so that they don't only have a love and a passion for the sport but also clearly understand how important the foundations are and that's what I find misses a lot with our developing riders. They tend to be weak in the basics of the slot work and the education of the fundamentals of jumping, whether that's grid work or pattern work or working on developing your eye and your horse's ride-ability; all of those things are so integral to having a horse who's ride-able and responsive to the rider's aid. So that's something I stress very heavily in my teaching.

Jacobsen: In your experience, what do you find are some of the more emotional difficulties that riders typically have to encounter throughout their careers?

Beth: I think, like I touched on, I feel that social media has created a lot of pressure for people to do well, and they see what their peers are potentially jumping. Maybe not even what they're doing, but it's how it comes across, and they feel either a lack of confidence or they feel that they're being judged or watched. I feel that's something we maybe didn't deal with quite as much in my beginnings of the sport, not to the degree that there is today. So, I think it's important that, as trainers, we try and create confidence in our riders and teach them that not everyone's standing in the ring watching and judging them. As you step in the ring, it's you and your horse and the course designer and how you can navigate the puzzles the course designers created in the course.

I think it's important that riders are educated and trained to the point at home where they feel very comfortable in the division that they're jumping in, so it doesn't feel like a big ask; it's something that they're comfortable doing, it's something that they practice at home, it's something that they step in the ring and feel that they are capable and able to do. That's why, as I mentioned, it's so important to me that horses and riders are not overfaced. I would rather spend an extra six months with an individual or a horse, gaining their confidence because then that next step up will be solidified. When you err on the side of getting ahead of the game, then you can create detrimental attacks. So, having the rider feel very strong and confident in their own skills gives them naturally more confidence mentally when they step in the ring. So I think a lot of what riders struggle with, particularly young riders, but also at the higher levels, is fear of making a mistake and fear of not succeeding.

The reality of the situation is we're going to lose more than we win. So you better step in the ring, working on being the best rider. You can be improving your horse incrementally, even if you come out of the ring with a rail or two, that feeling that you've improved in some way. To me, you have to have realistic expectations as you move along as to what you've learned and what you've gained from each experience and from each horse show. That, to me, is very important because that's how you learn about yourself and your horse, and that's what gives you the building blocks to consistency because what we're looking for is consistency. We don't want the one-hit-wonder; we want the consistency of riders that can step in the ring at the team level and deliver a clean round or double clean. It's going to be a helpful contribution to the team score, and in order to do that it takes a lot of mental strength and education and experience, and that doesn't happen overnight. That's your 10,000 hours or whatever it takes to get you to that level, and it's not a fast process. So, understanding the fact that there are going to be peaks and valleys and it's not going to be just a quick ascension of the ranks is part of understanding the process, in my opinion.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 47: Annette Case Background to 3-Day Eventing (1)

Annette Case is an Adult Amateur Eventer/SJ who was born in Auckland, New Zealand. She started riding at the age of 4/5. She moved to Canada in 1987 and married David Case in 1991, with whom she has 3 girls. She is a small-time breeder of Canadian warmbloods and competed in preliminary level eventing before having a family with David. Annette is one of the few people responsible for bringing eventing to Northern Alberta in the South Peace Horse Trials. Case shares her equestrian roots in New Zealand, inspired by her mother's show jumping. Early experiences included pony clubs, bareback riding, and show jumping. She later transitioned to eventing and working as a pupil for John Cottle. Case highlights the financial and geographic challenges in equestrian sports, emphasizing the importance of rider-horse relationships over costly purchases. She reflects on balancing family and passion, noting sacrifices required for competitive success. Case admires equestrian longevity, where experience shapes skill, and remains committed to breeding and training young horses for future riders.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, we were talking off-tape. I wanted to get one thing as a preface to all this. I was focusing on show jumping at the start, but it started expanding quite a lot. So I've made this a project where I want to start with Canada, doing English riding and its disciplines and Western riding and its disciplines and then going North American, European and internationally in general. I might take detours from that structure, but I can't determine how long this project will take. However, I would like to get people who are running equine therapeutic businesses, from small-time riders to big-time riders. So on, to get a rounded perspective on equestrianism because, as far as I know, that's not been done outside of siloing: show jumping, three-day eventing, dressage, barrel racing, horse racing. The things of this nature. I'll take a step forward now and ask how you get involved in horses.

Case: It may have been the first word issued from my mouth. I am one of four kids, from a mum who used to show jump in NZ in the days before FEI. Those days all the classes were judged. She grew up on a farm; we grew up on an acreage and there were always horses around. Anytime I could, I'd be out with them. I was infatuated with them initially; my sister and I were.

Jacobsen: How did you find interaction with them over time? I'm talking more before actual riding.

Case: I've always loved all my animals, but a horse was something special. We had cats and the neighbor's golden retriever who were very special too but for me the horses were my friend, therapist, sounding board, wiper of tears. I told them everything but they just don't talk back.

Jacobsen: [Laughs] They don't speak English.

Case: Some horses do talk back.

Jacobsen: Yes, there was a child yesterday at the business here. It was a Sunday. She said something to the horse in Spanish, even though the girl's native tongue is English. I looked at the mother and said, "The horse only speaks Japanese." It's amusing because they have this very malleable quality with how we, as human beings, engage creatures anyway.

Case: Yes. I'm in my mid-50s. Sometimes, the reason may be hazy, but I know if I was in trouble with Mum or dad, I'd go to the horse. We were lucky, we lived on an acreage so it was fairly

cheap to keep a horse back then. I'd talk about my problems. If I were younger than that, I'd sit there and hug them or cry and say, "Life isn't fair." So, it's always been that extra, that little bit of... I didn't think of it as that back then, but maybe therapy if you want to add that extra... Something extra there... what I mean is they were there for you.

Jacobsen: People get their start if they want the basics of good riding in dressage. Everyone tells me. How did you start in a saddle?

Case: Mum was very busy. She couldn't always be watching us and we were always on the horse every second we had. We weren't allowed to ride with a saddle just in case we got caught up so we hopped on bareback and hared around the paddocks. Depending on who wanted to ride, we'd double or even triple and from time to time tumble. Sometimes, we shared a horse for a bit and took turns. Later on, there were two horses and we'd play tag with the neighbours. I probably got a normal start to riding and went to pony club as soon as I could talk my parents into it. It's a little different from here but has the same values. I rode the horse to pony club every Saturday and spent basically the whole afternoon there.

You get taught how to look after your horse right from the little stuff you can do when you're young to the big stuff as you get bigger and better. There are instructors and many volunteer parents present the whole time—a lot of work. You sit tests; you move up your levels. That's how many kids in New Zealand get started. That's how I got started.



Jacobsen: Is that structure now similar to other areas of the English riding world regarding how kids get into riding?

Case: I'm not too familiar with other country's pony club systems but I would imagine, they'd be somewhat similar. I haven't been there for over 30 years. Here, you can choose between going to a riding stable, a pony club, finding a coach and leasing horses or just ride at home if you're

lucky enough to live on an acreage, farm or ranch. Many kids I've known here in Canada have found a coach who will take you through the basics of riding and horse care. Flatwork or dressage before you start jumping, but it depends on that coach's training, upbringing and everything. It's a little bit different here. Does that answer your question?

Jacobsen: Yes. As you became more experienced as a rider, you had to expand into different riding disciplines to get to where you are now. How did you go about doing that? Was it a structured process or more of an organic, exploratory endeavour?

Case: In New Zealand, we didn't have Western riding when I was growing up. I believe it is there now but it was all English riding. Through the pony club there was structure but we also watched our heroes like, Sir Mark Todd, Andrew Nichol森, Blythe Tait etc. Mark was a show jumper and an eventer, winning Badminton Horse Trials in England before going on to win back to back Olympic titles on a horse called Charisma. There was also Show jumping and dressage as equestrian sports but not quite in the spotlight like Eventing was. I don't know what it's like in NZ now but back then Dressage was not quite as popular.

Coming through Pony Club, you get a chance to do the pony club games at the rallies, which are all focused on you enjoying your horse while learning at the same time. Every pony club had a one-day event. It's like a three-day event, but the dressage, cross-country and show jumping are all in one day.

Here in Canada, we run a lot of what are called horse trials. They run the three disciplines, but because of distances, they run it over two days. Distances and the number of volunteers that we have available, make it easier to run the dressage and show jumping on one day because they're the two smaller events and then run the cross country on the third day.

The thing with one day events is that the rider gets a taste of all three disciplines and if you decided that you like one discipline better than another then you could branch off.

I love the thrill, the adrenaline of it, but in my first year out of high school; I didn't get into the program I wanted to attend at university. I worked for a show jumper named John Cottle, New Zealand's 1984 individual show jumping representative at the Los Angeles Games. I got to be a working pupil, so essentially I groomed for him, worked the horses at home and he had lessons. I love show jumping, but I also love cross country, so I did both.

Jacobsen: You're my first eventer interview formal and the first person, as far as I know, who has a New Zealand history with horses in general. [Ed. part of a slow process of going international and into different disciplines.] This is an interesting aspect of it because a lot of the time, when I'm talking to Canadians, there are a lot of assumptions under the surface. For instance, something as simple as you say we didn't have Western. For instance, that would not be something to come up in British Columbia or Alberta.

Case: No.



Jacobsen: So, the context in which someone does grow up with horses can impact the paths that are open to them or what they see before them as they're growing up in a particular sport.

Case: Yes. Geographically, that makes a huge difference, right? Growing up in Alberta, I would think that most young riders would think of Western riding unless born into an English riding family. They would think of horses and think of the westerns, right?

Alberta and BC and maybe even Saskatchewan have working ranches where horses are a way of life so I imagine geographically there'd be higher numbers of western riders in the western provinces.

I was lucky enough to grow up with horses but I can only afford to do what I'm doing now because I'm very fortunate. My husband has a great job, we live in the country and we have the horses at home. I pay for coaching, but I keep my horses at home. And you make a lot of sacrifices. Families come along. You choose whether you run with a family or the horses; you can try and do both, but it wouldn't have worked for me. It geographically and economically determines what you will do and how you will do it.

Jacobsen: Gail Greenough noted a similar difficulty regarding ever having a family. You have a family. However, regarding that decision one makes about whether to have one, I think she was quite frank about noting that as a regret. Even though, within her career, she was very successful.

Case: Yes. It's one of those things I didn't even think about growing up. I've been a person who's always lived for the moment but not a risk taker either. I always wanted to have something to do with horses but decided early on that I wasn't going to work for them because I didn't want them not to become the love and passion that I have. I was very lucky enough to have another sport that I was very good at. I played field hockey not on the national team in New Zealand but at a national level. I possibly could have made it had I not left the country when I did. My mum played on the New Zealand field hockey team. I mean, it was a possibility if I wanted it.

I forgot where I was going with this, but the horses were....I didn't want them to be my work, I wanted them to be my sport and passion. I definitely would have said that I wanted to make the Olympic team at one point. Every young kid wants to go to the Olympics. Yes, I did, but when I decided I wanted a family, I realized it wasn't for me. I mean it's fine when it's the two of you; I can decide to do something, without making a choice for my husband. He can come with me, or he can go do his own thing. When you have kids, everything changes. If I choose to do the horses, he has to look after the kids, or we pay somebody to look after the kids. We didn't want to do that. We wanted it to be one of us with them. If I chose to compete, follow the horses, go as high as possible, I was choosing Dave to look after the kids. I didn't want him to do that all the time and I wanted to do it, too. So basically, I rode all through pregnancy. I rode while we had the kids. I still rode when they were young, but then, at a certain age, I stopped competing and just rode at home.

Once the kids were not too financially dependent on us, it was, "Okay, the time is mine now." Luckily, horse riding is one of the sports that, as long as you've kept yourself fairly healthy and fit, you can still ride. You don't have to be under 30 to be half-decent. It's also the only sport that I know that you can compete alongside your stars: Laura Jane, say she was riding a young horse - you might have a young horse in the same division and be competing alongside them. Whereas you'd never get a chance to play with or against an NHL player or an NFL player. The factor is that of the horse; it's the level of the horse, a young horse or a green horse. You've got your green horse. You're all in the same pool together.

Jacobsen: I remember Tiffany Foster mentioned that the horse is the great equalizer in one article or interview that had been turned into an article. Yet, Mac Cone noted, a certain number of horses are born each year. There's a higher demand for them internationally. The price is based on demand. Limited supply creates an artificial inflation of the prices of the horses. Those Olympic-level horses, say half a million dollars to five million dollars or something like this, become further and further out of the reach of people without sufficient means. Something that you were alluding to before: how much does finance, especially now, create a barrier to entry into higher ends of the sport for many people who have the talent but are more ordinary in terms of means?

Case: It is a huge barrier. That does not mean to say that it can't be done. If you work hard, are in the right place at the right time, and want it badly enough, I'm sure it can be done. It's just not as easy without the financial backing. I have three young prospects who are well-bred and depending on the people who end up with them, and lady luck, they may make it to the higher end of the sport. They don't have that huge price tag on them, but somehow, they've got to find a market. "Who you know" helps but I don't have the finances to compete with them up the levels so I enjoy the babies and pass them along.

Jacobsen: When do you think most riders are serious about going to the Olympics or getting to the higher end of the FEI rankings peak? What is that time of life for them typically?

Case: For a rider?

Jacobsen: Yes.



Case: I don't know if I am fully qualified to answer that. From my knowledge of other sports and stuff, I would say that it would depend on the relationship with a horse and where they've come from. I don't know the youngest rider to be at the Olympics. I know some young people have been there as eventers, and Canada has had young show jumpers too. Usually, they're mid-20s at the youngest. It depends on how much experience they've had or how quickly they've been able to move up the levels, if they've had to go to school, if they've had to have breaks anywhere along the line through injury or for family or anything like that.

Jacobsen: There was one young lady, Luiza Almeida. She was in dressage on the Brazilian team at the 2008 Olympics. At that time, she was 16.

Case: Yes. The minimum age at the Olympics is 14. But I would imagine that there has been no lack of money, she's been able to decide to ride; she's had top-quality instructors and quality horses. I don't know how well she did, but she made the nation's team and went to the Olympics - that's amazing.

Jacobsen: 39th was the ranking.

Case: That's awesome. Here, I think there's a lot more people, there's a much larger populace wanting those few spots on the team. I think you've got to do a bit more and be more out there. I'm not qualified to give you that answer, but I know it would be a lot harder to do it in a country where more people are riding who are fighting for those spots. They'll have so many qualifiers that you have to do and whatnot and how your horse goes and if they get lame or if you have a

straight run-through and stuff like that. Even though you're talking about the rider, it all depends on whether you've had a horse that's been able to do that all the way through, too.

Things can throw a huge wrench in some people's plans. The 15 yr old horse that is at the top of his game one season but the Olympics are still 2 yrs away... anything can happen in that 2 years of waiting. And again, I haven't been at that level.

Jacobsen: You got me thinking. In one of my first interviews, I was lucky enough to get one with Erynn Ballard, also within a couple of months of working in the industry. I didn't know anything. I recall her saying something more akin to your own perspective on the financial thing or the horse rider combination, both of them at the same time, where she noted that with respect to being able to buy a great horse, she still thinks that or likes to think that the best horse and rider combination where you build that relationship, is the strongest predictor of a successful performance.

Case: I had a special young horse that I was working with many years ago and I was talking to a course designer who had ridden at the Pan Am's, wondering if I should get a good trainer to start this horse or do it myself. And he said, "Annette, you're a good enough rider and you've got enough knowledge to do this. If you want to have this horse to compete on, you start it and then find trainers to work with to learn how to put the buttons on. You'll do better relationship-wise if this is the horse that you want to ride and compete on to start it yourself." I honestly do believe that having a good horse and rider relationship makes a more successful partnership which should go hand in hand with performance.

I breed a few of my own horses. I start them. Then we see where they go; like, right now, I've got a nice three-year-old. I will probably start it and enjoy it as a three- to four-year-old. But then it might go somewhere else for somebody to take it further than I could afford or probably do myself. So yes, I take pride in putting a nice start on them. What I know, though, scratches the surface Scott but it's a passion of mine and my sport as opposed to my livelihood. I've had horses most of my life, but I've not been in it as a work thing for most of my life.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 48: Lynne Denison Foster on Storytime with Brent Balisky (2)

Lynne Denison Foster is the mother of Rebecca Foster, owner of the Bale and Bucket restaurant, and Tiffany Foster, a professional equestrian show jumper ranked the highest in Canada. She was an aviation professional for 48 years, beginning with Pacific Western Airlines in 1969 in the Edmonton Reservation office and moving to Vancouver in 1973. She helped with the implementation of the first computerized reservations systems for a regional air carrier in North America. Since 1974, she has been an instructor and in 2012 was awarded BC Aviation Council's Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to educating the aviation community. At Canadian/Air Canada, she trained CEOs, Pilots, Aircraft Groomers, and worked on training initiatives and programs for aviation safety management system, computerized reservation systems, corporate change, customer services, frontline leadership, human factors, interpersonal skills, management practices, and service quality. She taught at BCIT between 2000 and 2017. Foster was key in the development of the Aviation Operations Diploma Programs. She was Chief Instructor for 7 years. In 2015, she won BCIT's Teaching Excellence Award. Foster reflects on parenting Tiffany and Rebecca Foster, emphasizing principles of perseverance, guidance, and fostering independence. Financial challenges in equestrianism were tackled through creative solutions, like working student arrangements for lessons. Foster instilled responsibility by involving her children in tasks and teaching them through shared experiences before independent execution. She highlights her daughters' attachment to her and their reluctance to be apart, sharing humorous anecdotes about their reliance on her presence. Foster credits her professional background in customer service training, based on Eric Berne's transactional analysis, for shaping her parenting style, emphasizing recognition, structure, and stimulation as key needs.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, in the article we found together in the 50th/bicentennial of Show Park magazine, it stated. Rebecca and Tiffany started early. Costs were an issue. What were the first reactions to the costs? How did you take that approach of facing the problem, problem solve, towards those kinds of costs when income may not necessarily be so high in a sport that was expensive at their level, even more expensive now?

Lynne Denison Foster: You should get Brent to tell you this story. Because he was telling it when we were at the World Equestrian Games in Normandy. I said to him, "Brent, tell me the story of how Tiffany Foster came to your barn as if I am not me." He tells a really good story. So, you should ask him.

We came from the North Shore with three other families. They thought we had good money for our kids because the other families did.

Jacobsen: Which isn't an uncommon thing in this industry.

Foster: Yes, basically, you have to. He kind of thought that we were... He spoke with the other parents of the other kids. Because he kind of saved me for the last, I guess. I don't know. Tiffany and Rebecca were nice kids. And I was a nice person. So, we had a meeting with Tiffany and Rebecca, and Brent and Laura. He [Laughing] asked me how much I was willing to spend. Basically, what was in my budget for my kids...

Jacobsen: I can imagine how those conversations would go.

Foster: You should ask him, because it is a funny story. He says, “How much are you thinking of spending on your daughters’ lessons?” Brent would, probably, remember. I couldn’t remember. I said something like, “Uhhhh, probably, \$12,000 a year.” [Laughing] He and Laura looked [Laughing] like, “Is she delusional?” Brent realized, ‘Oh, this lady has no idea how much these girls need if they want to ride and compete in equestrian sport.’ But he said, “Since these two scrawny little kids were such good little kids and the mother was nice, they decided at the time that they would give us a break.” At the time, he said, “It costs more than that. We need a working student. If you pay for your pony’s board, the girls could work for their lessons...” then he said, “Tiffany needs another horse.” Laura had this horse. They paid a lot of money for him, and he was injured. He was on rehab. They could free-lease him to Tiffany, and she could earn her lessons and do a couple of other things if I paid for the board. That is how the girls got into that. He said, “The next day, there they were. The mother and two little girls hauling hay and mucking stalls.” Whenever my girls had to do something new, I went with them, showed them how it was done, explained what they needed to do, then “let’s do it together” and then “show me how you do it.” Rebecca was nervous. But they were confident because I was there. So, when they knew what they had to do, then it was like, “Okay, get out of my way, I know what I am doing.” Tiffany did a babysitting course when she was 12. A young couple from our church were her first customers. I asked them if I could come with Tiffany, orient her, and explain to her that a good babysitter didn’t just look after the kids, she should do more than that: cleaning up the kitchen, tidying up, etc. I followed the same formula with her: Do it together, explain, let me see how you do it, then do it alone. Even with Rebecca and her cooking, it was the same thing. That was another principle. “Let’s do it together, discover it, be clear and understand what our tasks are, and then I will watch you and give you advice, and then let you do it by yourself, when you are ready, I won’t be there anymore.”

Jacobsen: From your own perspective, these are principles, ways of thinking, ways of delivering those ways of thinking to your kids at appropriate ages, with appropriate consequences, even choosing those consequences. What about situations for yourself as a parent, as any parent has?

Foster: I think I was very lucky with the children that I had. They weren’t hard to raise. I have to say, like I find it more challenging as an adult parent to adult children than I did when they were children.

Jacobsen: How so?

Foster: They were devoted to me. They really were. Do you want another story?

Jacobsen: Please.

Foster: It is kind of late. I’ll do a quick one. We lived in North Vancouver. Part of being in grade 6, children were enrolled in outdoor school for 1 week and learned about nature. Rebecca, whose birthday is in January, was 2 years behind Tiffany in school. The same incident occurred with both of those girls. I took Tiffany to the bus. We lived right behind the school. We walked through this greenspace, which the girls called “Fairy Land.” It was easy for me to walk them with their little backpacks. She was getting on the bus to go to outdoor school. Tiffany asked, “Why aren’t you coming with me?”

“No, Tiffany, I can’t.”

“What?! You have to come.”

“Sorry, Tiffany, there are already enough parents who volunteered.”

“No, you have to come with me. You have to come with me! I don’t want to go by myself.”

She started crying. Clinging to me, and didn’t want to get on the bus, I finally convinced her by getting one of her friends to help me. She got on the bus and I saw her face looking out the window at me with tears coming down her face. Rebecca knew nothing about that. Two years later, “You’re not coming with me?” Exactly the same kind of reaction, they were attached to me, because their dad was a kid. He goofed around with them and loved them, but really didn’t parent them. That was part of it. Another time, okay, riding, they were, probably, 9 ½ and eleven. I decided that they should go to an English riding camp in the summer for a week. So, I was telling them I had registered them. The first words out of their mouths: “Are you coming?”

“No, no, it is a kids’ camp. I can’t go.”

“We’re not going if you’re not going.”

“It is going to be exciting,” blah-blah-blah. So, they wouldn’t go. They didn’t want to go and were upset. Then I found out there was a mother-daughter weekend camp in May. I said, “Hey, let’s go to this one, you’ll see. Then you’ll go to the other one without me.” So, we went to the mother-daughter [Laughing] camp. That was the first and only time I’ve ever ridden English, on this postage stamp piece of leather [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Foster: I was used to sitting in a Western saddle with this big saddle horn to hang onto, sitting on a big comfortable seat queueing on a trail ride. That was one thing I did for my daughters. I took this English riding camp. I was so sore. I could hardly move [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Foster: They were not difficult children to raise. They were usually happier when their mother was around. You know what I am saying? There was another thing. I taught customer service and leadership skills to the staff and management at the airline. One thing that was very important in the Pacific Western/Canadian Airlines culture was the concept of reward and recognition: how necessary, critical, and important it is to humans... I studied this theory developed by a guy named Eric Berne, a Human Behavior psychologist. In the 70’s, Thomas Harris wrote a book called *I’m OK – You’re OK*, based on Berne’s research. It was very popular in those days.

Jacobsen: I recall these phrases.

Foster: He developed transactional analysis.

Jacobsen: Transactional Psychology.

Foster: Yes.

[Ed. My Belgian guest who joined me] **Hans De Ceuster:** Games People Play.

Jacobsen: *Games People Play*.

Foster: In the book, *Games People Play*, Eric Berne described three principle needs humans instinctively crave. You may be familiar with this as well. Although you’re probably more familiar with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and all that. I liked Berne’s theory because it is much more simplified. He explains that humans crave three things: Recognition, Structure, and Stimulation. So, I did extensive research and included it in my course. Being in the Service industry, I

focused most on recognition. But, as a parent, I realized that all three of them are important. That's, basically, the principles that I raised my children by, in many ways.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 49: Annette Case on Eventer Stereotypes and Family Life (2)

Annette Case is an Adult Amateur Eventer/SJ who was born in Auckland, New Zealand. She started riding at the age of 4/5. She moved to Canada in 1987 and married David Case in 1991, with whom she has 3 girls. She is a small-time breeder of Canadian warmbloods and competed in preliminary level eventing before having a family with David. Annette is one of the few people responsible for bringing eventing to Northern Alberta in the South Peace Horse Trials. Case embraces her passion for the discipline despite perceptions of its danger, citing advancements like frangible jumps for safety. She finds cross-country less nerve-wracking than show jumping due to fewer risks of entanglement. Her training involves structured weekly sessions in dressage, jumping, and fitness, including trail rides in Blackfoot Provincial Park, which she considers therapeutic. Balancing family and horses, Case describes equestrianism as a 365-day commitment and a vital part of her life. While horses provide joy, connection, and health benefits, her family remains her priority. She values the humbling, lifelong learning the sport offers.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Many show jumpers I've talked about define eventers as "crazy." They use colloquialisms like that in that they prefer standards, rails, shallow cups, and light rails. The safety aspect of it. They find events, which I'm gathering, more dangerous than show jumping.

Annette Case: I have heard that. Sometimes I tell people I have a dirty little secret - that I'm an eventer. They say, "Oh my God, I'm not brave enough to do that." It's just something I've always done. I think any jumping can be dangerous but cross-country is becoming a lot safer. Frangible jumps have been introduced in the last 5 or so years and have made the sport much safer. Unfortunately these jumps are quite a bit more expensive to build.

I'm an eventer, however I'm more nervous about show jumping than I am about cross country. I've seen rails get caught in horse's legs and bring the horse down. I feel like my horse will either stop or bounce off the jump out on cross-country whereas, in stadium, they can get mixed up and tangled. I believe or something like that. Superman, Clark Kent, got badly hurt show jumping too.

Jacobsen: What happened to him? I believe he was in a wheelchair. Was he not?

Case: Yes, that was through show jumping.

Jacobsen: Really?!

Case: Yes.

Jacobsen: I didn't know that.

Case: You learned something today. Getting back to it, it doesn't bother me if they want to say I'm crazy, I don't find it offensive. I'm just more comfortable doing the cross country. A jump is a jump. Laura, when she walks a course with us, she'll tell us exactly how to approach it or what to do or how to do it or whatever and the same thing with my cross-country coaches. We have a few different varieties: water, banks, drops, etc.... Yes, slightly different questions, but it's still a jump.



Jacobsen: When you're doing the three-day eventing, how are you in your mind structuring? How are you going to be doing your training? How are you going to be going about each day?

Case: What I do right now is I have a dressage coach. I see her usually once a week, depending on what's going on, once every two weeks. We work on straightness, connection, and impulsion. We've worked through tests that I'll be riding too. I have a jumping coach as well. I also take full advantage of lessons with Laura Balisky when she comes up to Grande Prairie, Alberta. She has definitely helped my show jumping. My coaches help with preparation. They know the courses we're going through when you get to that. If it's a two-day, it's slightly different than a three-day. If it's run over the two days, you always have the dressage first then stadium; I don't get nervous anymore. If you've done your work beforehand and the test is in your head then you just ride to the best of your ability and hope you've done your homework.

And then it's switching gears to the different saddle, different course. Now you're jumping and the cross-country course is usually around 2K, anywhere between 15, 18, or 20 jumps and some combinations depending on your level. I usually walk four times. I get there and get my package. I try to walk one more time, sometimes not with my coach, but there's always a course walk with my coach. And then the last time, it's so I know exactly where I'm going. I usually put on a good 8k. Then, on the third day of the stadium. Again, you put on a different saddle. We got the jumping saddle on and changed gears. You get used to changing gears quite a bit. It was like when I was at Thunderbird with Laura; each day was a new course. I concentrated specifically on that. In some ways, that made it easier; in some ways, it made it harder because you would feel frustrated as you want to keep getting better and better and better. I'm insanely competitive all the time, but know that nearly 100% of the mistakes my horse makes, come from me. We can always get better. So, it's a humbling sport, that's for sure.

Jacobsen: Outside of simply competing, do you think the work and thought and construction of a relationship with a horse is for some people a very good part of their life, in that it's a mechanism for psychological health, it's helpful?

Case: Yes, 100%. I am one of the very fortunate people. We have 20 acres, so I can have my horses here. I've got friends who have land but take the horses to an arena in the winter. I ride outside in the winter. I play with them. I see them every day. For me, it psychologically makes me healthier. I've come from a country where I could be outside all day even if it rained, whereas here, I've come to a place where it gets cold and you don't get enough sunlight. I think the horse is a lifesaver. If I hadn't thought of that, I would now because, with the broken ribs and a concussion, I haven't been able to get out and get my therapy. I've talked to them but I need to ride. We've got a provincial park about 10 minutes away. I'm probably down there three times a week with the horses. It's a huge parcel of land called the Blackfoot Provincial Park. You can look that up if you want. It's next to Elk Island National Park in Strathcona County.

We go for miles and miles and miles. One day, we might go out for a hack. Sometimes I go by myself, but I've got a couple of friends who I meet at six o'clock in the morning. We'll do hill work, pace work, hacking, gallop sets on acres and acres of land. like quarters... I did look it up, but we're allowed to ride on this huge amount of land.



We've got apps on our phones that we tap into. It records how much walking, trotting, cantering we do, how much hill work, measures the kilometers, cardio output etc. Eventing horses need this; we're not running them the whole time, but I believe our horses are much happier by doing this rather than doing circles in an arena, on a race track, or something like that. It's interesting. But we've got trails. We've got open pasture land. So to answer the question, roughly 3 days a week fitness, one day is dressage, then one day jumping in a week. The horse will probably get two days off a week, sometimes one day, depending on what's going on with the rest of my life because I do have a family. They do come first, but the horses are a very close second. That's my life that I need, but I do need the horses. They're very much a part of my life.

Jacobsen: Even despite having a family making that choice, how do you find horses as a part of that in and out of your life for so long? The first thing I heard about this industry before I even got into it was that it's a lifestyle.

Case: It's a 365-day-a-year responsibility.

Jacobsen: How would you encapsulate that? The word that comes to mind is a consuming passion, but I don't know if that's necessarily right on point.

Case: You get all sorts of different horse owners. It's not all-consuming for me because my husband does come first followed closely by the kids. Sometimes, he complains he doesn't, but he does. I'm a huge family person but my family includes cats, dogs and horses. I am quite willing to go away on holiday. We have one week of holiday in the summer. Usually, we have a couple of skiing holidays, but they might be long weekends, or they might be a week. If we go down to visit my family in New Zealand, then I'm usually away for a little bit longer, but that'll always be in the winter here, but yes, horses are a big part of my life. I know it's been a way of life for me.

Jacobsen: Annette, thank you very much for today's opportunity.

Case: You're very welcome.



The Greenhorn Chronicles 50: Conversation with Beth Underhill on Horses and Tragedy (3)

Beth Underhill's biographic sketch states: "Beth Underhill's International Show Jumping career places her today as an impressive veteran of Pan American, Olympic and World Equestrian Games. Beth is one of Canada's top coaches for junior/amateur riders through to Grand Prix athletes. Beth's successful career and the knowledge she has gained allows her to guide, train and mentor both horse and rider from junior to world class competition level. Beth has a wealth of experience to share with students; as the Leading Woman Rider in the World in 1995, also the first woman to win the Canadian World Cup League as well as representing Canada in the Olympics and many Nations Cup Competitions across the world: Italy, Spain, Luxemborg, Germany, Equador, USA, Holland. Today Beth is still competing at the highest level and is a great asset to any rider who is looking for coaching from an extremely passionate equestrian. Beth is also successful in training riders and horses in the Hunter and Equitation divisions, guiding one of her students to win the CET Medal Finals at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. Beth was also the leading trainer of the Ultimate Hunter Challenge and has twice been named Coach of the Year in Canada. Beth has acted as Chef d'Equipe for the North American Young Riders Team and oversaw the National Talent ID Program. Beth identifies up and coming talent for Canada's future team riders. She is also a member of the High Performance Committee that selects our team riders for international and major games competitions. Canadian Grand Prix riders have elected Beth as their Grand Prix rider representative to the Jump Canada Board for the past 8 years as well as the FEI Competitions Approval Committee representing Canada. In October 2015 Beth was appointed Jump Canada's Young Rider Development Program Advisor, a position she held until 2019. During Beths tenure with the team, Canada won an unprecedented number of medals. Including in 2017 when the Canadian Senior Young Riders team swept the podium individually, a feat that had never been done before." Underhill highlights European dominance in equestrian sports, attributing their success to abundant competitions, Nations Cups, and affordable young horse development. North America lags in financial support and access. Modern course design demands quicker, more agile horses, reflecting the sport's increasing sophistication. She emphasizes the importance of empathy, technical growth, and lifelong learning in equestrianism. Beth advocates exposing young riders to horsemanship and warm-up rings for holistic development. While videos aid training, intuition remains vital. Horses have been her solace during personal tragedies, providing focus and emotional support. She values adaptability, friendships, and knowledge gained over her career's trajectory.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What countries do you think are doing the best right now? What factors do you think are behind their great success?

