

NWDA

Nov 2022

Accent

NWDA Board Member Claudia Schoendorf shares her story of the healing journey she patiently walked with her horse, Sammie.



A Tale of Horse Healing

By Claudia Schoendorf

April 18, 2022 I received the call no horse owner ever wants to get. Dave called from the barn and said that Sammie was limping badly and there was a large contusion on her left hind leg. He thought the vet should come to look at her. Dr. Dan Bloomquist arrived that evening and took xrays and called me to say that he didn't think the leg was broken, but xrays were processed. *Broken, I thought, with despair running through my mind.* I arrived at the barn that evening after everyone had left, with a plan on icing her leg to keep the swelling down. I iced her leg every two hours through the night, thank goodness for a heated lounge and barn. Dr. Dan called me in the morning to say that the outside splint bone on her left hind leg was fractured and displaced to the inside, pressing on the suspensory ligament. He said he could meet me there to discuss some treatment options.



Some equine anatomy: there are two splint bones in each leg. The head of the splint bone attaches to the knee in forelegs and the hock in hind legs. The suspensory ligament attaches to the proximal (top) back side of the cannon bone, it is nestled between the natural groove created by the splint

Table of Contents

A Tale of Horse Healing	1
A Venture into Classical Riding	2
Meet the Board	4
Membership & Awards Information	6
New 2023 Dressage Tests	7
The President's Message	7

bones. The splint bone is non-weight bearing bone and is not as long as the main weight bearing cannon bone. *An interesting bit of history:* horses' splint bones actually date back to the ancient days when horses had five toes. The evolutionary process eventually narrowed that down to one toe, the hoof as we see today, with the other toes shortening or disappearing to the splint bones shown in the illustration.

Dr. Dan arrived, and we discussed some possible treatment options for Sammie. We thought taking her down to the University of Minnesota in St Paul for an exam and

A Tale of Horse Healing, continued on page 5

All King Victor Emmanuel's School Horses Can Make Really Beautiful People Fall



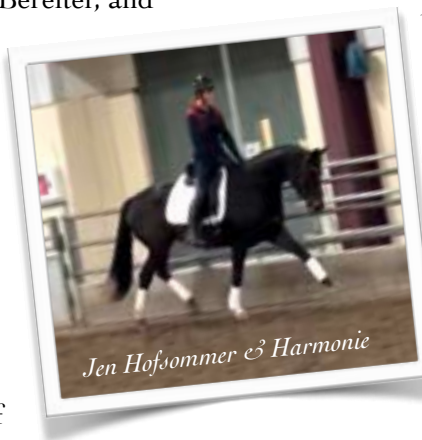
A Venture into Classical Riding

By Jen Hofsommer

Dr Gerd Heuschmann came to the Leatherdale Equine Center for a symposium on October 14-16th, 2022. Heuschmann is a well-known German veterinarian, Master Bereiter, and author. He has written several books, including *The Balancing Act*, a well-illustrated book outlining many of his training principles.

He has been the center of some controversy as he spoke out against rollkur years ago when he worked as an official vet for international dressage events. He is always a voice of empathy and concern for the welfare of the horse, and is unapologetic in his criticisms of some aspects of competition.

Dr. Heuschmann also is a connoisseur of classical riding master literature. He refers to Steinbrecht's *Classical Riding* quite often and has many other favorite authors who are also classical dressage masters of the last century



discussed what he liked to see in rider position, such as lower leg ON the horse, *hugging* gently all the time with looser thighs and inviting seat position. He does not like to see riders who are sitting behind the vertical with a demanding or *loud* driving seat, especially on youngsters or lower-level horses.

Dr. Heuschmann said that horses that have tight backs go into flight mode with protective tension because that is their natural instinct. Over time this can cause much damage to the horse's back, neck, hocks, and stifles.

He discussed the principle he repeated many times over the weekend, which was *NEVER bend the neck more than the trunk (of the horse's body)!*

He emphasized straightness *like a ruler* should be worked on prior to bending, and in fact suggested that most horses should not be bent in their first year under saddle. In the canter, says Dr. Heuschmann, horses move more uphill when they are truly straight. He suggested straightening by use of the outside rein and also would have riders add inside leg if their horse was counter bent or leaning in in response to straightening aids.

