

OrthoHorse© Newsletter

Newsletter about Ortho-Bionomy® - bodywork & related topics for equines and humans
Issue 5

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Building the Connection

Years ago, my mother and I were driving to Acoma Pueblo in western New Mexico. There was a young boy on a horse herding sheep. He looked as though he had been born on a horse, his body one with the horse – virtually no seam where the horse ended and the boy began. Their energy was so pure and forward, full of purpose, to round up the sheep, there was no wondering where they were going. The boy had probably never had a riding lesson in his life.

In contrast, as a child I took a bazillion riding lessons, once a week, and once in awhile got to participate in a show or trail ride. My riding instruction took a long time, yet on a horse was really the best place for me to be.

It really doesn't matter how you come to being with horses, it's the building of the connection that counts.

The same is true of Ortho-Bionomy© – the introduction to it can come from many different places, but then once it is a part of you, it can make an enormous difference in your life.

For me, the two, Ortho and horses, are so exciting I am thrilled to be able to do both together. I am also thrilled to ride with my granddaughter Ariana, as I had fun years ago getting my grandson Obie involved in endurance.

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 recap of a demo I conducted for BackCountry Horsemen's Association in Santa Fe on September 13, a small bit on competition and Ortho-Bionomy© principles, the Life of the Quiet Horse and a bit about Equine Dentistry.

BACKCOUNTRY HORSEMEN'S ASSOCIATION DEMO

I conducted a demo on four horses that people were kind enough to bring to the Sheriff's Posse Building on Tuesday evening, September 13.



Dorado hung up in the fence

I explained that Ortho-Bionomy® is a form of bodywork that works with the central nervous system to access the body's self-corrective response.

What does that mean? Our bodies have their own intelligence which gives them the ability to self correct. Horses are more in touch with this ability than people, but

we can all become reunited with it. This ability allows healing to take place in its own way, rather than more aggressive methods of healing that may slow the actual healing process while providing immediate action. Ortho-Bionomy® does not require that you do that and nothing else; it complements other treatments and can enhance the healing process by letting the body find its own way. I encourage people to feel this at work in their own bodies, although sometimes it is very easy to see the changes in the horse's body.

The first demo horse was Dorado, a Paso Fino who had gotten his hind leg caught in a fence. He was found three hours later by his owner Carol Karps and received veterinary treatment right away. It has been two months since that accident, and he is still a little tender on that hind leg which was trapped in the fence, but in very good spirits otherwise.

What I noticed about Dorado was that several of his thoracic vertebrae were raised up like a hunters' bump, but in front of the pelvis rather than right on it. He was also very sensitive about his hindquarters, having had them stretched in that position for such a long time. The raised vertebrae is not great– it means that the ligaments have separated from the spine.



Working on the thoracic vertebrae

With an injury such as this, a horse that has had his entire limb stretched and hung up experiences pain and dislocation all the way up the limb and into the pelvic area – not just in the fetlock area where the vet stitched him up.

Dorado seemed to favor the left hind at a walk but not at the trot. I worked on the shoulders and neck to effect change in the spine as well as directly on the spine and ribs. In future I would work very holistically to help the pelvis and hind limbs align as an injury like this can cause other damage.



Checking neck mobility

The next horse was Lily, a Tennessee Walker mare whom I had seen some months ago and at that time her vet had diagnosed her with a stone bruise. She was really stiff all over her body and had a hard time lifting her legs for treatment. This made me think there was more going on in her body. She had her shoes removed and improved with Ortho treatments. After I stopped treating her, some weeks later she began to collapse on the rear. Her owner took her to the vet who diagnosed her with Cushings and attendant laminitis, and prescribed corrective shoeing. She looks very stable now.

Cushings is a disorder of the pituitary gland which causes the gland to produce too much hormone, evidenced by a thick

hair coat even in summer and other immune system imbalances. With immune system problems, there are often signs that seem benign such as a “stone bruise” or slight lameness, wobbly gait or lack of energy. It isn’t until something really apparent happens that a more accurate diagnosis is made.