Beth Underhill: I think that, obviously, the Europeans have been fantastic across the board. I mean you, you see different events, and you see different strengths; I think that being able to compete in Europe is a definite asset for us as North Americans because it's a different level of competition. You get comfortable competing against the best in the world. I think that when you go to Europe, then you see the amount of shows and the amount of opportunities those guys have to compete in Nations Cups. In North America, we have a handful of Nations Cups, and so being where you get better is being able to practice something, like I just mentioned, to be able to get comfortable doing something over and over again; it's not something you do once or twice a year. I think that the opportunities that are in Europe, whether it's the number of five-star shows

even for younger riders being able to meet at The Young Riders level, more competitions. The Nation's Cup opportunities, the global tour, and the level of competition create strength and confidence and create horses and riders that are going to be the best in the world. I think that we're mindful of that and the necessity to compete outside our comfort zone. It's not just about, you know, going to Europe for the sake of being in Europe; it's the fact that we are all comfortable competing at shows nearby us. It shows that we know the people. That we know the venue. We're comfortable being at home. We have to push outside our comfort zone. That's where the support needs to come from financially, so that we're able to do that and be able to compete in situations and in competitions that are a little bit foreign to us. That's what makes us better.

Jacobsen: Are there any countries that have stood out from the global South or the global East? Because we focused mostly on North America and Western Europe.

Beth: That's a big topic. I think I answered that pretty much just in the last question.

Jacobsen: Where do you think the sport is headed in terms of some of the things that we discussed before, sort of the ways in which training develops, the ways in which horses and riders are brought along, as well as the development of aspects of the sport like the technicality of the courses?

Beth: That's also a very, very big topic. I think what's tricky for us in North America is that in Europe, the horses are raised and developed in Europe. A lot of their local or national shows are very inexpensive relative to North America. So, it's much easier to develop young horses and riders at less cost. They have access to the opportunity to be alongside all these young horses that are developing throughout the year, so they're able to be earmarked and identified much earlier. Whereas, in North America, we go over to Europe specifically to look for a horse for a week or ten days, whether it's a client or whether it's for ourselves. So that's much more difficult to find horses and to make it affordable. So, I think the access to the horses makes it tougher for us in the West.

In terms of the sport, in terms of course designing, it's changed so much when you look at where the sport was even 15-20 years ago. The courses have become much more careful, the jumps that are built are so beautifully designed. They're light. They're careful. The time allots have become so much quicker. The training has to be commensurately more specific to each horse. Horses have to be more naturally careful, naturally quicker, and more agile. Before, we were jumping into much more solid courses in much less time allowed. So it's just become exponentially more difficult and more technical. How much more can you do? I don't know, but every year you see the heights going up a meter 65, a meter 70; there are so many top courses and riders in the sport. When compared to 20-30 years ago, it's just become much much more sophisticated.

So I think it's been fascinating to be part of that trajectory and have to adjust your training and level; the type of horse you gravitate towards can't just be a huge scope-y horse. It has to be a horse that is able to be quick and competitive in order to win. So I think the veterinary care, the blacksmiths; they're seeing some horses now jumping without shoes. We're seeing riders trying different things and more changes and adjustments in the sport that dovetail with the changes we're seeing in the courses. That part I find fascinating as riders where we have to stay so current and so up on the changes of the rules and the changes of what's expected of the horses and riders these days. And that part of it, I think, is only going to get better. It's fascinating to watch how it has changed.

Jacobsen: You mentioned finances as an issue in terms of what the national organization can bring forward for support of some riders at the higher levels. With respect to sort of the provincial-territorial or national organizations, where are they the strongest in terms of their support for riders and so on? Where do you think there is room for improvement?

Beth: It's difficult to answer that question because I'm not privy to how the funding goes with the provincial versus the Federation. I know more just from what we have access to, but I know, for example, there's not any money that's earmarked for the young riders this year and for Canada. These kids need to get out, and they need to have support to be able to compete at these shows. We have invitations and opportunities to compete in Europe. We can't go; we can't take advantage of them because there aren't the finances there. I'm not saying the federations should pay everything, but they should certainly pay something. It's the same thing for the National Federation for our team in Europe; there was no funding for them to go to Spain. So I mean to me, we need to do better. We need to be able to support not just the senior teams, but the young riders teams that are at the provincial level. That's at the federal level. That's across the board.

Jacobsen: What do you notice are some aspects of becoming more seasoned in the sport that are pluses and minuses? I recall Ian Miller speaking to the fact that as one progresses in their age. Your strength might not be as much, but your technicality and finesse will be better, something to that effect.

Beth: Yes, and I mean, I think you could drill that down even for women and men in this sport. I mean, women obviously aren't as physically strong as men, but they can, maybe, bring a different type of empathy to a partnership. They're, maybe, going to be a little more patient in the training aspect of it, sometimes; you're going to bring different things. For sure, as you become older in the sport, you become more, I think, mentally strong. When I was younger, it was just, "Oh, I've got to make this team. I've got to do that. I've got to make this competition be the best." I would say I look more long-term now. I enjoy the process even more than I did when I was younger. You come at the sport with a little bit more of a calmer attitude. I think for sure it's fascinating as you grow older the relationships you make with people, not just in North America but in Europe and everywhere across the board in the sport, whether it be veterinarians or blacksmiths.

I've been so fortunate to have so many people that I've learned from and been able to access when I've needed them. That longevity, those relationships, those friendships, and those business relationships come with time. They come with experience. So, I think that's something I've also learned to appreciate, but definitely, the technicalities and the things you learn as you get older help you to outweigh the fact that you may have some more physical limitations.

Jacobsen: Now, I haven't broached this topic with too many interviewees or even in much depth, but I do come across as conversation while working in the industry a bit. Many years ago, there were cases of individuals misbehaving with the trainees or others and then in different organizations outside of show jumping. They're dealt with in organizations in different ways, people coming forward, and so on. I know in show jumping. There have been a couple of cases, at least, of individuals who have had claims put forward against them around sexual misconduct in historical circumstances or, maybe, even recently. Do you think these are being handled well or unwell in different ways by sort of the community or by the organizations when these come forward?

Beth: I honestly don't know enough about it. I can't speak to that; I honestly don't know. I think it's too early days there; I mean, I don't know the situation specifically you're speaking of. I don't want to speak on someone else's behalf. That's not something I feel I have knowledge to speak of.

Jacobsen: In 2024, the Olympics in France are coming up. I know many people are excited about that and looking forward to it and trying to put their aims towards it, setting it as part of their plans for the next five years. When you're looking at that, if you are, what are those steps that you look towards to get to that point? That's because, as you were noting before, it's not just you're there. It's that you have to make a plan and try to get there while also focusing on contingencies that come about.

Beth: Yes, I mean, obviously, you have a long-term goal, and you have a plan, and you start to think what is the best way in time to peak, assuming you have a horse in mind; the best way to create an optimum situation where your horse is going to be peaking physically and mentally at that time for that competition. Obviously, it's some time away still. So, with horses, you have to always have that long-term plan in place, but also be able to make adjustments quickly because based on how they feel, based on how they are competing. You may make a change and decide, "My horse needs to break now," or, "I always need some more competition to get to his level of expertise," where it needs to be for a top event like the Olympics. So, I always try and be very malleable in my training plan whilst having a very strong overall plan in place in terms of the shows that we think will best create the horse to be comfortable, confident, strong enough, but still fresh enough for competition such as the Olympics. But it would be a little bit early right now to be mapping out the exact shows and competition schedule that we would have 18 or 20 months away.

Jacobsen: When I first interviewed another similarly accomplished woman rider, Erynn Ballard, about a year ago, she warned me. She warned me that if I don't have a feeling for the horses, then I won't understand where riders are coming from. And after a sufficient amount of time, I think in this industry. I do have feelings towards the horses. It's a weird thing that grows on you as you work with them more and more. Do you have any sort of recollection of when you first developed a sense and a feel for horses? I don't just mean hanging around them doing Pony Club riding and so on. I mean, actually having feelings for them.

Beth: I would say I had an affinity. Like I said, I've always been an animal lover since my earliest recollections. So, I've always had an affinity for all animals. I am also a very competitive person, and I liked that juxtaposition of having an animal that I loved but still being competitive in a sport that I enjoyed and that was fast enough for me and competitive enough for me. So, as I mentioned, it took a while to decide which avenue because I did have different opportunities through the Pony Club in different aspects. I did some dressage, eventing, and show jumping, but the love of the horse and that competitive nature that I had gradually drew me towards show jumping, but in terms of an affinity for a horse and an understanding and an innate empathy and ability to create a good partnership even with difficult ponies I had to ride at the beginning, that I had early on. I would say I was more brave than technically good initially, but as I got older, a technical aspect of the sport became more and more fascinating for me.

The more I knew, the more I learned, the more I had a hunger for knowledge, whether that was the flat work or whether it was working on making myself a better and faster rider. I always had

that hunger for knowledge, and it was just always a natural fit, a natural evolution for me, but the affinity with the horse was always there.

Jacobsen: Do you have any regrets?

Beth: No, not really. I mean, I regret maybe that I didn't go to Europe sooner. I had some opportunities over the years to go there with a couple of offers, but then when I look back, I mean I'm very close to my family. I created a very strong business in Canada. I'm Canadian through and through, and I loved being a part of the Canadian circuit. So, when I truly look back on it, I don't know. I'm very much a fatalist; I feel like I made decisions as I went, but a lot of things also presented themselves in a way that seemed to navigate me down a particular path. So, honestly, I don't have too many regrets. I don't think too much about could have, should have, would have.

Jacobsen: Ian Millar famously retired in his 70s. Do you have any sort of time that you would like to retire, or is this something you just want to keep going for as long as you can?

Beth: I will know when it's time. There's no doubt about that, and I'm very honest with myself in that respect. I don't sugarcoat things to myself. I'm very hard on myself in terms of what I expect from myself, and so if I felt that I was falling short of what I could do to contribute to the team or to contribute to Torrey Pines at the level of riding that I'm doing, then I would be very clear to stop. I think every rider who has had the experience and ridden as many years as myself or I have done, we have a very clear sense of what you need to do to be successful in the sport. So, that's not something I dwell on because I know that I will do it as long as I feel that I'm contributing.

Jacobsen: What literature should young riders read to become more educated on the discipline of show jumping?

Beth: I like reading some of Mclean's books. It was great. I like reading more about riders as opposed to a how-to book. I know when I started, I read a lot of how-to books because that was all that was out there. When I started, you had the Pony Club manual and the horse masters notebook, which were really great for horse husbandry, and I feel like we've lost a lot of the horse husbandry with kids getting started at riding schools and things like that. Honestly, when I started, most of us came from a farming community or a country aspect and had access to those types of things. What you learned was what was right and what didn't work just from experience.

I would say I do feel more and more that people should spend more time at the warm-up ring behind the scenes, and to me, that's what's fascinating when you watch the warm-up ring when people are getting ready to compete: the top riders; how they warm up, how they flat their horses in the morning; those are missed opportunities I feel for a lot of people. They come and watch the actual event, but there's lots and so much to be learned. I like to hear the last-minute advice and the last-minute adjustments that each rider makes and how they mentally step into the ring, whether it's really quiet or whether they're talking to their groom or the last-minute advice from a trainer. I find that part of it very, very interesting. So, that to me is something that whether you can be a working student, whether you can volunteer in different aspects of the sport, work for the vet for a week or for a blacksmith, just any you can make your knowledge. Not just specifics to the jumping aspect of it but also to the generalities; the horsemanship, that aspect of it I think could be stronger in young riders coming along.

Jacobsen: I thought of two more questions to wrap us up, I think. One, Sean Jobin spoke to using a lot of modern technology like video recordings and analysis, things of this nature to improve performance in the sport. Do you think this stuff is effective, or not, in a more serious performance level of the sport?

Beth: Oh, I think for sure it is. I mean, I don't think there's much that I wouldn't utilize. I might say it's not for me, but I would say for sure we all rely heavily on videos. I think you have to be mindful. Sometimes, a round can look better and smoother in a video, and sometimes it can look worse. I mean you also have to go with your feelings. I also find it useful to watch a video right away and then leave it for a few days and look at it again, and you often see something quite different that you missed or just a different sensation. I think we all do rely on videos, particularly those of us who are, you know, at this age and stage in the sport. You don't always have someone on the ground all the time. So that part of it, I think, is very, very helpful, but I think we also very much have to learn or consider the feel that we have, what our horse is telling us because they communicate very, very well without the spoken word. And I think that it's easy to get... we all have our own habits, good and bad. I think it's important as riders that we keep going back. Sometimes I like to jump, just some cavaletti. There are some smooth jumps and really focus on position and focus on my delivery, and you catch yourself doing things that have become a little sloppy or not what they should be.

So, I think you always have to have a self-awareness of what your own individual weaknesses are. We're all stronger on one side than the other. We are stronger on one side than the other. We are constantly working on strengthening and developing the weaknesses that we have ourselves, so that we're not creating a detrimental effect on our horses. So, I think we have to consider not only what we can see in front of us, but also what we feel and what we know to be true.

Jacobsen: A lot of the really great riders, as with anyone else, have gone through tragedy in their personal lives. I'm aware of my own. How do you set aside the time to properly grieve while still in the midst of a high-performance level of the sport and continue to compete?

Beth: It's a good question. I would say that it's actually been my solace. Oftentimes, when there's been a tragedy in my life, it is the horses and the competition that have actually brought me back and centred me. I'm a pretty strong individual. I mean, there's not a lot that brings me down. Still, obviously, there are times in our life and everyone's life when unexpected tragedy happens. I always found that having the horse and going back to what's familiar for me and being able to focus on something other than that immediate situation; it has given me great solace. I felt very fortunate to be able to have something like that to lean on to go to and not only the horse, but my colleagues and my friends who are in the industry who understand what we do, who understand what it takes and who is there to lean on as well.

Jacobsen: Beth, thank you very much for the opportunity and your time today.

Beth: You're very welcome, my pleasure. Thanks for the call.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 51: Bob Marshall, 5-Time World Champion Blacksmith

***Bob Marshall** is from Southport, England. He has been crowned World Championship Blacksmith 5 times at the Calgary Stampede five times. He was inducted into the International Horseshoeing Hall of Fame in 1994. Marshall shares his journey from a five-year apprenticeship in England to an esteemed career in Canada. His experiences range from pioneering techniques to global seminars, emphasizing simplicity and horse care. He highlights the unchanged fundamentals of farriery since Roman times, contrasts British grass-based horse training with North American practices, and critiques the lack of apprenticeship systems in Canada. He advocates for proper conditioning over invasive treatments and stresses the importance of collaboration with veterinarians and adherence to principles. Bob's anecdotes, including narrowly avoiding injury and shoeing iconic horses, reflect his lifelong dedication to the craft.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, today, it is with Bob Marshall. So, regarding being a farrier, did you always work out of British Columbia?

Bob Marshall: No, I'll tell you how I became a farrier, okay? Is that all right?

Jacobsen: Yeah, sure.

Marshall: Okay. First, I did a five-year apprenticeship with my dad in England, in the North of England. Then, after that, I was offered a job in the South of England, in the Cotswolds. And with the job came a house and so forth, and it was an exceptional opportunity for me because I wasn't married then. But anyway, we got permission to get married, Adrian and I. We did, and we went down to The Cotswolds in England. And after that, I spent two years there and learned a lot of the... how can I say? I do not want to put my dad down. My dad gave me some excellent basics, absolutely first-class. I was allowed to see a few more high-quality horses. The people I worked with were organized, and I learned a lot from them.

My wife didn't like it down there after a few years. So we went back to the North of England. I didn't want to go, but my wife wanted to, and that was her. So I went back there. In the winter, in the north of England, it could have been better as far as horseshoeing goes because everything's going to close down. There wasn't much going on, hunting going on down there. Consequently, it was tough for us. Anyway, when I was there, somebody phoned me from Canada. They were the principal of a huge vocational school. In that vocational school, they had a farrier program, but the instructor of this farrier program decided to go off. They were stuck with a beautiful opportunity and offered me the job to go over there as a guest instructor. We scraped the money together. I still need to find out where we got it from, but we got the plane fare and off to Canada.

I get on the plane. Who am I sitting next to? This guy, a professional, was a furrier. I'm a farrier; he's a furrier [Laughing]. We got talking. His hobby was collecting horseshoes [Laughing]. This is historically weird. Anyway, we got pretty friendly, and when we got to Edmonton, he said, "I'm going to make sure you get in the hotel properly because in Edmonton, at the moment, it is called Klondike Days." Klondike Days meant that everybody in Edmonton, as we got off the plane, was all dressed in the same outfits they wore during Klondike Days. I thought I'd gone back in time.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Marshall: [Laughing] Anyway, I can still remember he got me into this hotel; I think it was 14 dollars for the hotel room. I still believe it. Anyway, [Laughing] shows how naïve I was; I'm going up, so I couldn't get my luggage up. This guy picks it up and says, "Hey, that's mine." [Laughing] He said, "I'm just carrying it for you." I said I'm not used to it. I realized, "Man, I'm from bloody Liverpool, mate, you do not do that" [Laughing]. Anyway, he got me to the hotel room and there he was, there was a phone and television. I said, "I didn't ask for this. This is extra money." He said, "No sir, they're in every room." I'm just trying to explain how naïve I was out there.

The next day, we got on this bus to Dawson Creek, one straight road. It was an eight-hour journey on a bus. I could not believe it, honestly. We eventually arrived, and the appropriate people greeted me and went to the school. But when they showed me this vocational school, it was a former Air Force Base. It was incredible. I mean, the buildings were massive; all central heated, all air-conditioned, and then they showed me the farrier shop. This is the first time I've seen something like it. I mean, all rubber floored. It was massive, like I said; it was air-conditioned, centrally heated, and I thought, "Wow," there are all the forges lined up perfectly, and that's how my career started in Dawson Creek.

There is a bit of a humorous side to this. Because there was a war, and many people decided to get into Canada and get out because they didn't want to go to this war. So they all hid in the bush. I mean hundreds of these people. The Canadian government decided to bring them out of the bush and offer them a trade. So you can imagine what I was getting to teach to be farriers; I mean, these people probably had never appropriately washed for a long time because they came out of the bush, but the Canadian government did a good job. They brought them back, and they offered to give them a trade. That's where I came in to teach some of these people the art of farriery.

I will jump ahead now to a few years later. I get a phone call from this guy, and he says you probably need to remember me; my name is Tim Biggins. I said, "How could I possibly forget you?" [Laughing] "What is giving you the cause to phone me?" And he said, "Bob, you wouldn't believe it. What you did with me in Dawson Creek changed my life, I couldn't care less whether I worked, but you allowed me to know what it was like to earn a good living." So I said, "What are you doing now?" He says, "You wouldn't believe it. I am the president of the British Columbia Blacksmiths Association." You've got to be kidding [Laughing]. I said, "Where did that come about?" He said, "I was successful in blacksmithship, not shoeing but blacksmithship, and it went from there." And I said, "What about your buddy?" A guy called Greg and he says, "You wouldn't believe what he's doing." I said, "Go on, I probably would." He says, "He is in the Kootenays with draft horses and shows them all."

He said the two of us had had great experiences, and we are grateful for what you told us. I thought, 'Man, that's such a nice thing to say.' So, I rolled on a bit on that, but that's part of what this job has done for me. It is just incredible in many different ways. Does that make sense?

Jacobsen: You brought up the term "blacksmith." What I have noticed, at least in the discipline of show jumping, some of the riders of the newer generation, a farrier is a farrier. To those in their 60s or 70s, those whom I've talked to, they will call a farrier a farrier. Sometimes, they will call a farrier, a blacksmith.

Marshall: Yeah. A lot of it depended on the area and so forth, but everybody understood it. He's a blacksmith to horses. Oh, he's a farrier to horses... it was pretty clear to everybody involved. I

was often called the blacksmith in this place, but it was called the farrier in other barns that go down the road. So it is just one of those things. Both words mean the same thing.

Jacobsen: And are there any other trades that genuinely are as if they're from the medieval period? You work with heat, steel, a hammer, and a nail. The techniques changed slightly, but the fundamental premises are the same.

Marshall: No, the techniques have stayed the same since the Egyptians. It was just after the Egyptians that they started to forge shoes. The Romans were some of the first to generate shoes and were good at it. They were staying in England, you see some of these stables, and they've got some old Roman shoes hanging up on the barn though to show everybody. The horses were more miniature in those days, in Roman days, but all the basics were the same.

Jacobsen: What were the techniques pioneered by the Egyptians?

Marshall: I believe the Egyptians used rope horseshoes; I read about that anyway. They used rope and horseshoes to cover the feet and protect them from being sore. And then they went on from the strings to solid steel.

Jacobsen: What techniques were mastered by the Romans adapting from the Egyptians?

Marshall: The Romans forged their shoes just like we do today.

Jacobsen: Wow.

Marshall: They were excellent blacksmith farriers thing. There are a lot of Roman shoes in the stables just hung up there to show. They were smaller because horses were more miniature. They covered most of the foot, which is what they needed to do. So it was still close. The Romans are clever. I mean, some of the roads they built. There's a road called the Fosse Way when you come from the Coast of England. You get on the Fosse Way. It is dead straight for about 18-19 miles. There's no curve in it. How did they manage to do that? It is unreal. And at the end of that, there are some ruins called Chedworth Cathedral, and the mosaic tilings and the concrete were stone pedestals that they put the floors on for the houses and the buildings. It was incredible; at the end of that, there was a giant forge, like a big fireplace. So, it is a centrally heated building built by the Romans. So incredibly clever people; it goes back to having my trade like this so I could travel and look at all this stuff.

Jacobsen: This is great. A lot of my best friends when I was in high school, were people who were retired or near retired. I get this same conversational sense where we're going to have a theme, but the conversation is going to go any which way it is going to go. So it is lovely for me.

So, as your skills developed, what were some rewarding experiences during that time? As your skill set grew more and more, this is obviously as you are in the workforce more. You are training people, moving along, and going into competitions. How did this develop over time, too?

Marshall: Okay, what's happening now is we have many farrier competitions. Did you realize that?

Jacobsen: I only found out about a month and a half ago.

Marshall: One of the leading competitions was in Calgary at the Calgary Stampede, where they used to hold the world championships. I competed in that quite a few times, and so forth, which was successful. I met many people from all over the world, and, after that, everybody, all the farriers from all over North America, all over the world, came together. There was this significant

unity and a spread of knowledge that was unbelievable. And we had at one time 23 countries competing at Calgary. To exchange ideas, it was just fantastic. Everybody, lots of friends and so forth, and people started to get invited to go to different parts of the world and from then on, it was just like a giant spider's web; it has just increased. It is just absolutely fantastic.

But going back to the basics of shoeing the horse, it has stayed the same since Roman times. All I've used is different steels and so forth. I went aluminum for the racehorses. I have even made titanium shoes, which weren't necessary, but we did it for the heck of it. But, the standards and message might be different, not so much of a statement but transportation, that'll be these big fancy trucks with everything you can imagine in there. But what goes on the foot is similar to when I was an apprentice. It is still the same. Going on the horseshoe and going on the foot hasn't changed much at all.

Jacobsen: How do you differentiate between a skilled farrier and a less skilled farrier? I do not mean things like, 'The shoe fits.'

Marshall: If it is a skilled farrier with experience, he'll have the same clients for many years. They'll shoe the horse. In five weeks, they're asked to go back again, and so on and so forth. And some farriers have been going to these barns for over 20-30 years. That means that's a skilled farrier, but the ones not asked to go back again, there's a reason for it. You can lame a horse or make a horse unsound in no time at all with a fundamental mistake. Once you do that, you are done, especially if it is through ignorance or lack of experience. Is that okay?

Jacobsen: It helps. I hear these terms a lot. I haven't quite figured out what they mean to different people in the industry: the word "lame" and the term "sound." What makes a horse lame compared to a horse being unsound?

Marshall: Okay, it is the same as is. If you stick a stone in the bottom of your shoes, you will walk unevenly, won't you? That's a simple remedy. That can happen with a horse; a rock could stick in the bottom of its hooves, and the treatment is to take the stone out, but if your horse is shod improperly, that lameness can create a significant problem and give a long time, they owe it to the horse, and sometimes they have to be euthanized, and that's the way it is. Inside the horse's foot, there's an incredible amount of anatomy going on in there, which are susceptible tissues. When you think about it, they have a tactile nose on the bottom of their foot, whereas we have them at the end of our fingertips, almost the same.

A horse can walk on something and feel the ground underneath it to say whether it is safe. Here's an example: we used to shoe horse horses in England that were called shankers. Now, you probably have yet to hear of that. What these shankers did, they used to catch shrimps with a horse and cart, and the coaches have these massive wheels on them so they can get into the water, and the horses would walk up, so the water was just over the backs of the horse. Those horses obviously couldn't see the bottom where their feet was, but they could feel it with their tactile nose and sometimes they'll also stop and it would back up and turn, do another way and probably what it was, was quick sound in front. Now, how do these horses know that? They must have it through that tactile nose in the bottom of their feet, and they sensed it, 'I'm not going through there,' the driver would just let them go, and everything was fine. So that's how sensitive the bottom of the horse's foot is and how incredible a horse is. I'm not good with words. You probably guessed that already.

Jacobsen: But your examples are apparent.

Marshall: Okay, good.

Jacobsen: Now, one thing my farrier friend did mention was that you are crowned, let's call it, World Champion five times for your skill in being a farrier. What are the specific kinds of qualifiers tested at these championships to be crowned World Champion?

Marshall: I was crowned five times World Champion by winning at Calgary Stampede.

Jacobsen: And what were the criteria tested for that?

Marshall: Oh, okay. Part of them was many different parts of the competition because it was a three-day deal. Sometimes we had to shoe draft horses. Another time we'd have to shoe light horses, riding horses. Another time we'd have to show what they call the roadster, which is a horse that used to pull carts on the road. There were three different, let's say, levels there: the riding horse, the driving horse, and the draft horse. You must be skilled to be at a reasonable level with all those three. Luckily, I was trained by some of the best, so it worked out for me.

Jacobsen: Who did you look up to as you became a more skilled farrier?

Marshall: Oh, good point. Yeah, how can I say now? I was in the North of England with my dad, and then, as I said before, I did go down to the South of England for quite a while. Still, I met some exciting farriers when I was starting to compete. I went to this one competition. I said to my dad what the heck are we doing, never competed before. He said, "Just do what you do at home." I said, "Okay," so I did what I did at home [Laughing]. There were three divisions in this. There was the open division, which was obviously that quality people. And then there was a prize for the under the 30s and an award for the under 26s, and I'm only 24, so I could get a mention in the under 26s.

Anyway, I just did what my dad told me. I just did the job and did the horse and so forth, and they came to give out the prizes, and they said the first one was a guy called Tom Allison, a respected farrier. Anyway, the next one was RH Marshall. I thought, 'Who the heck is that?' So I'm looking around when somebody says, "That's you, you silly bugger" [Laughing].

There I was a second, meaning I must have won all the others underneath it. It was one heck of a day. That's where I met this Tom Allison. He said, "Where did you get training?" I said, "My dad just gave me the basics." He said, "You've got a pretty good basic, mate." [Laughing] We became excellent friends after that. We used to visit and work with him, which slightly refined me. He'd show me all sorts of different things. Again, that's what the farrier industry is like. You lock on to somebody with these talents; if you are fortunate enough to go with them, that's pretty good. So that's how it started, and it was a tremendous friendship.

Jacobsen: Have you ever had people come up looking up to you in a similar manner?

Marshall: Oh yes, I used to do seminars and so forth. They'd come up from all over the place. Of course, I went to Australia eight times for workshops, so it gave me a chance to try to travel and so forth. But like I said - I know I'm repeating myself, but it is one hell of a career. My wife and I still talk about it because I was doing so many seminars worldwide. At one time, I ended up with flight miles for us both to go first class to Australia. And that takes much collecting. And yes, we stopped off in Fiji on the way to Australia. Then next time, we stopped somewhere else, in Hawaii. It is just fantastic.

Jacobsen: When you are training newer farriers, what have been some of the essential skills and methods that you try to get across to them: things to look for, things to do right, not wrong?

Marshall: First of all, what I try and pass on to them is that when you are showing somebody else's horse, that horse is so vital to them and important to them, you have got to do your utmost to look after it because if you do not, there's going to be some fault in there somewhere and you will not be asked to go back and so forth. That's pretty straightforward, but they must also realize that much safety is involved. If you put a shoe on that is too slippery, you could cause some serious injury to somebody or even kill them. Some people have been killed because they've had a horse go into a deep hole or something. A deep hole is not much different than losing a shoe and slipping. So that's your responsibility as a farrier; you've got to consider that every time you shoe a horse. You've got to put the appropriate amount of shoe on with the tracks it requires without putting too much stress on it.

In other words, let me simplify that, if you put a shoe on that replicates the primary growth of a regular foot, you are not far off. But if you start to put on extensions, which some people do because they've got this weird idea about things, or they'll put something extra wide, so it is supposed to straighten the legs which they do not need straightening because that's how God put them. So, quite often, you get these people that want to show that they've got these silly skills that could try and straighten legs out and so forth, but it doesn't work. You have to keep the horse sound. Does that make sense?

Jacobsen: Yes.

Marshall: Okay.

Jacobsen: Are the punishments more institutional for people who do lousy ferrying? So they get punished by some organization or more social in that people will stop hiring them?

Marshall: Oh yes, okay. There is a body of the Farriers Association that could give them a bit of warning, but as far as taking them to court and things like that, that doesn't happen, which sometimes is unfortunate. But that's just how it is. If you are doing something wrong, you better correct it; otherwise, you will lose your clients. That's just how it is. If you do something wrong, you must move or change your location sooner or later. And then that levels everything out like in other trades; you keep building houses that keep falling. You aren't going to do too many, are you? [Laughing]

And you know something? Horses are precious now. I mean, the value is unbelievable. It is 100,000 dollars for a horse now with nothing, just a cheap one. So, every time you get onto those horses, you are dealing with a lot of money. These are their buddies. You have to look after them.

Jacobsen: So, for individuals entering the industry, what are your recommendations for longevity? How do they build up a company?

Marshall: First of all, if you are going to get into the industry, you need to work with somebody qualified and recognized. How's that? So you must spend at least two years travelling with them, helping them, and getting as much knowledge as possible. And then usually the person looking after them, they're more talented. The one you are working with or working for, they typically find some clients for you that you can branch out and start doing on your own and then it goes out from that. The good farriers allow the young lads or girls to work with them. Eventually, they'll say, "Okay, you can tell this client and take that client," it all works out quite well because what it is just lots of horses around. Nobody's struggling for horses these days. Does that make sense?

Jacobsen: Yes. I've noticed in some discussions with equestrians of different kinds of stripes that there is a potential issue in some sectors of Canada with two things: one is finding good farriers or a good farrier shortage, and then another is a good vet shortage. Is that accurate to you?

Marshall: Oh boy! Now, you are touching the subject. This is tough for me. It is like any trade, mate. I mean, there's good and evil in this. There are sure vets in our area; I wouldn't trust him with a bloody butcher knife, let alone a horse. I do not know how to go from that because when you work for the veterinarian, the farriers and the vets usually get together, and quite often, an excellent vet would turn around and say, "Look, I'm not sure what this is, it is in the foot, I recommend you call your farrier, and I'll meet him, and we'll take extra aid and work together and figure it out." That's the way to do it.

Unfortunately, like farriers or vets, they decide to do things on their own, and if they're lucky, they might get some results, but quite often, they do not get good results. And eventually, it'll work out, but sooner or later, the vet and the farrier must work together. I mean, I've got some of that. There are many farriers like that; they get on excellent with the vet, and the vet says, "No, call your farrier. I'll meet him here," or "Call the farrier, and if he needs me, call me, and I'll meet him with my X-rays." That's an excellent situation to react to.

Jacobsen: Regarding the industry of farriering in Canada at the moment, what are some of the positives, and what are some of the negatives that you note?

Marshall: It is positive; the whole industry worldwide is buoyant. With all our connections with different farriers from all over the world exchanging ideas, it is a positive.

Jacobsen: What core ideas are exchanged between farriers to improve the industry?

Marshall: Yeah, like I said before, because of the modern technologies and so forth, the ideas that are coming from different countries, it is just unbelievable. For instance, I mean the farrier competitions; I mentioned this before: 23 countries competed at Calgary the last time I competed. So that gives you an idea that the industry's gone worldwide. So it is incredible. Does that help?

Jacobsen: It does help. I've heard similar things from the show jumping world, where, in the 70s, you had several countries competing, but now it is upwards of 80 or more countries competing. So, it has expanded tremendously.

Marshall: Yeah, and a tremendous amount of money involved as well.

