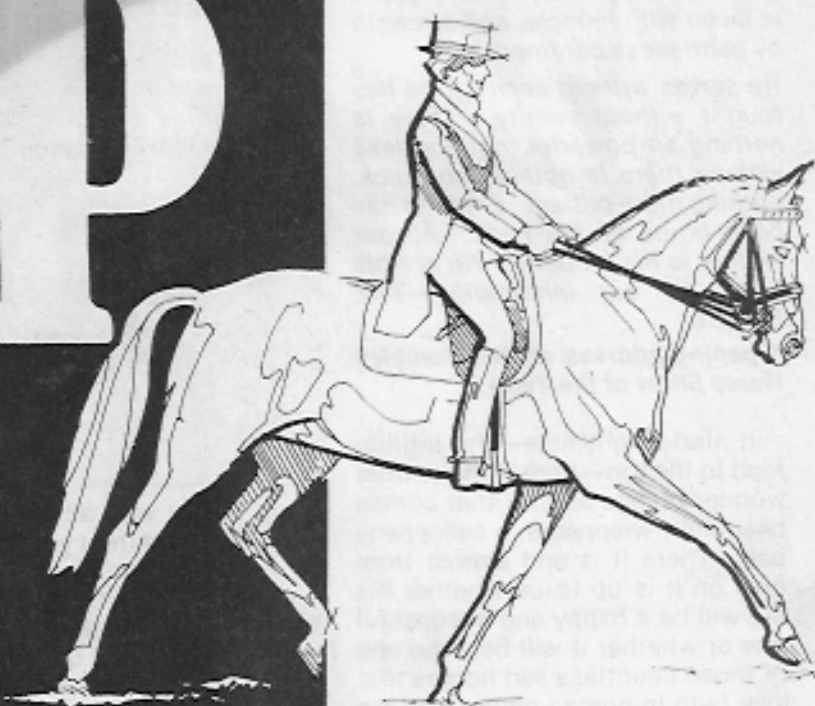


THE INFINITE ROAD TO THE TOP

TINA
WOMMELSDORF



The Infinite Road to the Top

FOREWORD

This book has been written to help Australian Riders on their infinite road to the top, to make them understand that nobody ever reaches the end of this road, but some succeed in riding along a fair bit of the way.

If you don't wish to end up on a little side road, you must be prepared to work hard and enjoy every inch of the way. I mean *honestly* enjoy it, otherwise you will invariably get bad tempered with your horse, punish him without justification and in doing so depart from the only road to your ultimate aim.

You must cheerfully ride literally every step off him, as only then will you be schooling him, if he can make a passenger out of you, then he is schooling you...

Chapter 1 the first steps

Where in this wide world a man finds nobility without pride, Friendship without envy, or beauty without vanity. Here where grace is laced with muscle, and strength by gentleness confined.

He serves without servility, he has fought without enmity. There is nothing so powerful, nothing less violent, there is nothing so quick, nothing more patient. England has been borne on his back. All our history is his industry. We are his heirs, he our inheritance—THE HORSE!

(Opening address at the Wembley Horse Show of the Year)

It starts right here—the infinite road to the top—here with the little wonder of legs and fur that comes beautifully wrapped in a cellophane bag. There it is and almost from now on it is up to us whether his life will be a happy and successful one or whether it will become one of those countless sad horses that lose faith in human nature and are tense, mistrustful and ever ready to fight back or run from us.

If you think about it, you will find that even a little love goes a long way. As you train your child with infinite patience and love to

Franz Mairinger used to tell us the story of the man who set out to walk around the world. When asked how he was going to do it, he answered quite simply: "One step at the time", and that is exactly what it is all about. It is really quite simple if you don't waste time looking for non-existing shortcuts; or fall for all the so called aid-reins. Use understanding, discipline and dedication...enjoy what you are doing now, don't count the hours it takes to get your horse ready for the next competition! Every hour you spend with your horse must be enjoyable for both of you. Was your love of horses not what made you choose this road in the beginning? Why look so strained and almost bitter when you are riding? You chose your sport for pleasure—keep it a pleasure, it is in your hands, your hands alone.....



The wonder of birth...just out of the "cellophane bag" and mother considers trying to persuade her baby to get to her feet.

be a happy well adjusted person, so you should treat your foal.

Don't rush him, don't hold it against him if he does not want to have anything to do with you at first, his curiosity will eventually get the better of him and he will come to investigate you on his own accord. There is NEVER any need to prove your "superiority" by manhandling him, nor to combat your inferiority complex by trying to prove to yourself that you are

stronger and that he has to do as he is told.

This is most certainly NOT the way to set about one of the most precious things in life, the beginning of a lifelong friendship with an animal.

For the first few months leave him as much as you can alone with his mother—education in these early days is her business.