Dr. Heuschmann discussed the *Podhajsky jog* for warming up horses—a slow jog on a long rein to bring the horse's back up with an inviting seat. This concept is described in one of Col. Podhajsky's books. Dr. Heuschmann is also a proponent of the use of two point to stay off your young horse's back, and insists that galloping forward in two point with no rein contact (*on the buckle*) is an important part of

“ The horse is a reflection of the rider. ”

such as Udo Burger and Colonel Alois Podhajsky.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to take a lesson from Dr. Heuschmann on Friday, and was a demo rider for both Saturday and Sunday as well. We started off Friday with limited auditors, but lots of discussion. He

Classical Riding, continued on page 3

Classical Riding, from page 2

building back muscle and proprioception in young horses. He was not a fan that dressage riders can often be scared to gallop outside in a field with their horses. He encourages bravery and said bluntly *if you don't feel comfortable riding out on a long rein, you need to learn how to ride.*

He insisted multiple times that you need to have strength of character to properly work with horses. You need patience so you do not force,

“ Ride to the loose,
give to the heavy. ”

self-control so you do not become angry at the horse, and a small enough ego to make mistakes in front of others without it affecting how you train or treat your horse.

These words were good for me to hear as I took a 5 year old hot Trakehner/Hanoverian mare into a big arena atmosphere with 90 auditors on Saturday. Harmonie is so sensitive that if I was concerned about looking like a fool in front of others, she would most certainly feel my nervousness and make that happen. At one point over the weekend, I started negative self-talking in my mind, and she immediately got tighter and spookier. I felt inept at something we were doing, and started to feel stressed that I was *doing it all wrong*. However, Gerd's words came back to me about ego, and I changed my thoughts into more positive ones, focusing solely on my partnership with Harmonie. I honestly could feel her coming back to me mentally and gaining bravery. I couldn't even hear what Dr. Heuschmann or the auditors were saying, because I was so at one with my horse. I couldn't think about anything else for that time. We were in the *Podhajsky jog* and it was impressive to me how much control I had with the slightest movement of my seat. I know for a fact I have never felt that level of harmony before. It was amazing, and now I am slightly obsessed with feeling it again.

We listened to almost eight hours of lecture with Dr. Heuschmann and his *German English*

over the weekend — it wasn't enough to cover the material! It is difficult to summarize all this in one short article, but suffice it to say that he had a lot of research and anatomy-based findings to back up classical quotes from many older books. There were many interesting illustrations and videos to show specifically how the rider effects the horse's anatomy in movement. Dr. Heuschmann is strongly and unapologetically an advocate always for the horse's welfare. He discussed that many lameness or back issues are rider caused. He discussed the HDV12, which is a military handbook for riding written back in 1912 with many interesting points in the few sections he shared.

Dr. Heuschmann wants every rider to think of their horse first and competing or training second. I sat and discussed this with him Sunday morning. He told me, “Jen, you are riding a lovely mare that of course you want to show off. But don't make it an every weekend priority or you will not prioritize the proper things like suppleness, swing of

the back, and elastic connection. You will have to make it look good for the show ring which is fine every once in a while, but not too often. If you are riding for the show ring instead of riding for the partnership the horse will suffer.”

These words did hit home with me, as I have been trying to decide how much I should get this mare out to shows. I will feel great about getting out to shows when I feel like we are ready, but I also know now that my priority will be having amazing moments of harmony at home, quietly, with my dance partner.

Riding, as Dr. Heuschmann put it, is not a sport. *It is an art.*



**Special thanks to Regional Pony Club
members Eliese Klennert and Linda Scott
for bringing Dr. Heuschmann to our area!**

Dee Closson & Zebby

My name is Dee Closson and I am the Membership Chair for NWDA.

I grew up with horses. My first horse show was when I was 6 years old with my little Quarter Horse mare, Poco Reno. From there I showed Arabians at breed shows from Utah to Kentucky to Canada. Ladies Sidesaddle was my favorite class where I placed 7th at the Canadian Nationals.

The past 20 years I have been riding dressage. *I'm addicted!* My current partner is D.E. Zebaron (*aka Zebby*). I've owned him since he was 6 months old, he's now 8. We'll be making the move to 2nd Level in 2023.