Jacobsen: Yes, that's right. [Laughing] Do you think the costs of horses now are a barrier for some people to compete at the highest level of some of these sports disciplines? Is the cost of a horse, purchasing price, a barrier to many taking part in the highest levels of these sports disciplines: dressage, show jumping, horse racing, and so on? As you mentioned earlier, a horse costs around 100,000 dollars in most places as a starting price. This wasn't the case before; it was cheaper. Does this naturally prevent entry into some sports?

Marshall: It does, yes, because, like I said, it is a costly sport to get in. When I told 100,000 dollars for a horse, that was cheap; that's the starting point. To other examples of how extraordinary this profession can be, let me tell you a story about a good friend who's an excellent farrier. He's well known, a good rider and horseman, and extremely wealthy. He turned into a multi-millionaire, but he was asked to go to Saudi Arabia to shoe a horse from England anyway. Now, can you imagine the cost of that? That is bizarre. And he told me himself. He says, "Bob, I go there

on holiday twice a year. I do not need to go back there. And this is what I told him." He said, "I go there on holiday; I do not want to go and shoe a horse." And they just said, "Look, Grant, we've had two farriers looking at this horse; he's expensive. What will it cost you to get out here and help us?" And he just straight off said, "20,000 Euro," They said, "Book a ticket."

Jacobsen: Holy hell.

Marshall: Yeah. So he flew over there. This is the best part; being a good horseman and a rider, he looked at it. The two farriers were there that had shod the horse. Grant told me it was exceptionally well fed. There was nothing to do with the shoeing; he went up to the horse's shoulders, moved it towards the neck, pinched it, and cowered down. He said, "That's your problem. You need an equine chiropractor; you do not need a farrier." So he said, "I got my cheque and returned home." [Laughing]

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Marshall: That's just some of the stories that are bizarre in this profession, it is. I mean, the money is just bloody unbelievable.

Jacobsen: What are some of the bizarre stories in your professional history?

Marshall: My bizarre stories? How much time have we got? [Laughing]

Jacobsen: I have all day. I have the day off.

Marshall: It is hard to say. At least some of them are; I mean, as I said before, my primary training was from my dad. I owe so much damn everything to him. He gave me the solid basics. That's all I started with. It came to a situation where I was asked to do some demonstration. I told you this before, in Washington State. It went from there. The following way, I flew all over the United States, then to Australia, and it just continued. After a while, I didn't have time to shoe any horses, so I kept a few of my clients, but I was flying around the rest of the time. So, it has been an incredible career in that respect. Does that answer any questions, or am I repeating myself?

Jacobsen: No, not at all. What would you consider your most expensive shoeing experience where you charge the most money?

Marshall: I do not think I've been to that stage. I do not think I've charged a lot. Many years ago, I was asked to do a horse in Vancouver, and I said I didn't know how much I could trust because it was a long way to go from where I lived, and they just said we'd pay you by the hour and I said well okay, it is a 100 dollars an hour and that's what they did. I forget the total, but it was a good wage for me. That's the most I ever did. Some of these other guys now here, they shoe three horses in a day. They're walking away with 1500 dollars. I used to shoe six horses a day on average, so you can imagine how much money is involved in the farriers down in these areas where the horses are like multi-million dollars that everybody's used to spending lots of money, but they're just used to it. I do not know whether they've been conned into it or not, but they're just used to it [Laughing].

Jacobsen: How do farriers make their prices? What sets the industry standard?

Marshall: Well, it is just wide open. It is a wide-open market, so it is hard to answer that question. What you do, you have to look at the situation where you are asked to go. You see what the quality of the horses are, you ask what the usual prices are, and if the prices are, say, 400 a set,

but asked you to go down there because they wanted something a little bit better. So, now, you can charge 500 a group, for want of a number. And that's the way it happens, and quite often, some of those people; like I said, they're just willing to pay. But you better be on the ball if you are going to do that. Does that answer the question?

Jacobsen: Yeah.

Marshall: Okay, You seemed hesitant there when you said yes.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] I'm also thinking about another question to ask based on the response because I've been doing interviews for so long. I like to do improvisatory interviews more than scripted. I go more naturally based on the given answers.

Marshall: Oh, okay.

Jacobsen: Do you find that there's a common industry standard for farriers themselves, or has there yet to be a standard set in the same sense of the cost? It is just wide open.

Marshall: Again, I need help understanding that question. Simplify it for me.

Jacobsen: Sure. Is a minimum standard set for farriers in Canada?

Marshall: In what respect? In respect of what we charge or the quality of the work?

Jacobsen: I would say the quality of the work because we just talked about cost.

Marshall: The quality of the work within British Columbia is basically what you asked; you can go to the ranching industry and still shoe your horses there for 150 dollars a set, which is nothing. You go another 50 miles in one direction, and you'd be paying 300 dollars. It comes down to what the horse is doing. You will only get paid a little if it is a ranch horse. And if horses were shod like ranch horses every day worldwide, the equine system would be much better because they do a good job. When you think about a horse that gallops around all day chasing cows for four or five hours a day, probably 30 miles a day, they've got to have some decent shoes on them, which they do. But if you took that same horse out of the show jumping industry and tried to ride it down for four or five hours over the hills, it'd probably break down. Do you understand me? It wouldn't be able to handle it. So it comes down to many of the basics, its conditioning and what other conditions to do with a job there and chasing cattle is pretty tough.

Jacobsen: How often does a ranch horse need hoof care done?

Marshall: Just like any other really, every four to five weeks because what happens you see is the shoes might not wear out, but the foot grows like our fingernails, so they get long. If they're not trimmed back, it puts a lot of tension on the tendons and the ligaments of the leg and therefore can cause serious problems. So they have to be done in the summertime between every four and a half to five weeks. In the wintertime, the growth does slow down slightly, so you can extend it another couple of weeks sometimes.

Jacobsen: What are the main problems with a horse's hoof? Like, you are coming to this as a professional. You see a hoof. What are the issues?

Marshall: There are various problems. First, the main concern would be breeding the horse and whether the feet on the front end.... Usually, you do not get many back-end problems with a foot. Still, on the front end, we can get what is called a club foot, which means that one foot is smaller and more upright than the other. That's from the leg basically. Mother nature is trying to

provide natural treatment for the horse. In other words, you've got one leg shorter than the other; the farrier tries to give that by growing one foot a little bit longer to match them all up. And often, people try to intervene with that too much and create more of a problem. Does that answer your question?

Jacobsen: Yes, it does.

Marshall: Okay. Now, compared to when I was an apprentice with my dad, I probably only saw one or two horses with odd feet. Rarely, we saw a club foot. Now, something happened with the industry, whatever it was. I do not know, but, now, it is rare that you find a horse with two feet the same on the front of the horse. It is just gone that bad. There are so many odd feet now; it is unbelievable. It is not all done through the farrier industry. There are systems that do poor breeding, etc. That's my opinion.

Jacobsen: Which country does the breeding the best?

Marshall: Boy! You put me on the spot now. It is not so much who does the best breeding, but what happens when the foal is born. If it can be looked after as it should be, it should have plenty of room to roam and gallop around on fields. And what we used to do in Britain; if a foal in the thoroughbred industry or the show jumping industry were born, they would send it over to Ireland, where it could be turned out for about a year and a half. Where it can run on some good natural green grass and that would do the job. They'd come back after a year and a half, so now they're two-year-olds, and they can start working them slowly, but it helps to progress, to get some substance underneath them or within them. Ireland is an incredible place. What it is, they say that something in the grass that makes them stronger. I do not know, but I know they still do that in England. They'll send horses over to Ireland for the air or something.

Jacobsen: What are other issues other than the mismatch of the hoofs caused by the farriers, though, this time?

Marshall: I would say probably the most common fault is that the hoses are shod way too heavy. The shoes are too heavy. They're too long. They're just generally way too big. They do not fit the horse. If you trim the foot down, you should replace that piece of foot that you trimmed off with a bit of steel with the exact dimensions all the way around. In other words, if you trim 3/8th of an inch off and then put 3/8th of an inch back with the shoe, people do not do that. They'll take the 3/8th of an inch off and then put half an inch on and much broader. For instance, measurements instead of taking something 5/8th by 3/8th, they'll put one inch by half, which is heavier and way too much for the horse to burden. Does that make sense?

Jacobsen: Yeah, I think so.

Marshall: Yeah. So, I'm repeating myself, but it is a matter of whatever you take off, replace it with steel. That's it, as close as you can. This has worked for about 64 years. So I'm not going to change now [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Are there any things that when you look at a horse's hoof, it is so bad you cannot do anything with it? Are there any conditions like that?

Marshall: Yeah. You often get what they call seedy toe, a fungus that goes in between the bone of the foot, and the bone of the foot is attached to the wall by a lamina. And what it does is it af-

fects the laminae, and the whole part between the bones on the horse's division, the outside surface, becomes separate, and there's a significant big gap in there. That often has to be removed because it cannot survive without oxygen.

But that outside wall has got to be removed before it gets any worse. That can cause significant problems, starting with just a tiny opening in the structures between the wall and the coffin bone and the bone inside. They are just there. It can go fast. They thrive with no oxygen so that whole wall has to be removed and start the new growth again. It is incredible how fast it can happen.

Jacobsen: How does the industry in Canada compare to the American or Western European industries for farriers?

Marshall: I would say, in general, the better quality of farriers is still in Britain, in the British Isles. You can rarely go anywhere in Britain. You can have a horse in the north of England and send it down to the south of England. You can guarantee that it'll be shod by someone else, and we will do it identically to how you've done it. In Canada, that's not the case. In the United States, this is not the case; they will change things in any way they can to make more money. I hate to say that, but it is true. The more gadgets you put on, the more you can charge; unfortunately, that's a sad thing. I'm repeating myself because the farriers make a good living anyway. They do not need to do all that stuff, putting bizarre things on. And when you think about it, when they spend that much time and that much money buying all these crazy weird things for the feet, by the time they put them on, they're not making that much money even if they charge 500 dollars a set because it is cost them so much for all the gadgets. But if you stick to the same old basics and shoe them appropriately, the horses go better, and everybody's happy.

I know I'm repeating it, but the farriers' responsibility is to keep the horse sound so it can be ridden in most terrains without causing injury to itself by tripping or slipping because that can create a problem for the rider. They can get seriously hurt. You may have heard of this place, but there is a massive place in Calgary for children. It is probably one of the biggest in the world. They were videotaping it. These horses coming up to a jump. Somehow, when they turned, it twisted. It was a challenging course, and then he started picturing all these shoes coming off the horse and to think that about ten different riders coming up to the jump and then you could see that she was rolling off them. They're moving away because they were shod with too much shoe. It is like us. We have running shoes to go running in, and you have walking shoes to walk in, and you have dancing shoes to dance in. So you do not go running in the marathon with dancing shoes [Laughing].

It is so simple. It's ridiculous that people have to start changing things and making it difficult. Like I said, your responsibility is for that rider. They can get seriously hurt. You only need one of the horses to slide, and you can get some significant problems. I might drift off the subject sometimes, but I start thinking of situations, and I drift a bit, so you have to put up with me [Laughing].

Marshall: How is it shoeing a horse using aluminum versus steel?

Marshall: It is lighter. What happens is that an excellent example of this is the horse that my dad used to shoe, that famous one called Red Rum. Now, Red Rum was stabled in our tiny hometown. It raced in Liverpool, which was 20 miles away, a renowned race, gruelling. But anyway, when my dad shod Red Rum, they take the shoes off and put the aluminum ones on; they're

the same size but lighter and make a difference for approximately a day. Then, after that, everything comes back, and the aluminum shoes feel the same as the steel ones for up to 24 hours, but if you are lucky enough, like my dad and the horse, it was only an hour away from the racecourse. So within two or three hours, he was riding with feeling good. It is like you; when you take your shoes off and put a pair of running shoes on, you bounce around a little, don't you? You feel good. Well, that's exactly what the horse feels like, but after a while, you walk around in those running shoes for a time, and then they return to feeling like ordinary shoes. And we captured that quality within the hour of them being put on. Does that make sense?

And this is tremendous, I got to say. My dad inspired me when he got to shoe that horse; that was his pride and joy. One of the most prominent people was chasing racers in the world. They've run in it five times. And incidentally, out of all the horses that run in it, only seven horses ever run in it five times. The rest they couldn't run in after the first time. They were tired, worn out, or broken down, and ran in it five times. They buried him at the racecourse and in the finishing post, going past the finishing post.

He was 32 when they put him down, which is another incredible thing. So again, I'm going back to what it is like to be a farrier and to be involved with a horse like that is unbelievable. I was involved with a horse that was in Canada. It jumped the Canadian record in Toronto. It jumped several at the Royal Winter Fair, and that was my pride and joy, and it is so neat to be involved with something like that.

Jacobsen: This is helpful for me to get a side perspective. The primary relationships a farrier will have between the vet and the owner in the professional sphere. What are other secondary relationships farriers have, if any, while working?

Marshall: Secondary relationships with the horse owner?

Jacobsen: When they're working with the horse when it is first born and onwards, you noted they work with the vet and the owner. Are there any other industries that do not work with them as much but still work with them to ensure things are running smoothly?

Marshall: Oh yes, there probably are some, but those are the three main ones: the veterinarian, the owner, and the farrier. And then the others are only looked after temporarily if they go to a show; they may have a different vet there, but it is only temporary. It is only for that show. Then they come back to the original stable and back to the same people concerned. Same with the farriers; they go to Spruce Meadows in Toronto. They'll have another farrier shoeing it, but hopefully, if there's any problem with that horse, they will detect it straight away and then call the farrier that originally shod it to ask why that was done and then go from there, have a professional explanation to each other. But that's a bit about the owner is the owner. So, the farriers and the veterinarians do vary in other places. As you said, you can't expect to follow them down to Florida, but telephone communications.

Jacobsen: When a horse is new versus when a horse is retired or old, what are the different things that need to be managed regarding the care of the hoof?

Marshall: Not a lot because they're doing only some strenuous work once it retires. It is a matter of whether the horse can and whether he's got the foot that can handle it, which many of them had at that time. It is to take the shoes off, have him barefoot, and let him enjoy his retirement. That's the best thing. But I have to tell you this: what can happen, and again, it is communication. I had to look at a horse and screw its metals. This stallion was worth a lot of money, but he

had a club hoof which was steeper than the other. One steeper than the other one and, of course, if he was being ridden and jumped and so forth, you had to shoe accordingly. But when he retired, they told me, "Can you do anything with that hoof to make it look more normal?" I said I could, but I told them you can't jump him. "Oh no, we're not going to jump because he's retired." They said. I said, "Okay, this is against my beliefs, but I will do it, and I'll be as careful as I can," which I did. Guess what they did?

Jacobsen: Oh no.

Marshall: They didn't jump him with the rider on the back, but when people came to buy some of his offspring; they would jump him over a giant fence and ride it. I said, "You idiots," and he broke down, didn't he? Yeah. So when they came to me. I said, "We need a good discussion here."

I said, "You told me you were not going to jump this horse." She said, "There was no rider on his back." I said, "Have you got an intelligence problem here?" I lost it with them. I did. I said, "Do not you ever ask me to do that again." And then sooner or later, I just said, "Look, I do not need to go public with you people." I left the place. And it is a well-renowned place, Spruce Meadows. I just said, "No, I do not need this." That's why I'm a man of principle. It helps to be like that, too.

Jacobsen: I'm thinking of other things to ask you. That's an important question. In your many decades in the industry, what are the values of the farrier community in Canada? Like to the point you mentioned where you have to be a person of principle, you have to step down and say, "I won't stand for both lying and mistreating a horse."

Marshall: Yeah, this is a concern throughout many industries within the horse. Quite often, a farrier is asked to do something that he knows full well is not correct for the horse, but it is obliging the owner or the trainer, usually the trainer. The owner won't do anything that would hurt the horse, but the trainer sometimes want to push it that little bit more and a good owner would say, "No, I want to talk to my farrier" And another owner might say, "Okay. Whatever the trainer said, do it," and consequently then you have a problem. Who gets the blame for it in there? The farrier. So, it can be unrealistic; in the farrier industry, it can be done with the owners and the veterinarians. So many veterinarians I've worked with have been incredible.

Here's another example. I was at Spruce Meadows again. There was a German horse there. He was lame. And the way that the Germans shod this horse was unbelievably wrong, and I was asked to go there and give my opinion. So I gave it. The owner said, "I do not believe what you are saying." They just said to step aside. I said gladly, "You carry on, but if you keep doing this with this horse, I will guarantee he'll be finished within a year." I looked into it a year later, and he was finished. What they did, they used to wedge his shoes off, make the heels higher than the toe was, and change the angle. It puts pressure on the heel of the foot, which is softer than the steel, and crushes them. If you can imagine having no shoes on and somebody putting in a steel wedge under your heel on one foot and walking around with that, what happens to the bottom of your foot? It just gets displaced. Steel won't move.

I have been successful because I'm so simple. Well, not simple, but simple marketing [Laughing]. As I said, some of the questions you are asking are difficult to answer because I have yet to have any of those problems you asked, but I've seen them. I'm trying to answer the best I can for you.

Jacobsen: Following on the point about horse treatment, most of my experiences with people in the show jumping industry, mainly the sports side, riders and trainers and many people; if they're working with me as stable hands, for instance, they will talk about the horse racing world as probably the worst in the treatment of horses compared to other industries in equestrianism.

Marshall: Yeah, I can see; the horse industry, as far as the racing industry is concerned, is poor in North America. The surface, first of all, of the race is usually sand or gravel or something like that, and it is not natural for a horse to gallop at high speeds through that environment. They should be run on grass, which is entirely natural. Whereas you compare it with Britain, a lot of the race courses, there is still grass. So, it is a natural thing for the horse to go on. A horse can sink into the ground, but when it comes out of the bed, it has enough traction to keep it going forward, whereas in the gravel and the sand, it goes in too much, and sometimes it sticks in the bottom of the foot makes the foot heavier one than the other one. Consequently, they could run better. That's why we have a lot of problems in the industry in North America in the racing industry.

Now, they started doing something in the show-jumping industry. They came up with fantastic ideas about this false footing: it looks like snow or white Styrofoam, pieces of white Styrofoam. I do not know what it was, but it caused many problems. I'd retired by then, so what the issues were. They've taken it off now, which created a lot of lameness. And the other thing, too, we were talking about what the owners do regarding safety for the horse about soundness. Now, what they're doing, they're starting to inject the hocks on a perfectly sound horse to prevent it from having a particular problem in the hind leg.

Now, years ago, those problems were never there. So I asked, "Why is it so necessary now?" What it was, it comes back to what I said before; the training is much too fast on run surfaces, so now they start interfering with injections. In other words, instead of finding out what the problem was in the first place and not doing it anymore, they stick an injection in it so it can't feel anything. Excellent, these injections!

Jacobsen: Some other footing that I've seen has been silica rings. It is a different footing than you might see in the wet dirt or the gravel you are talking about. Have you looked into any of that or heard about any of that, the silica footing?

Marshall: I'm unfamiliar with that, so I can't comment. I do not know. Whatever it was, it needed to be fixed. You cannot beat the natural surface, which is grass. If they can get like grass, it would be great, but you can't copy grass because it is not just the grass; it is the roots underneath, right? Certain grasses have a shallow heart, which would be no good. Certain grasses have an extended basis, allowing the horse to go into it and come out of it quickly because it has some specific traction. This is what they have so far had in Britain because they do not race on artificial surfaces; they run on grass. So, somebody over here will get their head out of their ass.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] Which facilities do you think are doing an excellent job conducting their competition grounds and their treatment of the foot care of the horse in terms of stuff like that?

Marshall: They're all doing the same thing. As I said, Spruce Meadows is one of the biggest in the world, but they only have one grass area. No, I'm telling a lie. No, they do not. The main Grand Prix area is grass, so they've done an excellent job of that. But they do other sites for the lower standard horse; it is just underneath the top level, and they're in a gravelly sand thing. But the main area at Spruce Meadows now is grass. That's an incredible place to be, and it is one of the biggest in the world.

Jacobsen: What kind of grass are they using?

Marshall: I'm still determining what kind of grass it is, but I know it has a pretty good root. So, if they get long and deep into the grass, that helps. If it is one that skirts off the top, that would be no good. So, whatever the grass is, I do not know the names of the grasses, but it has a pretty good root to it. The way they look after these grass fields is just incredible. They do a tremendous job with it. Have you ever been to Spruce Meadows?

Jacobsen: I have not; I would like to do a tour at some point.

Marshall: Where are you based?

Jacobsen: I'm based in Langley, British Columbia. People reading this should know Canada is so big that people in the same provinces do not even know where each other is.

Marshall: Yeah. I'm about 10 miles West of Hope.

Jacobsen: Oh wow, far.

Marshall: One time in Ireland, they had two racehorses, and they were completely equal, and they were shod precisely the same way, but they were shod with steel. Somebody came along and said, "Look, we want to try something." This is when they first started using aluminum shoes. So they changed the boots on one horse to aluminum and left the other to steel. They raced them again for three days in a row. Every time they ran it, the one with aluminum finished first and was less tired. And they said, "Okay, they should be aluminum." And that's where it all started for two horses in Ireland. Interesting, that.

Jacobsen: Yeah. Where do you think the industry will be going into the future? What else could be developed or enhanced?

Marshall: Where is it going to go in the future?

Jacobsen: Yeah, if it hasn't changed in so long, I couldn't see it necessarily having any rapid changes, but any industry can make adaptations.

Marshall: Going back to that question before, why do they have to start injecting the hind end on a horse when there's nothing wrong with it? That's going in the wrong direction as far as I'm concerned, and if it is adequately conditioned like it used to be years ago, they wouldn't need to do that. But now it is the time factor; everybody's in a hurry to get things done super quick, and some things weren't meant to be done quickly. Sometimes, they have to be developed in time, which is one thing that gets me when they start injecting sound horses in the back end of the hocks to prevent them from going lame. If they conditioned them, they probably wouldn't go lame in the first place. That's old-fashioned, but that's how the industry's going; it is coming down to sticking more needles in these horses.

They do not get needles when they're out; the ranch horses do not, and they go up around all day. It always goes back to those ranch horses; they're good, solid, and healthy as can be, and what? They enjoy what they're doing. And if you look at a horse and some of these show jumping facilities and walk around, many horses are uncomfortable. You see them in the soil, and they're going from one leg to another, one leg to another, and they're not pleased. It comes down to what I said before: good solid conditioning. It is like our feet; if they're not conditioned, they're going in a 26-mile race. You better have some conditioning on you because it won't take 20 miles before

you start fatiguing. So you've got to be prepared for it. And that's the same with the horse industry: preparation. And a horse is meant to look ahead and stretch out.

An example of this would be, in Britain again, they have the resources to get conditioned. Well, they do not chase around a little racetrack on the sand like they do over here; they go out in the fields and gallop for miles across up and down hills. That's all on grass. That's how they do it over there; consequently, when the British horses run, they hold more records than any other country. The races are more gruelling, but the horses stand up to it because they have been appropriately conditioned on the correct surface: grass. And not only that, when you are riding a horse because I rode horses for a long time when you are riding a horse, a horse wants to look ahead. I mean, they look way, way ahead. They have incredible vision. When they can see ahead and see it safely, you can feel them stretching out underneath you, and they love it; they enjoy it. They know that that surface is good. And I told you before about the shankers/shankars in England, didn't I?

Jacobsen: You mentioned the word shankers/shankars before. I do not recall this story off the top.

Marshall: Yeah, what it was, it was that their horses used to go into the tide to catch shrimps and so forth and then walked their water up to the withers in the grass and then back, but sometimes they would stop. Now, they can't see anything, but only those feet and those tactile knows. They knew that if they went ahead, it would be quicksand. So, the driver or the person in charge just let him go, and they turn around and get out of there. So, like I said, the horse has incredible resources and sensitivity to different situations.

Here's another example. I was riding my horse one day, and I've been over these railroad tracks many times to get to the river. And this time, he stopped, and there was no bloody way; he said, 'Nope, I'm not going,' I tried and tried. Nope. Anyway, I decided to walk about the other way and about five minutes later a train went fast. Now, how did he know? It must have been the vibrations that he felt, but how did he know a bloody train would come? He saved my life [Laughing]. He was a horse that only had one eye. He had an injury in his eye. Guess what his name was? I hope I've been helpful, mate.

Jacobsen: Yeah. There's one other question I would have, which would be about the health of the farriers themselves. What health concerns should farriers be aware of in their careers?

Marshall: Okay, that's a good question. First, most of the problems you get are farriers with back issues. Now, sometimes, it is related to the size of the person. I'm short, so everybody said, "You are okay; you are just short." I said, "No, I've nothing to do with it." Whether you were shoeing 100 years ago or 50 years ago to now, I wasn't greedy. You've only got so many horses in here before you start to get tired, and on average, five horses a day was a good living, and you could stay pretty healthy. But no, some of these people decide that they're going to shoe seven or eight or nine horses a day and, consequently, their health fatigues. And by the time they're 60-70 years old, they're disabled; they can't stand up. And that's the way it is.

It was like the racing industry in England. They'd start working on miles, and they never stopped until they'd finished all the horses, and it was just too much. You are back and can only stand so much, right? A lot of those racing people in England who shod racehorses were finished. And I'm fortunate; I'm close to 80 years old, but I'm still reasonably fit and doing okay. I know many people are like me; they look great but are never greedy. Do you know what the thing is? It is

good money, there's no doubt about it. Shoeing horses is damn good money, so what the hell? But in 10 years, you will know the difference if you keep doing that.

Jacobsen: Are there any areas I haven't covered that should be mentioned in the interview?

Marshall: I think we've covered most of it. If they're getting into this job, make sure they work with somebody qualified because this is the thing: we do not have an apprenticeship system here. They go to school for 12, 14, or 15 weeks or something like that, and that's it; they're out. That's not enough. What they should do is go to school, learn anatomy, learn all the different aspects of the trade, and then make arrangements to go and work with somebody else for at least another two years and get into the industry itself where they are working with horses in the fields and not just the ones that go into the farrier school.

Whereas, you've got lots of time in the farrier's school; you've got all the different things, it is pretty nice and so forth, an excellent area to work and then when you get out into the real world it is not always like that. Sometimes, you can be out in the field, tie it to a fence or something like that when you start, and it is not all that wonderful sometimes. So it takes a while. The apprenticeship system in Britain I did five years with my dad and two years somewhere else; I basically did a seven-year apprenticeship. And here, we do not have apprenticeships. So, we've got to do the next best thing; you go to the farrier school for so many weeks, and then you get with another farrier and work with them for at least a couple of years, and then you will be okay. At one time, they just sent him out of the school, and that was it. A bit lost, and not only that, it is dangerous because in the farrier school, they do not usually get horses that are, let's say, unpredictable; or when you get out in the actual field, it can be unpredictable. I'm lucky. I've not been kicked yet, but I've had two close calls. Did I tell you about that?

Jacobsen: No, how did those go?

Marshall: When I was 15, I worked with my dad, shoeing this big draft horse. He'd never been done before, and I was working on his backhand and turned around to get underneath him on the back on the feet, and I must have tickled his belly. He jumped up in the air, and when he came down, I turned and tried to stop the foot from going on the ground. I didn't want to let go of it. But with a draft horse, that doesn't work, and he flipped me. He came down with two hind feet, one on the other side of my head [Laughing]. He was white, absolutely white. Anyway, I got out. I stood there until I got out, and my dad came in. He says, "What's the matter, lad?" I said, "He did me a jump from the head." My dad said, "Be careful." He did not know how lucky I was. [Laughing] I tell you, mate. It is unreal.

Jacobsen: All right. Well, Bob, thank you very much for your extensive time.

Marshall: Whenever you want to do it, mate. We'll make it work. Thank you.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 51: Bob Marshall, 5-Time World Champion Blacksmith

Bob Marshall is from Southport, England. He has been crowned World Championship Blacksmith 5 times at the Calgary Stampede five times. He was inducted into the International Horseshoeing Hall of Fame in 1994. Marshall shares his journey from a five-year apprenticeship with his father in Northern England to becoming a global expert in farriery. His career took him to Canada, where he taught at a vocational school and influenced many lives, including students who excelled in the blacksmithing industry. Marshall emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional techniques, proper horse care, and ethical practices. He criticizes modern shortcuts like excessive injections and poor breeding, advocating for foundational training, apprenticeship, and maintaining the horse's natural biomechanics to ensure their well-being and performance.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: So, today, it is with Bob Marshall. So, regarding being a farrier, did you always work out of British Columbia?

Bob Marshall: No, I'll tell you how I became a farrier, okay? Is that all right?

Jacobsen: Yeah, sure.

Marshall: Okay. First, I did a five-year apprenticeship with my dad in England, in the North of England. Then, after that, I was offered a job in the South of England, in the Cotswolds. And with the job came a house and so forth, and it was an exceptional opportunity for me because I wasn't married then. But anyway, we got permission to get married, Adrian and I. We did, and we went down to The Cotswolds in England. And after that, I spent two years there and learned a lot of the... how can I say? I do not want to put my dad down. My dad gave me some excellent basics, absolutely first-class. I was allowed to see a few more high-quality horses. The people I worked with were organized, and I learned a lot from them.

My wife didn't like it down there after a few years. So we went back to the North of England. I didn't want to go, but my wife wanted to, and that was her. So I went back there. In the winter, in the north of England, it could have been better as far as horseshoeing goes because everything's going to close down. There wasn't much going on, hunting going on down there. Consequently, it was tough for us. Anyway, when I was there, somebody phoned me from Canada. They were the principal of a huge vocational school. In that vocational school, they had a farrier program, but the instructor of this farrier program decided to go off. They were stuck with a beautiful opportunity and offered me the job to go over there as a guest instructor. We scraped the money together. I still need to find out where we got it from, but we got the plane fare and off to Canada.

I get on the plane. Who am I sitting next to? This guy, a professional, was a furrier. I'm a farrier; he's a furrier [Laughing]. We got talking. His hobby was collecting horseshoes [Laughing]. This is historically weird. Anyway, we got pretty friendly, and when we got to Edmonton, he said, "I'm going to make sure you get in the hotel properly because in Edmonton, at the moment, it is called Klondike Days." Klondike Days meant that everybody in Edmonton, as we got off the plane, was all dressed in the same outfits they wore during Klondike Days. I thought I'd gone back in time.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Marshall: [Laughing] Anyway, I can still remember he got me into this hotel; I think it was 14 dollars for the hotel room. I still believe it. Anyway, [Laughing] shows how naïve I was; I'm going up, so I couldn't get my luggage up. This guy picks it up and says, "Hey, that's mine." [Laughing] He said, "I'm just carrying it for you." I said I'm not used to it. I realized, "Man, I'm from bloody Liverpool, mate, you do not do that" [Laughing]. Anyway, he got me to the hotel room and there he was, there was a phone and television. I said, "I didn't ask for this. This is extra money." He said, "No sir, they're in every room." I'm just trying to explain how naïve I was out there.

The next day, we got on this bus to Dawson Creek, one straight road. It was an eight-hour journey on a bus. I could not believe it, honestly. We eventually arrived, and the appropriate people greeted me and went to the school. But when they showed me this vocational school, it was a former Air Force Base. It was incredible. I mean, the buildings were massive; all central heated, all air-conditioned, and then they showed me the farrier shop. This is the first time I've seen something like it. I mean, all rubber floored. It was massive, like I said; it was air-conditioned, centrally heated, and I thought, "Wow," there are all the forges lined up perfectly, and that's how my career started in Dawson Creek.

There is a bit of a humorous side to this. Because there was a war, and many people decided to get into Canada and get out because they didn't want to go to this war. So they all hid in the bush. I mean hundreds of these people. The Canadian government decided to bring them out of the bush and offer them a trade. So you can imagine what I was getting to teach to be farriers; I mean, these people probably had never appropriately washed for a long time because they came out of the bush, but the Canadian government did a good job. They brought them back, and they offered to give them a trade. That's where I came in to teach some of these people the art of farriery.

I will jump ahead now to a few years later. I get a phone call from this guy, and he says you probably need to remember me; my name is Tim Biggins. I said, "How could I possibly forget you?" [Laughing] "What is giving you the cause to phone me?" And he said, "Bob, you wouldn't believe it. What you did with me in Dawson Creek changed my life, I couldn't care less whether I worked, but you allowed me to know what it was like to earn a good living." So I said, "What are you doing now?" He says, "You wouldn't believe it. I am the president of the British Columbia Blacksmiths Association." You've got to be kidding [Laughing]. I said, "Where did that come about?" He said, "I was successful in blacksmithship, not shoeing but blacksmithship, and it went from there." And I said, "What about your buddy?" A guy called Greg and he says, "You wouldn't believe what he's doing." I said, "Go on, I probably would." He says, "He is in the Kootenays with draft horses and shows them all."

He said the two of us had had great experiences, and we are grateful for what you told us. I thought, 'Man, that's such a nice thing to say.' So, I rolled on a bit on that, but that's part of what this job has done for me. It is just incredible in many different ways. Does that make sense?

Jacobsen: You brought up the term "blacksmith." What I have noticed, at least in the discipline of show jumping, some of the riders of the newer generation, a farrier is a farrier. To those in their 60s or 70s, those whom I've talked to, they will call a farrier a farrier. Sometimes, they will call a farrier, a blacksmith.

