



**December Pittsburgh Pet Connections
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Notes from Kyra Kyrkland - by Kris Cooper. Kyra is a Finnish dressage rider and trainer. In 1991 she and "Matador II" won the World Cup Finals in Paris. She has competed in six Olympics. Her book Dressage with Kyra is great. Recommended reading buy on Amazon! I have many vcr tapes featuring Kyra Kirkland if anyone wants to view them.

- ~ The rider's body should support the horse's body in a helpful fashion and not interfere with the horse. Tips for improved communication between rider and horse (and horse and rider) follow..
- ~ "How much of the horse's body weight is in his head? If 90% of the horse's weight is in his body, that's where 90% of the rider's attention should be."
- ~ "Turn with the withers. Turn the front legs, not the neck." Ride the horse's withers." "Point the horse's withers where you want to go." "Keep your outside hand really still." (Withers is shoulders)
- ~ "Feel that you are riding the horse's front legs in front of his hind legs." The hind legs are the engine.
- ~ "If your hips are straight, you can steer the withers."
- ~ "Make your hands wide like a tunnel. Create a bridge to go into the tunnel."

Calendar of Events

Pilates in Coventry's lounge every Saturday at 11am. Your first class is free, then sign up for packages for a reduced rate. See Anita or FMI contact Kristin at

blythedale@comcast.net or Anita at pilatesanita@gmail.com

January 26th - Robing Birk lessons at Coventry sign up with Kristin leave confirmation check in mailbox made out to Robin Birk

February 13th - Animal Communicator Sheryl Blumenthal

April 12-13th - Hilda Gurney Clinic [Wyndham Oaks](#), 19301 Bucklodge Rd, Boyds, MD

January - March 30th -Winter! Only 11 weeks to go!

Horse on Course 2014 Dressage Schooling Shows ~ April 27th; May 4th; June 1st; July 27th; August 24th; September 7th
Coventry is planning on a schooling dressage show April 20th, weather permitting

USEF?USDF Recognized Show Schedule which Coventry plans to attend...

LEC Prix de Ville - April 25 - 27th
GrandHaven WPDA show - June 7 & 8th (two day show)
Grandhaven WPDA Show August 9 & 10 (two day show)
PVDA.org Morven Park May 17 - 18th
www.vadanova.org Sept 13-14th (two day show)
Morven Park

~ "The rider is much stronger if his elbows are at his side." "When your hands are flat, you have no strength." "Feel the horse in the elbows, not the hand. The hand and the elbow belong to the horse." Kyra put her hand in the inside of the elbow of many of the demo riders and asked the rider to resist. This is the feeling of connecting with the horse through the elbow.

~ "Don't jam with your hips. Then the back goes down." "Don't drive [the horse] into the reins all the time." "Don't ride the saddle. Ride the horse." "The back is a bridge. Don't let the horse drop his back." "Ride the horse's back. "Feel that the back is carrying you."

~ "Don't help him so much. Think of the horse as a river flowing." "In the stretchy chewy, let the reins go long but keep the back up."

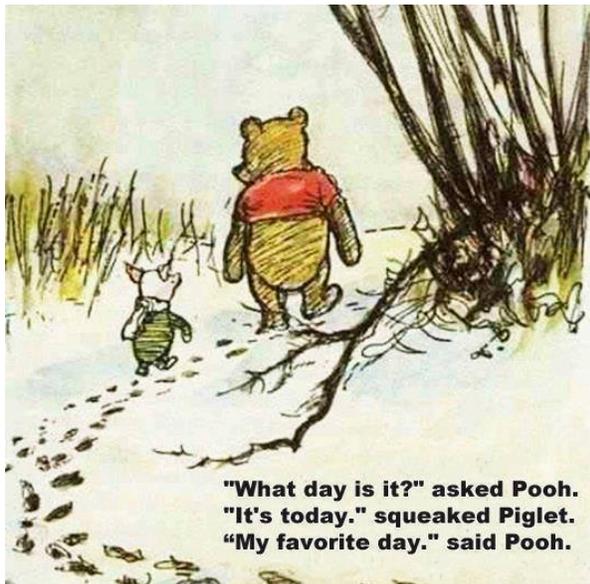
~ "Don't work so hard at the canter. Just sit there." "In the canter, your center of gravity must stay stable. Ride the horse, not the saddle." "Sit in the middle of the saddle. The horse must carry you, not you carry the horse."