When weaning time approaches, it is time to take a hand as from



Half an hour after birth, and still a little damp. Already showing the inquisitiveness that will work FOR you and enable you to handle the foal sooner or later. there is no need to force the issue.

never when I was not around because even in the safest paddock a foal can come to grief when the headstall gets caught on something. No manhandling of any kind was ever employed. Apart from the fact that I detest any rough handling, I don't even think it is clever, as it only teaches the foal to fight and ultimately discover his own superior strength.

The brushing was always done without a headstall—free in his paddock. Though at first a little doubtful, he soon learned to enjoy a short brush and would always readily come and "suffer" the grooming. Here again, do not forget you are dealing with a very young animal, and patience cannot be his strong suit just yet, so if he shows any signs of getting a little bored with it, leave him alone before he leaves you. This way he will forever look forward to you, his daily grooming, and as he acquires more patience will eventually stand for you forever, having experienced that you mean only pleasure. Grooming also includes having his feet picked out. You will find that in the beginning he will flatly refuse to believe that he can stand on three legs—however a little patience and love from you he trusts, will soon convince him this is quite possible. The same will happen when you start leading him.

then one he will need you and another horse-uncle around to take over when his mother leaves. The event of weaning does not have to be the traumatic experience for foal and mother as it so often is because of lack of time. It only takes a little effort and a *little* time to lock the mare away while feeding, separated only by a wire door so that she remains in full sight of the foal. The foal, running free with his feed bin placed close to the "uncle" in the next paddock can run to her as often as he likes, at the same time exploring and learning to be alone, while the mare cannot leave and is always to be found at the same place.

not to need moral support from his mother anymore. So one day we quietly led her away, in full view and neither she nor he even whinnied. He was truly weaned without any hangovers, a confident and trusting little man!

He knew me well by then as also during this I introduced him to the brush and headstall. With great patience I eased the headstall on, only to take it off again, gradually leaving it for longer and longer periods, although never for any great length of time and never,

In the beginning I locked the mare away 4 times daily for half hour periods increasing the time slowly to 2 hours 4 times daily. The foal, with his feedbox close to my thoroughbred gelding "uncle Jackie", soon felt secure enough to go exploring and began almost overnight his wonderful friendship with him. Jackie, a playboy by nature, had no objection to the playful advances the little colt made over the fence. With 5 pounds of oats per day, all the other goodies and lucerne hay always ad lib, mother slipped more and more into the background and after only 8 days he was playing up and down the fence with his new friend and sufficiently self reliant

The world is full of new things and experiences for the little filly. Here she is introduced for the first time to "Uncle Jackie".



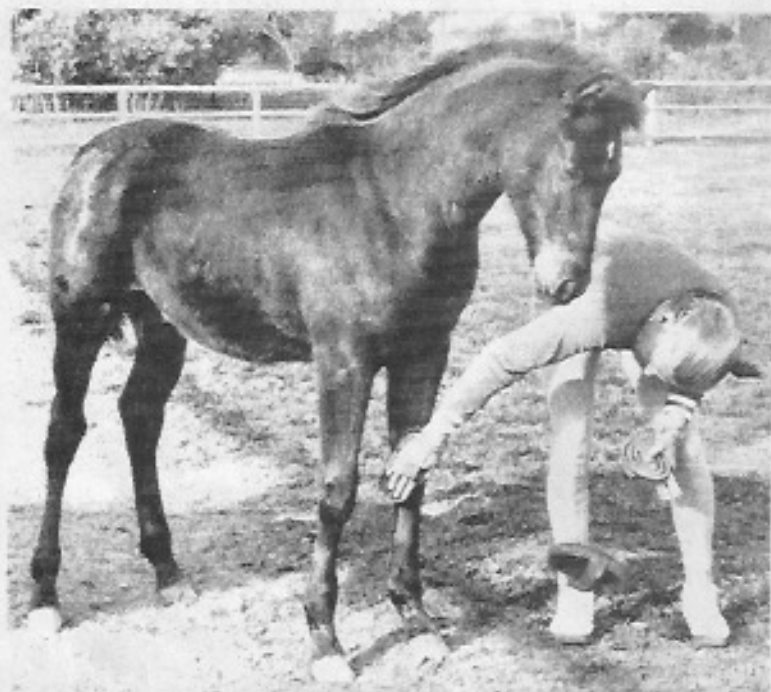
Naturally a young colt will have his own ideas about where he wants to go and he will find the end of the rope an irresistible toy. There is no harm in this and with playful and gentle persuasion you can convince your friend that in the end it is always your way he will be going, not because of brutal strength but simply because of your ability to persevere without losing your temper, but with compassion, endless patience and love.

Remember that today is the first day of the rest of your life with the horse—make it a happy one.

Apart from educating your foal towards your ultimate aim, you have the obligation to look after his physical well-being as well as his mental one!