Marshall: Yeah. A lot of it depended on the area and so forth, but everybody understood it. He's a blacksmith to horses. Oh, he's a farrier to horses... it was pretty clear to everybody involved. I

was often called the blacksmith in this place, but it was called the farrier in other barns that go down the road. So it is just one of those things. Both words mean the same thing.

Jacobsen: And are there any other trades that genuinely are as if they're from the medieval period? You work with heat, steel, a hammer, and a nail. The techniques changed slightly, but the fundamental premises are the same.

Marshall: No, the techniques have stayed the same since the Egyptians. It was just after the Egyptians that they started to forge shoes. The Romans were some of the first to generate shoes and were good at it. They were staying in England, you see some of these stables, and they've got some old Roman shoes hanging up on the barn though to show everybody. The horses were more miniature in those days, in Roman days, but all the basics were the same.

Jacobsen: What were the techniques pioneered by the Egyptians?

Marshall: I believe the Egyptians used rope horseshoes; I read about that anyway. They used rope and horseshoes to cover the feet and protect them from being sore. And then they went on from the strings to solid steel.

Jacobsen: What techniques were mastered by the Romans adapting from the Egyptians?

Marshall: The Romans forged their shoes just like we do today.

Jacobsen: Wow.

Marshall: They were excellent blacksmith farriers thing. There are a lot of Roman shoes in the stables just hung up there to show. They were smaller because horses were more miniature. They covered most of the foot, which is what they needed to do. So it was still close. The Romans are clever. I mean, some of the roads they built. There's a road called the Fosse Way when you come from the Coast of England. You get on the Fosse Way. It is dead straight for about 18-19 miles. There's no curve in it. How did they manage to do that? It is unreal. And at the end of that, there are some ruins called Chedworth Cathedral, and the mosaic tilings and the concrete were stone pedestals that they put the floors on for the houses and the buildings. It was incredible; at the end of that, there was a giant forge, like a big fireplace. So, it is a centrally heated building built by the Romans. So incredibly clever people; it goes back to having my trade like this so I could travel and look at all this stuff.

Jacobsen: This is great. A lot of my best friends when I was in high school, were people who were retired or near retired. I get this same conversational sense where we're going to have a theme, but the conversation is going to go any which way it is going to go. So it is lovely for me.

So, as your skills developed, what were some rewarding experiences during that time? As your skill set grew more and more, this is obviously as you are in the workforce more. You are training people, moving along, and going into competitions. How did this develop over time, too?

Marshall: Okay, what's happening now is we have many farrier competitions. Did you realize that?

Jacobsen: I only found out about a month and a half ago.

Marshall: One of the leading competitions was in Calgary at the Calgary Stampede, where they used to hold the world championships. I competed in that quite a few times, and so forth, which was successful. I met many people from all over the world, and, after that, everybody, all the farriers from all over North America, all over the world, came together. There was this significant

unity and a spread of knowledge that was unbelievable. And we had at one time 23 countries competing at Calgary. To exchange ideas, it was just fantastic. Everybody, lots of friends and so forth, and people started to get invited to go to different parts of the world and from then on, it was just like a giant spider's web; it has just increased. It is just absolutely fantastic.

But going back to the basics of shoeing the horse, it has stayed the same since Roman times. All I've used is different steels and so forth. I went aluminum for the racehorses. I have even made titanium shoes, which weren't necessary, but we did it for the heck of it. But, the standards and message might be different, not so much of a statement but transportation, that'll be these big fancy trucks with everything you can imagine in there. But what goes on the foot is similar to when I was an apprentice. It is still the same. Going on the horseshoe and going on the foot hasn't changed much at all.

Jacobsen: How do you differentiate between a skilled farrier and a less skilled farrier? I do not mean things like, 'The shoe fits.'

Marshall: If it is a skilled farrier with experience, he'll have the same clients for many years. They'll shoe the horse. In five weeks, they're asked to go back again, and so on and so forth. And some farriers have been going to these barns for over 20-30 years. That means that's a skilled farrier, but the ones not asked to go back again, there's a reason for it. You can lame a horse or make a horse unsound in no time at all with a fundamental mistake. Once you do that, you are done, especially if it is through ignorance or lack of experience. Is that okay?

Jacobsen: It helps. I hear these terms a lot. I haven't quite figured out what they mean to different people in the industry: the word "lame" and the term "sound." What makes a horse lame compared to a horse being unsound?

Marshall: Okay, it is the same as is. If you stick a stone in the bottom of your shoes, you will walk unevenly, won't you? That's a simple remedy. That can happen with a horse; a rock could stick in the bottom of its hooves, and the treatment is to take the stone out, but if your horse is shod improperly, that lameness can create a significant problem and give a long time, they owe it to the horse, and sometimes they have to be euthanized, and that's the way it is. Inside the horse's foot, there's an incredible amount of anatomy going on in there, which are susceptible tissues. When you think about it, they have a tactile nose on the bottom of their foot, whereas we have them at the end of our fingertips, almost the same.

A horse can walk on something and feel the ground underneath it to say whether it is safe. Here's an example: we used to shoe horse horses in England that were called shankers. Now, you probably have yet to hear of that. What these shankers did, they used to catch shrimps with a horse and cart, and the coaches have these massive wheels on them so they can get into the water, and the horses would walk up, so the water was just over the backs of the horse. Those horses obviously couldn't see the bottom where their feet was, but they could feel it with their tactile nose and sometimes they'll also stop and it would back up and turn, do another way and probably what it was, was quick sound in front. Now, how do these horses know that? They must have it through that tactile nose in the bottom of their feet, and they sensed it, 'I'm not going through there,' the driver would just let them go, and everything was fine. So that's how sensitive the bottom of the horse's foot is and how incredible a horse is. I'm not good with words. You probably guessed that already.

Jacobsen: But your examples are apparent.

Marshall: Okay, good.

Jacobsen: Now, one thing my farrier friend did mention was that you are crowned, let's call it, World Champion five times for your skill in being a farrier. What are the specific kinds of qualifiers tested at these championships to be crowned World Champion?

Marshall: I was crowned five times World Champion by winning at Calgary Stampede.

Jacobsen: And what were the criteria tested for that?

Marshall: Oh, okay. Part of them was many different parts of the competition because it was a three-day deal. Sometimes we had to shoe draft horses. Another time we'd have to shoe light horses, riding horses. Another time we'd have to show what they call the roadster, which is a horse that used to pull carts on the road. There were three different, let's say, levels there: the riding horse, the driving horse, and the draft horse. You must be skilled to be at a reasonable level with all those three. Luckily, I was trained by some of the best, so it worked out for me.

Jacobsen: Who did you look up to as you became a more skilled farrier?

Marshall: Oh, good point. Yeah, how can I say now? I was in the North of England with my dad, and then, as I said before, I did go down to the South of England for quite a while. Still, I met some exciting farriers when I was starting to compete. I went to this one competition. I said to my dad what the heck are we doing, never competed before. He said, "Just do what you do at home." I said, "Okay," so I did what I did at home [Laughing]. There were three divisions in this. There was the open division, which was obviously that quality people. And then there was a prize for the under the 30s and an award for the under 26s, and I'm only 24, so I could get a mention in the under 26s.

Anyway, I just did what my dad told me. I just did the job and did the horse and so forth, and they came to give out the prizes, and they said the first one was a guy called Tom Allison, a respected farrier. Anyway, the next one was RH Marshall. I thought, 'Who the heck is that?' So I'm looking around when somebody says, "That's you, you silly bugger" [Laughing].

There I was a second, meaning I must have won all the others underneath it. It was one heck of a day. That's where I met this Tom Allison. He said, "Where did you get training?" I said, "My dad just gave me the basics." He said, "You've got a pretty good basic, mate." [Laughing] We became excellent friends after that. We used to visit and work with him, which slightly refined me. He'd show me all sorts of different things. Again, that's what the farrier industry is like. You lock on to somebody with these talents; if you are fortunate enough to go with them, that's pretty good. So that's how it started, and it was a tremendous friendship.

Jacobsen: Have you ever had people come up looking up to you in a similar manner?

Marshall: Oh yes, I used to do seminars and so forth. They'd come up from all over the place. Of course, I went to Australia eight times for workshops, so it gave me a chance to try to travel and so forth. But like I said - I know I'm repeating myself, but it is one hell of a career. My wife and I still talk about it because I was doing so many seminars worldwide. At one time, I ended up with flight miles for us both to go first class to Australia. And that takes much collecting. And yes, we stopped off in Fiji on the way to Australia. Then next time, we stopped somewhere else, in Hawaii. It is just fantastic.

Jacobsen: When you are training newer farriers, what have been some of the essential skills and methods that you try to get across to them: things to look for, things to do right, not wrong?

Marshall: First of all, what I try and pass on to them is that when you are showing somebody else's horse, that horse is so vital to them and important to them, you have got to do your utmost to look after it because if you do not, there's going to be some fault in there somewhere and you will not be asked to go back and so forth. That's pretty straightforward, but they must also realize that much safety is involved. If you put a shoe on that is too slippery, you could cause some serious injury to somebody or even kill them. Some people have been killed because they've had a horse go into a deep hole or something. A deep hole is not much different than losing a shoe and slipping. So that's your responsibility as a farrier; you've got to consider that every time you shoe a horse. You've got to put the appropriate amount of shoe on with the tracks it requires without putting too much stress on it.

In other words, let me simplify that, if you put a shoe on that replicates the primary growth of a regular foot, you are not far off. But if you start to put on extensions, which some people do because they've got this weird idea about things, or they'll put something extra wide, so it is supposed to straighten the legs which they do not need straightening because that's how God put them. So, quite often, you get these people that want to show that they've got these silly skills that could try and straighten legs out and so forth, but it doesn't work. You have to keep the horse sound. Does that make sense?

Jacobsen: Yes.

Marshall: Okay.

Jacobsen: Are the punishments more institutional for people who do lousy ferrying? So they get punished by some organization or more social in that people will stop hiring them?

Marshall: Oh yes, okay. There is a body of the Farriers Association that could give them a bit of warning, but as far as taking them to court and things like that, that doesn't happen, which sometimes is unfortunate. But that's just how it is. If you are doing something wrong, you better correct it; otherwise, you will lose your clients. That's just how it is. If you do something wrong, you must move or change your location sooner or later. And then that levels everything out like in other trades; you keep building houses that keep falling. You aren't going to do too many, are you? [Laughing]

And you know something? Horses are precious now. I mean, the value is unbelievable. It is 100,000 dollars for a horse now with nothing, just a cheap one. So, every time you get onto those horses, you are dealing with a lot of money. These are their buddies. You have to look after them.

Jacobsen: So, for individuals entering the industry, what are your recommendations for longevity? How do they build up a company?

Marshall: First of all, if you are going to get into the industry, you need to work with somebody qualified and recognized. How's that? So you must spend at least two years travelling with them, helping them, and getting as much knowledge as possible. And then usually the person looking after them, they're more talented. The one you are working with or working for, they typically find some clients for you that you can branch out and start doing on your own and then it goes out from that. The good farriers allow the young lads or girls to work with them. Eventually, they'll say, "Okay, you can tell this client and take that client," it all works out quite well because what it is is just lots of horses around. Nobody's struggling for horses these days. Does that make sense?

Jacobsen: Yes. I've noticed in some discussions with equestrians of different kinds of stripes that there is a potential issue in some sectors of Canada with two things: one is finding good farriers or a good farrier shortage, and then another is a good vet shortage. Is that accurate to you?

Marshall: Oh boy! Now, you are touching the subject. This is tough for me. It is like any trade, mate. I mean, there's good and evil in this. There are sure vets in our area; I wouldn't trust him with a bloody butcher knife, let alone a horse. I do not know how to go from that because when you work for the veterinarian, the farriers and the vets usually get together, and quite often, an excellent vet would turn around and say, "Look, I'm not sure what this is, it is in the foot, I recommend you call your farrier, and I'll meet him, and we'll take extra aid and work together and figure it out." That's the way to do it.

Unfortunately, like farriers or vets, they decide to do things on their own, and if they're lucky, they might get some results, but quite often, they do not get good results. And eventually, it'll work out, but sooner or later, the vet and the farrier must work together. I mean, I've got some of that. There are many farriers like that; they get on excellent with the vet, and the vet says, "No, call your farrier. I'll meet him here," or "Call the farrier, and if he needs me, call me, and I'll meet him with my X-rays." That's an excellent situation to react to.

Jacobsen: Regarding the industry of farriering in Canada at the moment, what are some of the positives, and what are some of the negatives that you note?

Marshall: It is positive; the whole industry worldwide is buoyant. With all our connections with different farriers from all over the world exchanging ideas, it is a positive.

Jacobsen: What core ideas are exchanged between farriers to improve the industry?

Marshall: Yeah, like I said before, because of the modern technologies and so forth, the ideas that are coming from different countries, it is just unbelievable. For instance, I mean the farrier competitions; I mentioned this before: 23 countries competed at Calgary the last time I competed. So that gives you an idea that the industry's gone worldwide. So it is incredible. Does that help?

Jacobsen: It does help. I've heard similar things from the show jumping world, where, in the 70s, you had several countries competing, but now it is upwards of 80 or more countries competing. So, it has expanded tremendously.

Marshall: Yeah, and a tremendous amount of money involved as well.

Jacobsen: Yes, that's right. [Laughing] Do you think the costs of horses now are a barrier for some people to compete at the highest level of some of these sports disciplines? Is the cost of a horse, purchasing price, a barrier to many taking part in the highest levels of these sports disciplines: dressage, show jumping, horse racing, and so on? As you mentioned earlier, a horse costs around 100,000 dollars in most places as a starting price. This wasn't the case before; it was cheaper. Does this naturally prevent entry into some sports?

Marshall: It does, yes, because, like I said, it is a costly sport to get in. When I told 100,000 dollars for a horse, that was cheap; that's the starting point. To other examples of how extraordinary this profession can be, let me tell you a story about a good friend who's an excellent farrier. He's well known, a good rider and horseman, and extremely wealthy. He turned into a multi-millionaire, but he was asked to go to Saudi Arabia to shoe a horse from England anyway. Now, can you imagine the cost of that? That is bizarre. And he told me himself. He says, "Bob, I go there

on holiday twice a year. I do not need to go back there. And this is what I told him." He said, "I go there on holiday; I do not want to go and shoe a horse." And they just said, "Look, Grant, we've had two farriers looking at this horse; he's expensive. What will it cost you to get out here and help us?" And he just straight off said, "20,000 Euro," They said, "Book a ticket."

Jacobsen: Holy hell.

Marshall: Yeah. So he flew over there. This is the best part; being a good horseman and a rider, he looked at it. The two farriers were there that had shod the horse. Grant told me it was exceptionally well fed. There was nothing to do with the shoeing; he went up to the horse's shoulders, moved it towards the neck, pinched it, and cowered down. He said, "That's your problem. You need an equine chiropractor; you do not need a farrier." So he said, "I got my cheque and returned home." [Laughing]

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Marshall: That's just some of the stories that are bizarre in this profession, it is. I mean, the money is just bloody unbelievable.

Jacobsen: What are some of the bizarre stories in your professional history?

Marshall: My bizarre stories? How much time have we got? [Laughing]

Jacobsen: I have all day. I have the day off.

Marshall: It is hard to say. At least some of them are; I mean, as I said before, my primary training was from my dad. I owe so much damn everything to him. He gave me the solid basics. That's all I started with. It came to a situation where I was asked to do some demonstration. I told you this before, in Washington State. It went from there. The following way, I flew all over the United States, then to Australia, and it just continued. After a while, I didn't have time to shoe any horses, so I kept a few of my clients, but I was flying around the rest of the time. So, it has been an incredible career in that respect. Does that answer any questions, or am I repeating myself?

Jacobsen: No, not at all. What would you consider your most expensive shoeing experience where you charge the most money?

Marshall: I do not think I've been to that stage. I do not think I've charged a lot. Many years ago, I was asked to do a horse in Vancouver, and I said I didn't know how much I could trust because it was a long way to go from where I lived, and they just said we'd pay you by the hour and I said well okay, it is a 100 dollars an hour and that's what they did. I forget the total, but it was a good wage for me. That's the most I ever did. Some of these other guys now here, they shoe three horses in a day. They're walking away with 1500 dollars. I used to shoe six horses a day on average, so you can imagine how much money is involved in the farriers down in these areas where the horses are like multi-million dollars that everybody's used to spending lots of money, but they're just used to it. I do not know whether they've been conned into it or not, but they're just used to it [Laughing].

Jacobsen: How do farriers make their prices? What sets the industry standard?

Marshall: Well, it is just wide open. It is a wide-open market, so it is hard to answer that question. What you do, you have to look at the situation where you are asked to go. You see what the quality of the horses are, you ask what the usual prices are, and if the prices are, say, 400 a set,

but asked you to go down there because they wanted something a little bit better. So, now, you can charge 500 a group, for want of a number. And that's the way it happens, and quite often, some of those people; like I said, they're just willing to pay. But you better be on the ball if you are going to do that. Does that answer the question?

Jacobsen: Yeah.

Marshall: Okay, You seemed hesitant there when you said yes.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] I'm also thinking about another question to ask based on the response because I've been doing interviews for so long. I like to do improvisatory interviews more than scripted. I go more naturally based on the given answers.

Marshall: Oh, okay.

Jacobsen: Do you find that there's a common industry standard for farriers themselves, or has there yet to be a standard set in the same sense of the cost? It is just wide open.

Marshall: Again, I need help understanding that question. Simplify it for me.

Jacobsen: Sure. Is a minimum standard set for farriers in Canada?

Marshall: In what respect? In respect of what we charge or the quality of the work?

Jacobsen: I would say the quality of the work because we just talked about cost.

Marshall: The quality of the work within British Columbia is basically what you asked; you can go to the ranching industry and still shoe your horses there for 150 dollars a set, which is nothing. You go another 50 miles in one direction, and you'd be paying 300 dollars. It comes down to what the horse is doing. You will only get paid a little if it is a ranch horse. And if horses were shod like ranch horses every day worldwide, the equine system would be much better because they do a good job. When you think about a horse that gallops around all day chasing cows for four or five hours a day, probably 30 miles a day, they've got to have some decent shoes on them, which they do. But if you took that same horse out of the show jumping industry and tried to ride it down for four or five hours over the hills, it'd probably break down. Do you understand me? It wouldn't be able to handle it. So it comes down to many of the basics, its conditioning and what other conditions to do with a job there and chasing cattle is pretty tough.

Jacobsen: How often does a ranch horse need hoof care done?

Marshall: Just like any other really, every four to five weeks because what happens you see is the shoes might not wear out, but the foot grows like our fingernails, so they get long. If they're not trimmed back, it puts a lot of tension on the tendons and the ligaments of the leg and therefore can cause serious problems. So they have to be done in the summertime between every four and a half to five weeks. In the wintertime, the growth does slow down slightly, so you can extend it another couple of weeks sometimes.

Jacobsen: What are the main problems with a horse's hoof? Like, you are coming to this as a professional. You see a hoof. What are the issues?

Marshall: There are various problems. First, the main concern would be breeding the horse and whether the feet on the front end.... Usually, you do not get many back-end problems with a foot. Still, on the front end, we can get what is called a club foot, which means that one foot is smaller and more upright than the other. That's from the leg basically. Mother nature is trying to

provide natural treatment for the horse. In other words, you've got one leg shorter than the other; the farrier tries to give that by growing one foot a little bit longer to match them all up. And often, people try to intervene with that too much and create more of a problem. Does that answer your question?

Jacobsen: Yes, it does.

Marshall: Okay. Now, compared to when I was an apprentice with my dad, I probably only saw one or two horses with odd feet. Rarely, we saw a club foot. Now, something happened with the industry, whatever it was. I do not know, but, now, it is rare that you find a horse with two feet the same on the front of the horse. It is just gone that bad. There are so many odd feet now; it is unbelievable. It is not all done through the farrier industry. There are systems that do poor breeding, etc. That's my opinion.

Jacobsen: Which country does the breeding the best?

Marshall: Boy! You put me on the spot now. It is not so much who does the best breeding, but what happens when the foal is born. If it can be looked after as it should be, it should have plenty of room to roam and gallop around on fields. And what we used to do in Britain; if a foal in the thoroughbred industry or the show jumping industry were born, they would send it over to Ireland, where it could be turned out for about a year and a half. Where it can run on some good natural green grass and that would do the job. They'd come back after a year and a half, so now they're two-year-olds, and they can start working them slowly, but it helps to progress, to get some substance underneath them or within them. Ireland is an incredible place. What it is, they say that something in the grass that makes them stronger. I do not know, but I know they still do that in England. They'll send horses over to Ireland for the air or something.

Jacobsen: What are other issues other than the mismatch of the hoofs caused by the farriers, though, this time?

Marshall: I would say probably the most common fault is that the hoses are shod way too heavy. The shoes are too heavy. They're too long. They're just generally way too big. They do not fit the horse. If you trim the foot down, you should replace that piece of foot that you trimmed off with a bit of steel with the exact dimensions all the way around. In other words, if you trim 3/8th of an inch off and then put 3/8th of an inch back with the shoe, people do not do that. They'll take the 3/8th of an inch off and then put half an inch on and much broader. For instance, measurements instead of taking something 5/8th by 3/8th, they'll put one inch by half, which is heavier and way too much for the horse to burden. Does that make sense?

Jacobsen: Yeah, I think so.

Marshall: Yeah. So, I'm repeating myself, but it is a matter of whatever you take off, replace it with steel. That's it, as close as you can. This has worked for about 64 years. So I'm not going to change now [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Are there any things that when you look at a horse's hoof, it is so bad you cannot do anything with it? Are there any conditions like that?

Marshall: Yeah. You often get what they call seedy toe, a fungus that goes in between the bone of the foot, and the bone of the foot is attached to the wall by a lamina. And what it does is it af-

fects the laminae, and the whole part between the bones on the horse's division, the outside surface, becomes separate, and there's a significant big gap in there. That often has to be removed because it cannot survive without oxygen.

But that outside wall has got to be removed before it gets any worse. That can cause significant problems, starting with just a tiny opening in the structures between the wall and the coffin bone and the bone inside. They are just there. It can go fast. They thrive with no oxygen so that whole wall has to be removed and start the new growth again. It is incredible how fast it can happen.

Jacobsen: How does the industry in Canada compare to the American or Western European industries for farriers?

Marshall: I would say, in general, the better quality of farriers is still in Britain, in the British Isles. You can rarely go anywhere in Britain. You can have a horse in the north of England and send it down to the south of England. You can guarantee that it'll be shod by someone else, and we will do it identically to how you've done it. In Canada, that's not the case. In the United States, this is not the case; they will change things in any way they can to make more money. I hate to say that, but it is true. The more gadgets you put on, the more you can charge; unfortunately, that's a sad thing. I'm repeating myself because the farriers make a good living anyway. They do not need to do all that stuff, putting bizarre things on. And when you think about it, when they spend that much time and that much money buying all these crazy weird things for the feet, by the time they put them on, they're not making that much money even if they charge 500 dollars a set because it is cost them so much for all the gadgets. But if you stick to the same old basics and shoe them appropriately, the horses go better, and everybody's happy.

I know I'm repeating it, but the farriers' responsibility is to keep the horse sound so it can be ridden in most terrains without causing injury to itself by tripping or slipping because that can create a problem for the rider. They can get seriously hurt. You may have heard of this place, but there is a massive place in Calgary for children. It is probably one of the biggest in the world. They were videotaping it. These horses coming up to a jump. Somehow, when they turned, it twisted. It was a challenging course, and then he started picturing all these shoes coming off the horse and to think that about ten different riders coming up to the jump and then you could see that she was rolling off them. They're moving away because they were shod with too much shoe. It is like us. We have running shoes to go running in, and you have walking shoes to walk in, and you have dancing shoes to dance in. So you do not go running in the marathon with dancing shoes [Laughing].

It is so simple. It's ridiculous that people have to start changing things and making it difficult. Like I said, your responsibility is for that rider. They can get seriously hurt. You only need one of the horses to slide, and you can get some significant problems. I might drift off the subject sometimes, but I start thinking of situations, and I drift a bit, so you have to put up with me [Laughing].

Marshall: How is it shoeing a horse using aluminum versus steel?

Marshall: It is lighter. What happens is that an excellent example of this is the horse that my dad used to shoe, that famous one called Red Rum. Now, Red Rum was stabled in our tiny hometown. It raced in Liverpool, which was 20 miles away, a renowned race, gruelling. But anyway, when my dad shod Red Rum, they take the shoes off and put the aluminum ones on; they're

the same size but lighter and make a difference for approximately a day. Then, after that, everything comes back, and the aluminum shoes feel the same as the steel ones for up to 24 hours, but if you are lucky enough, like my dad and the horse, it was only an hour away from the racecourse. So within two or three hours, he was riding with feeling good. It is like you; when you take your shoes off and put a pair of running shoes on, you bounce around a little, don't you? You feel good. Well, that's exactly what the horse feels like, but after a while, you walk around in those running shoes for a time, and then they return to feeling like ordinary shoes. And we captured that quality within the hour of them being put on. Does that make sense?

And this is tremendous, I got to say. My dad inspired me when he got to shoe that horse; that was his pride and joy. One of the most prominent people was chasing racers in the world. They've run in it five times. And incidentally, out of all the horses that run in it, only seven horses ever run in it five times. The rest they couldn't run in after the first time. They were tired, worn out, or broken down, and ran in it five times. They buried him at the racecourse and in the finishing post, going past the finishing post.

He was 32 when they put him down, which is another incredible thing. So again, I'm going back to what it is like to be a farrier and to be involved with a horse like that is unbelievable. I was involved with a horse that was in Canada. It jumped the Canadian record in Toronto. It jumped several at the Royal Winter Fair, and that was my pride and joy, and it is so neat to be involved with something like that.

Jacobsen: This is helpful for me to get a side perspective. The primary relationships a farrier will have between the vet and the owner in the professional sphere. What are other secondary relationships farriers have, if any, while working?

Marshall: Secondary relationships with the horse owner?

Jacobsen: When they're working with the horse when it is first born and onwards, you noted they work with the vet and the owner. Are there any other industries that do not work with them as much but still work with them to ensure things are running smoothly?

Marshall: Oh yes, there probably are some, but those are the three main ones: the veterinarian, the owner, and the farrier. And then the others are only looked after temporarily if they go to a show; they may have a different vet there, but it is only temporary. It is only for that show. Then they come back to the original stable and back to the same people concerned. Same with the farriers; they go to Spruce Meadows in Toronto. They'll have another farrier shoeing it, but hopefully, if there's any problem with that horse, they will detect it straight away and then call the farrier that originally shod it to ask why that was done and then go from there, have a professional explanation to each other. But that's a bit about the owner is the owner. So, the farriers and the veterinarians do vary in other places. As you said, you can't expect to follow them down to Florida, but telephone communications.

Jacobsen: When a horse is new versus when a horse is retired or old, what are the different things that need to be managed regarding the care of the hoof?

Marshall: Not a lot because they're doing only some strenuous work once it retires. It is a matter of whether the horse can and whether he's got the foot that can handle it, which many of them had at that time. It is to take the shoes off, have him barefoot, and let him enjoy his retirement. That's the best thing. But I have to tell you this: what can happen, and again, it is communication. I had to look at a horse and screw its metals. This stallion was worth a lot of money, but he

had a club hoof which was steeper than the other. One steeper than the other one and, of course, if he was being ridden and jumped and so forth, you had to shoe accordingly. But when he retired, they told me, "Can you do anything with that hoof to make it look more normal?" I said I could, but I told them you can't jump him. "Oh no, we're not going to jump because he's retired." They said. I said, "Okay, this is against my beliefs, but I will do it, and I'll be as careful as I can," which I did. Guess what they did?

Jacobsen: Oh no.

Marshall: They didn't jump him with the rider on the back, but when people came to buy some of his offspring; they would jump him over a giant fence and ride it. I said, "You idiots," and he broke down, didn't he? Yeah. So when they came to me. I said, "We need a good discussion here."

I said, "You told me you were not going to jump this horse." She said, "There was no rider on his back." I said, "Have you got an intelligence problem here?" I lost it with them. I did. I said, "Do not you ever ask me to do that again." And then sooner or later, I just said, "Look, I do not need to go public with you people." I left the place. And it is a well-renowned place, Spruce Meadows. I just said, "No, I do not need this." That's why I'm a man of principle. It helps to be like that, too.

Jacobsen: I'm thinking of other things to ask you. That's an important question. In your many decades in the industry, what are the values of the farrier community in Canada? Like to the point you mentioned where you have to be a person of principle, you have to step down and say, "I won't stand for both lying and mistreating a horse."

Marshall: Yeah, this is a concern throughout many industries within the horse. Quite often, a farrier is asked to do something that he knows full well is not correct for the horse, but it is obliging the owner or the trainer, usually the trainer. The owner won't do anything that would hurt the horse, but the trainer sometimes want to push it that little bit more and a good owner would say, "No, I want to talk to my farrier" And another owner might say, "Okay. Whatever the trainer said, do it," and consequently then you have a problem. Who gets the blame for it in there? The farrier. So, it can be unrealistic; in the farrier industry, it can be done with the owners and the veterinarians. So many veterinarians I've worked with have been incredible.

Here's another example. I was at Spruce Meadows again. There was a German horse there. He was lame. And the way that the Germans shod this horse was unbelievably wrong, and I was asked to go there and give my opinion. So I gave it. The owner said, "I do not believe what you are saying." They just said to step aside. I said gladly, "You carry on, but if you keep doing this with this horse, I will guarantee he'll be finished within a year." I looked into it a year later, and he was finished. What they did, they used to wedge his shoes off, make the heels higher than the toe was, and change the angle. It puts pressure on the heel of the foot, which is softer than the steel, and crushes them. If you can imagine having no shoes on and somebody putting in a steel wedge under your heel on one foot and walking around with that, what happens to the bottom of your foot? It just gets displaced. Steel won't move.

I have been successful because I'm so simple. Well, not simple, but simple marketing [Laughing]. As I said, some of the questions you are asking are difficult to answer because I have yet to have any of those problems you asked, but I've seen them. I'm trying to answer the best I can for you.

Jacobsen: Following on the point about horse treatment, most of my experiences with people in the show jumping industry, mainly the sports side, riders and trainers and many people; if they're working with me as stable hands, for instance, they will talk about the horse racing world as probably the worst in the treatment of horses compared to other industries in equestrianism.

Marshall: Yeah, I can see; the horse industry, as far as the racing industry is concerned, is poor in North America. The surface, first of all, of the race is usually sand or gravel or something like that, and it is not natural for a horse to gallop at high speeds through that environment. They should be run on grass, which is entirely natural. Whereas you compare it with Britain, a lot of the race courses, there is still grass. So, it is a natural thing for the horse to go on. A horse can sink into the ground, but when it comes out of the bed, it has enough traction to keep it going forward, whereas in the gravel and the sand, it goes in too much, and sometimes it sticks in the bottom of the foot makes the foot heavier one than the other one. Consequently, they could run better. That's why we have a lot of problems in the industry in North America in the racing industry.

Now, they started doing something in the show-jumping industry. They came up with fantastic ideas about this false footing: it looks like snow or white Styrofoam, pieces of white Styrofoam. I do not know what it was, but it caused many problems. I'd retired by then, so what the issues were. They've taken it off now, which created a lot of lameness. And the other thing, too, we were talking about what the owners do regarding safety for the horse about soundness. Now, what they're doing, they're starting to inject the hocks on a perfectly sound horse to prevent it from having a particular problem in the hind leg.

Now, years ago, those problems were never there. So I asked, "Why is it so necessary now?" What it was, it comes back to what I said before; the training is much too fast on run surfaces, so now they start interfering with injections. In other words, instead of finding out what the problem was in the first place and not doing it anymore, they stick an injection in it so it can't feel anything. Excellent, these injections!

Jacobsen: Some other footing that I've seen has been silica rings. It is a different footing than you might see in the wet dirt or the gravel you are talking about. Have you looked into any of that or heard about any of that, the silica footing?

Marshall: I'm unfamiliar with that, so I can't comment. I do not know. Whatever it was, it needed to be fixed. You cannot beat the natural surface, which is grass. If they can get like grass, it would be great, but you can't copy grass because it is not just the grass; it is the roots underneath, right? Certain grasses have a shallow heart, which would be no good. Certain grasses have an extended basis, allowing the horse to go into it and come out of it quickly because it has some specific traction. This is what they have so far had in Britain because they do not race on artificial surfaces; they run on grass. So, somebody over here will get their head out of their ass.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] Which facilities do you think are doing an excellent job conducting their competition grounds and their treatment of the foot care of the horse in terms of stuff like that?

Marshall: They're all doing the same thing. As I said, Spruce Meadows is one of the biggest in the world, but they only have one grass area. No, I'm telling a lie. No, they do not. The main Grand Prix area is grass, so they've done an excellent job of that. But they do other sites for the lower standard horse; it is just underneath the top level, and they're in a gravelly sand thing. But the main area at Spruce Meadows now is grass. That's an incredible place to be, and it is one of the biggest in the world.