To help offset the costs of show fees and hay, I craft and sell leather products. I've been around



LEFT
Tooled leather
clasp and
straps on two
purses.



RIGHT
A tooled leather
journal cover.

ABOVE NWDA Board Member Dee Closson creates beautiful leather work under the name *Up North Leather Craft*.

leather working my whole life — my dad made the sidesaddle that I showed in for years and my mom tooled the leather on it. My dad also made beautiful landscape scenes tooled in leather.

I like to tool flowers, scrolls, birds and leaves on my journals, wallets, purses, backpacks and ornaments. We live off the power grid so all of my work is done by hand. I buy whole hides, cut them down to the size I need, then tool, paint and sew the leather all by hand. No machines are used.

This is what I do during the long, dark Minnesota winters.

I was born in Wyoming, raised in Colorado and lived in Montana before moving to Minnesota where I now live with my hubby Dave. We live off the grid in very remote Northeast Minnesota. Canada is my backyard and my closest human neighbor is 9 miles away. Dave and I live with two horses — *Zebby* and *Texas*, two dogs — *Roscoe* and *Vayda*, and a cat named *Magoo*.

Life is good!

2023 NWDA SHOW DATES

SCHOOLING SHOWS

June 10-11, 2023

August 5-6, 2023

RECOGNIZED SHOWS

June 24-25, 2023

July 22-23, 2023

A Tale of Horse Healing, from page 1

possible surgery was the best option. Brittany Davis immediately volunteered to go with me using her truck and trailer, saying that it would give Sammie a better ride than my trailer. *Thank goodness for compassionate friends!*

We arrived at the U that evening and got Sam settled into a stall. We had an appointment to see Dr. Nickolas Ernst in the morning. Dr. Ernst had reviewed the xrays that Dr. Dan sent, but thought he could get a better picture of treatment options with a CT scan, as it gives a much more detailed picture. He said U of MN has one of three large animal CT scanners in the country. The CT scan clearly showed the fracture and the displacement to the inside. He also said that he thought there were microfractures of the splint bone, and was concerned that if he did the surgery that day, he would not know if there were microfractures and she could blow them out, when she tried to stand after the surgery. He said that if we waited 2 to 3 weeks, he could see calcification on them.

We discussed that Sam was in good health and very fit, but she was 19, so her age also complicated things. He said that if we did the surgery she would require 4-6 months of stall rest. UGH!!

So we brought her home, with strict orders to keep a tight standing bandage on, and for her not to leave her stall, even to do hand grazing. Britt was great, she wrote up a chart and attached it to her stall, so that the barn staff could initial each feeding for Sam's medication and everyone would be on the same page.

May 17th, we went back to the U for surgery. The surgery was a complete success. Dr. Ernst removed the top two inches of the bottom splint bone fragment, relieving the pressure on the suspensory ligament, and she stood up without complications after the surgery! Part of the reason for the long stall rest, was to give the other fragments time to fuse in place.

I had been going to the barn often to do massage on her, some hand grazing and lots of

brushing to get her out of her stall for a little bit. June 8th, we started hand walking for 20 minutes. Dr. Ernst said I could ride at the walk if she will allow it, so we started to ride at the walk for 20 minutes. I can tell you its kind of scary to get on a horse that has been in a stall for 7 weeks, *but she was fine!!* She was just so glad to be out and about.

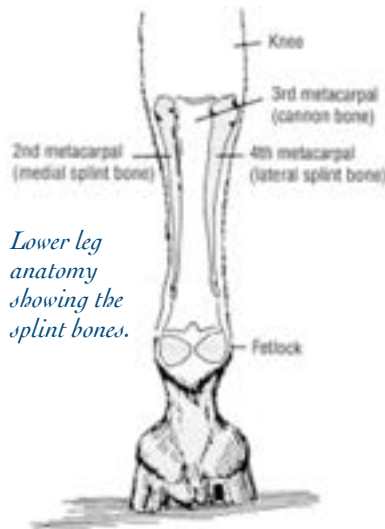
Dave built an outdoor pen for her next to the pony's pen. We would go up there and she would eat some hay and I played solitaire on my phone for an hour. I couldn't leave her alone or she would buck in place! July 8th Dr. Dan came back to do new x rays and emailed them down to Dr. Ernst, to see how she was healing.