It is for instance, of great importance that his feet are trimmed regularly as an unevenly worn foot can throw the joints above out of alignment and cause serious harm.

We have taught him to allow us to pick up his feet and from there it is only a small step to cutting his feet back and this should be done regularly from approx. 4-5 months on every 4-6 weeks depending on his rate of horn growth. Ask only a thoroughly trusted farrier or if you are experienced, you can do it yourself. A curious nose will look over your shoulder to see



*Above:
First experiences of grooming, free in the paddock.*

*Left:
Casbah has been playing with the brush by picking it up but now he drops it in "horror" when I introduce the currycomb to his legs. You can see the brush falling just in front of my right ankle.*

Peter Wommelsdorf Pictures.

what you are up to and that's a good time for showing a little affection.

To allow your foal to grow to his full physical potential it is necessary to supply an adequate amount of protein. Intensive research overseas has proven that it is vital that he is carefully fed in his first year. The rule is to give him 1lb. of oats per month of age. While he is still

on the mother this is hard to ensure, but the moment he is weaned you should have no problem making sure he gets the proper amount. If he is weaned at 5 months, he has to get 5 lbs. of oats per day, this increases until he is 12 months old and on 12 lbs. per day. Here you will have to start levelling out as it will depend a lot on the amount of running around he does how much he needs. You don't want him overweight, as this is also very bad for his legs. The best way of feeding is to divide the daily ration into 4 small feeds, as a horse needs a little food often. You should make sure that his intake of calcium and phosphorous is balanced, ration 1:1 if possible but not more than 1:1.2 or 1.2:1. He will need a minimum of 15 gr. each daily. A list of the most commonly used feeds will give you a guide to the amount present in gramm per lb.

	Calcium	Phosphorus
CORN	0.04	1.17
OATS	0.04	1.50
BRAN	0.63	5.90
LUCERNE	6.67	1.09
CHAFF		
Oaten	0.95	0.86
Wheaten	0.64	0.82

These values will vary according to the quality of the ground where the crop is grown. 28 grams (1oz.) of limestone will provide 10.3gr. of common calcium. Salt must be included in the diet, approx. 28 grams per day. I also keep a large piece of rocksalt so that they can help themselves to more if they need it.

These values and the amount of food suggested for your youngster is strictly for horses, not ponies. I always provide cut up carrots or apples, as nearly all horses adore these additions and they provide an additional source of vitamins. (Calcium and phosphorous values from "Applied Animal Nutrition" by E.W. Crampton. McGill University, Quebec.)

On the education front, continue to lead him every so often, brush him, attend to his feet and in preparation for rugging run a smallish piece of cloth all over him until you can wipe him over with a bag

without him getting upset. If you want to rug him you MUST put a headstall on him with a sufficiently long rope to attend to the legstraps. I let him sniff the rug thoroughly then roll it up from the tail end and place it gently just behind the withers across his back, taking it off and putting it back a few times. I then unroll it and fasten securely, patting him and assuring him that I have not placed a horse-eating monster on his back. With his feed ready nearby to take his mind off it, I walk him for a little while to make him realise that he can still move and let him go when he appears confident. Nevertheless he will probably be the eternal horse and snort and kick up before giving his attention to the wonderful passtime of eating.

To introduce him to the hose it is best to bide your time until a scorching summer day comes

along and the perspiration is running down his back. A headstall with a long leadrope, a washstand or fence so that he cannot run around too much and if possible a hose you can shut off with a gun-type nozzle are basic requirements. You start by turning the water on very lightly onto his legs. Greatly surprised he snorted and hopped a little only to find very quickly how beautifully cooling it was and in no time at all I could run the water all over him while he tried to bite the stream.

I continued to hose him on those very hot days, doing his face as well while closing his ear with one hand, so that no water enters, as this can cause serious trouble. He learned to love it so much that he started to queue up outside the washstand while I was hosing another horse!

Hold his ear closed while you wash his face.



TO WORK!

When he is leading properly and with good manners you can start to lunge him a little. If you are inexperienced you must have someone who is competent with horses to help you as this is not as easy as it may look. One person stands in the middle of the circle, while the other leads the foal around. Make sure that the lungeline is rolled up and never slack or lying in an untidy heap under your feet. While the foal is being led by the

helper there should be no need to take the line in, however by himself later you must always take it in neat loops so that you can let it out again without delay, but not from the ground, from an untidy heap, as this is plain dangerous when dealing with any horse, not only the young ones. For the same reason one loop should always be kept and not paid out, ready for an unforeseen jerk.

Next Page....



Lunging free for exercise and working on one track. With contact but not being pulled.