Jacobsen: What kind of grass are they using?

Marshall: I'm still determining what kind of grass it is, but I know it has a pretty good root. So, if they get long and deep into the grass, that helps. If it is one that skirts off the top, that would be no good. So, whatever the grass is, I do not know the names of the grasses, but it has a pretty good root to it. The way they look after these grass fields is just incredible. They do a tremendous job with it. Have you ever been to Spruce Meadows?

Jacobsen: I have not; I would like to do a tour at some point.

Marshall: Where are you based?

Jacobsen: I'm based in Langley, British Columbia. People reading this should know Canada is so big that people in the same provinces do not even know where each other is.

Marshall: Yeah. I'm about 10 miles West of Hope.

Jacobsen: Oh wow, far.

Marshall: One time in Ireland, they had two racehorses, and they were completely equal, and they were shod precisely the same way, but they were shod with steel. Somebody came along and said, "Look, we want to try something." This is when they first started using aluminum shoes. So they changed the boots on one horse to aluminum and left the other to steel. They raced them again for three days in a row. Every time they ran it, the one with aluminum finished first and was less tired. And they said, "Okay, they should be aluminum." And that's where it all started for two horses in Ireland. Interesting, that.

Jacobsen: Yeah. Where do you think the industry will be going into the future? What else could be developed or enhanced?

Marshall: Where is it going to go in the future?

Jacobsen: Yeah, if it hasn't changed in so long, I couldn't see it necessarily having any rapid changes, but any industry can make adaptations.

Marshall: Going back to that question before, why do they have to start injecting the hind end on a horse when there's nothing wrong with it? That's going in the wrong direction as far as I'm concerned, and if it is adequately conditioned like it used to be years ago, they wouldn't need to do that. But now it is the time factor; everybody's in a hurry to get things done super quick, and some things weren't meant to be done quickly. Sometimes, they have to be developed in time, which is one thing that gets me when they start injecting sound horses in the back end of the hocks to prevent them from going lame. If they conditioned them, they probably wouldn't go lame in the first place. That's old-fashioned, but that's how the industry's going; it is coming down to sticking more needles in these horses.

They do not get needles when they're out; the ranch horses do not, and they go up around all day. It always goes back to those ranch horses; they're good, solid, and healthy as can be, and what? They enjoy what they're doing. And if you look at a horse and some of these show jumping facilities and walk around, many horses are uncomfortable. You see them in the soil, and they're going from one leg to another, one leg to another, and they're not pleased. It comes down to what I said before: good solid conditioning. It is like our feet; if they're not conditioned, they're going in a 26-mile race. You better have some conditioning on you because it won't take 20 miles before

you start fatiguing. So you've got to be prepared for it. And that's the same with the horse industry: preparation. And a horse is meant to look ahead and stretch out.

An example of this would be, in Britain again, they have the resources to get conditioned. Well, they do not chase around a little racetrack on the sand like they do over here; they go out in the fields and gallop for miles across up and down hills. That's all on grass. That's how they do it over there; consequently, when the British horses run, they hold more records than any other country. The races are more gruelling, but the horses stand up to it because they have been appropriately conditioned on the correct surface: grass. And not only that, when you are riding a horse because I rode horses for a long time when you are riding a horse, a horse wants to look ahead. I mean, they look way, way ahead. They have incredible vision. When they can see ahead and see it safely, you can feel them stretching out underneath you, and they love it; they enjoy it. They know that that surface is good. And I told you before about the shankers/shankars in England, didn't I?

Jacobsen: You mentioned the word shankers/shankars before. I do not recall this story off the top.

Marshall: Yeah, what it was, it was that their horses used to go into the tide to catch shrimps and so forth and then walked their water up to the withers in the grass and then back, but sometimes they would stop. Now, they can't see anything, but only those feet and those tactile knows. They knew that if they went ahead, it would be quicksand. So, the driver or the person in charge just let him go, and they turn around and get out of there. So, like I said, the horse has incredible resources and sensitivity to different situations.

Here's another example. I was riding my horse one day, and I've been over these railroad tracks many times to get to the river. And this time, he stopped, and there was no bloody way; he said, 'Nope, I'm not going,' I tried and tried. Nope. Anyway, I decided to walk about the other way and about five minutes later a train went fast. Now, how did he know? It must have been the vibrations that he felt, but how did he know a bloody train would come? He saved my life [Laughing]. He was a horse that only had one eye. He had an injury in his eye. Guess what his name was? I hope I've been helpful, mate.

Jacobsen: Yeah. There's one other question I would have, which would be about the health of the farriers themselves. What health concerns should farriers be aware of in their careers?

Marshall: Okay, that's a good question. First, most of the problems you get are farriers with back issues. Now, sometimes, it is related to the size of the person. I'm short, so everybody said, "You are okay; you are just short." I said, "No, I've nothing to do with it." Whether you were shoeing 100 years ago or 50 years ago to now, I wasn't greedy. You've only got so many horses in here before you start to get tired, and on average, five horses a day was a good living, and you could stay pretty healthy. But no, some of these people decide that they're going to shoe seven or eight or nine horses a day and, consequently, their health fatigues. And by the time they're 60-70 years old, they're disabled; they can't stand up. And that's the way it is.

It was like the racing industry in England. They'd start working on miles, and they never stopped until they'd finished all the horses, and it was just too much. You are back and can only stand so much, right? A lot of those racing people in England who shod racehorses were finished. And I'm fortunate; I'm close to 80 years old, but I'm still reasonably fit and doing okay. I know many people are like me; they look great but are never greedy. Do you know what the thing is? It is

good money, there's no doubt about it. Shoeing horses is damn good money, so what the hell? But in 10 years, you will know the difference if you keep doing that.

Jacobsen: Are there any areas I haven't covered that should be mentioned in the interview?

Marshall: I think we've covered most of it. If they're getting into this job, make sure they work with somebody qualified because this is the thing: we do not have an apprenticeship system here. They go to school for 12, 14, or 15 weeks or something like that, and that's it; they're out. That's not enough. What they should do is go to school, learn anatomy, learn all the different aspects of the trade, and then make arrangements to go and work with somebody else for at least another two years and get into the industry itself where they are working with horses in the fields and not just the ones that go into the farrier school.

Whereas, you've got lots of time in the farrier's school; you've got all the different things, it is pretty nice and so forth, an excellent area to work and then when you get out into the real world it is not always like that. Sometimes, you can be out in the field, tie it to a fence or something like that when you start, and it is not all that wonderful sometimes. So it takes a while. The apprenticeship system in Britain I did five years with my dad and two years somewhere else; I basically did a seven-year apprenticeship. And here, we do not have apprenticeships. So, we've got to do the next best thing; you go to the farrier school for so many weeks, and then you get with another farrier and work with them for at least a couple of years, and then you will be okay. At one time, they just sent him out of the school, and that was it. A bit lost, and not only that, it is dangerous because in the farrier school, they do not usually get horses that are, let's say, unpredictable; or when you get out in the actual field, it can be unpredictable. I'm lucky. I've not been kicked yet, but I've had two close calls. Did I tell you about that?

Jacobsen: No, how did those go?

Marshall: When I was 15, I worked with my dad, shoeing this big draft horse. He'd never been done before, and I was working on his backhand and turned around to get underneath him on the back on the feet, and I must have tickled his belly. He jumped up in the air, and when he came down, I turned and tried to stop the foot from going on the ground. I didn't want to let go of it. But with a draft horse, that doesn't work, and he flipped me. He came down with two hind feet, one on the other side of my head [Laughing]. He was white, absolutely white. Anyway, I got out. I stood there until I got out, and my dad came in. He says, "What's the matter, lad?" I said, "He did me a jump from the head." My dad said, "Be careful." He did not know how lucky I was. [Laughing] I tell you, mate. It is unreal.

Jacobsen: All right. Well, Bob, thank you very much for your extensive time.

Marshall: Whenever you want to do it, mate. We'll make it work. Thank you.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 52: Quentin Judge on Double H Farm (1)

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Today, we are here with Quentin Judge. You are based in Florida at Double H Farm, correct?

Quentin Judge: Yes, we are in Florida half the year and New York the other half.

Jacobsen: What is the facility in New York? I am still waiting to learn of that one.

Judge: It is a new facility for us. We have been in Ridgefield, Connecticut, for about 13 years. This last spring, we unexpectedly sold our farm there and bought a little bit of a smaller place about 15 minutes away. It has been a historic horse farm for a long, long time. It will be some work and changes, but it is a great place. We are excited about it.

Jacobsen: Since you moved to a smaller facility, how are you finding managing and owning it, working with clients and staff, and other similar tasks?

Judge: It has been a positive change for us. The original we had was quite big. The business we were running was in response to the facility we had. It was about 60 stalls and big trucks. It was a big business. We have focused more on training and our clients and reduced the size while keeping the quality high or even higher in the sport.

Jacobsen: Do you have the same clientele or a new set of clients?

Judge: Same clientele. We now have four clients who ride with us and bring horses and different levels that they do. That has all stayed consistent. We have slightly increased our number of sales horses in the last few years. My wife is a hunter rider. We have returned to the hunter market, which suits our sales. We brought along a few more young horses to sell. Our number of clients has stayed about the same. We do not have stalls to rent to outside boarders.

Jacobsen: Do you find it easier to be more detail-oriented with fewer horses and fewer clients to work with and care for?

Judge: Yes. Being able not to be spread thin and focusing on what horses we have is better for me. At the beginning of my training career, I wanted a successful business. Everyone did well. However, I would like to be someone other than the trainer who would hire many assistant trainers with people who came to Double H Farm and wanted to train with me. I realized we wanted a different direction than having a big business like that. So, yes, having fewer horses allows me to be more focused on the clients we have and to focus on their results and their long-term goals.

Jacobsen: What is the range of riding that you are doing right now?

Judge: Myself, you mean day-to-day or the horses?

Jacobsen: I mean day-to-day and the level of the clients getting trained.

Judge: I have up to 5* Grand Prix horses down to 5 or 6-year-old jumpers or hunters. I run the gamut there. Horses are very expensive these days. We are always on the hunt for young, talented horses. It is bringing them along and feeding them into FEI horses and seeing where they end their career. For our clients, we train so many adult hunters and jumpers. In the last season, many people jumped 3* and 4* grand prix. It is big.

Jacobsen: How do you approach training an individual regardless of their level? Do you take them at their current skill level and push them to see how far they can go with the scope of their horse and technicality?

Judge: For me, I find it... I should not say. I follow the same playbook with our client's horses as my own. It sounds like a line. However, it is soundness, the right horse in the right class, and the right rider with the right ability. I try to set people and my horses up for success. In this industry, people often have a couple of horses, and maybe the horse is not perfectly suited to them. I start with their goals and ask, "What are your goals? What do you want to do in the next 12 months? What is the crazy goal?" Whatever it is, "Let us try to work on both things, the immediate and the long-term, and see how far we can get."

We have had great success across-the-board training at Double H. Everyone who has ridden with us has jumped bigger than they had before. Some had moved up more. It takes dedication from the riders themselves to know this is not an instant result and instant gratification. It is realistic in show jumping. It takes time. It takes practice. It takes honing skills and the right riding classes. It means something other than buying a bunch of overqualified horses and having them jump smaller. It is having horses prepared to do what we want them to do. The adult jumpers are confident, straight, and so on, and have a horse with the right scope to jump the jump and the right heart and mind to remain confident.

For a 4* and 5* grand prix, you need a horse that is just as good as any: fast enough and with scope. Putting the right horse for the right rider and giving that rider as many skills as they can handle in the ring is a basic principle.

Jacobsen: Since this is a transitional set of interviews from the Canadian to the American and to the Mexican base of the equestrian world, I am aware. The Americans are far better at funding equestrian sports than Canadians. Why is that? How does this type of financial support help bolster and maintain the quality of the sport for Americans?

Judge: That is why Americans and Canadians are so close on the same continent. Why is the sport so much deeper across the board in the States versus Canada? I cannot say. I know it is a historic sport in the States. We have fox hunting. It is a long history of equestrian sport, starting in the Northeast in Virginia, in that area, and then branching out across the States. When more people have a longer history of show jumping in a country like the United States, you have more people involved. The funding should be available. I worked closely with Ian Millar. He is a good friend and a mentor of mine. I talk to him in passing about the lack. He wants to see more depth in the riders in Canada, which needs more funding.

Canada, compared to the US, is huge. It is more spread out in the population. There are fewer hotbeds of equestrian sport as here in Florida and California. That may be why there is not enough momentum in one area to pick up the pace and get people excited and involved in supporting Canadian riders. However, yes, this is a very expensive sport. It gets more expensive all of the time. At the top level, what we are all trying to do does not matter how much money we have. If you have a billion dollars to spend on horses, many people have a billion dollars on horses these days [Laughing]. It is not simply throwing the money around and becoming the best in the world.

You are one of at least 50 people or many people looking at that same horse. The funding is hugely important. The history of horse owners in the States is strong because of the US riding

team. In the 80s, the owners owned the horses and leased them back to the team. There is a real history of support and recognition of owners of horses in the United States, which is different from Canada. People being recognized for owning the horses encouraged them to continue doing so. There is more of a backbone for recognizing the owners, which does help.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 53: Emily Fitzgerald on Equestrianism (1)

***Emily Fitzgerald** is an equestrian and a show jumper. Fitzgerald shares her journey into equestrian sports, beginning with lessons at age nine despite initial fear. Influenced by trainers like Chris Franson and the Millar family, she transitioned from local horses to high-performance riding. Fitzgerald highlights the technical precision required in show jumping, emphasizing trust between horse and rider. She discusses safety advancements, including lighter rails, helmets, and horse welfare rules. Fitzgerald notes barriers in the sport, such as high horse prices and limited access for talented riders without financial backing. She admires mentors like Lisa Carlsen and highlights venues like Spruce Meadows for their challenging courses.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: This is another equestrian interview with Emily Fitzgerald, a Canadian show jumper. I want to take a narrative approach. So, my first question would be: What was your first moment of becoming involved with horses or interacting with them?

Emily Fitzgerald: That's a tough one. My grandmother rode horses, not competitively. Still, she always loved horses, and then my aunt was a bit of a hunter rider back when Spruce Meadows had Hunters. They never followed it; they never really were competitive at this level, and I begged my parents over and repeatedly to let me get lessons and try riding, and they resisted for a very long time. I think I was about nine years old because they knew how expensive it was, and then they finally caved in, and I wouldn't say I liked it at first. I was terrified of horses, and I was terrified of riding, but I just kept going because I knew it was going to be something better than my first experience.

Jacobsen: What about early trainers or mentors in the industry? Everyone must come from somewhere and be associated with someone, so how did that develop?

Fitzgerald: Yeah, for sure. My first trainer's name was Chris Franson. She was out of Cochrane, Alberta, a small town north of Calgary, and the kindest person I've ever met. However, she was big on doing the work yourself, putting the work in, and doing everything yourself. Then you start with these not proper fancy horses, and so I got my first horse with her, and I still have him, and then I got a couple more with her. For my birthday, my dad emailed Amy Millar and wondered if Ian did any clinics, and Amy said, "No, you can come ride full-time with us." So, I went there, and it was like a whole other world. It introduced me to the world's top show jumpers, and I was like a deer in the headlights. It was wild; I'd never seen horses like this before, and it was quite the experience. Then I got a couple of adorable horses from them, and they pulled me and took me up the rank a little bit.

I was with them, I think, for about three years, and then I was really getting homesick because I moved out when I was 18. That's when I met Dayton at Young Riders, and then it just clicked, and I came here. I've been here for four and a half years, and it's been amazing.

Jacobsen: During the headlights experience with the Millars, how would you characterize the facets of that? What were the areas of the discipline were culture shock for you coming from a place without proper professional horses to get to a higher-end level in the sport?

Fitzgerald: I think probably the most significant initial culture shock was the Millar family, like everyone knows the Millars, like it's Captain Canada, that kind of thing, and then I got there and how technical every single aspect of riding is and how technical every single aspect of the horses is. It was like nothing I'd ever experienced before.

Jacobsen: Many people who have had conversations within the industry, not in a formal interview, have used that word when talking about good trainers: They are technical, she is technical, or he is technical. What do you mean by that?

Fitzgerald: Oh, how do you define technical? It's like being aware of your hands, where your shoulders are, being aware of where your foot is, degrees of pressure, and being aware of everything you're asking your horse at every single moment like there was kind of no room to ride off into the sunset if that kind of makes sense.

Jacobsen: When you're on the horse, and you're in a competition ring, as opposed to at home farm, doing just regular warm-up or training or going through a course, what's the difference in mindset? What is the degree of focus, frame of mind, and this sort of thing?

Fitzgerald: Well, the most challenging part would be you're going in on your own, you're going in with you and your horse, and you must have complete trust in your horse. I could never ride a horse I didn't trust in the show ring. You must be laser-focused; you must remember every little piece of training you have; you must remember where your weaknesses are; you must remember where your horse's weaknesses are and try not to let your emotions get in the way, and you just have to be in that moment.

Jacobsen: Have you had any significant injuries?

Fitzgerald: Not major injuries; I've had a couple of significant falls. In November, I fell off my horse, Coco, and landed on my face. I flipped like I did like a scorpion kind of thing, and I was fine, but I think that's how a lot of people break their necks, which was very scary, but luckily, I was fine, my horse was fine, my helmet was totalled, but praise the technology of helmets these days. That was probably my worst of all.

Jacobsen: When you've worked with a horse for a long time, I mean, there is a specific bond there, I noticed, between horses and their riders. When you fall, does the horse make moves to avoid harming you?

Fitzgerald: Yes, 100%.

Jacobsen: What are some of the things that they do?

Fitzgerald: Well, I believe no horse is mean-tempered, mean-spirited, or wants to hurt you. That's just not in their nature. So, a lot of the time, if you fall, they'll leap away from you. I don't know if it's out of fear or if it's out of just trying to get out of the way, and I've been fortunate that I've never ended up underneath a horse, but I know a lot of horses will do crazy things with their body to try and avoid stepping on you.

Jacobsen: What's the most severe injury you know in the Canadian side of the industry?

Fitzgerald: On the Canadian side, I would say Tidball. I know she had that bad fall where she broke her ribs and broke her pelvis, and that would just be awful.

Jacobsen: Who do you admire in the industry?

Fitzgerald: [Laughs] A lot of people. I admire my trainer, Lisa Carlsen, so much as she deals with many different personalities and other horses. And she comes to work, knows exactly what she needs to do, and has no quits, as I've never seen in a person before. So, I do admire her for that. Another person I admire would be McLain Ward; he has a calm, collected disposition on a

horse, knows precisely where his horse is and can ride any horse, which I think is fantastic. He has such an excellent outlook on the horses, too.

Jacobsen: Which horses do you like? Of the horses out there, who do you think is a fantastic horse or an excellent performer?

Fitzgerald: My horse that I've always had a love for is the Clockwise of Green Hill Z, Uma O'Neill's horse; it's such an athlete, and it just keeps going, and it just is incredible. Another one would be Pia Contra. I don't remember the rider's name, but he rides for Mexico, and she's like nothing I've ever seen before.

Jacobsen: How does she ride?

Fitzgerald: She's careful; there's no gravity. I've never seen a horse jump quite like that.

Jacobsen: When you come into a ring with a professionally set course that is very technical, how do you analyze that course before you ride it and when you do?

Fitzgerald: Well, for that, we do a lot of exercises at home that can tick all the boxes that a course designer would ask. When I'm analyzing it, I look for my weaknesses, and my trainers also do this. We kind of go over and say, "Over here, you have a great drift; you're going to have to hold here, you're going to have to bend this line accordingly," and rely on your training and the flat work that you've done that you've got most of the control over a horse.

Jacobsen: So, places like Spruce Meadows and Thunderbird, I wonder if the Royal Winter Fair is still going with Covid time; those are big venues for Canadian riders. They provide a platform for them to compete at a higher level. What do they bring to the sport, specifically show jumping for riders coming into the discipline in their early 20s and those more seasoned: 30s, 40s, and so on?

Fitzgerald: Spruce Meadows goes without saying; it's arguably the most complex show in the world based on their courses, course designers, and how things go. If you can get around Spruce Meadows, you can get around anywhere. I quite like the Royal Winter Fair because it's very much like a championship-type venue. You must qualify, and then it's at the end of the year, and you get all these amazing riders, and they bring their best horses. Then, there is another show like Thunderbird; I like Thunderbird because they have different shows for everyone if that makes sense. It's not all five stars; it's not all tiny jumpers; it's somewhere in between, like there's always something for everyone at any level. So, Spruce Meadows is one you must work up to, and I always say you must feel overconfident going into Spruce Meadows.

Jacobsen: Mac Cone, to me, noted that the sport has changed significantly over time. Also, Tidball said the same; it's the idea that the safety standards have increased. The cups are shallower, the rails are lighter, things like this... helmets are a thing. These safety measures protect the rider and the horse. What other safety measures have been put in place even in your time coming into the industry and beginning to compete seriously in the sport?

Fitzgerald: I think more recently the increase in the... like your vaccination certificates and the number of vaccines you need for your horses coming into places; I think that's wonderful to help prevent the spread of disease for the horses. I know that the schooling rules at shows, basically what you're allowed to do at shows and stuff, have changed, which I think is excellent also. It's hard because I'm a little bit younger, and I haven't been in the sport quite as long, but you know,

if you jump a solid wall, the wall's not actually solid, so if you crash through it, it comes crashing with you.

Jacobsen: A few people have told me the standards of behavior have also changed. How trainers interact with trainees and how the culture conducts itself has also improved over time. It's become a little less Wild West, in a way. Have you heard the same things?

Fitzgerald: I have, and I've seen those things too, especially just coming into jumping some FEI Grand Prix and the number of regulations they have on that; like you must check nosebands, you must check the boots, more and more boots and such are becoming illegal, and taboo and bits and all that kind of good stuff has changed. It's best for the horses; they're athletes and animals and don't get anything out of this sport. So, we need to do everything we can to protect them.

Jacobsen: Another thing brought up is barriers to sports entry. So, it's not necessarily the skill set that's been universalized by Morris over time with some variation. It's more financial. So, barriers of just pure purchasing price of a horse where a certain number of horses are born every year of a particular quality, and the demand for them goes up, so the prices are inflated quite a bit and that prices out certain classes of people from entering the sport at the higher level. So, people might syndicate a horse, have a connection with a wealthy benefactor, or be part of a more famous farm to get those uh access points to better horses. Will there be any mitigation to that price point as an access point?

Fitzgerald: That's a tricky one too because sometimes it's the best rider in the world, but they don't have the money to get a horse, and no one's going to kind of support you unless you've proven yourself, and there's no way to prove yourself unless you've got the right horse. You know you are applying for a job, and they say you need five years' work experience in this job. So, it's hard because sometimes the people who excel in the sport have no opportunity, and those who do have the opportunity only sometimes excel. So, it would help if you got that weird balance of the ability and the drive for it. I don't see the price of horses going down anytime soon; I see it increasing even more, which is always challenging.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 54: Quentin Judge on Top Tier Show Jumping (2)

***Quentin Judge** is an equestrian and owner of Double H Farm. Judge discusses equestrian sport's challenges and nuances. He highlights differences between equestrian cultures in Mexico, Canada, and the U.S., emphasizing transparency in financial dealings and the importance of client-horse suitability. Judge underscores managing time between training clients and maintaining high-quality facilities at Double H Farm. He praises advancements in data collection and veterinary care for improving horse longevity and performance. Judge shares lessons from Ian Millar on patience, gymnastic training, and tailoring timelines to each horse. He advocates for professionalism and mutual respect in equestrian sports to enhance its reputation and accessibility.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: How about the Mexican riders, too? How is the sport South of the United States?

Quentin Judge: I have only been to Mexico a little bit. I would not be an expert by any stretch about Mexican riders. In Mexico, my take on it is: The Mexico Team is more self-funded riders doing it at whatever level they are doing it. There are more clubs in Mexico and Brazil and places like that, but fewer Mexican riders are on the international circuit compared to Canada. More people who can fund their careers are buying their horses, whether part-time or full-time. That is what I see coming out of Mexico. Again, I am not an expert by any means.

Jacobsen: What are some of the most complex parts of being a trainer? What are some of the more challenging parts of being an owner-operator?

Judge: The hard part of being a trainer with me is managing my time. Because I speak for myself as a trainer, I care about our clients' results. Not only their results but their progression as riders. That takes time. I am finding that I am a lot better than I used to be. I am still looking at ways to manage and prioritize my riding and horses and give the appropriate time for clients. It is the challenge of training. It is that. I have a young family. My kids are in school out in Florida. I fly back and forth to see them. I will be back here doing more training and riding myself because my horses show more in the Fall. However, I have clients. It is a job. Having clients is a sport; it is a service industry. It is managing time across the board. It is a small quantity of a challenge for me.

Insofar as challenges as an owner-operator, it is essential. If you own or operate a facility or facilities like ours, it is more than just the training for clients. It is renting stalls and paddocks, doing turnouts, treadmills, and everything we have for our horses. People think of us, Double H Farm, having top-tier facilities and training, which we do have. But the general maintenance of things. People are paying you for services or stalls at your farm. The top services offered the best grounds for horses and the best paddocks. It is a constant, not-so-fun system of keeping things up to snuff.

Jacobsen: Where do you think most facilities are doing strong, whether the quality of the hay, quality of the stall cleaning, the shavings, the grounding, the footing, the style of training, the quality of the horse? Where are most facilities doing good? Where areas in American equestrian sport need some improvement?

Judge: This speaks to the top tier, the A circuit, where I have worked for the last 20 years. If you are in Wellington or that level of farm, everyone, the level of footing is, I think, people conscious

of footing. People do that well. Riding for horses, facilities differ per barn or operation. For us, we have turned out. We prioritize paddock space. Others do not. The footing, the boarding, is high in Wellington because people know. There are many operations offering services in places like Wellington or New York. It would help if you had the proper facilities to attract those clients. People do well across the board.

As far as something I am passionate about, there is an excellent history of equestrian sport in the United States. There is also a history of getting taken advantage of in the United States. As a trainer or somebody who sells horses or trains people, it is easy to be flippant with people's money. It is a costly sport. People who own horses for their daughters. If they have 4 or 5 horses, that is more often a wealthy, well-off family. In the United States, there is a shift coming. There is a shift happening in people taking advantage of horse deals. You can walk around a horse show. People will tell you about a commission paid through a trainer that they were not aware of or a deal that was not transparent. In our operation, we try to be highly transparent in everything we do. As my late father-in-law said to us, "Treat people well. Treat people with respect; treat people's money as if it was your own." There are things in California law.

Everything has to be spelled out in a bill of sale. There needs to be awareness of that. People need to know that people are there and being paid to do a service. Are there trainers and professionals not taking advantage of anything? I think that kills the business, at least in the United States. It leaves a sour taste in people's mouths for the sport.

Jacobsen: If you are looking at actual numbers for the worst to the best Olympic-level horse, what are the prices in US dollars?

Judge: That is very nearly impossible to say. The simple answer: A horse will cost what people will pay for it. We have all heard the rumours of horses bought for 8, 10, 12 million Euros. No one knows what someone paid in those deals. If you buy a horse, if you say, "I want a horse I can take today to take to Paris next year if I qualify for it." I believe you will be paying at least \$1 million (USD). That is on the low end. It is such a wide range of what horses cost and what horse people pay for horses. It is a tricky question to answer. I can say it is extremely expensive.

Jacobsen: When you are looking at horses for clients, the carefulness of the horse, the choppi-ness of the horse, the stamina of the horse, the quickness of the horse, what factors tend to be more critical for the sport of show jumping compared to something like dressage or 3-day eventing?

Judge: I speak from having very minor experience in dressage. When picking clients, the most crucial thing is suitability and horse-and-rider matching together. That goes across all of the sports. You can have an extremely talented horse with a rider who is not there and does not do well, and vice versa. A great rider can make horses do well at the lower level but not higher. For clients, that is a priority. It is a match for the rider. The horse needs to be overqualified for what they are doing. If someone is learning the ropes, jumping the 1.40m class, you want to know if you are going extra deep or giving an extra stride in the 1.40m oxer; you want to know your horse will not max out at 1.40m. It makes better riders. The horse needs the skill. It is suitability and making sure the horse is up to the job. As far as eventing and dressage, it would be similar. However, there would be more critical factors. You want a horse that understands those factors.

Jacobsen: What do you think are some of the cutting-edge areas of the show jumping world now?

Judge: Data collection seems to be huge. It is coming to the forefront. Regarding the results of horses and riders, it starts when you buy a horse. You want to get all of the information you can. It is so hard to find a horse nowadays. You want to have every round, every stat, how many clear rounds, where it jumps best, and how to work with that. You are working with an animal that cannot speak. He cannot tell you what it thinks or feels. With horses, it historically goes off the feel of what a horse can not do. You want to have data collection, see what these horses do, and have a look at black-and-white numbers, which is helpful for people. We are constantly pushing in the veterinarian sense. There are things we can find to help horses have longevity and recover. People, in general, are changing their mindset from putting out fires. You call a vet and make a horse feel better. Now, we have more regular check-ins with vets before there is an issue to be ahead of a problem. Medications or even treatments can help the horse with longevity in their career.

Jacobsen: What were the main lessons Ian Millar taught you?

Judge: Ian is a master of many things. He is so unbelievably thorough and patient with horses. I think Ian, in the early part of his career, made a name for himself with good horses good horses, but maybe he could buy. He only sometimes had the owners to buy the best horses for him. He made a career for himself, taking horses that other professionals may have worked past and working with them to make them successful. He has an unbelievable ability to dissect what a horse does and how you can find ways to help them. I count Ian as a fantastic resource. I called him two weeks ago with a horse struggling with a double-oxer combination. He is dedicated to gymnastic work. I asked, "How can you help this horse?" Ian taught me that things take time. Horses thrive off repetition. That is how horses learn. Some horses learn fast, and others do not. It is our job as the riders to give the horses as many skills as possible in the timeline that the horse is showing us that they need to have and to see if we can succeed that way.

Jacobsen: Any final thoughts or feelings based on the conversation today?

Judge: No, anything else? I do not know. [Laughing] We covered a lot. The short of the long is that there is a difference in the American way compared to the Canadian or Mexican way of doing the sport. We are heavy into the hunters and the equitation. That is a fundamental foundation of our sport. Many things go into it. There are so many differences. We see it in the Canadian and American market of riders. It would be good to have Canadians - I have some good friends who are Canadian - come up and be at the same level.

Jacobsen: Quentin, thank you for the opportunity and your time today.

Judge: My pleasure.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 55: Hyde Moffatt on Show Jumping & Costs (3)

Hyde Moffatt, according to Starting Gate Communications, can be described as follows: “Andrew Hyde Moffatt had an unusual introduction to horses. When he was five years old, a girl at school brought in her horse for show-and-tell and Hyde was hooked! His top horse is Ting Tin, a son of the well-known sire Chin Chin, purchased in Belgium as a six-year-old. Hyde describes Ting Tin as a brave, intelligent and energetic horse who loves to play with people, but gets bored easily. Starting their Grand Prix career together in 2004, Hyde and Ting Tin have steadily improved with each outing, enjoying top ten finishes at several of the biggest horse shows in Canada including the Capital Classic Show Jumping Tournament, the Collingwood Horse Show, Tournament of Champions, and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. When he is not showing in the Grand Prix ring, Hyde competes with several horses in the Young Horse Development Series including Baron, who was crowned the 2006 Ontario Six-Year-Old Champion. In addition to his equestrian pursuits, Hyde also enjoys running. Although he is currently a middle distance runner at 10 to 15 km, he would like to work towards doing his first marathon.” Moffatt, a Canadian show jumper, discusses the complexities of training, financial barriers, and personal philosophies in equestrian sports. He emphasizes the importance of fostering resilience in young riders while respecting evolving cultural and legal boundaries. Moffatt highlights challenges in Canadian show jumping, including financial barriers, the disconnect between national and international riders, and diminishing drive due to lowered skill thresholds at top competitions. He admires figures like Ian Millar and Eric Lamaze for their contributions to the sport. Moffatt’s personal motto revolves around incremental self-improvement, valuing hard work and adaptability over financial privilege in carving out a successful career.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Some trainers I know need help pushing trainees, younger riders, without going over the boundary of what is considered acceptable now. In the prior generations, it was more extreme. They may have stepped over boundaries but pushed people hard. How do you find that balance between having a talented young rider who needs more resilience so you push them? However, do you want to avoid running afoul of any institutional lines drawn legally? In terms of what you can say, how you say it, how you can act, I am told that is a struggle for some people.

Hyde Moffatt: Some people have a real struggle with it. I do not think anybody tries to fail. I do not think anybody tries to do anything wrong. I am speaking as a student in riding. People do things wrong when they do not know what they are doing, do not have the skills available, or do not know what they are trying to accomplish. Nobody screws things up on purpose. I train with that mentality. My job is to provide that information. If I have to make you want it, you do not. It is not skin off my back. However, you have to want it.