This was also a milestone, as we were cleared to ride as much as we wanted at the walk and could add in 5 minutes of trot. We also could increase the trot by 5 minutes at two-week intervals. I would start my stopwatch and GO! Dr. Dan and I discussed how great her attitude was about the confinement, she didn't try to tear the barn down, or even

get very pushy. She just accepted that this was her life now. She has now been in her stall or 1 hour in the pen per day for 3 months. Ugh. The summer continues, I am just happy that I have a healthy horse, and so glad to be able to ride at all. Sam & I got closer to each other during this time.

August 18th Dr. Dan came back for another recheck xray and emailed it down to Dr. Ernst. They agreed she is healing wonderfully, and I'm cleared to *canter! Woo Hoo!* We continued with the stopwatch rides, as I'm allowed 5 minutes of canter only, but I have my horse back!

Sam thinks the best part of this story happened on September 30th, the day she went out in a large paddock with a herd of mares. She couldn't believe all the room—and new friends too! She was finally allowed to *RUN!*



Lower leg anatomy showing the splint bones.

It's Time for Membership & Awards

Application and membership forms are in the NWDA Omnibus Forms Section.

**NWDA 2022 Awards applications
are due by November 30th.**

Send or email your awards application to:

Jen Hovde
PO Box 325
Esko, MN 55733
mackie_k_shadow@hotmail.com



**Year end nominations are also
due on November 30th.**

Nominate an NWDA member for:

*School Horse Hall of Fame
Good Sportsmanship Award
Club Recognition
Volunteer of the Year Award*

**Do you know someone who went out of the way to help or teach you,
or to promote NWDA? Thank them with a nomination for an award.**

Send your nominations to:

Jen Hovde
Mackie_k_shadow@hotmail.com

OR

Kathi Marshall
Mychala2@aol.com

NWDA Membership is due by November 30, 2022!

Membership is \$45 by Nov 30th, then \$55 after Dec 1st

*A membership includes the NWDA newsletter, the annual Omnibus, 1 USDF associate membership,
USDF Connection magazine, & reduced fees to participate in NWDA sponsored activities.*

Each member may be eligible for NWDA year end awards!

Send Memberships to:

Dee Closson PO Box 261 Hovland, MN 55606

You can also join NWDA quickly and easily on our NWDA website:

northwoodsdressage.net

New 2023 Dressage Tests

By Claudia Schoendorf

Every 4 years USDF revises and modifies their dressage tests. The new tests are effective 12/1/22 to 11/30/26. The tests are designed to systematically teach and train your horse at each stage in its development. There is a committee of test writers that review and revise the tests to make sure all the movements within each test are appropriate for a horse and rider at that level, making sure there is no ambiguity and the test flows smoothly.

Visit the USDF site for the official test sheets. You can find them at www.usdf.org. They are free to download and print. For FEI tests, such as Prix St Georges, Intermediate, and Grand Prix go to www.fei.org to download and print.

Western Dressage tests can be located at the Western Dressage Association of America website. Go to westerndressageassociation.org for Basic Level to Fifth Level.

I like to memorize the dressage test from a diagram, rather than from a call sheet. I find

that by diagramming the test side-by-side with the movement description, it helps me memorize the test better. I hope it helps you too. You can find the new dressage test diagrams at mayidesign.com/dressagetests. The site states that they are free for personal use. She has diagrams for Intro through Fourth Level.

Videos are also a great way to learn how to ride the movements. AmeliaNewcomb.com has videos on how to ride 2023 Training Level 3 on YouTube with more to come soon.

There will be a 2023 USEF/USDF Dressage Test Symposium with Lilo Fore on Sat Jan 21, 2023 by the California Dressage Society. You may be able to find it on the web. They had it posted when they did one for 2019. Watch the USDF website as they will post videos there as well.

Search around. There are lots of resources from the comfort of your living room couch!

Let the Horse be With You!!



The President's Message

NWDA exists to develop and encourage an interest in dressage, combined training, and all related English style horse activities; to improve communication among interested people; to provide recreational activities to its membership; and to encourage other individuals or groups to provide educational and recreational activities to the area.

Join us!
Kathi Kusch Marshall



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