

# *Craig Cameron*

## **Double Horn Ranch—The Making of Great Horses & Horsemen**

### **LEARNING TO LEARN**

Learning is the response from a demand to grow or do something that you have never done before. Horsemanship, like life, is an unending journey of learning for both horse and rider. No person comes into the world knowing horsemanship. By the same token, no horse comes into the world knowing what the human is asking of him. In the art of horsemanship, the student is not only the horse but also the human. In this article the word 'student' will be applied to both entities.

In most cases, the human is the one who steps into the horse's life. It is the human who is asking something of the horse. And the horse is only asking for a fair deal. With most occupations in life, a license or diploma is required. Doctors, lawyers, plumbers, accountants, electricians and other disciplines demand years of education and money to receive a degree or diploma. Only with this achievement does one have the authority to practice a trade. Unfortunately for the horse, there is no requirement of a license or education to ride or even purchase this amazing animal. I think most of us would agree that the majority of people who own or ride horses know little or nothing about the horse. The human is the one who must make the conscientious effort to become educated in the art of equine. Each person must put his ego aside, be truthful and seek out whatever it takes to learn horsemanship.

It has been my experience that the majority of humans who are starting out in horsemanship believe that the endeavor will be simple. To these people, horsemanship is 'kick it to go, pull it to stop' and 'why won't it do what I told it to do?' Truly, my favorite comment by novice horseman, (which they usually say in frustration), is "This horse has a mind of its own!" I always respond "Whose mind did you think he was going to have!?" In my opinion, the slowest and hardest way to learn horsemanship is to try and teach oneself.

Learning how to ride without instruction is like trying to cook an intricate meal without any recipe. I am often asked, "where do I start?" To this I reply, "The beginning would be nice!" Years ago, as a young horseman, I found information difficult to obtain and experienced horsemen close mouthed about their techniques. Most old horse masters got their knowledge through the school of hard knocks and they figured you ought to get it that way as well. Fortunately for horse people today, there is an abundance of readily available information through magazines, books, videos, clinics, instructors, and expositions. Conscientious horse people of today, whether beginner, intermediate, or advanced, are helping themselves by attending one of the many educational opportunities offered throughout the country.

To be great in anything, I think you must do it every day. If you cannot do it, you must think about it, visualize it, or read about it. With a little investigation, one can find out who the better horseman are in your area. Start with lessons and surround yourself with the world of horses. One thing will lead to another. You will meet new people and make new friends who have the same interest in horses. These are the seeds you plant and you nurture then with knowledge.

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Horsemanship is a physical, mental, and emotional endeavor for both man and horse. Horsemanship is always a work in progress. I must warn you that it is hard work but if you love horses, it will be the most rewarding work you ever do. Learning is expounding, compounding, and mathematical. The more you learn, the more fun horsemanship becomes. Like anything worthwhile, the learning process can be frustrating. Do not let frustration get the better of you. With desire, determination, and dedication, anything will get better. As you hone your equine skills, it becomes easier for the horse to understand what you want and don't want. Remember that the horse seeks the level of the rider. Be patient and do not forget that your equine friend is learning as well. The horse, just like you, will have good days and bad days. This is part of the learning process.

Remember, as students of the horse, not only are we learning but we are also teaching. The horse is always learning something from us. Whether that something is good or bad will be up to you. To be a good teacher, you must first be a good student. When it comes to horses and horsemanship, the horse may be the best teacher. Don't forget to let the horse teach you as much as you teach him. Remember, teaching is the art of communication and communication requires TWO minds listening and TWO minds open- yours and the horses.

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