Jacobsen: What do you do with someone who has a talent for reading and horses but doesn't want it? Do you just let them move on?

Moffatt: Yes, absolutely, there is a role for everybody. They have talent but enjoy it as a fun sport. You do not have to do this at the top level, perfect. You can do it any way you feel comfortable participating. That extends right down. You have people who do not even ride horses, who have them at horses, etc. There are a million ways to enjoy the sport. Everyone needs to find their role. I do not think it is important that everyone is a competitor.

Jacobsen: What words come to mind when thinking of Canadian show jumping?

Moffatt: Resiliency, toughness, resourcefulness. All those words describe those who have been quite successful in leading the way for my generation, and my generation is starting to lead for the next generation. All those adjectives still apply to my peers.

Jacobsen: What areas do you think Canadian show jumping struggles?

Moffatt: We have some fantastic venues available to us domestically. World-class; we struggle a little bit nationally. There is a bit of a disconnect between the international level riders and that group, and then the national stuff. I think that we could try harder to bridge the gap between that. We have a wide base of participation at horse shows anyway. But maybe the barrier to entry is only financial, and we are offering levels at horse shows where, previously, you wouldn't have been able to compete at national-level shows. Unless a certain skill set was already available or well-practiced, virtually anyone can go there now. I think removing those barriers. By removing those barriers, I think we have removed some of the desire to improve. It sounds a bit odd. But you started at a schooling show when you went to the first shows, unrated little shows at local stables. Then, maybe, you got good enough where you could go to the provincial circuit and aspired to go to the provincial circuit. Then, you aspired to go to the national circuit. You had to generally have a level of proficiency before you moved from one circuit to the next. That was the idea. Now, you can do things at the top circuits that do not require much skill and practice. I am just not sure that removing those barriers and allowing everyone to do everything removed some of the desire. The toughness stuff that has made us Canadian or made us successful as Canadians.

Jacobsen: What country do you think is doing the best right now?

Moffatt: Right now, it is hard to argue Sweden isn't doing something right there. They have probably proven they are at the top of their game and can sustain it, which means they have an educated ownership behind those riders. It looks like they have solid horsemanship because they are developing horses well and keeping them at the top of the sport. They have been able to think outside of the box. Not that they are the only people in the world doing it, but they have come with horses without shoes on. The first time people have done that at that level for that long and won that much. They are thinking differently than everyone else. The Swedish program appears to be strong as well. So, I thought they had got things pretty organized in that country. I think we can all aspire to follow in their footsteps.

Jacobsen: What aspects of show jumping as a sport are the least figured out?

Moffatt: Wow! That's a great question, man. Human psychology is probably still the least figured-out part. Horses do not lie. Horses tell us stuff. It is still very difficult to ensure we listen to them constantly, that we are having conversations with them, and that we are speaking with them fluently. Probably, what makes the people tick? What do the people think? I think the limiting factor is our understanding of the horses and fears.

Jacobsen: That's my job [Laughing]. Who do you admire?

Moffatt: In life in general or in the horse shows?

Jacobsen: I think in the horse shows.

Moffatt: I think the accomplishments of a person like Ian Millar were to create a business and a model sport where he could be competitive for as long as he was and as consistently as he was.

The ability to reproduce yourself. I think the style, ease, and natural way in which Eric Lamaze rides when he is on a horse. I would say it is something we should all aspire to; he is such a natural talent. That is something that is hard to reproduce. People like Ian and Mac created systems where they could produce horse after horse. That is something that we should strive for. The goal is to take a little bit from everybody. Somebody like Margie Goldstein-Engle, whose style is a little different than many others but who has been at the top of the sport for years and is absolutely fearless. You have to admire that as well. My goal in life is to take little bits from everybody, realizing nobody is perfect.

Jacobsen: Do you think the Canadian industry is expanding, sustaining, or declining?

Moffatt: At the moment, I think it is expanding. I do not know what the long-term trend is. That is all I can say about that.

Jacobsen: You mentioned financial barriers. Mac Cone called it the elephant in the room: The prices of the horse. He didn't phrase it this way, but the horse's purchase price. There are many more costs regarding vet bills, farrier bills, food, grain, etc. But that's a big thing. You are looking at \$500,000 to \$5,000,000 for an Olympic horse to get entry-level to very good. How does that make show jumping, in a way, have a self-fulfilling prophecy of being for the wealthy for a lot of people, not all, and hinder those who have a talent with horses but cannot get their way in due to those barriers being too great?

Moffatt: The financial barrier is real. I hope that people will still be able to work their way into the industry through hard work. I have to hope that because I do not have the money. I have been able to participate in this. I have only purchased one horse in my entire life. That was a long time ago and for not much money. I have been able to carve a career out for myself mostly through hard work, as we said before. I think it is the elephant in the room. It is significant. Certainly, it is not possible if you are talking about competing internationally without significant financial backing.

Jacobsen: I have seen some of the more prominent riders in Canada. Obviously, they have backers to help them. Others will syndicate a horse. They each buy a piece of a horse. But that is the biggest thing I have noticed as a barrier to entry. When adolescents talk about the cost of a horse, it is staggering. It has become more normalized for me as I have been in the industry longer.

Moffatt: It is. You don't want the experience to be limited to people who can afford it. You would love it if it could be available to all. But horses are expensive. It is expensive to feed them, to look after them, and also to buy them. I do not know the answer to that question. But definitely, the finances are a burden.

Jacobsen: What would you consider your motto for your riding career?

Moffatt: Also, a good question. I think I strive every day to get a little bit better. How far you can go if you try for a month is pretty amazing. It would be pretty good if I could have some version of that as my motto. If you get a bit better every day, you can create the best performance you can. I do triathlon stuff. It is an interesting concept. You are running a race against other people, for sure. You may be a terrible swimmer and a great runner, while somebody else is a fantastic swimmer but suffers a lot on the bike. While racing against someone, you are also running your race. All you can do is run your own race. If you run a good run, maybe you will be successful at the end of it. I think that that is what I would like to try to accomplish.

Jacobsen: Hyde, thank you again for the opportunity and your time.

Moffatt: Thank you; that was great. I wish you luck, and I look forward to reading it.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 56: Lynne Denison Foster on Recognition & Repetition (3)

Lynne Denison Foster is the mother of Rebecca Foster, owner of the Bale and Bucket restaurant, and Tiffany Foster, a professional equestrian show jumper ranked the highest in Canada. She was an aviation professional for 48 years, beginning with Pacific Western Airlines in 1969 in the Edmonton Reservation office and moving to Vancouver in 1973. She helped with the implementation of the first computerized reservations systems for a regional air carrier in North America. Since 1974, she has been an instructor and in 2012 was awarded BC Aviation Council's Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to educating the aviation community. At Canadian/Air Canada, she trained CEOs, Pilots, Aircraft Groomers, and worked on training initiatives and programs for aviation safety management system, computerized reservation systems, corporate change, customer services, frontline leadership, human factors, interpersonal skills, management practices, and service quality. She taught at BCIT between 2000 and 2017. Foster was key in the development of the Aviation Operations Diploma Programs. She was Chief Instructor for 7 years. In 2015, she won BCIT's Teaching Excellence Award. Foster shares her philosophy on recognizing positive actions, a principle rooted in the belief that "what gets recognized gets repeated." She highlights examples of small gestures, like acknowledging a young rider's generosity, which can have a profound impact. Reflecting on her life, Foster discusses her role as a supportive mother, balancing work and raising daughters Tiffany and Rebecca. Both daughters pursued successful paths in equestrianism and culinary arts, inspired by her guidance and principles. Foster also recounts her work at Thunderbird Show Park, emphasizing community, teamwork, and nurturing young talent while ensuring her children were supported and protected in their pursuits.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: What about recognition?

Lynne Denison Foster: In terms of recognition, often, as parents, typically we will focus on what kids do wrong instead of what kids do right, right? The principle I learned from Eric Berne, is that what gets recognized gets repeated. When teaching this to the leaders for their employees and staff, I use the example of children. Let us say you and I meet in a supermarket; I have my children. You and I are in a conversation. The kids want my attention, saying, "Mommy, mommy." I say, "Behave yourself, be quiet." The kid wants my attention. Because I am talking to you and ignoring the kid, sometimes, the kid will knock over a display, hit the brother, or do a naughty thing. Then, what does the parent do? They pay attention to the kid. Now, the kid learns that the parent will pay attention to them if they do naughty things. My principle is that it's more important to recognize when the kids do good things. Because what gets recognized, gets repeated.

So, instead, say to the little child, "I am speaking with Scott. Let us listen to what Scott has to say, then it will be your turn." and then at the end, say to the child, "Thank you for being polite and listening to what Scott has to say." Coincidentally, I made a point of recognizing a good action the day before yesterday. There was a kid competing at the horse show. His dad had left his riding boots in the car. The car was way over in the east parking lot. The kid had to go right away to the ring and get on his horse. The dad says to me, "Lynne, I left Jairo's riding boots in the car. Do you know any kid who can let him borrow boots so he doesn't miss the class?"

Do you know Veronica Dromboski?

Jacobsen: No.

Foster: Veronica is a trainer and she was there, training some of her younger students. She said, “Skye, can you lend Jairo your boots?” Skye said, “Yeah.” I said, “Skye did something nice and readily helped him out, without hesitating. She is eight years old.” I spoke to Veronica. I said I wanted to recognize Skye for that. I got some George bucks (Thunderbird gift certificates) and wrote a note to say, “Thank you so much for your kindness and generosity, and it was good of you to give up your boots and allow Jairo to enter the ring.” I gave it to her yesterday. The girl was over the moon. This is another example of how much recognizing even the simplest ordinary gestures can have an impact on the person who did something nice. It made her day! You must recognize this. That even not-so-great, ordinary gestures can be recognized.

Jacobsen: I cannot say. However, you have made a very kind gesture for a young lady, a teenager I know. One was having a tough day. That was a very sweet thing that you did. I appreciate that. Things like that are the currency of many equestrians I know.

Foster: Yes. I am fortunate because I did have children who were easy to [Laughing] manage. I do not know how to explain, but it is easy to impose those principles. However, I have to say. I had a father who was like that. He would do similar things and help us learn things by living our lives.

Jacobsen: You mentioned earlier the church you’re a part of; your partner, Glenn, was more of a kid.

Foster: He is still a kid. He is 74. I am still his mother [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Did you feel alone in that parenting effort regarding the heavier lifting?

Foster: We were married for ten years before we had children, and we were married for 25 years when he chose to leave the marriage. I always say I was a better mother than a wife for him. He needed a mother at the time. I was told by my childhood friend, who is still my friend. “You have always been a mother, even when we were in elementary school. When someone was fighting, you would try to help them resolve their issues.” I realized I did not know what kind of person I was then. Even a few days ago, I was cleaning the house, and found a good citizenship award certificate I received when I was 11 years old. Also, when I was a young teenager, I belonged to the Anglican Girls’ Auxiliary, and was awarded the GA Honor ring. It was an honouring of my contribution to the values and principles of that organization. I didn’t realize that was the kind of person I was; I probably imposed some of those principles on my daughters when they were growing up.

Jacobsen: It is a sense of temperament rather than role. There is a sense that temperament comes first, and the role is derivative.

Foster: I wanted children so much. I lost one child. She was born too early. But there was a reason for that. I am very grateful for that. That is another long story that I don’t need to tell you. I had Tiffany when I was 35 and Rebecca when I was 36. Sometimes, you have a different approach when you are that age. Like, my friend said, I was always a mother. I had that attitude and gratitude for being gifted with two precious daughters. Tiffany was a very sweet baby. Rebecca, if she could eat, she was happy. [Laughing]

Jacobsen: There is a trendline there, too. I have approximately two years in the industry with no background. When I am at competition grounds, do work, or even at the home barn, most of the

people who show up for these kids are the moms. In much of the community, at least in English riding, show jumping, and eventing, the mothers are the ones who are the support, the infrastructure as you called it yesterday, for the wellbeing and trajectory of health and wellbeing in this sport for mostly girls in this country.

Foster: Your original question was if I feel alone.

Jacobsen: Yesterday, I interviewed one woman who is the mother of a girl in para-dressage. I asked her, “Do the mothers talk and have a similar experience?” She said, “Yes.” Not necessarily the aloneness, but just the anxiety about getting kids to a functional, independent life, such as it is. I would assume a similar thing for you and other mothers of daughters in show jumping.

Foster: At the North Shore Equestrian Centre, we would sit there watching our children, and we became friends. As a result, when the three families chose to come out to Thunderbird, it was the moms, not the dads, who were there. The moms initiated, ‘Our children should be going somewhere else’. The environment wasn’t good for them or the horses at the time. It was another mother and I who did research and site visits. Also, we were all living on the North Shore. One family did move out to Langley. My husband was a firefighter and worked four days on and four days off. He used to say, “It is a pain in the ass, to have to drive the girls to the barn” etc., even though he had the most free time of all the parents.

Jacobsen: That’s horrifying.

Foster: The one set of parents that moved out to Langley had one daughter. The other six kids had to be driven there from North Van six days a week. The other Moms also had children who were in different sports. So, they were only able to drive one day a week for the six days. I drove three days a week.

Jacobsen: That’s the teamwork.

Foster: We supported each other. I had two daughters who were both in the sport. They each had two more kids in sports that they also had to support. I lived in North Vancouver, worked at the airport in Richmond, and had to get out to Langley from the North Shore. The best I could do most of the time with their father, Glenn, was to have him drive the kids over the bridge so I could get them to their lessons on time. There was a Costco on the Grandview Highway and Boundary Road. He would bring them there, all of them. I would pile them into my car. I would drive to Langley after work, hang out with the kids, and bring them back. We developed a system that worked. I don’t know if I felt alone because I had those women. I had the women who were there. The dad provided the money to be able to have the kids go. Mine didn’t. He liked to spend the money on other things that were important to him. But again, you manage as you can. Tiffany and Rebecca began working and earning their lessons and things like that.

Jacobsen: Do you notice any changes in cultural trends, speaking of equestrianism? Women in developed societies are a significant portion of the employed economy and are far more educated than men. It is not even close. For instance, in some countries, women are 40% of the breadwinners, making more or being the sole income. Do you think dynamics are changing some of the assumed roles within a partnership, a heterosexual partnership?

Foster: I was the only mother of those families that worked. The other two (women) did not work. They were stay-at-home moms. I suppose, yes, it must be changing. I cannot say because I am not in that society anymore. I am 74 years old. I have a 37-year-old and a 39-year-old children, now women, who are my daughters. Perhaps, in my role with Thunderbird, I do see. But I

do see fathers there more than when my kids were younger. I do see dads supporting their kids and being with them. A lot of them support their young kids. Then there are the mothers who are the ones that are riding, and the fathers are there with the children. That is a different society than what it was when I was there. Again, my kids didn't start riding until they were 8. It wasn't like competitive riding, and I wasn't a rider.

Jacobsen: Also, the options available to women were more limited.

Foster: I was a working mom, an airline customer service instructor who had to regularly travel for my work. I did not even think about a hobby. I was involved at the church in my community in North Vancouver when my children were younger. We had a group called St. Martin's Players. We did musical theater and performed pantomimes. I also was a Brownie leader. That was my recreation. When my husband and I split up, and I moved to Langley, I joined an A Cappella singing group. That was my personal self-preservation indulgence. I was also very lucky in my life path because of my daughters and their interests.

Jacobsen: *You've given your life to them.*

Foster: I did. I did. I gave my life to them. That was important to me because I wanted children so badly. I love kids.

Jacobsen: My mother had miscarriages and a similar sensibility.

Foster: You value them so much. They are very precious assets or whatever. I don't know. But if you can provide something to help them to grow, why not do it? I get a sense of accomplishment. I can take credit for providing the opportunities to pursue those paths because they couldn't do it without me. If my husband and I hadn't split, we probably wouldn't have come to Langley. They wouldn't have started to work for Brent and Laura. Tiffany wouldn't have shown that she has this talent. Brent and Laura wouldn't have put all this effort into Tiffany because she was riding their sales horses. Maybe, if we had the money, Tiffany wouldn't have gone that path anyway. She would probably be an amateur owner doing it as a hobby. I don't know how to explain it. I feel like there was a destiny kind of thing.

Same for Rebecca. She has great respect in the food service community with influential people because she worked with them. Rebecca is an incredible person, too. She was attending university and because we could not afford her to attend full-time, she would go from September to December. Then, she would work in the horse world grooming from January until August to earn money and then return home to attend the fall semester. I started working in the industry to keep my eye on my kids because they were working. I wanted to ensure they were doing what they were supposed to do and that they weren't exploited. Young kids, "I love horses. I will do anything." Sometimes, adults take advantage of that.

Jacobsen: Correct.

Foster: I did not want that to happen to my girls, particularly with Tiffany in the film industry. I was there, so I made sure everything worked for her. I wanted to do the same when they were working in the horse and equestrian worlds. By that time, I was working at BCIT. I was getting nine weeks of vacation. Brent suggested that I go talk to Dianne(Tidball), Laura's mom, to see what I could do for work at Thunderbird during the horse shows. He said, "Dianne could probably use some help at the new facility, go and see." I did. That's when she said, "You can do hospitality." I was feeding everybody. She wanted all the employees fed: office staff, in-gate people, ring crew, officials, and also to provide some interesting exhibitor events.

I was the only one in hospitality at the time. I did it. But I had a 13-year-old, Rebecca, who loved to prepare food. She helped me when she wasn't grooming or going to school. Then Chris Pack who was working at Thunderbird, and his friend, Pat Kerr bought this little trailer that they made into a little food concession. They called it The Tasty Bit. I co-signed a loan for him. They were going to university at the time, and I thought, "I need to help you with this." So, we developed a menu that offered a healthy alternative to fast food, and Rebecca became a cook at age 15. She stood at the 4-burner stove in that trailer for 3 to 3.5 hours a day preparing custom-ordered hot pasta without a break. She would cook the food and I would buy local produce and prep it for her. It was a good concept...healthy fast food.

By the time she graduated high school and had attended four semesters at university. She thought, "What am I doing going to university?" She thought that was what she had to do. She loved working with food, so she switched to Vancouver Community College and registered for the Culinary Arts Diploma program. While going to college, she got a job at a Belgian-style pub.

There were three jobs available. One was dishwashing. The other was hostessing. The other one, I forgot, was doing food prep, maybe. She applied for the dishwashing job. I said, "Rebecca, you have been helping me prepare food and you have experience as a cook. Why are you applying for a dishwasher job?" She said, "I applied for a dishwasher job because I already know how to be good at washing dishes so I don't have to worry about it when I'm at work. If there are other things I can offer to learn to do that aren't my responsibility, I will get more skills."

'If you want the best the world has to offer, offer the world your best.' She did. Then she started helping the chef and the sous chef. Pretty soon, the restaurant owner said, "Rebecca, I want you to do this and that...no more dishwashing!" They were teaching her things because she was eager to learn. She did her job well. So, he wanted to reward her. She went to culinary arts school and then graduated top of the class. As a result, she had an opportunity.

Do you know the Chambar Restaurant in Vancouver? Nico Schuermans, a chef originally from Belgium, owns it. He is well known. He co-owns the Dirty Apron Cooking School and Cafe Medina. Rebecca worked for him. He thought she was incredible. He is still her mentor. By thinking, "When I go to work, I want to do the job well. Then I can learn more things and can contribute," she has gained a very valuable relationship with someone who willingly has supported her in her venture as a restaurant owner herself. It will be 12 years next season that The Bale and Bucket has offered healthy fast food at Thunderbird Show Park.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 57: Lynne Denison Foster on Hard Work and Helping the Least of These (4)

Lynne Denison Foster is the mother of Rebecca Foster, owner of the Bale and Bucket restaurant, and Tiffany Foster, a professional equestrian show jumper ranked the highest in Canada. She was an aviation professional for 48 years, beginning with Pacific Western Airlines in 1969 in the Edmonton Reservation office and moving to Vancouver in 1973. She helped with the implementation of the first computerized reservations systems for a regional air carrier in North America. Since 1974, she has been an instructor and in 2012 was awarded BC Aviation Council's Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to educating the aviation community. At Canadian/Air Canada, she trained CEOs, Pilots, Aircraft Groomers, and worked on training initiatives and programs for aviation safety management system, computerized reservation systems, corporate change, customer services, frontline leadership, human factors, interpersonal skills, management practices, and service quality. She taught at BCIT between 2000 and 2017. Foster was key in the development of the Aviation Operations Diploma Programs. She was Chief Instructor for 7 years. In 2015, she won BCIT's Teaching Excellence Award. Foster reflects on her multifaceted role in the equestrian community, emphasizing hospitality, recognition, and mentorship. Her daughter Rebecca's career in food service at Thunderbird Show Park highlights the value of cross-disciplinary experience, blending equestrian and culinary skills. Foster established the Legacy Club to honor retired equestrian contributors, ensuring their stories and influence remain celebrated. Drawing from her nurturing temperament, Foster often provided a home for those in need, fostering a strong sense of community. Her deep respect for equestrian sport's history and infrastructure underscores the importance of recognizing contributions and creating a supportive environment for future generations.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Start with what you know. Before starting here, I worked in four restaurants. I took any position I could get, even Event Coordinator, for a little while. They even made a card. Everyone gets thrown in the dishpit to start, to know what that is like because everyone thinks it is the worst job - because it is.

Lynne Denison Foster: Another opportunity! Thunderbird asked Rebecca to come into the horse world and take over the restaurant that was there. When she took it on, she had an advantage that others who had been in it before her didn't have. She was a groom. So, she knows what the grooms need when it comes to food service and she had her previous horse show food service experience. The timing was everything. She has been there 11 years and people rave about her food.

Jacobsen: Do what you can reach out to because you will be surprised by the cross-linkages; I can give you an example if you want - it takes about a minute. I have been doing interviews for about a decade with Mensa and various other high-IQ groups. There is one that is called the Mega Society. It was a one-in-a-million society when they had the world's highest IQ category in Guinness; that was the society they used as the metric. Smart person and a comedy writer for Jimmy Kimmel for about 12 years; there were other members like Marilyn Vos Savant and Keith Raniere. This guy (Raniere) is one of the worst scandals I have seen in the high-IQ world. He formed a multilevel marketing scheme in the 90s. Then he formed a cult. The cult branded like cattle, women. These women would sleep with him. He was involved in trafficking. It was an organization called NXVIM. His name was Vanguard within it. Two ladies who got involved with him were part of a family fortune. He swindled them out of \$150,000,000 (USD). If you check

their bios, it says, 'Brief equestrian career.' I asked my friend about it. I check it up. Those names were Clare and Sara Bronfman. When I talked to one of my bosses, they knew about it. They were in that world. One has been safe-sported, at least. I will be writing on the SafeSport cases. One, at least, is in jail. It is weird to me that this one area was related. With cross-pollination, you should pursue your passions. Explore your talents; they can be dramatic or benign, like being a groom and dishwasher and knowing the timings in the different industries.

Jacobsen: Because of that, there is a lot of corruption in this world. There is a lot of exploitation and things like that. Getting back to the role of the mom, where do you belong?

Foster: I am not an important person, but I am part of the infrastructure because I went in and worked for Dianne. Dianne had some strong principles. Her daughters and son will tell you that as well. She ran the ship. She had expectations. One of the things she told me. "You are Hospitality. But when you are at the Show Park, you look after it. Whatever you can do, do it. If a toilet is plugged, unplug it. If there's litter on the ground, pick it up and throw it away. It is important that that is part of your role as well. Make sure it is clean and safe."

It is based on her personality of hospitality and a family-oriented environment. Making sure if there was anything I could do to make anyone else feel welcome and safe, I would do it. My career was in a safety and service-oriented (another word for hospitality) industry, which brings me to my current job at Thunderbird. You read the article. It was about rewards and recognition.

I am now responsible for coordinating Ribbons and Awards, and I volunteered to be the employee advocate. One of my jobs that I felt was necessary, was to provide support to the crew, (which I haven't done very well this year because I have been super busy), and introduce myself to each one of the employees.

I used to do orientations. We've let it slip by the wayside because other things, like COVID have distracted us. We would do orientation sessions at the beginning of the year. Just because you pick up poop or serve coffee or serve food, it doesn't mean you shouldn't be part of the team. I initiated the Tbird Spirit Recognition program. But again, I have to depend on management to see it through because I am a seasonal employee and don't have the ability to provide special awards and stuff like that. I had it all laid out for them. It has fallen to the wayside because they thought other commitments were more important than that.

I also created the Legacy Club.

Because I did hospitality and fed everybody when this Show Park started up, I knew all of the old regime; the people who were judges and stewards and the coaches 23 years (or so) ago. Eventually, they retired. More people now come to the shows and there are more employees. They don't know these veterans of the equestrian sport. I know them because I fed them. They were retired people working as officials. I saw Dave Esworthy, an elderly gentleman who was well-respected and known in the industry, wandering around Show Park maybe 12 years ago, looking for someone who knew him so that he could go and watch the Grand Prix.

Jacobsen: No one knew who he was.

Foster: No one working in Hospitality knew who he was. Dianne, by this time, was ill. She had early dementia, and Jane had recently taken over. At the time, Jane didn't know him because, originally, Jane wasn't in the equestrian sport world. She was in the skiing world when she was younger [Ed. Olympics, Jane Tidball]. I greeted Dave with pleasure and asked, "Are you going

to the Grand Prix field?" I took him to the TimberFrame, introduced him to the hostess and invited him to take a seat.

I thought it was so sad that this man was such a longtime integral and influential contributor to the sport and on that day, he was a nobody until I recognized him. So I approached Jane and Chris and said, "I think we should have..." You will get a kick out of this. I wanted to do something to give recognition to the people who initially supported the equestrian industry years ago because, in Canada, equestrian sport is not a high-visibility, popular sport. Right? Here was Dave; he put his heart and soul into it since he was young. He was a trainer, rider, and coach. He was a judge. That was how I knew him because I fed him as a judge. I introduced him to Chris and Jane. I said, "We should be honouring these people and offering them some kind of membership in a club." They wholeheartedly agreed. Because everyone knows "Captain Canada," Ian Millar, we wanted to think of a good name for these folks. You're going to get a kick out of this. I suggested "The Pasture Prime Club", but Jane didn't like it, so we settled for The Legacy Club.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] That's very good.

Hans De Ceuster (Belgian military, Chief of Humanist Chaplains and 2-Star General, who was visiting me and joined us): [Laughing] You're past your prime.

Foster: Isn't that good? When a horse has done its best and is finished doing its job it's put out to pasture. And prime is a word used to describe the best possible quality or excellence!

Ceuster: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: The girls at the barn would know. That would be something I would say.

Foster: The farm Tiffany operates out of in Belgium is now the retirement farm. Those barns are in a pasture.

Ceuster: Antwerp?

Foster: Just outside of Antwerp.

Ceuster: Vrasene.

Foster: Yes! That's it!

Ceuster: Yes, I found it on the website.

Foster: Thank you for doing that. That barn is still there. It is now also a breeding farm. Artisan Farms still owns it. The owner of Artisan Farms keeps his favorite horses there and Tiffany's Olympic horses are retired there. They spend their time in the pasture. They were prime.

Jacobsen: These horses must be incredible.

Foster: Yes! So, we called it the Legacy Club instead. It's kind of boring, but it does offer membership to someone who has contributed to the industry, is over the age of 70, is not actively working anymore, and has retired basically from whatever their contribution was, but their heart is still there. What they get is free access to the VIP area and the TimberFrame; they can go anywhere in Thunderbird and enjoy being a special person there. There are about five of them that come to the shows these days and have been welcomed into the Club.. Dave passed away as did Alfie Fletcher. To me, that's a part of honouring the infrastructure there.

Jacobsen: You have to do this.

Foster: You cannot put on a show without having those people.

Jacobsen: The best form of memory right now is institutional memory. Word of mouth degrades fast. Print, few people read. So, having a place for these people, they can tell their stories.

Foster: It is to show that we respect and honour them and have gratitude for them, for they have made the industry what it is now.

Jacobsen: As a teenager, I was kicked out of the house for several months. I was a troublesome kid. I got back! I got back.

Foster: I can tell you. I am surprised you didn't end up at my house because I took in a lot of kids whose parents kicked them out. After all, they weren't happy with them.

Jacobsen: One of your kids, you told me, threatened to run away.

Foster: Tiffany only tried twice, but there were other kids. One was hooked on speed. The other was promiscuous. Her stepfather said, "Get the hell out." She was 16! Tiffany said, "She has nowhere to go. Can she come and stay with us?" Long story short, it was eight years that I lived just outside of Walnut Grove by the Redwoods Golf Course; the house was brand new in 1999 when my girls and I moved in. When I sold the place and went back to North Vancouver, I thought, "This place has had a lot of people (besides my two daughters and me) live in it." I decided I would figure out how many, using the time frame of anyone who had lived with us for more than three months: 13 people...not all at once, but over the eight years.

I had a homeless guy staying in the basement once. But the girls that worked for Brent and Laura and lived in my house, they felt uncomfortable. Brent was the one who found him. I don't know where he found this guy. He was trying to help him out, and asked me if he could stay in the basement. I was okay with him. The girls weren't. I had to ask him to leave. Jesse, Sarah, and Sid were living there when I sold. Jesse and Sarah had been there for three years. They were disappointed when I said I was selling and moving back to North Vancouver. Jesse is the one who is now married to Chris Pack, who also lived in my house for about 2 years.

Jacobsen: It is a very tightknit community, like Fort Langley. Once they are there, they're there.

Foster: I'm surprised you didn't come to live at my house! [Laughing] How old are you?

Jacobsen: 34.

Foster: Yes, so you could have been one of those kids.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 58: Lynne Denison Foster on Loneliness and Thunderbird Show Park (5)

Lynne Denison Foster is the mother of Rebecca Foster, owner of the Bale and Bucket restaurant, and Tiffany Foster, a professional equestrian show jumper ranked the highest in Canada. She was an aviation professional for 48 years, beginning with Pacific Western Airlines in 1969 in the Edmonton Reservation office and moving to Vancouver in 1973. She helped with the implementation of the first computerized reservations systems for a regional air carrier in North America. Since 1974, she has been an instructor and in 2012 was awarded BC Aviation Council's Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to educating the aviation community. At Canadian/Air Canada, she trained CEOs, Pilots, Aircraft Groomers, and worked on training initiatives and programs for aviation safety management system, computerized reservation systems, corporate change, customer services, frontline leadership, human factors, interpersonal skills, management practices, and service quality. She taught at BCIT between 2000 and 2017. Foster was key in the development of the Aviation Operations Diploma Programs. She was Chief Instructor for 7 years. In 2015, she won BCIT's Teaching Excellence Award. Foster reflects on her parenting journey, emphasizing trust, support, and resilience. She shares her experience raising two successful daughters: one excelling in the culinary world and the other an internationally ranked show jumper. Foster discusses the challenges of transitioning from being a central figure in her children's lives to feeling less needed as they became independent. She highlights the prevalence of women in equestrian sports at younger levels but notes the male dominance at professional levels, particularly in Europe. Foster underscores the importance of fostering independence while expressing the emotional toll of stepping back as a parent.

Lynne Denison Foster: So, questions?

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Last question.

Foster: Did you get what you needed?

Jacobsen: Oh yeah. You mentioned about a half hour ago. It is more challenging to be a parent of adult children now than of children.

Foster: I was 50 when my husband and I split up. I was married at 25, ten of which I had no children, and 15 with the kids. I was working in a high profile job and involved in several activities. I am not a solitary person. You probably gather that.

Jacobsen: Yes!

Foster: I had my husband. Like I said, I was a good mother to him - maybe not a good wife. As a mother, I was occupied. I had a lot of things happen at the same time. I grew up in my career because I was 19 when I started working, almost 20, in the airlines. I always had a goal or something to work for, etc. Then, when my husband and I split, Air Canada gobbled up the airline I grew up in. I left my community where I had my society with the church and the performing and all of that kind of stuff. I left that and all of my friends. I came out here for my kids. Then, I was able to take on this new role for Dianne.

I also took on launching two new diploma programs and teaching for BCIT Aerospace Campus. I was busy. I was needed. Then, I wasn't thinking of myself in terms of what I needed. Somebody to support me or to be there for me. I was busy being there for them. My daughters went their

separate ways. Then, I had another tragic incident that happened. I was able to support the affected family through that. I was needed. So, I was okay doing that. My daughters left me. I had the other girls in the house. I had people with me. Then, I moved back to North Vancouver, and Rebecca was going to UBC so she lived with me for the semester. Then she said, "I am 22-years-old. A 22-year-old should not live with her mom." So, she moved out. But, I still had my students at BCIT until I retired in 2017.

Suddenly, I am by myself. My daughters had moved on. There is some other stuff, a dynamic, which was hard for me when I went to Florida. That's when I was lonely. I was done at BCIT. My daughters were doing their own thing. I tried to explain to them how I was feeling. They didn't want to hear it. Eventually, I called a meeting with them. It was a meeting with expected desired outcomes because I felt I needed to express how I felt. I felt I was being left out of their lives. Do you know what Tiffany said to me? She said, "You are the reason why. You raised us to be independent, freethinking, good thinking, capable, confident women who can now solve their own problems." She didn't say it in this way, but I got the message: We don't need you anymore.