The eyes of the person who holds the lunging must never leave the foal and he should always hold the line in his inside hand, his outside shoulder pointing towards the inside shoulder of the foal. The whip is held in his outside hand pointing towards the spot where later the rider's inside leg will be! Let's say we are lunging to the left: your line is in your left hand, your whip in your right. You're holding your left arm and wrist very much in the same position as when you are riding, providing a constant flexible contact with your horse's head, using the centre ring of the cavesson and no other gear whatsoever at this stage. The helper will continue to lead the foal on, gradually letting it walk by itself but still keeping fairly close by until the pupil goes around by him-

self. After a few rounds on the left you lead him again to the right. Be sure to give him the same amount of time on each rein. Should he suddenly spin around and go the other way again, you must bring him in and calmly lead him back to the side he was going on. If you watch him very carefully and have the whip ready to urge him on (not hitting him!) you can soon avoid these sudden fancies. Once he has learned to lunge properly to both sides, there is no need to keep on. It should always be done for only a few minutes on each side, as we are only educating him, not working him!

The most important thing here again is to praise your foal generously when he did something right—how else is he to know you are pleased with him?

Chapter 2

When your foal is a little older, say 2, you may get him used to the lunging pad. As he is thoroughly accustomed to the rug by now he usually takes the placing of the pad in his stride, although you can slide it on and off a few times before you get around to girthing it. Remember you have plenty of time, the way you girth him for the first time is very, very important, it is in this vital moment that bad habits can be born like blowing up, biting or bucking. Nothing of this will occur if you take things very gradually with talking to him in between and leaving it always comfortably loose, never, never tighten the girth completely at this stage.

The girth will automatically tighten when he starts to breathe deeply with exercise (which will usually frighten him enough that he will give a little kick-up or even a little buck). Don't panic, it does not mean your foal has a career as a buckjumper in front of him, he merely rebels against the tightness which irritates him when he takes a deep breath. He will soon realise

that there is nothing seriously restricting his air intake and as he was only girthed up lightly he will soon feel comfortable again. While he is letting off steam don't forget not to take your eyes off him, to keep your safety loop in your hand, the whip there to make him go forward in his little jumps and to stand correctly so that you will be able to cope with the unforeseen. As soon as he is going around calmly again—finish!

If you have never lunged a horse, the time to learn is NOT with your young horse.

When you have finished the few minutes schooling, it is very nice if apart from praising him on the spot, you give him something like carrots or apples after you have hosed him off.

He will always associate work with reward and never be difficult to catch. I prefer this way to catching him with a tit bit.

The side reins are attached to the lunging pad, but not in use yet. They provide a gentle intro-

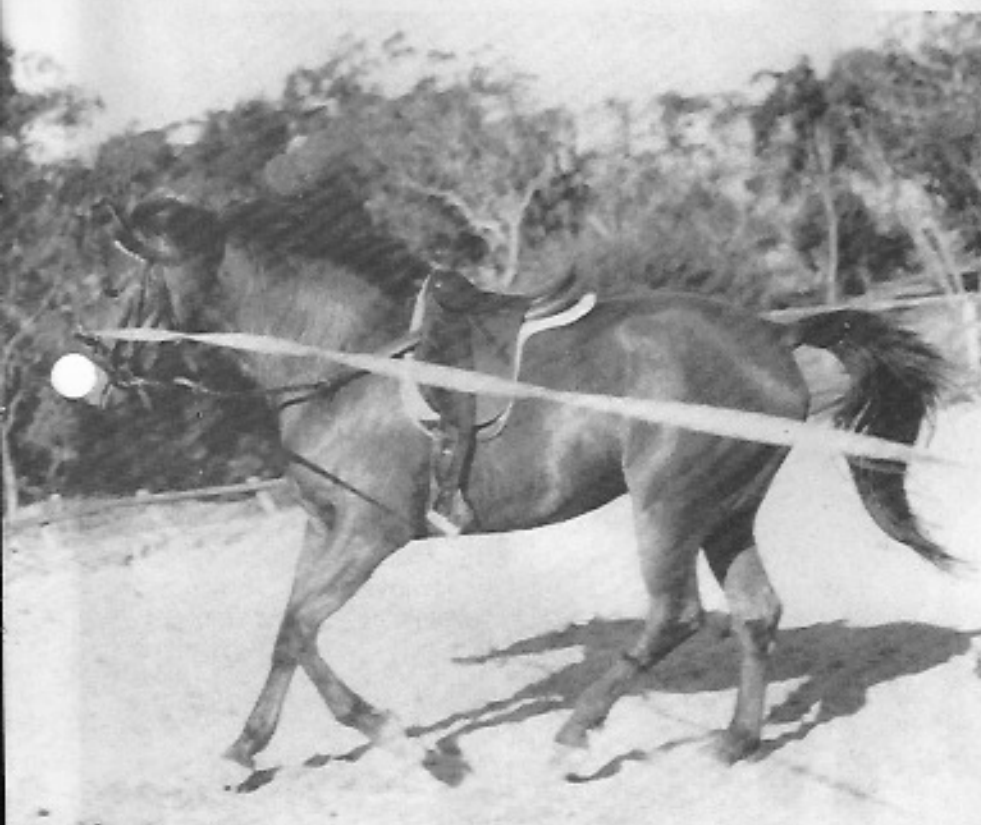
duction to the feel of the rider's legs later.