I worked on the neck to influence the gland and help it come into balance. In a full treatment, I would also increase circulation in all limbs and address the endocrine system.

[Lily's Movement Assessment Before & After Ortho-Bionomy© Sessions](#) (taken before Cushings diagnosis by vet)



The third horse was Amigo, a QuarterHorse who did not pick up the right lead at a canter. He showed stiffness in the hindquarters, and was unable to cross over his hind legs in a circle. The hindquarters also did not track evenly. I worked on the sacrum, leg lifts into the hindquarter area, and the hamstrings. His hips moved more evenly and he crossed over a bit better after some treatment. More treatment for this horse would focus on the hindquarter and how the rest of the body might be compensating.

Another horse collapsing behind was a Tennessee Walker who had had hock and stifle injections this summer and since then has mostly been traveling well. The hocks were inflamed and I noticed that she had a lot of movement throughout the body – but it was disconnected movement. The hind legs were heavier than the fore, indicating imbalance in the way she is relating to the ground.

I worked on the circulation in all four limbs and some direct contact with the hocks. The collapsing on the hind end can mean a lot of things, so again a holistic treatment would be in order, to help the central nervous system operate more smoothly and achieve more integration.

In these instances, Equine Ortho-Bionomy® can be useful in supporting the central nervous system and helping the body self-correct. The body becomes more resourced and ideally needs less support as time goes on.



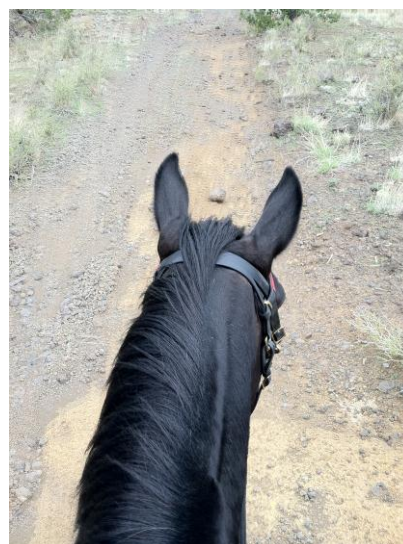
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COMPETITION & ORTHO-BIONOMY® PRINCIPLES

It has been two years since I competed in an event, and this September I have competed in two very different events.

The first, a 30-mile limited distance ride at the Caja del Rio, was exciting to me because I was coming back to the sport – last summer I had suffered a pelvic fracture and couldn't ride for months. I didn't know if I'd do endurance again. In the winter my mare Zuzka suffered blister beetle toxicity and nearly died, so between us we've been recovering from one thing or another.



Her energy level was good throughout the ride, a little tired and sore at the finish but neither sore nor tired the next day. I did a little Ortho to check in with her and to reintegrate after the ride. I also had been tired at the finish but recovered energy quickly by the next day.

The second was the ACTHA ride (American Competitive Trail Horse Association) a week later – totally different event for me, but a great experience. Ariana and I did this one together.

The weather was cold and miserable starting out, and the trail had to be rerouted because of the mud. This sort of thing doesn't really deter me but I thought it would bother a ten-year-old, yet she was a trooper.



Practice, practice

The ride was just six miles long but had six obstacles to tackle. We had practiced during the week before with the horses, and only one of the obstacles we practiced was used in the event.

We did well with those obstacles we didn't really know. It showed me that the mere act of practice had us all in the right relationship with what we were planning – like Ortho-Bionomy® principles. It doesn't matter what you encounter, there is a way to remain in the moment and accomplish what you want.

We are now building a cool obstacle course in the back pasture ;-)



THE LIFE OF THE QUIET HORSE

A lot is expected of quiet horses. They are used for all kinds of things that other horses don't have the mentality for: dude string work, therapeutic riding programs, kids learning to ride – and carrying all sorts of riders of different shapes and sizes, and different levels of knowledge or lack of knowledge. They have to fill in some incredible gaps in human comprehension.

