

OrthoHorse© Newsletter

Newsletter about Ortho-Bionomy® - bodywork & related topics for equines and humans
Issue 6

November/December 2011



About the Herd

When we observe horse behavior in a herd or even in a paddock, we can see them interact using voice, gesture, eye contact, and movement -- the language of horses.

My ongoing study of Ortho-Bionomy has spanned the actual techniques, anatomy and physiology, as well as the energetic component for both people and horses -- a study with which I expect to fill the rest of my life. The energetic component is vital in all interactions, most apparently with horses. Ortho-Bionomy is bodywork, not horse training; however, studying horse language helps to further my knowledge and create a true energetic connection with horses -- and helps others do the same.

As I say in each issue, for those not yet familiar with Ortho-Bionomy®, it is a form of bodywork based on structure derived from osteopathy, that works with and relies on the body's self corrective capacity. It is not a replacement for veterinary or medical care, but can complement it.

My videos will give you a glimpse of what demos look like. See videos by searching for OrthoHorse® on YouTube or go to my website – www.orthohorse.info

If you are interested you can subscribe to receive notices when one has been posted.

This month features a story about my trip to Holland and visit with Monique Ros, instructor of the Carolyn Resnick Method®, and a short bit about Mirroring.

MY VISIT TO MONIQUE ROS

Heading to Apeldoorn on the train, the fog is so thick that I can't really see the fields. The fog is a presence in my photos and casts a gentle blur over horses, people and fields. November in rural Holland means bitter cold, overcast skies and mist.

How did I get here? A work trip had taken me to Amsterdam for a few days. I merely added an extra day to my stay in order to connect up with Monique Ros, an instructor of the Carolyn Resnick Method™ of Liberty Training Horsemanship.

The Carolyn Resnick Method™ is a philosophy of horse training based on using the horse's natural instincts. By respecting and working with a horse's natural tendencies you can shape his behaviour to become a true partner who is enthusiastic about his work. When a horse experiences great self esteem, superior performance can be achieved.

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I took off on the train to Apeldoorn, where Monique would pick me up. After a few anxious minutes of not being able to find each other, we did get together, embraced and immediately began talking -- and continued doing so, in her warm little car, all the way to her farm in Emst. We talked about our experiences with Carolyn Resnick and about health, bodywork (Ortho) and natural ways to keep horses. At her home, her colleague and friend Bjorn Rhebergen -- who happens to be field instructor for the Association for the Advancement of Natural Horse Care Practices and Paddock Paradise consultant

-- talked about the importance of creating an environment that would allow horses to live in their natural state. Bjorn showed a blueprint of how he planned to build a "Paddock Paradise" for Monique's herd on her three acres. This work is based upon scientific studies of horses done in the U.S. Great Basin. (see links to this exciting work in the Links section)

Monique found Carolyn Resnick's Method while searching for a direction in her life, something to study, and someone to guide her studying. Carolyn. Monique told Carolyn she must study with her. At that point Carolyn wasn't taking any students. But Monique would not be dissuaded; she knew she was on the right path and persisted. She first went to the U.S. for one week of study, then Carolyn felt she should stay longer, and so she stayed for four weeks of study -- which does make sense when you are travelling all the way from Holland!

Monique is now an instructor of the Carolyn Resnick Method and uses it with the 19 horses on her place, many of them rescues from area farms. Additionally, she also owns and operates her own gym business, which fills whatever free time she has left when she is not putting on clinics and working with the horses. Monique and I went out to "say hello" to her horses. With each horse Monique and I would come around the side in a wide arc, speaking to them, coming in then closer, extending our hand to let them sniff it, then walk away. We are just saying hello, not asking for anything.

You have probably seen this happen between horses getting to know each other countless times: They don't stay there and hang out; they don't stroke the new horse on the nose -- they touch and then just walk away. You are entering their territory, which becomes

immediately apparent when going into a pasture where they have everything they need. The "saying hello" ritual is one of a number of "Waterhole Rituals" that are the cornerstone of Carolyn Resnick's work, developed as a result of Carolyn's observations of horses in the wild; her observations of how they interact are the driving force behind this work and are what make it so effective as a fundamental training tool.

We did not let the bitter cold deter us. Monique is definitely the hardier one, being accustomed to the cold, sunless winters of Holland. She selected a young stallion to work with, whom she said had been thought to look like a donkey when he first came to her. She said he would be a king and named him aptly - Celeborn. She took her time to halter him and bring him into a small corral area fenced off by electric fencing, where she proceeded to do the "eye contact" ritual with him. He made it clear he wasn't interested in that ritual, but he wanted to do something else, and showed this by being very frisky and forward.