The bit may also be introduced about this time (2-3 years). Here again I firmly believe you must be very, very gentle about it. Just let him feel it the first time, holding it up in his mouth for a moment. He will show his disgust very quickly, so you quietly take it out. The second time he will leave it there maybe for a second and again display his disagreement. There are no reins attached to the snaffle bridle and the horse is handled and led from the cavesson. As you have removed the bit almost immediately he showed displeasure, he has no reason to fear or distrust it in any way and you will find that in no time at all he will not object anymore, but chew a little and keep his mouth happily closed throughout his little lunging session. Take the bit off as soon as you are finished and reward him.

Provided that the lunging pad phase went smoothly you may now introduce a saddle. Naturally the same care has to be taken when



Above:
The correct way to put on a bridle.



With all the gear...see how loose the side reins should be at first?

girthing and it is always wise to let him inspect it first. The side reins are attached to the saddle and clipped back. I leave the stirrups on the saddle as he is confident and in no way worried and when they slip down after a few rounds he will not take any notice at all.

You may now attach a comfortable side rein to the bit for trotting and cantering but never at the walk. As soon as you let him walk, unclip the reins and let him stretch right down.

You always start and finish each lunging session without the side reins and you will find that the horse will not fight them. Beware of him slowing down or curling up in front. He must go forward by seeking contact in stretching and you must encourage him to do so by always letting him go a little better than he offers.

As before, you only educate him for very short times and do not lunge him on side reins to train him but use them simply to introduce him to the bit and the feel of the reins for later.

Working a horse on the lunge in the true sense of the word is a very highly qualified job and a great deal harder than to learn riding. Only use it as an introduction and please don't get too involved as you will do more harm than good.

After the little lunging session is finished and you are back in your washstand or other small enclosure, take the cavesson and side reins off the saddle and attach a pair of reins to the snaffle. Gently let him feel a little tug right and a little tug left. I keep cut-up carrots in one hand and let the tug coincide with his wish to turn to get the carrots. It is established in no time in this way and in two or three days he will follow the slightest tug. At the same time I always pat the saddle with my own hand and pet him everywhere. Long before I put anything on the horse in the paddock I used to ride up next to him to scratch his back which he loves and I also lean over to put weight on his back through my hand to get him used to me towering over him. Every possible preparation was given to the most

wonderful moment of it all: to first sit astride!

Something I was trained to do with the help of a groom and instructor I now had to do all by myself. Instead of having the groom lifting me on to the saddle to lie across, I drag a bale of straw out of the stable, place it next to him and climb up placing my weight across the saddle. His ears immediately focussed on me and although attentive, he was absolutely calm. After doing this leaning across and petting him I put my foot on the stirrup and down again. The horse did not mind! If you have to do it by yourself with no one keeping the saddle from moving you must be sure the girth is fairly firm and will not slide around. After putting the weight on the stirrup a few

times, I eased my leg across and there I was! It never fails to give me a feeling of gratitude and joy towards the noble animal accepting the master-to-be with calmness and trust.