~ "The rider's thigh muscle must be loose so that the rider can free up and use the lower leg." "Let the back of your thigh drop down." "Let your leg relax down. The muscle at the back of the thigh relaxes." "Your leg should be movable within the boot." "The leg hangs down from the hip joint. Use the lower leg, only when needed."

~ "Your hip joint should rest in your heel." "You need a knee-to-toe line."

~ "All animal schooling utilizes pressure and release. The reward is a cessation of the pressure releasing. If you don't release, there is no learning." "If you ask the horse to go with a squeeze of the leg and there's no response, don't squeeze harder. Go chip, chip, chip with the leg." "If you use your leg, the horse must react. Even if it's not exactly what you want, the horse must react." "If the horse ignores your leg, don't use it stronger, just repeat it." "Use your leg or hand when needed, not all the time."

~ "If you restrict the neck with your hand, the horse can't use his neck as a balancing rod." "I've been criticized for riding with reins too long, but I don't want to create a shorter frame by pulling back." "I warm up in a frame that's comfortable for the horse. If I let the rein out, I know I am not holding up the horse." "The horse's neck should be out, not up."



"What day is it?" asked Pooh.
"It's today." squeaked Piglet.
"My favorite day." said Pooh.

~ "If the horse pulls, take your hands up not back."

"If you must use bigger pressure, give a bigger release." "If the horse is strong in the hands, just do turns." "Let the horse wait for you to turn him. If the horse is in too much of a hurry to turn, halt in the corners."

~ "Tell a gelding. Ask a stallion. Submit three petitions to a mare." While Kyra was riding she said, "The mare is trying to pick a fight. I'm not going there."

~ When a rider learns something, he only learns one thing at a time. Then the new learning moves to the subconscious.

~ Kyra cited gymnastics research. "It takes 100,000 repetitions to learn a new movement. It takes 5,000 repetitions to break an old habit, then 100,000 more to re-learn it. If you can find an image, it takes fewer repetitions, like telling a rider with flat hands to hold a champagne glass." "Once I realized this, I

got much calmer. I realized that I am not stupid as a teacher. My students were not stupid. It just takes many repetitions to learn."

~ There are three zones in which both horse and rider operate: the comfort zone, the stretch zone and the panic zone. If you stay in the comfort zone all the time, you don't progress. Neither do you progress if

you are in the panic zone. “If you always stay in your comfort zone, you’ll always stay mediocre.” “Get the horse out of her comfort zone. Don’t think, ‘I’m not doing this right’ or ‘she can’t do this’. Just ask for and expect what you’re looking for.”

~ “A horse needs to be in balance to re-balance.” “A half halt can be anything.” If the horse is not in balance, leg yields are helpful to balance the horse. In the leg yield, the rider’s weight should be in both hips. Don’t squeeze every stride. Halt through the leg yield. Do walk/trot transitions in the leg yield.

Ride the withers to your target.

~ “The rider’s hips must be parallel with the horse’s hips at all times. “In lateral gaits, keep your seat even and the withers going in the [intended] direction.” “Shorten and lengthen the steps in travers.”

~ But ... “in the shoulder in, my head goes where the withers are going. Your eyes can turn in the direction of travel, but your head goes with the horse.” “Use trot/walk/trot transitions in shoulder in.”

~ “In skiing the weight is in the hips, not in the upper body.” “If your hips are straight, you can steer the withers.” In the sitting trot, the rider’s “bones jump within the body”. “Don’t chunk yourself down in the saddle. You have hips.” “Don’t lean back. Let your upper body fall into your hips.” “You must feel like you are balanced the horse’s back as though you were sitting on a bicycle.”

~ “Most riders are so concerned about the frame that they forget that it is the horse doing the carrying.”

~ “The only way to get a 7 or an 8 (on a dressage test) is for the horse to appear to be doing the movement himself.”

This week I found out Bracchus and I won the 2012 Hi Point Spanish



Spanish Norman Horse Registry

Norman Registry horse of the year! We showed at Training Level in 2012 and on several occasions scored above 70% so, I guess that is how we did it!

This has nothing to do with him winning the USDF All Breed Award in 2012. This Spanish Norman Horse Registry award is for all the Spanish Norman horses in the country that competed in dressage – way to go Brachstar! They are sending us a limited edition Breyer horse of Romantico – a Spanish Norman! Last year we debuted at First Level on our way to placing well again but he pulled a muscle and we settled with an average score of 64% with only two shows under our belt. Looking forward to this year! May the horse be with you

"If we did all the things we are capable of, we would literally astonish ourselves." ~ Thomas Edison, Inventor