Monique pointed out to me that working with stallions was particularly important because you always had to assert yourself as the leader, or else you would not be very successful.

It was fascinating to observe how she allowed him to choose the ritual he would do and how he would do it, while still maintaining her boundaries and overall leadership. He would come in for a piece of carrot offered once he had kept a respectful distance from her, walked with her companionably (companion walking ritual) and when she raised her energy to run a little bit, he danced off, bucking and careening around in pure joy. She said, "he's showing himself!" which was totally true - a beautiful stallion with pure and unbridled spirit, happy to be with her.

There was a softening in his eye over the course of the interaction, a real acknowledgement of their relationship and his comfort in it.

He was so happy in fact, that when she opened the electric fence to allow him out with the herd, he hesitated, looked to her, wanted to stay with her. Then with a look toward the others he bounded off, galloping joyfully out to meet them and infusing them with his great thundering enthusiasm.

We ducked inside the house for cups of tea to warm us up and get us ready to meet the cold again. We talked some more, about the energy in different horses, how you raise and lower your energy according to what response you might be looking for in the horse. We ventured back out again and brought in Fleur, a gray mare with a foal at her side. Fleur was gracious about leaving her foal, who was fine playing with others. Fleur is a shy mare, and yet she was agreeable to doing some companion walking with me and coming over to the wheelbarrow for a treat when she had done a good job. At one point, I was trying to get her away from the wheelbarrow to walk with me some more, but she wasn't willing, and I believe my energy wasn't firm enough. I was backing up a bit next to her, then going forward, which confused her. I hadn't been aware that I was doing this to get forward motion, which actually was counterproductive, so it was good to have Monique point that out to me.

"Think of your shoulders and your heart space," Monique told me, demonstrating a strong, shoulders back posture that horses would be more likely to want to follow.

"These rituals are heartfelt rituals, not just things we do. From this we build a heart connection."

After this Fleur would do some more companion walking, but then grew a little anxious about having left her foal and wanted to go back out, which we allowed her to do.

More cups of tea – the day growing deeper, darker, and more foggy. We came out again to the fields and selected a pair of minis – Dopy and Snoesje, who trotted amiably into the enclosure to work. They set about munching on the hay left in the center of the corral and we worked on eye contact with them. Maintaining eye contact can be a prerequisite to many other pieces – once the horse has you in his field of vision, there is a certain level of connection, and sometimes you can turn or summon the horse to you, once they are connected in this way.

The two minis had moments of watching me but Snoesje wanted to go over to the gate towards the end. I had some difficulty with eye contact – my feet felt leaden when it was time to move to the side. I would catch the side Dopy was looking and come back to center, then he would keep turning away from that same side. With this work the leader needs to stay in the moment, be very still inside themselves, and not take offense if the horse decides they are not interested in a given activity. There will be something else. In this case all we were asking was to see if there was engagement in the eye contact ritual. There was and that was as far as we went with it. It was interesting to me that although Snoesje went off to the gate, Dopy stayed with me and the hay.

Before it got dark, we fed the horses. Raking the hay off the big round bales, we piled it into two wheelbarrows and wheeled it out to them, putting small piles around at intervals so they would move around. Coming from the Southwestern

U.S., the green grass that grows naturally in Holland seems like a horse heaven, but in reality it is the cause of problems such as laminitis, insulin resistance and other problems of high sugar pasture diet. By putting out hay in numerous places, the horses need to walk from pile to pile to eat, so they get exercise and stay warm at the same time.

Monique said that her stallions were very much a part of their foals' lives – at a certain age, they would want to be with their fathers and follow them around and learn their ways. Celeborn played with the other two stallions, FullMoon and Stream during feeding time, then galloped off to round up his offspring and one of the other foals and bounded around joyfully. I had never known that the stallions would remain a part of their colts' lives if they were allowed to live wild with them.

In the waning light we finished the feeding and headed back to toward the house. As we were passing through a narrow area from one pasture to the other, the horses galloped over and crowded around us, as though they were including us in their play. They wanted to be close and followed, treating us as though we were part of the herd, but all at once! Monique laughed and reminded them – no, we have two legs instead of four! You could see that strange “astonishment” among the horses where they recognize your non-horsiness. But it was special in that they had wanted us to be part of the herd and play.