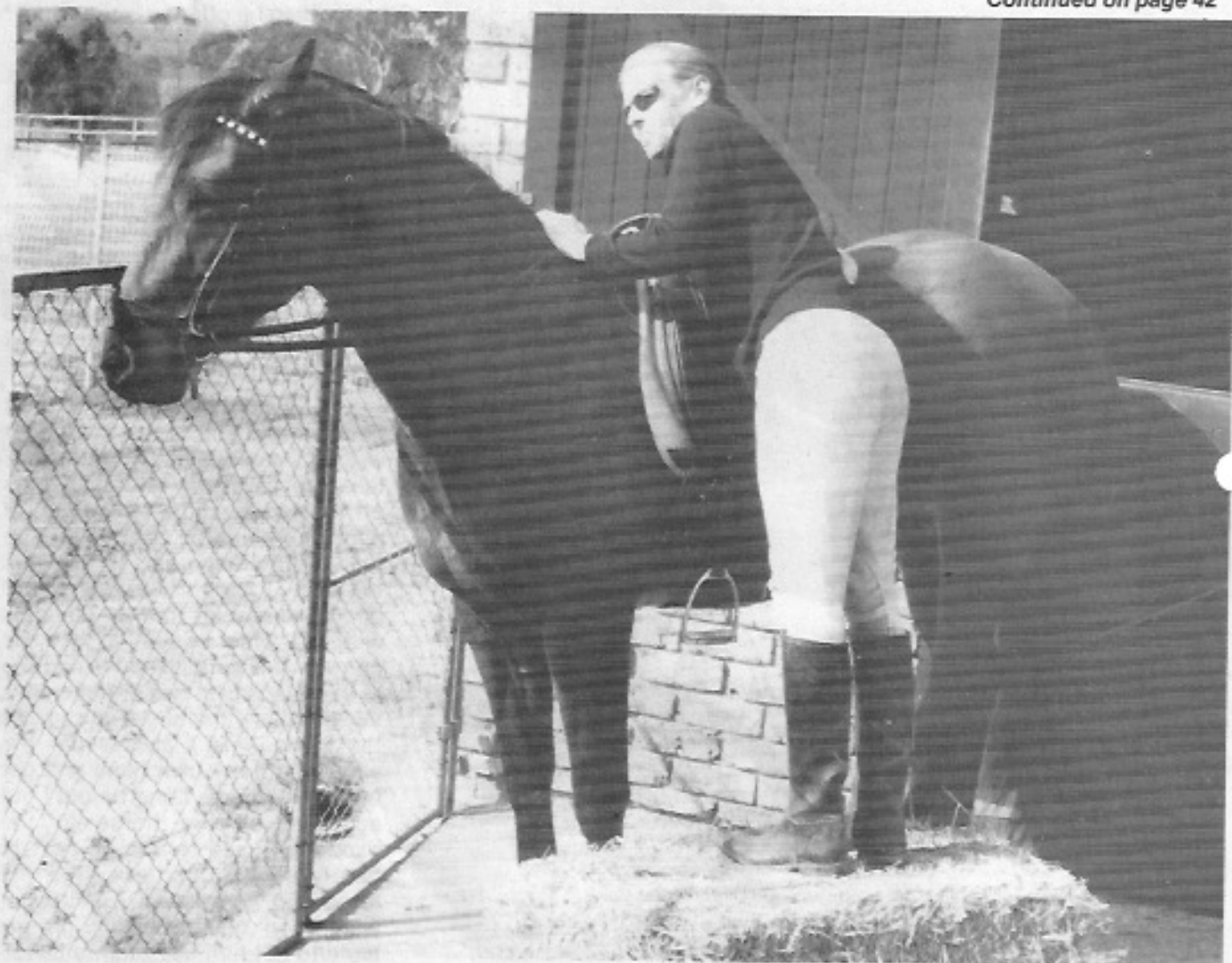
If you have disagreements don't hold it against your foal, as now and later, it is always the rider who through lack of knowledge, inexperience or simply bad position, makes it impossible for the horse to carry out what is required of him. Always seek fault in yourself, if you blame the horse or foal you have already successfully barred yourself from ever getting on to the infinite road to the top!

Now that your horse is going willingly and well balanced on the lunge it is time to put a rider on his back and it's ideal if it can be