Jacobsen: You gave us the principles.

Foster: I was used to being the one who gave everything. Then they didn't want anything. That was hard for me. Then, Debbie, you didn't meet her. She is cleaning the bedroom over at the house right now. She and her sister have been a part of my family. My husband and I would borrow these kids before we had ours whenever we wanted a 'kid-fix'.. Their mother...we had been friends since we were 11 years old. Sorry, I like to make long stories longer. Anyway, their mother died at age 35, a week after Debbie turned 13. Her sister, Becky was 11. It was three weeks before Tiffany was born. Those girls helped me with my new baby because it was summertime. Becky has always been very close to me. She is now grown up and she is my sounding board, but she lives in Ottawa..

I was feeling so lonely and hurt because my daughters weren't integrating me into their adult lives. They were moving on, etc. That kind of stuff. I kind of vented how I felt with Becky. She said - and there is more to it, "Okay, all right, I want you to answer this question. If I asked Tiffany and Rebecca who they would choose for a mother, would they choose your sister? someone else? or you?" I didn't hesitate.. I knew they would choose me. I was just lonely. I had no partner, you see. If I had a partner or somebody I could talk to and feel like he cared for me, my state-of-mind would be different. I didn't have that with Glenn because I cared for him. I do not mean to make it sound like it was one way. He was devoted to me as long as I was devoted to him. You know what I am saying? But when I had children, I focused more on the kids than on him. He was used to 10 years of just him.

Jacobsen: It was probably a blow for him.

Foster: He couldn't handle the responsibility of parenthood. So, he had an affair with a woman for two years. The girls were the ones who found out. Anyway, that is another story. I felt like I wasn't needed in their lives anymore. So, that was hard for me. I think if I had a partner and if I had somebody, it wouldn't... you know. I think there were some other causes, but they were resolved. I had my students. I retired in 2017. What do I have? I have Thunderbird and I drive around and wave at everybody; then everybody waves at me. That makes me feel good. [Laughing].

Jacobsen: [Laughing]

Hans De Ceuster: So, you're part of Pasture Prime.

Jacobsen: Yeah, ahhh!

Foster: I should be put out to pasture now. [Laughing] So, that's what I mean. Does that make sense to you? It was a big part. My kids were devoted to me, and then they were gone. Like Tiffany said, "You were the one who helped us be who we are today."

Ceuster: Sometimes, my mother feels that way. She is in Europe.

Foster: So, you understand.

Ceuster: My mother was part of the European Parliament and started an NGO.

Jacobsen: She was! God, your whole family.

Ceuster: She started an NGO to combat human trafficking. My youth was with the children victims of human trafficking in the house the whole time.

Foster: Is that why you chose the path you've chosen for your life?

Ceuster: I first ran away, not physically. I ran from Antwerp and went to Brussels for school.

Jacobsen: Another runaway.

Ceuster: Antwerp was too scary and dangerous. My mother was being protected by security. All the while, she was fighting mobsters and human trafficking.

Foster: Mobsters, woah.

Ceuster: Albanian.

Foster: Where is your mother now?

Ceuster: In Belgium.

Jacobsen: So, Albanian mobsters were after your mother.

Ceuster: She is still there. She can come to Vancouver to teach at the university. We have students from Vancouver coming to Belgium for our NGO.

Jacobsen: Did she ever go to Albania?

Ceuster: Many times, all over. So, now, she is taking care of my father.

Foster: How old is your mother?

Ceuster: 71

Foster: Oh, she is younger than I am.

Ceuster: I can understand if you're always with or helping people.

Jacobsen: Any more questions? Any final feelings or thoughts based on the conversation today?

Foster: I think I would ask you that question.

Jacobsen: [Pause] I asked first.

Foster: [Laughing] I talk a lot. I tell a lot of stories. I was raised to trust people. Unless they prove untrustworthy, I would trust that the information or the stories I have given you will be treated with integrity. Does that make any sense?

Jacobsen: Accurately represented in the text. They would be veracious. They would have veracity. They would have truth value in presenting tone, context, and word choice. My thoughts: Your personality resembles the one you noted about Berne. "I am okay. You're okay." Hence, the concluding statement about raised to be trusting. To me, that seems more like temperament than how you were raised because I think many of our temperaments and proclivities are inborn. It seems. We seem to be an incomplete package. But a snowflake will form if it is frozen water or freezing water. How that snowflake will form? We don't know.

Similarly, I think our character, temperament, and talents are largely heritable. The form in which it takes will also be dependent on culture. We find this in linguistics, as Noam Chomsky told us or taught us. There is something like generative grammar, where we see these differences in languages, representations of languages, symbols, and symbolic structures. Yet, those differences in symbolic structures have a standard grammar and structure. So, you can draw all of those surface differences rather than differences to an underlying core structure. It is similar to our character.

What I notice with you, I see, "I am okay. You're okay." We all have encountered people who are, "I am not, you're okay. You're not okay." We typically say those people are depressed [Laughing]. Other things that come to mind.

You use practical examples to convey principles. Those principles are taught as per your self-identified role as a mother. Both of your children are very successful in their chosen passions. One recognized nationally for her food prep is in the restaurateur world. The other is recognized internationally in terms of current Longines rankings as the best Canadian rider, just behind Laura Kraut as the #2 woman rider in the world. It's very tight, like 25, 29. Last year, in July, she was number one. Erynn Ballard, the first half of the year, was number one. The reason for Canada creating such great women riders is from Mac Cone; in my interview with him, he put it down to a focus on equitation and hunters. That's probably a reasonable thing to think. Your parenting is devoting your entire life to your kids. So then, it has been a thought to me. Less as a journalistic point, if you look at the top riders, typically, they will be European, Western European men.

Foster: Yes.

Jacobsen: I think if there was an effort to have more gender balance for show jumping in that way, maybe that area of the world - The western European region - could consider Mac Cone's statement to me. If the focus is on equitation and hunters to have so many great women in the industry in Canada, maybe, if they had more focus on equitation and hunters in Europe, you could get a little more talent development and interest from girls for a little bit of a better balance.

Foster: It is quite puzzling when you look at the younger kids who come to the show, mostly female. I don't know if that is what it is like in Europe. But it is primarily females who are coming.

Jacobsen: Everywhere has said this.

Foster: Yet, when you get to the professional level, Tiffany was the leading lady rider in the world but was number 33 in the standings.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 59: Lynne Denison Foster on Last Comments (6)

Lynne Denison Foster is the mother of Rebecca Foster, owner of the Bale and Bucket restaurant, and Tiffany Foster, a professional equestrian show jumper ranked the highest in Canada. She was an aviation professional for 48 years, beginning with Pacific Western Airlines in 1969 in the Edmonton Reservation office and moving to Vancouver in 1973. She helped with the implementation of the first computerized reservations systems for a regional air carrier in North America. Since 1974, she has been an instructor and in 2012 was awarded BC Aviation Council's Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to educating the aviation community. At Canadian/Air Canada, she trained CEOs, Pilots, Aircraft Groomers, and worked on training initiatives and programs for aviation safety management system, computerized reservation systems, corporate change, customer services, frontline leadership, human factors, interpersonal skills, management practices, and service quality. She taught at BCIT between 2000 and 2017. Foster was key in the development of the Aviation Operations Diploma Programs. She was Chief Instructor for 7 years. In 2015, she won BCIT's Teaching Excellence Award. De Ceuster raises the challenges women face balancing careers and motherhood, noting cultural differences in Europe and North America. Lynne Denison Foster shares her life theory about personal growth stages, emphasizing self-discovery in one's 20s and self-actualization by 50. The discussion highlights the gender resilience in equestrianism, with Canadian women excelling at the highest levels. Foster reflects on her own adventurous youth, illustrating trust in humanity and naivety during a European trip. The conversation concludes with plans for future endeavors, including interviews and humanitarian aid in Ukraine.

Hans De Ceuster: I was thinking. Does Tiffany have a partner or have children?

Lynne Denison Foster: No.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: No, she has mentioned this in interviews: She doesn't have a partner, a husband, or children. She is doing this solo. She has her team.

Ceuster: It is not about solo. Still, in this society, women get their careers sidetracked. I do not know anything about show jumping or horses, and I do not know what age you are in your prime to be a rider.

Foster: That's an interesting question, Hans. This is what I say to my non-horsey people: There is no gender differentiation at all. And...there is no age limit.

Jacobsen: That's right.

Foster: Ian Millar was 69-years-old, I think at the London Olympics. The last time he competed, he was 72.

Ceuster: It is about the age between 24 and 40 when...

Foster: ... when they have childbearing and stuff. You have to time your childbearing.

Jacobsen: There are extremes, though. There is a Brazilian rider. She has been on the Olympic team for Brazil 2 or 3 times. She was first for the Olympics for dressage at age 16 or 17. That's insane. Yet, you can have outliers like those who set that time range in a different mixup. What I find with a lot of horse people is that there are too many variables with a live animal. So, a lot of stuff is a rule of thumb. You can say 24 to 40.

Ceuster: It is about giving people chances. What you see now is the mothers riding. The fathers...

Foster: ...looking after the kids.

Ceuster: Maybe, there will be more.

Foster: There will be a shift. You're right. I just thought of something. For Canada, for the team, the successful team, all women.

Jacobsen: Erynn Ballard, Beth Underhill, Tiffany Foster, and Amy Millar.

Ceuster: His daughter.

Jacobsen: They went to Herning, Denmark.

Ceuster: Maybe, it is getting better.

Foster: She (Tiffany) was the only one who qualified for the final. They had some issues there.

Jacobsen: We can leave those for articles. People can get mad at me.

Foster: It is not really my position to discuss it. The point is that there were four women on the team.

Ceuster: Women fade out of careers because they become mothers.

Foster: I was surprised this year. There were so many babies at Thunderbird for the season!

Jacobsen: Yes. You should see the barn. So many kids! So many.

Foster: These were babies. All these women had their babies in the last year or so.

Jacobsen: [Miriam](#)!

Foster: The dads are there packing their little kids around in their pouches.

Ceuster: In Europe and Belgium, it is pretty normal to have kids later and pursue your career.

Jacobsen: In that department, I would argue that America is 25 years behind us and Europe is 25 years ahead of us.

Foster: Yes, it is interesting. Just based on gender more than anything else, women tend to be more resilient than men simply because they have to be. You guys don't have to go through any pain to have those children [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Correct.

Ceuster: We don't need the muscle as much to develop the countries. Public schools are needed right now.

Jacobsen: In the not-too-distant future, it's just a matter of reverse engineering in a way, or just improving that engineering, before you get semi-autonomous robots, which can do basic tasks for us. They will be expensive at first. They get cheap like every cellphone. Who knows? Some of these artificial intelligence are well-developed in the military. Thank you very much for the time and hospitality and for being so wonderful.

Foster: I tend to tell a long story. I hope I gave you what you wanted and what you're looking for. I can talk a lot about infrastructure.

Jacobsen: We talked about those before. It's not the physical infrastructure. It is the understanding: Pick one of these choices, and they have various consequences. You live in a free country - go. They learn this at a young age. So when they make those choices, you are teaching them the non-tangible infrastructure of life. Life is just about choices. There is no single answer. That's life. You'll find out the hard way or as you grow.

Foster: Can I give you one theory which I have?

Jacobsen: Go!

Foster: It is about one's life. This is my theory: From 0 to 20, you, as a living, breathing human, don't have much control over your life. Your life is influenced and managed by your parents, caregivers, teachers, and maybe your first employer in the first 0 to 20 years of your life. You are not managing your life. Somebody else is managing. You are a vessel. They are contributing to your growth. Your caregivers are depositing their values and ethics based on what they have learned themselves, so they are influencing you. Like with my daughters, I am contributing to providing that influence. I, as a parent or as a caregiver or as a teacher, from 0 to 20.

After 20, you get to take whatever you've got from those who were managing your life at that time or caring for you during that time, and you get to try it on and see. What is it that fits you? What doesn't? Go and experience your life, seeing other families, cultures, religions, environments, whatever; you check it all out and see what fits with you based upon what was given to you first, learn things, and try them on yourself. I have this theory. I have said this to quite a few young people. We ask our kids to decide about the future and their lives too soon. How can you, at 17, say, "Yes, I am going to go to university and study this, that, and the other thing"? Unless you have a specific passion like Tiffany. You always wanted to be a doctor. You want to be a truck driver, whatever. Most of us don't know that yet. I certainly didn't know that at 18 or 19.

So, you've got from 20 to 30 to figure it out. What you've been given, what you can use, how you can gain more. It is your responsibility to go out, learn and make mistakes, have triumphs, whatever it takes. Then, at 30, if, after you've tried yourself on for ten years and you still didn't find what fits for you, you have to decide, choose a path, and take that path. Maybe it *is* the right path, or it could be the wrong path. By 50, if you haven't found the path that leads you to your self-actualization needs, as Maslow talked about, you still have a chance at 50.

Now that you've got 50 years of experience, 30 of which you've had within your control, you can still go and try something new and see, especially if you feel you haven't gotten what you've wanted in your life. Until you're 70, then you must either reap your rewards or accept your punishment [Laughing] for your bad decisions because it is too late to do anything about it. You're now on the downward slope and just looking at your life, either reveling in it because you've gotten so much out of your life or "shit." My ex-husband is that way. He is a man riddled with regret. He dwells on the past. Be grateful for what you've got; look for the good things in your life.

Ceuster: The last phase after 70 is the latter, right? We talk about it in our meetings.

Jacobsen: The NATO meetings?

Ceuster: Yes. At certain points, people start to reflect on their lives, regret what they've done, and say, "I'm sorry."

Jacobsen: If they have a conscience... There is a small portion of the population who have none.

Foster: Right, that is when you can seek restitution. If you realize, "Oops," [Laughing], "What have I done? What have I done to others?" Something else: Tiffany and Rebecca...when we found out that a very close family friend was suddenly diagnosed with terminal cancer. She only had about a month, if she was lucky, to live. These girls, they were in their teens then, were stunned and wondered how she was dealing with the fact that her life would end sooner than ever expected.. "Auntie has been told she only has that amount of time to live." I said, "What we are guaranteed in our lifetime is that we will die. How or when do we die? Most of us don't know yet. We have a certain amount of time on this earth. You have to live your life as if every day will be your last, and do what you can to make sure you have no regrets. That is all you can control."

Jacobsen: That's true. That's true.

Foster: So that you have no regrets. You have to live your life. My kids always say to me, "YOLO." [Laughing] You only live once.

Ceuster: No, you only die once."

Jacobsen: [Laughing] I have heard that retort once.

Foster: You do. You have to live your life. If you leave today, will you regret not doing what you should have done? Will you regret something that you did do? You have to think that there has to be a purpose on this Earth to do some good. Unfortunately, there is a certain length of time for you. We all have an expiration date. What you are focusing on is that you've got to build up that purpose instead of the corruption and evil in this world as you talk about humanness.

Ceuster: I do not know the term that you use for it. I always call myself a positive naif. I am positive, nice to people, and naive because I don't know the reaction. Someone says, "Bad person." I can find that out for myself. Most of the time, I don't get hurt.

Foster: You're right. Pre-judgment is called prejudice, and attracts negative behaviour. Right after I graduated from high school, I went one year to university. I shouldn't have gone then because I was not ready for it. I came from a small school and went to this big university, and I didn't know anybody except for about 12 other students who were in my high school graduating class. I didn't do well in university, so I didn't go back after the first year. The following year, my sister and I spent a summer traveling through Europe in a Westphalia Volkswagen camper that our parents gave to us as a Christmas gift. We were 17 and 19 at the time. We celebrated her 18th birthday in Belgium. When we returned, I started working for the airline and turned 20.. We traveled for six weeks, driving our Westphalia camper, which we picked up at a factory in Germany. I had never travelled that long without my family. My dad, he trusted me. He made assumptions about me, which I was able to fulfill. When my dad gave us the gift, he said, "You've got to work to earn spending money for your trip. So, I got you a job as a front desk clerk in a new hotel in Yellowknife. I went to work in Yellowknife, saved all the money I earned and used it for travelling expenses for my sister and me.

Ceuster: [Laughing].

Foster: My dad gave me a single envelope which contained the bill of sale for the van, the insurance, the flight tickets, a woman's phone number and that was it. . He said, "The van is at a Volkswagen factory somewhere near Hanover."

"You are going to fly from Edmonton to Amsterdam. My insurance agent's sister lives in Amsterdam. He told her that you're coming. Get ahold of her; she will help you a little." That is all he told me. We were driving to pick up my sister from her last exam from high school. Then we drove straight to the airport so we could catch our plane. I said, "Dad, what do I do when I get there?" [Laughing]

Ceuster: [Laughing].

Foster: "I have to contact this lady. Then what?" He said, "It is your holiday, kid. Do whatever you want, but just make sure you take care of your sister." That is all he told me.

Ceuster: Now, people can get five years for that. [Laughing]

Foster: We flew to Amsterdam. We had to figure out how to get from the airport to the city and meet up with this lady. I will tell the whole story but it is getting too late and we must go to bed. I phoned her. She said, "It is good you are here."

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Foster: "It is 6 a.m., and I must go to work. I won't be done until 7 o'clock tonight." We travelled 12 hours. Now, we have to wait another 12 hours. We are in this strange city. [Laughing] What do we do? We figured it out. What you were talking about when you said naive, we trusted everybody. The Dutch lady did help us. A kid from Canada whose sister was a flight attendant on our flight was at the airport. He was travelling and ran out of money. His sister brought money. He befriended us and gave us some tips.

'Go to VVV or the tourist information centre at every central station,' we learned that and stuff. The German people were nice to us. We brought six pieces of luggage with us. We didn't know. [Laughing] We were carrying all this luggage because we had to carry our sleeping bags, camping gear and things like that. The German people looked at us getting on these trains with all our bags as if we were nuts.

We wandered all over Europe naive, like you wouldn't believe. We picked up hitchhikers, drove them, left people with our Volkswagen van, the key and passports and went off with these Italian guys we just met on the beach; no harm came. We had a good time. Something could've happened. We could've lost everything. Just trusting and believing, we had no idea what we were doing. We met many people who guided and helped us during the six weeks of travelling. I looked after my sister. So, when you said naive, it reminded me of that trip because we were quite naive and extremely trusting because we assumed that everyone had good intentions, like us!.

An interesting thing is that a classmate of mine from school went to Europe in September that same year. He bought a motorcycle in England to use for transportation. Two weeks after he was there, he was mugged. His motorcycle was stolen. All his money was stolen. He had to come home. Our experience was so different. Crazy, huh? Anyway, you guys have to get up early. Are you staying with Scott?

Ceuster: No, I am going back to Vancouver.

Jacobsen: I have two interviews. We will see if she is up. She is constantly travelling and giving talks. She is based in Kyiv. She went from New York to Rome and then went every few days to a new country with a very high-demand schedule. The other one is that he is in the war zone, but his money might run out. I will send some to them and other charities.

Foster: When are you going (to Ukraine)?

Jacobsen: [Laughing] I have mouth surgery on November 22nd in the morning. Then I will go straight to the airport.

The Greenhorn Chronicles 60: Emily Fitzgerald on Show Jumping (2)

***Emily Fitzgerald** is an equestrian and a show jumper. Fitzgerald discusses the glamour and challenges of the equestrian world, emphasizing the love for horses and their unique personalities as a driving force for many. She acknowledges the socioeconomic barriers in the sport, noting its reputation as a "billionaire's sport." Fitzgerald highlights Canada's success in nurturing women riders, partly attributed to the focus on equitation and hunters. She stresses the need for mental health support in the sport and stricter regulations to address mistreatment and exploitation. For young riders, she advises exploring life fully before committing to horses. Despite pursuing marine biology, equestrianism remains her lifelong passion.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Round two with Emily Fitzgerald. I am back from sprinkler duty. So, that previous response considers another critical aspect of the industry: it is expensive, and you find many elite families part of it, too. That's not disproportionate to the sector compared to other sports, or if it's just a tiny community, you have your spring teams in your gates that show up to it. What's your take on that?

Emily Fitzgerald: That's a great question because, I mean, you see many of these wealthiest families in the world in the sport. It's hard to say because part of the horse world is glamorous. A lot of these people, it's like, you show your horses, and then you go into fancy dinners, win watches, and get dressed up. That's where a bit of the magic of it appears, but another thing is that horses are so intoxicating for anybody. It's hard not to let yourself enter this industry and you're not in love with these animals. That's the case for everyone, but there is undoubtedly an aspect of glamour to it. It is arguably the most expensive sport in the world. So, it's very much a billionaire's sport right now, which is unfortunate.

Jacobsen: It doesn't take very long. There's a sudden feeling of humbling with horses because if they were intrinsically highly violent, they would crush you in a second; they're 1200-pound animals. They have these goofy elements to them where they roll, and they get themselves in poo, and they do weird things. Then they have this exquisite thing when they start to move rhythmically, but when you nuzzle up with them, or they nuzzle up to you or whatever it is, they're pretty subtle and nuanced in their behaviour patterns. They have quite a subtle emotional life, even though they might not necessarily have a deep sense of cause and effect.

What's your favourite part about horses themselves?

Fitzgerald: Honestly, they all have their personalities, and it's a mystery to figure it out. Then you get to see these goofy, ridiculous best friends you have, and then you get to go in the ring and these gigantic jumps and see them move like you've never seen them move. See them get excited. There's just something about them you can't resist. I've had many friends come in and out of the industry, but they always tend to come back. I mean, every horse is different, and it's just you find them, and you fall in love with them for what they are, and you don't try to change them. I don't, anyway.

Jacobsen: Almost everyone notes this fact internationally versus nationally versus the levels of the sport. Internationally, you see tons of dudes at the high end. You have your lower tiers, Tiffany Fosters, Erynn Ballards, and so on, yet you see overwhelmingly young girls and young women at the lower mid-level. Yet, in Canada, our top riders right now are all women. The whole team that went to Denmark was all women. So, there's something unique going on with

the training regiment and the encouragement of young women and women in the sport in Canada. When I talked to Mac Cone, he put it down to the focus on equitation and hunters in Canada. What do you think about that, and what do you think Canada is doing that's unique and is producing excellent show-jumping women?

Fitzgerald: That's a fascinating question. I never did equitation or hunters, but I know quite a bit of high-level equitation riders and hunter riders, and their focus is you, not the horse. They teach you how to be perfect, walk your courses, and think for yourself, which is huge for anyone, and I believe there are more women these days. It's not a man's or a women's sport; women are fighters. It's about how the cookie crumbles. Now, all of a sudden, there are more women, and maybe there's not something new going on. That's what I like about show jumping; it's a love of when you get into the ring. Maybe it's not... Everybody doesn't have the same opportunities, but it's getting there. Our Canadian women's team is pretty good right now.

Jacobsen: So, taking both those points of contact, do you think there could be a summary point made that there is the opportunity for excellent gender equality in the sport in competition while at the same time inequality with the rising costs in socioeconomic equality?

Fitzgerald: Yes, for sure. I agree with that, and it's tough to say, too, based on sponsors. Do they prefer men or women? It's a judgment call for them; there are no set rules. It would be great if they didn't have a preference, but yes, there is for sure a socioeconomic gap, and you got to know the right people at the right time, and they have to take a chance on you and not a lot of people are willing to do that.

Jacobsen: Would it be possible to set up a branch of the FEI to instill or establish a precedent for standardizing sponsorship endorsement?

Fitzgerald: Yes, that's tricky because sponsors choose to be sponsors because they want to, not because Equine Canada is telling them to or any of the FEI is telling them to. It's a bit their personal preference, and if they were asked to be more a standardized thing, like it's more of a random type, I don't think many people would like that. They know these people they sponsor, love them and are willing to support them.

Jacobsen: At the end of the interview, Mac Cone noticed that if there is this economic gap, to what degree can it be considered a sport, and to what degree can it not? He's been in the sport a long time; it's a critical question, but is this discussed within the industry?

Fitzgerald: A little bit, yes. It's a bit of a common saying, "You can buy your way to the top of the sport," which is unfortunate, but the people who can do that don't often stage if that makes sense. They never fell in love with the horses; they never fell in love with the sport; they fell in love with winning and that lifestyle. It takes a particular type of person to get knocked down 100 million times and get up 100 million and one, and that's the way this sport is where you're on top of the world one day, and then you're crashing and burning the next day.

Jacobsen: Personally, how do you find yourself taking those emotional hits of not necessarily winning and then getting back up and going for another round?

Fitzgerald: Some days are better than others. I fell in love with the horses first, and at the end of the day, they're what matters to me, and they're the reason I'm here. I love winning, but I don't just love winning; I love every aspect of this sport. I love getting up and going straight to the barn, spending all day at the barn and just watching these horses be horses. So, that certainly

makes it more accessible, and then nothing's fixable; you get up and try again. To me, there's no other option.

Jacobsen: Many have noted the longer maturation process for professional development and achievement in show jumping. So, hitting 30 or being in your 30s is a critical period after all that development in your teens and 20s. Do you think that, in general, is true?

Fitzgerald: Yes, I do. You see a lot of very talented young riders, but it's experienced at the end of the day, like many of these top riders; they've seen everything. They know how to get out of any situation they've been in; they know what would work and what might not work; they understand the horses they're on and how to ask them the right questions. Some young riders are very talented, but ultimately, they won't beat out a Laura Crawl or a Tiffany Foster.

Jacobsen: What makes Laura Crawl and Tiffany Foster stand out?

Fitzgerald: I watched Laura Crawl in Florida quite a bit and just watched her ride. She knows the horse. She took her time with the one horse, Ballotine, whose name is, and she has developed it, and I admire her for that. Then, Tiffany Foster rode her first five-star, and she kept going. She kept trying, and she got some very wonderful sponsors. She's a lifer.

Jacobsen: For those in their teens or early 20s, what would be a recommendation to have the right motivation rather than the wrong motivation for being in the sport?

Fitzgerald: Honestly, when you're a teen, you should ride and try and figure out what you want, but there's so much more to life than riding. You never want to be stuck doing one thing; try everything, and if you don't like it, then go back to the horses. Kill your curiosity a little bit. That's a bit of what I did, and I came back to it with a new outlook, and this is what I wanted to do with my life. There's a big life out there, and everybody needs to experience that.

Jacobsen: Over these last 4 ½ years at the most recent place, what have been your most significant growth areas?

Fitzgerald: My most significant area of growth has been my confidence. I've never been a confident rider, but my confidence flourished when I came to Lisa. I'm still working on it, but I never felt afraid to make a mistake, I never felt not listened to, they got me the great horses for what I needed, and they went above and beyond. So, it's nice to have a solid wall as your team behind you.

Jacobsen: What are areas for improvement within the equestrian Community, and areas where things have improved and deserve praise?

Fitzgerald: There certainly needs to be a more significant focus on the mental side of the sport because it is such a mental sport, and I know I struggle with that like, even though I might have the ability to get into the ring and get nervous and get in your own way thing. A lot of people would have a similar issue. I do think that the regulations on sexual assault and safe sport and all that have been very helpful still need a little bit of work, but it's getting there, and people are starting to recognize how a lot of people are mistreated in this industry.

Jacobsen: And to that point, as I delve into this industry, I will write on this specifically and in-depth. What will be your advice to me when covering some of these? I see at least 50 to 60 listed cases in the United States alone.

Fitzgerald: It's tough like this for whatever reason. It's straightforward to take advantage of people in the sport, and people get a little bit power-happy and treat people significantly less than they should be treated, and that's in just. So, I recommend you dig it up like it needs to change and stop. People are not objects. They come to you wanting help, and many people take advantage of it. So, expose them all, even if it makes them uncomfortable.

Jacobsen: Well, I will tell you one fun fact. One ongoing project for the last eight or nine years has been interviewing members of the international high IQ Community; there was one case of a guy part of the one in a million societies, Keith Raniere; he used to be listed in the Guinness Book World Records, and he founded a multi-level marketing scheme and then a cult. It was called it was called NXIVM. His name was Vanguard in it, so I cooled down on that and started on some other project, this equestrian one being one of them. I heard about the Bronfman sisters and the Seagram Fortune. I thought that sounded familiar because I know people in the Mega Society, this one-in-million society, and this particular individual who was part of it, he's in jail for life now for human trafficking and sex trafficking, and there were two names listed on safe sport; the Bronfmans. They were members of that cult.

Fitzgerald: Oh, good Lord!

Jacobsen: On the Wikipedia page, you know a brief equestrian career [Laughing].

Fitzgerald: Funny. A brief equestrian career.

Jacobsen: Keith Raniere had swindled the Bronfmans out of \$150 million US.

Fitzgerald: Oh my God!

Jacobsen: And he blew all the money.

Fitzgerald: Of course. How do you blow that much money?

Jacobsen: Exactly. There are tie-ins to some of these projects that I would never even have expected. A friend of mine is in that society, so it's what, one degree away? Two degrees away? So, there are significant cases around safe sports that have pretty broad implications.

Fitzgerald: Yes, for sure. I don't know why the Equestrian Community has been such a target for those things, but people take advantage of their power, and anyone who does that should be held accountable.

Jacobsen: Yes, I agree.

Fitzgerald: You trust these people, and you pay them for service.

Jacobsen: Well, there's a thing. I take money as an abstract currency in the information age because it provides access to different things in society. So, money is your degree of freedom within a society. When you have so much money centralized in what you were terming the most expensive sport, it gives people a lot of leverage to do things they would not otherwise do because they would be financially limited and taking advantage of these things.

Fitzgerald: Yes, I agree with that. Money can poison people.

Jacobsen: Yes, lousy horse deals, people getting sued for over a million dollars, active cases, etc.

Fitzgerald: Yes.

Jacobsen: I want to be mindful of the time we set up. So, when you are looking at talented young riders, boys and girls, how would you identify them? What are some tells or signals to those?

Fitzgerald: Well, honestly, I don't think it's all about winning; it's very much not. You can be one of the best riders in the world and have never won a big Grand Prix. Eric Krawitt, for example, is an incredible young rider; he has a great sense of his horses. He keeps calm and relaxed and rides very calculated, if that's the right word. It is the same with Sam Walker and Lexi Ray; they're all young riders, and they're moving up the ranks. They had the right trainer at the right time, they had the right horse at the right time, and they had the right mindset, and it is working out.

Jacobsen: Sam Walker; his parents are both trainers as well.

Fitzgerald: I know his dad is. I wonder if his mom is.

Jacobsen: I believe one individual stayed at our barn, Brian Moggre. Would that be another individual? As far as I know, he has no family history at all.

Fitzgerald: As far as I know. Again, sometimes you get lucky; you get a cheap horse, the horse of a lifetime, and somebody notices and likes you. He's a very talented rider. Some people do not have more talent but just more of a sense of what to do in certain situations, and those thrive at a young age, especially if given the right opportunities.

Jacobsen: Do you see this as a lifelong passion for you or something that you hope to pursue for a bit and then continue into a marine biology career?

Fitzgerald: It's a life passion for me. My dad has been the most incredible supporter for me. He's given me everything and wanted me to pursue school and find something I liked. I've been in school for seven years because I wanted to try everything. I never wanted to be just one thing, and when I found marine biology, I was finally going to get my degree; it's nice to have a bit of a break from the horses and reset because every time I come back, I'm just ready to go again.

Jacobsen: Emily, thank you for the opportunity and your time today.

Fitzgerald: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

The Good Men Project

Melanie Rempel and Lauren Rempel on Para Dressage

Melanie Rempel is the mother of Lauren Rempel. Lauren is involved in Para Dressage. This is their story and struggles to work within the provisions available for a parent and child in Para Dressage in Canada.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Today, we are here with Melanie and Lauren Rempel. And your specialization is in?

Melanie Rempel: Para dressage.

Jacobsen: So, we met at Thunderbird Show Park. We had a lovely afternoon conversation. I wanted to explore some of that because I don't recall - off the top - having a para-dressage interviewee. I aim to do equestrianism broadly, starting in Canada and then moving internationally. So, either can start. How did you get involved in horses?

Melanie: She's always loved horses. When she was three, we met my niece Joelle at Spruce Meadows. She was calling them all "kitties" because she was three. After that, we still met her at Spruce Meadows. She just got hooked on horses. I used to teach at camp; I was a wrangler for four years at a camp in Saskatchewan. So, I love horses. So, it came to be that we just started taking lessons from a person in our town, and it just grew from there. Then, for the last six years, she's been taking therapy. She had started at therapy because she has microcephaly, which is a small head. So, when she was born, she quit breathing. That caused her brain to not develop fully. So, her head is in the second percentile, and her body is in the 50th, so it's small. So, she has short-term memory, intellectual issues, and social issues. She is considered a vulnerable sector child. So, she would be easy to pray on because she's very trusting.