There was nothing as wonderful as that moment when being surrounded by the horses, and that funny look in their eyes as they recognized we were moving away, breaking the connection, back to the warm house.

Sometimes I wonder with my own work if I don't just talk until I'm blue in the face, trying to get people to understand something that is fundamentally vital to us

as human beings but very hard to verbalize. Monique and her horses demonstrated this heart connection without words (or with few of them) but in a language powerful enough to communicate her intention instantly.

Monique's generosity toward me was all encompassing. I feel blessed to have spent that magical day with her. Those who attend her clinics and experience her with her horses will experience an extraordinary gift.



MIRRORING



These two horses can benefit from changes I make in just one horse.

While practicing Equine Ortho-Bionomy, I am not only aware of the horse I am working with, but also other horses around, and those the horse lives with.

Many times the horse I'm working on is resistant to a certain technique, even though he or she really needs some direct contact.

Horses that live close to one another can benefit from changes I make to one horse. If the first horse is unable to accept a technique, then I will work on the one who is able to accept it.

This has happened recently with several horses who have had restrictions in the neck. They fling their heads and won't allow me to get to the cervical vertebrae. However, a stablemate is perfectly happy to have her neck worked on, so I go there.

When I go back to the first horse who is restricted the neck has released, the poll is soft. Sometimes that horse is no longer worried about me touching her neck.



Mirroring Behavior - leg cocked the same way, tail bent the same way

The other day my two horses were standing side by side. I needed to work on the bay horse, so I began with his spine. As I worked on his spine, the black mare released, which she shows by licking and chewing. His tail is wry, and bent to the right. The black mare has the same

restriction but less so. When I worked on his tail, her tail straightened.



The bay's tail isn't changed much, but the black horse's tail, whom I did not work on directly, changed. The two horses shifted their weight simultaneously after pelvic work on the bay.

They stood with the same leg cocked in rest. When pelvic work in the hips released in the bay horse, the black horse shifted her weight simultaneously and released also - although she doesn't have hip pain as he does, she has thoracolumbar pain at times.

This is what is called "mirroring," horses copying and integrating what other horses are doing. They start doing it as soon as they are born and keep doing it all through life. Having stablemates allows them to work this out and take advantage of this beautiful process which supports health.

Essentially what is at work here is herd energy. Herd energy keeps herds healthy, supports and validates the self-corrective process. Just as you see energy travel through herds when a predator is near, so does energy travel through herds when one is weak, injured or not right in some way. The proximity and movement help the self-correction process along.

ODDS & ENDS

All occasion Gift Certificates for Ortho-Bionomy for humans & equines available and new holiday ones just arrived! Discounts available for multiple purchases. Paypal welcome!



For all those horseback rider loved ones out there, here's a Gift Certificate design just for you!



LINKS

[Vires-animaliae](#)

[Carolyn Resnick Blog](#)

[Association for the Advancement of Natural Horse Care Practices \(AANHCP\)](#)

[Jamie Jackson](#)

[Lame Horses Use Muscles Differently, Study Shows](#) The Horse.com

[Art Grunig website](#)

Just for fun -

[Otto the Remarkable Ranch Dog](#)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December

10 – ACTHA (Competitive Trail Ride),
“Christmas on the Caja,” Caja del Rio,
Santa Fe, NM - Shelley Bachicha
showdoggal@msn.com
(505) 793-5417 www.actha.us

March 2012

17-18 Desert Wind Endurance Ride
Michael S. Reid 915-252-8883
(izhmon@yahoo.com) endurance.net
<http://www.doublejoy.com/erol/Calendar/RideDetails.asp?rideID=5514>

28 – 6:30 p.m. **Northern New Mexico Horseman's Association Meeting Talk & Demo - "Care for the Horseback Rider"** – Susan Smith, Advanced Ortho-Bionomy Practitioner. Talk about the kinds of challenges horseback riders have physically as a result of the physical lives they lead and working with 1,000 pound+ animals. The bulk of my people practice is comprised of horseback riders or people who work with equines in some capacity, so there are some common themes among us that we can all relate to in terms of pain/injury, etc. (ankles, shoulders, neck, spine, feet, fingers...) Most riders are pretty tough yet we can't keep doing what we're doing without help of some kind. My goal is to have everyone in the saddle who wants to be there -- without great expense and endless sessions.

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For more information on Ortho-Bionomy® and additional work, demos, clinics, private sessions and tutorials, see
www.orthohorse.info
[Facebook page](#)

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Have a very happy Holiday and prosperous New Year!