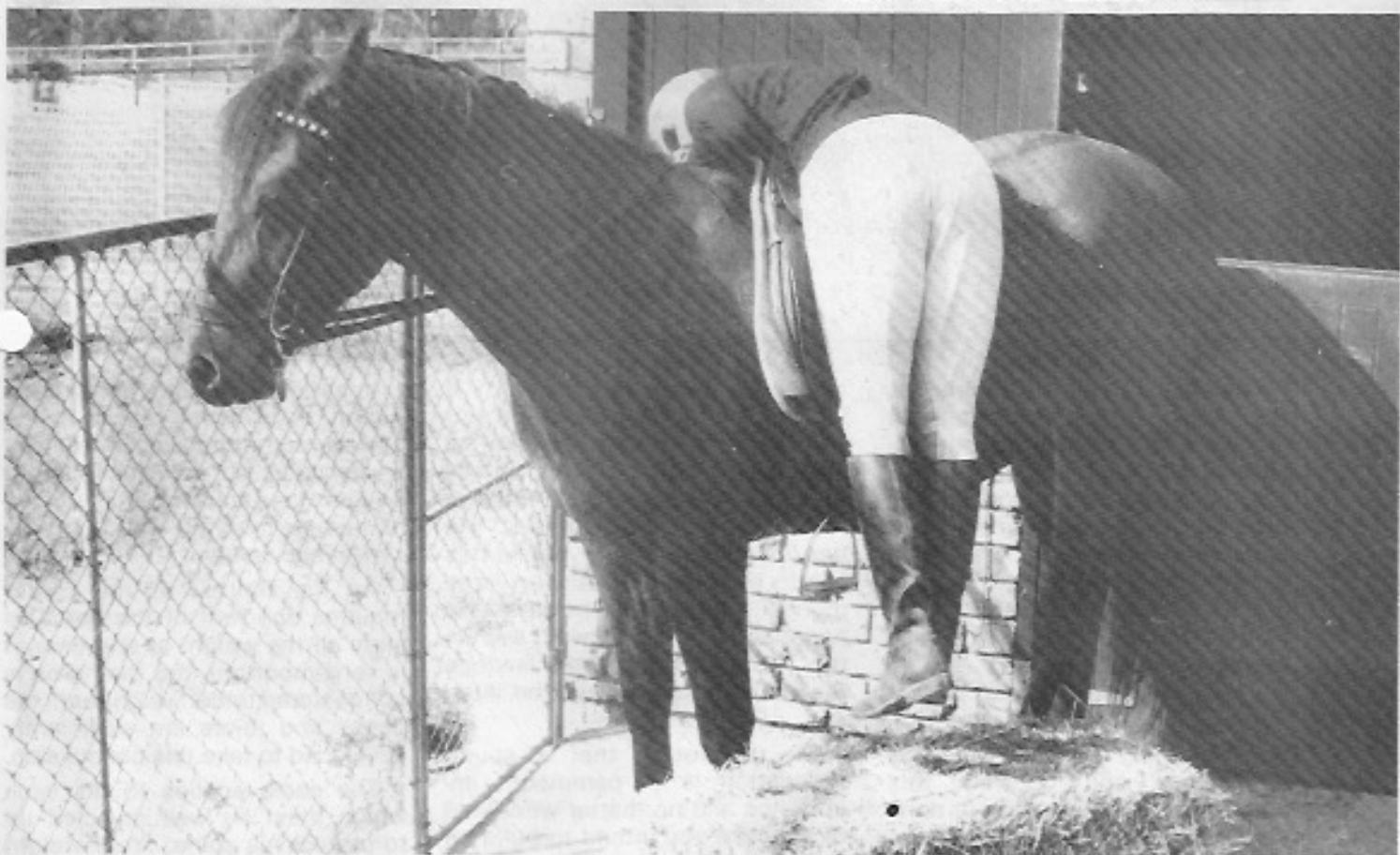
the person who mounted him the first time. The person he has learned to trust. But as you obviously cannot lunge him and sit on him at the same time, you may have to introduce someone else.

You must have someone with an independent seat, a balanced rider who does not have to hang on to stay in the saddle, a really good rider who will not upset the balance of your horse. If you have found the right person and carefully introduced the new face to your youngster, and prepared him for being mounted the same way as when YOU got on board, then put him up while you are lunging. Lunge the same way as always, with the rider synchronising his aids with the commands of the person lunging the horse.

Continued on page 42



A gentle lean from a bale of straw.



Full weight across the saddle.



The glorious moment!

That is all that is required at this stage and should be done at the walk and trot only, and only for very short periods and **RISING TROT ONLY**, with a consciously light seat. If the horse is balanced under the weight of the rider, happily going forward and beginning to take notice of the rider's aids, then comes the time to take him off the lunge.

You saddle up his friend and let the young horse and rider follow you. This will give him the necessary confidence and continue his education. All this riding is done on long straight lines or very large circles; under no circumstances must you make any sudden transitions, sharp turns, etc. Everything

has to be done progressively. If you do not follow this advice you will teach the horse things that he should never be given an opportunity to learn—dropping the shoulder or falling out with the quarters. He has not learned to flex yet and this has to be done gradually on large rounded figures which he can easily negotiate if ridden forward correctly. The slower you take this stage the easier your path will be later.

Do not forget that a sound foundation is of paramount importance and no matter what kind of a palace you intend to build on top of it, the foundation must be there to carry or it will never get off the ground!

In all this riding the horse is on a long, if not loose rein, with the head stretching down; do not try anything else but riding him forward so that he is tracking true. When he has muscled up well then you can let him canter a little.

As the footfall of the canter requires one foot of the horse to carry all the weight at one time, it is very important that the horse is not cantered under weight until his bones and joints are sufficiently developed to take this concussion.

The same applies to his back which must be well muscled up to protect his spine. Your weight should not be in the saddle when you canter at this stage, slightly leaning forward you ease yourself

just out of the saddle and canter well forward.

Don't do too much, remember he is still growing and needs a great deal of his strength to do just that. He also needs to be fed protein as he cannot build muscle without it. Do not entertain the idea that it is easier and safer to ride a horse which is weak and underfed and therefore will not fight you. If this is your line of thought, this game is not for you and you'd best leave it to a qualified person. He should not tolerate you on his back because he is too weak to do anything about it, he should accept you because he has confidence and is strong enough to handle your weight. A horse which is weak and not muscled up to handle weight, will very often drop the back to escape the frightening load, or roach it to protect himself. You don't want that to happen under any circumstances, as in your teaching you do everything to make your horse go—use his back and avoid like the plague everything which may cause him to hollow his back.