I never owned such a horse before we got Patches. I've had Arabs. Dr. Temple Grandin says that horses like him are "low-fear" while hot blooded breeds are "high-fear." Some of the horses I rode as a kid were like Patches – big, rangy, gentle beings who allowed children to clamber on and off, and give conflicting rein and leg signals – all without bolting or rearing or otherwise injuring their handlers.

I knew Patches would be a good horse for our family almost immediately because he could adjust to four different riders – including a child – within a short space of time. He wants to please.

I like that he shows a lot of interest in what he is doing. Some quiet horses shut down entirely just to be able to do what's required of them. I notice it when I work on them. Quiet horses often get passed around to different owners or organizations. One trainer likened this to being in foster care – every so many years having to adapt to a new family and their habits. Even though they may have received kind treatment, it is a huge transition to have to change families, feed, training, living quarters, etc.

Think about it – because they're quiet, they don't generally get experienced riders, because those riders want spunkier horses.



Intimacy Bucket Ritual

We are using [Carolyn Resnick's](#) Horsemanship Waterhole Ritual techniques with Patches. This helps him get reconnected with his horseness and reinforces healthy relationships. He likes it so much that he skips steps, as though he had watched the videos. I also ride him so he gets to enjoy an experienced rider and understands what is expected of him. He was once a show horse and seems to enjoy events with us.

Patches was fired from his therapeutic job because he was “cinchy.” He came to the right place as we're used to sensitive horses. He now has one of those soft Toklat woolback cinches that feels yummy against him. He receives Ortho-Bionomy® when he needs it. Come to think of it, I don't think he's really cinchy any more.

Patches will also help me with people who are transitioning back into the saddle after injury or surgery, and specific horse and rider integration work.

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STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

The expression “straight from the horse's mouth” alludes to determining the horse's true age by looking at his teeth. But a lot more can be learned by looking in the mouth, if you know what to look for.

Recently Dr. Phil Ratliff, equine dentist of RiteBite Equine Dentistry, came to Santa Fe and worked on my horses' teeth. My 22-year-old gelding, Khami, has had problems for years with his TMJ and has constantly opened and closed his mouth to try to “pop” his jaw, or that was what it looked like. We have not been able to completely address the problem through traditional teeth floating techniques.

Dr. Ratliff released the TMJ by addressing the mandible and hyoid. Khami's top teeth were slanted diagonally to the left, his hooves shifted diagonally to the medial. The results of this irregularity traveled down through the cervicals then into sternum, then translated back to lumbar-sacral weakness. This dental shift was corrected with Phil's work.

This dentistry, which addresses more than the filing of sharp points off the molars, and seems very simple (similar to Ortho-Bionomy® in that respect), has made my horse very comfortable in his body. Also, now when I do bodywork on him, my work holds better.

ODDS & ENDS

[RiteBite Equine Dentistry](#) Dr. Phil Ratliff

[Introduction to the Natural Feeder
Acclimation to the Natural Feeder](#)

Available at Desert Wind Saddlery.
505.474.7795
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READING & WATCHING LIST

[Ecole de Legerete, from an Auditor's
Perspective](#) *Horses for Life* article by Terry
Flanagan.

[Horse Behavior in Herds of Domestic and Wild
Horses](#) *Info Barrel*

[Understanding the Lick / Chew Reflex in
Horses](#) *KBR Horse Training Information*

[Feeding Laminitic Horses](#) *The Horse.com*

[Slow Feed Hay: Make Hay Last Longer and
Prevent Horse Boredom](#) by Eleanor Kellon,
DVM, *The Horse Journal*

[Horses Never Forget Human Friends](#) *Discovery
News*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October

8 - [ACTHA Ride](#), Sisterless Ranch, Grants,
NM

15-16 - [Barefoot in New Mexico Endurance
Ride I & II](#), Alamagordo - 35, 25 and 50
mile distances, 2-day 100.

September

23- 29 **Art Grunig**, champion reiner &
author of Reflex Balancing bodywork
technique: in Santa Fe offering working
with cows, private lessons, bodywork.
Contact Maryann Menetrey 660-5815
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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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