So, we started in therapy at Equilibrium Therapeutic Riding in Saskatchewan. Erin McCormack, her coach, just after the first year, said, "I think she could do dressage." Equestrian Canada had just come out with the para-dressage video competition. They were letting kids or people with intellectual disabilities compete alongside it. She can't get graded in the Para-Olympics grading, so she could never compete, which is kind of broader than the video competition. So, we were doing the video competition. She won high points champion for Canada in her division twice. She's doing them again this year. This year, they made a division for intellectual disability, which is amazing. Because if that could grow, that's exciting. That's why we're so excited to join that, to hopefully grow that intellectual disability category because she doesn't fit the para grading system, and she doesn't fit in the VIRTUS world sport, which is intellectual disabilities. She doesn't quite meet the criteria on both ends. So, we were excited to do that.

She does the videos from February until November. Each month, she does it in her barn. We video it. I put it on YouTube and sent it to them. Actual judges judge it; she's graded. She gets the dressage scores. It's fantastic. It's a great way for kids with disabilities who can't afford to travel around. I mean, we're in Saskatchewan, so there are not a lot of opportunities. So, that we can do it on video has been great. It's grown for her. She's been doing it for five years now. It helps with her critical thinking. It helps with her reaction time. It helps with her balance. It helps with everything; being on a horse is just therapy. To see kids and adults or people with disabilities, e.g., cerebral palsy, brain injuries, and other sort of disorders, get on a horse and be able to compete has been amazing. So, that's where my passion lies. I want to see more and more kids like Lauren and others be able to compete. Unfortunately, Canada, in itself, is a little behind some of the other countries. So, yes, we're hoping to help grow the sport.

Jacobsen: One detail. You mentioned a ranking showing how far Canada is behind. How far?

Melanie: Yes. So, I can't remember where I saw it, but they said, 'In the top 40 countries of the world, Canada is ranked 39th for disability inclusion.' 39th, like not even the top five or the top 10. So, it's incredibly hard for people with disabilities to get into not only sports but competition. It's just not seen. The only other sport that we know of is Cheer. She also does a CheerABILITIES team in Warman, Saskatchewan. Again, it's struggling because it's so hard to get in, get funding, get a placement, and all of that, but yes, Canada has a long way to go before they get on the front stage, which feeds the para and feeds the para-Olympics. All of it.

Jacobsen: From a personal perspective, how do you feel your interest in horses first arose?

Lauren: I think it's like the point where I called horses "kitties" at three.

Melanie: She's never been shy around horses. It's a natural thing in her. I think she's drawn to them. At one point, when she was eight, I texted my husband. I said this is not a phase. It's not just a girl who loves horses. This is a girl who can work with them. Trying to get her diagnosed took us from age 4 to age 10 to get a diagnosis for her. In that, one of the medical authorities told us, "Oh, yes, she'll probably be in a group home. You should start looking for a home for her because she won't function. She's not going to be independent. She's not going to be able to think for herself." As a mom, I was heartbroken. I was like, "Really? That's all there is in life for her?" And that's right when we found the therapy side of horses. She has grown and blossomed. She's been encouraged along the way, saying she's got what it takes to compete. She deserves to be on a bigger stage than just a video competition. It's great. It's a stepping stool, but there's just not the opportunities.

Jacobsen: What started the video competition? Was it a committee? Was it an individual impetus?

Melanie: That I can't answer. I don't know where it started. All I know is her coach is on the board for para-dressage on Equestrian Canada. It's through her that we knew about it. So, she's been a part. I'm not sure how long she's been a part of EC, but she's gung-ho and tries to get her students in the video competitions because her goal is to see how independent she can get her riders. So, like we said, some only do the walk test, but they're competing. They have cerebral palsy; they couldn't otherwise do any of this. I'm not sure where it started, but it's a stepping stone. It's a step in the right direction. I wish there would be a grade within Equestrian Canada for intellectual disability.

Jacobsen: What would sort of break down some of these barriers institutionally?

Melanie: Support, sponsorship.

Jacobsen: What kind of support? What kind of sponsorship?

Melanie: Sponsorship: money, flat-out money. For example, with VIRTUS World Sport, they have the Pan Asian Games; I believe they're called that. So, you go down to the country. All of the athletes are paired up with a horse from a pool. They ride for two weeks and train, compete for a week, and then go home. So, sponsorship of horses, sponsorship of time, and payment for a facility, like even a Thunderbird here, would be great if a pool of horses exists for people with disabilities. Understanding, when you're talking about it, there's more awareness, so there's more acceptance.

Jacobsen: Do you think the ‘behindness,’ to make up a word, in Canada, has more to do with institutions than individuals? In other words, the social culture is there; the institutional culture is not.

Melanie: I think it's behind that way.

Jacobsen: It kind of seems to be characterized by sort of a value of tolerance. If you're viewed as intolerant, you're viewed as a bad person. If you're viewed as tolerant, you're viewed as a good person.

Melanie: Yes. I think on paper, and when you read stuff, it's like, “Yes! We want people with disabilities to know they should have equal rights.” All of that, but it's not happening. It's up to some bigger organizations with that power and the money behind it to push it forward. Then say, “Let's give these people a stage. As I said, VIRTUS World Sport is doing an amazing job. They're doing video competitions as well. So, she could have been competing against people from Israel and Italy.

Jacobsen: And I raised this point earlier on the human rights domain. Canadian policy will stipulate one thing: Canadian voting record at the United Nations Human Rights Council, Security Council, and so on will be different. I did a series not in equestrianism but a separate domain on the Israel-Palestine issue with the country director for Israel-Palestine from Human Rights Watch and several UN special rapporteurs. The general notion about Canada was: We will state one thing, which is in line with international opinion, which is typically a good thing to do. Then, when it came to actual voting records, it was mixed in terms of sticking to universal human rights. Similarly, I'm getting a sense of this as well, where the institutions are behind what the culture supports. So, there's a duplicity, maybe not conscious.

Melanie: Yes, I don't think it's a conscious thing. I think people want people with disabilities to be able to do things. It's like there's a lag time. It's like we got the death spiral on a computer in Canada. It's loading, loading, loading, and loading. When is it going to happen? I hope that Canada gets up out of the bottom. How to do that? I don't know.

Jacobsen: Are there ways to creatively bypass sponsorship issues and financial barriers? So, for instance, having video competitions, it's remote. You don't have to travel. Horses cost money to take places. You need equipment, trailers, and trucks. Some people take trailers without trucks [Laughing].

Melanie: Yes, then there's the vet, then there's a farrier. It's so much.

Jacobsen: Even the shortage of farriers and vets, the people who can pay the most will have them, frankly. So, there's even a generational gap between those in the pipeline and those in their 70s, maybe 80s, still doing the trade because it pays very well, and they're the only ones to do it. So, that is impacting something in more vulnerable sectors of society.

Melanie: It's huge.

Jacobsen: So, you're coming from Saskatchewan. Places that are closer to Spruce Meadows are much bigger than Thunderbird.

Melanie: Much bigger.

Jacobsen: Huge. Thunderbird itself is big. It has grown rapidly, but nothing comes close to Spruce Meadows.

Melanie: The thing is, I don't even know if they do dressage. I don't know.

Jacobsen: I don't know.

Melanie: That's the thing. It wasn't until I had someone in the family doing horse stuff. Where, I'm like, "Oh, yes, Thunderbird does dressage. There are so many more places around here. It's like, "Well, do we move here?" And then the funding of it all, like I said, she has been making ice cream tacos to pay for all her riding. She - literally - makes ice cream tacos all summer. It pays for her riding and her therapy throughout the whole year.

Jacobsen: As with you, I recall the Lynne Foster story of selling things at Thunderbird Show Park.

Melanie: Now, I'm trying to create an equestrian t-shirt line that I'm hoping will help fund not only Lauren. But I want to make it so 10% of each profit of every t-shirt goes into a fund that we want to start to help support other athletes who fall in between the cracks, to help them get into therapy because money is the biggest barrier: Money and accessibility. Because, even the barn she's at, Equilibrium, she has a waiting list. It would be great if there was more training, knowledge, and spotlight.

Jacobsen: These trainers, too, work very long hours. Their staff work very long hours because they show up earlier. They leave later, typically, because few people do the more basic or intermediate labour, which isn't grounded in a decade of training experience.

Melanie: She's been working her way. She works in trade for lessons, as well. Back home in Saskatchewan, and even here, she comes to help her cousin because she loves horses that much. She wants to help, but it has given her more insight and independence. The whole thought of her being in an institution. Now, you look at her. You wouldn't even think of that. So, it's like: Let's just give more people the opportunities. Yes, there are jobs out there.

Jacobsen: It's about a marker of the degree of civilization of a society or the degree of civility of society, which is how the more vulnerable sectors of society are doing. I remember talking to a man from Iran. He lives in Norway. He's at the University of Oslo, a smart man. He's in the newspapers. He founded a group called Iran Human Rights. His name's Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam. He works for these teenage boys getting incarcerated or death penalties for various things. I believe he and some others noted that sort of marker to me. I met him in Copenhagen. One of the markers of a civilized society is how they are treating their prisoners and the idea that 'No, we're not going to kill them. We're going to, if there's an empirical record for that, institutionalize them.' So, it is to give them therapy and get them back into productive society. That's much better than leaving them there for the rest of their lives.

Melanie: Yes, writing them off.

Jacobsen: That's exactly what it is. I think a lot of societies do that. And people like yourself are very motivated and committed to giving your daughter a good quality of life. Have you talked to other parents in a similar situation?

Melanie: Yes.

Jacobsen: How are they feeling?

Melanie: Same thing. It's like we're all scrambling to find opportunities for our kids. Some love horses, some don't. She's in Cheer as well. So, I've been talking to a lot of the CheerABILITIES

parents. We're all on the same page. It's hard to find places for your kids to compete. The Special Olympics is fantastic. I know in Saskatoon (Saskatchewan). There's a school that's been doing Special Olympics for 40 years in their school. She was part of that. They adapted to the sports. They had the entrance parade of all the athletes. They had all the divisions. She competed with others with the same ability and intellectual level. It was fantastic. She got to compete. She came home with ribbons. But I didn't know about that until she was in grade 10. It's been going on. So, it's like more people need to know about these programs.

Jacobsen: Are there networks and associations that are informal for parents like this?

Melanie: Yes, there are, but I'm frustrated because she hasn't met the mandate for any of those organizations. I don't want to throw any of them under the bus because they all are at capacity, which is why they have to have such strict mandates. Same with VIRTUS; they have a very hard line of intellectual disability. She was three IQ points too high.

Jacobsen: What is the definition of intellectual disability for them? What is the IQ level rating?

Melanie: I think it was 75. She was 78. They have to have a hard and fast line because it's worldwide. You have to have a line. I respect that and understand it. It's frustrating when you have kids on the cusp who don't quite fit in that. She doesn't fit into para. She doesn't fit into VIRTUS. She doesn't fit into Special Olympics. I mean, we've been fortunate enough that she's had so much support from her school, her EAs, her coaches, and her family like her cousin. She will be able to compete in able-bodied dressage. But it's with assistance. She needs her test called out because of her short-term memory. So, talking with the other parents, we all have the same thing: Where do you find this? So, it's great for us as parents. We sit together and say, "Well, my daughter did this," "I heard of this." If you're part of the Kinsmen...

Jacobsen: Like those whole sets of groups, the Kinsmen, the Elks, the Freemasons...

Melanie: It's the Kinsmen in Saskatoon. There's more of a sports angle. The Canadian Tiger has kids in sports. Whatever is out there, it's daunting as a parent. Finally, you get tired because we've been fighting, battling, searching, and hunting. It's like, "Why can't they make them more mainstream? Why can't they make it just more open?" But again, funding comes into that. Everything comes down to money. You see Coke. All of them sponsor every main thing. It's like. "Well, what about people with disabilities?"

Jacobsen: Also, the funding is more pronounced in this sport. It's at the high end, like NAS-CAR. I mean teams of grooms, stablehands, riders, etc., akin to people whose whole job is changing tires at a pit stop. LJ Tidball in her interview with me. We made that comparison. It's very apt. If you're a kid and have a hockey stick and a puck, you can practice. It won't be a rink; it won't be protected.

Melanie: But you can practice your shot anywhere.

Jacobsen: Correct. So, that's slightly different than what you do because it requires a live animal that has only known captivity, is friendly to people, and that you have to build a relationship with, right?

Melanie: And you can't just go around the corner to a small-town rink like you can and have a free skate, and then you can shoot around a puck.

Jacobsen: If you swing that hockey stick, it will swing. That bat, it's going to swing. Shoot that basketball; it's going to go. If a horse does not want to move, it is not moving. They will plant their feet.

Melanie: All these people say that the horse does all the work. I'm like, "You sit on a horse and let it do its own thing. It's probably just going to stand there."

Jacobsen: I put it to the non-tangibles. The trust makes the horse move.

Melanie: Yes, because they want to move for you. They want to please you; they want that treat. They want to work.

Jacobsen: It's just that mint at the end of the lesson, or the carrot or the apple or whatever. How do you feel about your relationship with your horse?

Lauren: I think he is good and can tell when you have bad days.

Jacobsen: How would you describe his character?

Melanie: I'm always speaking for her. I don't mean to jump in, but he's an older horse. He's a gentle, grumpy old grandpa. He cares. He knows and can read her. It's a silent thing with her like watching her with her horse melts me every time.

Jacobsen: Do you feel more confident after working with the horse?

Lauren: Yes.

Jacobsen: Do you feel you've built much trust with the horse?

Lauren: Yes.

Jacobsen: How old is the horse?

Lauren: 20.

Jacobsen: What's his name?

Lauren: Thumper.

Jacobsen: Thumper? How do you spell that?

Melanie: "Thumper" like the rabbit, like t h u m p e r. He's a therapy horse, so he is also used for some therapy lessons. But she leases him, so she's the main rider of him. He's a very careful horse. He works for that carrot at the end of the lesson.

Jacobsen: What would you say is his favourite treat?

Lauren: He likes carrots and apple flavours, too.

Melanie: Yes, food in general. [Laughing] These two get along well because she's food-motivated.

Jacobsen: I think boy horses are the best, at least, for the English discipline. They do what they're told. They let you braid their hair. They enjoy every meal. It's great.

Melanie: She's been working with them in riding and living. For the summer, she lived in her coach's yard in a camper because she didn't drive. So, that's why I'm still a stay-at-home mom, technically. Even though she's almost 19. I'm still a stay-at-home mom for her because I have to drive her, which I am more than willing. My husband and I decided early on that my focus was

on her. Until she's settled in some place, that's a live-in situation, but I'm willing to do that because I want her to succeed. I want her to be independent. I want her to live life to the fullest. I want her to have everything normal - I hate using the word "normal" - that an able-bodied or able-minded person can have. Her teacher said it would have been a whole different situation if she could do math on a horse. So, when she says her confidence, it is through the roof because of the horses. Even socially, she was bullied by exclusion from K to 12.

Jacobsen: I'm sure you've experienced that. I've experienced that growing up. It is very terrible.

Melanie: It's the worst feeling. As a parent, to watch your child be in that, I don't want to negate what someone who's been bullied has gone through, but to watch your child go through it is more heart-wrenching than anything.

Jacobsen: I think it's the aloneness, or the loneliness rather, that comes along with the bullying that you not only have through the exclusion, but then you self-isolate. I think that's similar to a lot of experiences that are happening.

Melanie: She's an extremely social person. She's always smiling. We call her a ray of sunshine. She's known as the smiley girl wherever we go. But it hurts to see that. Yet, she shows up to Thumper. He's all love. She's got his trust.

Jacobsen: What are your dreams with Thumper?

Melanie: Just to ride and love him.

Lauren: Yes.

Melanie: Her bucket list item is to do...

Lauren: ...A show at Thunderbird in dressage.

Melanie: So, Thumper will only carry her so far. Again, we need a pool of horses for someone who's beginning. They get these horses. Then, when they're done, they move on to the next. I think that's how the UK does it. They've got a whole pool of horses. Clive Milkins, who's the Chef d'Equipe for the paralympic team, has come out and done clinics at her barn. He has kind of explained how it works in the UK. I wish Canada could adapt that somewhat, but it will take minds, money, time, and a physical place to do this.

Jacobsen: What's the main feeling many parents have in this situation?

Melanie: I want to throw out frustration. I want to throw out longing and wishing their kids could have that. I've been in the trenches with this for so long like she's 19. We got a diagnosis at 10, which took six years to get. It just seems like it's such a long road. Everything is a fight or not a fight, but everything is working. It's tons of paperwork and tons of interviews and tons of everything. It's a lot of work. We're all willing to do it because we want to see our kids succeed.

I know I jump all over the place when excited about this topic.

Jacobsen: I'm trying to think of a sort of wraparound. You mentioned something earlier, if I may bring it from off tape to on tape, about a hope to potentially be a groom for Joelle. How would you like to sort of achieve that dream?

Melanie: Coming to Thunderbird every year. We come to help her during the show season, which starts in April and goes on until about September. So, we've been coming for five years, where I drive her here and stay with her here.

Jacobsen: It's not cheap. Thunderbird is, I mean, rightfully so, but it's still very expensive.

Melanie: But for her, like she is a hard worker. She has put in the time and hours to live on her coach's farm in Saskatchewan, which will help her for her future here. They feed off each other. People with disabilities are hard workers. I think there should be more tracks available for them, not just stock shelves and not just do the simple things, but they can compete. They can be on the world stage, but being a groom is hard work.

Jacobsen: Would you like to be on the Paralympic team ever?

Lauren: Yes, that'd be quite fun.

Jacobsen: [Laughing] Very fun!

Melanie: [Laughing] Well, like I said, even we were hoping that VIRTUS World Sports would have something. Because there, she could have been on the international stage. It would have been a lot. It would have been more of her speed, but, as we said, she can do the able-bodied with a few adaptations. So, yes, when we get to the higher levels, then we'll see. But I mean, the sky's the limit. I'm proud of her, extremely proud of her. She's worked hard.

Jacobsen: What would you have words for her about seeing her growth?

Melanie: Words for her? I'm just plump and proud. I have set stuff up for her. She has never let me down. She has worked hard. She gets up at whatever time we need to get up. She's there. You give her a pink pitchfork. She's happy to care for both ends of the horses, as my dad always told me. So, I'm proud. I'm very proud of her. She's had a hard way through school. She's come out of it on top. I'm going to start crying because I'm just... [Crying] Yeah, it's been a long haul.

Jacobsen: Would you have any words for your mom that come to mind?

Melanie: [Laughing] We're an emotional bunch of people.

Lauren: [Crying] I think 'helpful'... 'amazing'....

Melanie: 'Supportive'?

Lauren: Yeah.

Melanie: I'm usually her thesaurus. I know what she's thinking. I think the tears say it all. So, yeah.

Jacobsen: Thank you both very much for your time.

Melanie: Thank you for bringing this to light. Like I said, I'm always ready to put this on people's minds.

Jacobsen: Yeah, and part of this is a call to action, I think.

Melanie: Absolutely.

Miriam Alden on Brunette the Label and Horse Girl Aesthetic

***Miriam Alden** is the Founder, CEO, and Creative Director of Brunette the Label and the Founder & CEO of Brunette Showroom. She's a fashion industry entrepreneur with a focus on equine fashion. Recently, she was featured in a Vancouver Sun article entitled "Equestrian style: The enduring allure of the 'horse girl' esthetic," which made a bit of a splash in the local horse community with Vanity Fair declaring 2022 the Year of the Horse Girl. Here, she talks about her experience and growth as a person and a fashion entrepreneur.*

Scott Douglas Jacobsen: Today, we are here with my first equestrian fashion brand interview, Miriam Alden of Brunette the Label. How did you get involved in fashion? Did this start with Janis (Alden) in any way?

Miriam Alden: It started when a girl walked past me in a t-shirt about 20 years after my friends and I made it in high school. There was a football team in my high school. We made t-shirts to support the team. I saw a girl wearing one. It was about 20 years later. I realized that the t-shirt I made in grade 10 or 11 had continued for 20 years. I think that was probably the beginning. But really, the reality of it is that I honestly wanted to be a competitive equestrian. It was the goal. I wanted to do it. I worked at a farm mucking stalls from 9 years old to help subsidize the costs because it wasn't affordable for my family. I worked to do it, and towards it, my whole life. Until about 20, I realized. It wasn't something I wanted to do. I fell out of love with the idea of that as my career. I still had a love of the animal. At that point, I decided it wasn't the direction I wanted to go into.

I took a break for a while. I hung out. I retired my horse that I loved so much. It was either sell her so that I could buy something else to continue or keep her and retire – take a break. Because I couldn't find another horse. I decided to keep her. I kept her until she was shy of 26. She died the day before her 26th birthday. I was 30. We were four years apart. I took a break for probably ten years from riding and about 4 or 5 years working and finding my next direction. I always wanted to work in fashion. I didn't know exactly where I wanted to go. I went to business school at BCIT. It was a business and marketing program. I talked about why I wanted to work in fashion. They suggested that I don't work in fashion because, typically, it is a low-paying industry. My dad wanted me to sell airplanes. There were so many different things.

I was in BCIT and did a practicum at a radio station because I wanted to get into media. Ultimately, my instinct of wanting to work in fashion didn't go away for me. That has driven almost every decision I have made in business today. I ended up going and applying for a sales job at a showroom. What is kind of cool is that while I was in school and before that, I did modelling. I made these modelling appointments for working with retailers. I loved the business side of fashion. I was thinking about everything I could do that would be successful for those stores. I wanted to do fashion. I wasn't quite sure, but kind of everything. I did fashion writing. I used to have a column in local magazines. I did styling for magazines as well as for people. I did writing, fashion styling, and wholesale. After school, I got a job in a showroom.

I worked for about a year there. They brought me up and then laid me off. I worked at a barn to return to the sales job when they needed me again. Then, I started from the bottom. I loved business fashion. I loved the idea that we could grow with our customers and help them be successful. I always believed there was room for everybody. There is this collaborative thing. I worked for somebody for five years. I travelled. It was full circle.

When I moved back here from the US, one of my riding trainers was a woman named Sandy, who ended up being the sales manager for the brand that I got hired for. So, she already had a vested interest in me and helped me learn a lot about the manufacturing side of business. She'd bring me to all the trade shows. It's funny. She is at the tail end of working in the industry. It is cool. It is a bit of a full-circle moment for both of us. She helps me. She came on when I came back from maternity leave to get the business restructured. It's been cool. I've been there for five years. I decided to start my own business. I asked my boss if they wanted to partner with me. I didn't have any money to offer. I don't know why he would want to say, "Yes."

So, he ultimately decided that it wasn't the right choice – they had a family business going on for 50 years. What they did do was let me start my business there while I was training my replacement; for about six months, I stayed training my replacement and started my own business on the side. I didn't have anything to start it; I didn't have any business starting a business. Other than the fact that I was passionate about it. I was lucky to be able to continue working there. It was nice of them to let me do that. On October 1st, 2009, I left and started Brunette Showroom, my first business. I had Brunette Showroom. It started with no name brands. I started selling pashminas out of my car and started all of these other side hustles to help me self-fund the business.

Ultimately, I got hired with my first big brand after about a year. I grew from there. It became one of the biggest Western Canadian showrooms there. We carried all sorts of brands like Quiksilver Women. We grew that for five years. Then, after about five years, I decided I wanted to build a brand around my showroom. This was before inclusivity was a topic of conversation in the fashion business. We started hosting media events talking about the brand value of the business. It was where "Babes Supporting Babes" started. We made a sweatshirt for the media events: "Brunette is the new black."

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Alden: One of my retailers, my business, was Brunette the Showroom because my name is not easy. It was a tagline for the showroom. It was about new beginnings as a company. One of my retailers said they could sell that. So, I made 12 sweatshirts, then 24 sweatshirts, then 48 sweatshirts. Then, it was a slow and steady growth. It will be ten years for Brunette the Label in February (2024). We are in our 14th year and are heading into the 15th next year.

Jacobsen: Congratulations!

Alden: Thank you.

Jacobsen: This all started with cleaning stalls, as you noted at the start of the narrative.

Alden: Yes, I was cleaning stalls at 9.

Jacobsen: I see this with many moms at the current barn. When I interviewed Lynne Foster, she also noted the same about her two daughters. They had to work.

Alden: Yes, Tiff and I worked together.

Jacobsen: How did that relationship develop, the barn and Tiff?

Alden: She was a couple of years younger than me. Tiff and I began riding in North Vancouver. Then, I went to a different barn. She started to work for Thunderbird. Our parents would alter-

nate days for driving to the barns. Both of us were in the same situation. It wasn't super affordable for us, our parents, to ride. So, we both had to work to be able to do it. We are both still very close now, working very hard.

Jacobsen: How have you seen her trajectory into the #1 show jumper (in the country)? How did that help build a relationship? The one from their personal lives into one more professional, with Brunette the Label being part of her brand of herself.

Alden: It's not totally. Honestly, we're just really good friends and support each other. We're both working hard to build our dreams parallel together. They're not cohesive businesses.

Jacobsen: How do you gauge the interests of style and aesthetic of your audience and your target market, and then develop the series of clothes for them?

Alden: We do collections four times per year. I just finished designing Fall/Winter '24. I learned over time that I have to believe in what I am making, or it doesn't work. My brand was the lifestyle of "Babes supporting Babes." It is a community. A lot of people support the brand and live the lifestyle. Then, as we grew, the brand grew into a fashion brand. We have launched into new categories like knitwear and outerwear. Sometimes, some things don't hit initially because they are new to the brand. But it is something I genuinely believe in. My brand is horse aesthetic, but it is also clothing for everyone. My goal is to be a clothing brand that makes people feel good.

When you go in, there are extra smalls and XXL. It is meant to be a brand that is wearable by everybody. Whether you love fashion or want something cute to wear, it is what I am trying to develop. It combines my and my brand aesthetic, and means a lot to me.

Jacobsen: What is the horse girl aesthetic?

Alden: 2022 was the year of the horse girl aesthetic. My brand has always carried a lot of equestrian elements to it. I ride in our clothes. Many of our people who support Brunette the Label the most are horse people. We use it in graphics. I use horses in a lot of my inspiration. The country lifestyle, especially in the current collection, is about knitwear. You can wear it. It's cozy. It has a country vibe and is cozy, comfy, and wearable clothing.

Jacobsen: How are the growth patterns for a fashion business with a niche set forth with a horse-girl aesthetic? Even though, it is for everyone. How do you get through the more emotionally difficult moments?

Alden: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: As with any business, input for income may not be as high as the output. So, you have to ride that low wave while waiting for the next round of income generation.

Alden: It is really difficult. Being an entrepreneur is difficult; I am probably working 18 hours daily. Covid was an interesting time. It gave everybody a shift in their business structure, especially for us at the fashion level. Our manufacturing factories closed. We had to come back and do things quite different. Being an entrepreneur is not for the faint of heart, it is hard. It takes a lot of work and a lot of sacrifice. Believing in yourself and knowing you are in the right direction is important, I think the only way out is through. It is knowing that you are doing what you are supposed to be doing. Everything has ups and downs in every business. It is more seasonal. When there are changes, when you make changes, there are always hard times. You can take the good with the bad and have to believe in what you're doing. You have to work hard. Sometimes, that is not enough. For me, I find that I just need to keep going.

Jacobsen: What are your moments of oases?

Alden: When I am with my son, I can be present. My favourite thing is to sit in my house when it is black and dark outside in the morning and have coffee by the fire. When I am on my horses and with my family, I think you have to surround yourself with people who love you. That is when I feel my best.

Jacobsen: How do you balance having a family life – husband and child – with this hectic work schedule, especially over the last three months?

Alden: I'm not even sure if there is anything such as a balance. I am still trying to find it. I think, by nature, I am a "Yes" person. I don't protect my time and energy as much as I should, ensuring I schedule time with my family. I don't know if there is a balance. I will try to find out if there is. You can't do everything. But I try to do everything. You pick your battles. Being with my son and my family is the most important thing. Figuring out how I do that and be there for him is hard.

Jacobsen: For successful businesswomen, are supportive partners an important facet of keeping that engine going?

Alden: If you are lucky enough to have a partner, it would be impossible if you didn't have a supportive partner. Both my husband and I are entrepreneurs. We carry each other's weight when we need it. I think you need support in your life if you are an entrepreneur. It is like any job. No matter your situation. It would be very difficult if you didn't have a supportive partner. Luckily, I do. I think that I am grateful for that.

Jacobsen: How about your kid?

Alden: What about him?

Jacobsen: How do you find having a child with all this business in your life?

Alden: It is the best thing in the world. It makes everything worth it. Honestly, it makes everything feel a little less important. When it gets stressful, I have a healthy, beautiful boy. I am so happy.

Jacobsen: How do you find being a horse girl and having the horses amidst all this?

Alden: For me, nowhere else in the world makes me feel more like myself than I do when I am with my horses. I am the same girl as when I was nine years old. I am still in love with them. I am still so lucky. Not everybody gets to find a passion in their life. I found one. I get to go to one place. The one place in the world where, if I go, I don't think about anything else. When I get on the horse, it is like meditation. I get to be so present. There isn't much time that I get for myself. I get to be with my horses, be present, be aware of only that. When I leave, I feel recharged.

Jacobsen: Do you find yourself leaning more toward books in those quiet moments with a coffee and your family? Or do you find yourself more as someone who flips on the television for a show?

Alden: I am a book girl. I like to watch a Netflix show before bed. But I love reading. In the morning, I'm not a TV person. The TV is not on in our house. We are not a TV family. I love reading.

Jacobsen: What was the last book you read, the last show you watched before bed?

Alden: I just finished the David Beckham documentary. It is so good. Then, I love subtitled shows because I focus on them. The last book I finished was *Lessons in Chemistry*. I am reading the book *I'll Drink to That Right Now*, which is about a New York personal shopper.

Jacobsen: [Laughing].

Alden: [Laughing].

Jacobsen: Where do you think this intense motivation for fashion comes from – not necessarily the focus on fashion? That story was told at the outset, but really, that drive. Where does that source itself?

Alden: It comes from riding. If a horse girl applies for a job, she'll almost be guaranteed to get it. We are built. We have always had to be responsible. When I was younger, there was no going on family holidays when I had horses. We always had to show up. We always have to be responsible for a living being. Riding is super hard. No matter who you are, you can have so much in the whole world, but you can go into the ring... you have to work really, really hard. It doesn't even mean that it will be successful. Every day, we become very resilient. You keep showing up. You have a super work ethic. Just because you have found someone passionate doesn't mean you are good at it. You have to work super, super hard for it. I had to work at so many things about something I love and am passionate about. To be there, it is cohesive in some periods as an entrepreneur.

Jacobsen: What would you consider your motto?

Alden: Babes supporting babes.

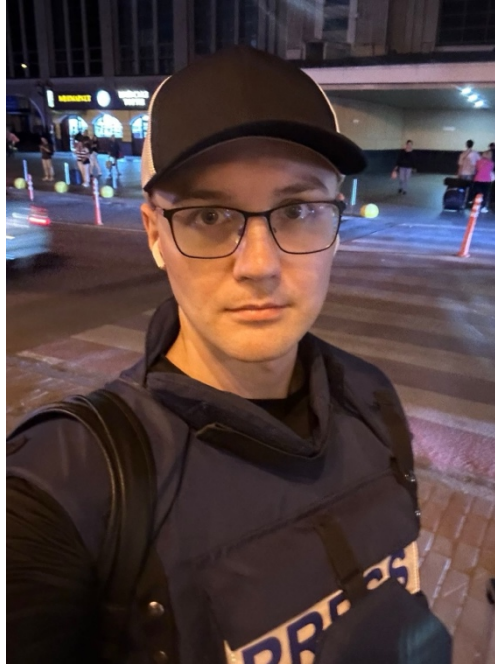
Jacobsen: [Laughing] That was a softball. For young girls who might stumble upon this interview who are horse girls, what would you give as some words for them? It doesn't have to be a warning. It doesn't necessarily have to be advice or something pollyannish – just words for them.

Alden: Something, for sure, which I am trying to follow now. If it is not an absolute "Yes," it is a "No." Your body and instincts mostly know. Our intuition is our superpower. If you feel something is right, not emotionally or physically, you just feel it in your bones, then it's probably right. Things that are authentic work and authentic things are way more challenging because the world works like that. If you are doing something you are meant to do, doors open for you. But you need to work hard while doing it. It cannot be, "I want to do this." Every overnight success is ten years in the making. It takes a lot of work to get you where you want to go within reason – coming from a privileged place. I know my privilege. I know how lucky I am to have everything I have. I am very privileged. There is a tightrope. You just need to keep going.

Jacobsen: Miriam, despite the hectic schedule you've been going through over the last months, I appreciate taking a little time to be the first equestrian fashion interview.

Alden: You're welcome, Scott. I'll probably see you tomorrow.

Author Biography



Scott Douglas Jacobsen is the publisher of [In-Sight Publishing](#) (ISBN: 978-1-0692343) and Editor-in-Chief of *[In-Sight: Interviews](#)* (ISSN: 2369-6885). He writes for *[The Good Men Project](#)*, *[The Humanist](#)*, *[International Policy Digest](#)* (ISSN: 2332-9416), *[Basic Income Earth Network](#)* (UK Registered Charity 1177066), *[A Free Inquiry](#)*, and other media. He is a member in good standing of numerous media organizations.