In these early months of riding the well prepared youngster, you still avoid all concussion of the spine by rising to the trot and easing your weight out of the saddle at the canter as I said before. Virtually his whole first year under the saddle is spent riding forward and riding him straight, changing gaits frequently. Do not rush this very important part of his education, it is the foundation of your palace!

Above:
"Gliding off", a pleasant and unexpected reward for the horse's good work.

Below:
Gentle handling and love all the way...on the Infinite Road to the Top.



**Two more chapters
next month!**

Chapter 3

WORK UNDER SADDLE

If your horse is going correctly and has started to accept the bit on a long rein with his nose clearly in front of the vertical, you should have a nice firm contact and willing response to your aids. I mean the aids for "trot on", "turn right", "turn left", "canter on" the transition from the canter to the trot, trot to the walk etc.

As the horse gets stronger you can let more weight into the saddle and increase the time of work; there are no hard and fast rules governing this increase as all horses are individuals and have to be treated as such in every way. If for some reason you have serious doubts about your horse being ready for work or more work, ask your Vet to take an x-ray of his front knees, which will give him an indication of the maturity and the state of his bone structure. This practice is now widely used in the States to determine whether or not young racehorses are ready for work; thus a great many horses have been saved from breaking down in training or racing.

At the end of the first year of training you should be able to ride a good 20 metre circle and reasonable corners and make fluent progressive transitions. In other words, you should have a correctly going Novice horse, flexed and tracking true!

I keep coming back to the importance of riding your horse straight. It is with horror that I continually need mark down horses even in high tests for crossing their hindlegs on a rounded line, or dropping their shoulders.

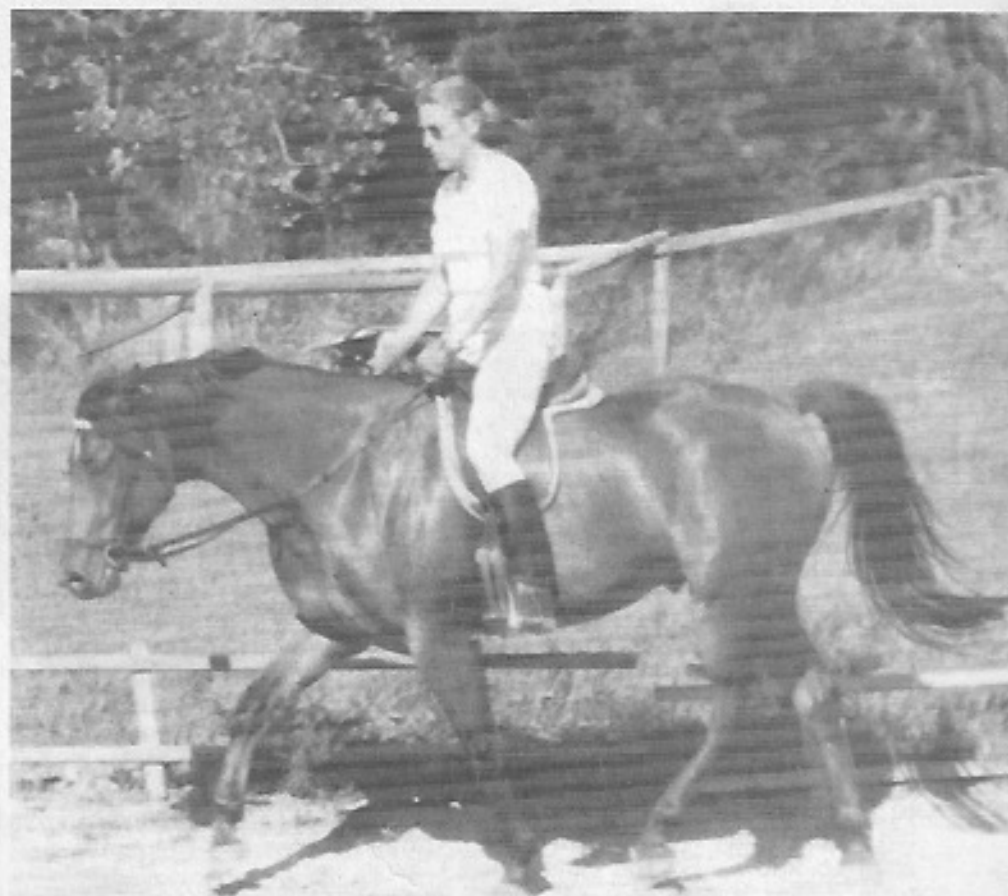
Your horse has to be flexed on the line you are riding, which means he has to be dead straight on a straight line and rounded throughout his body to the same degree as the line you are riding on. The

highest degree of bending ever expected is riding a volte, a small circle with a diameter of six metres. Because of conformation limitations not all horses can achieve a correct volte although the odd horse may be able to flex to an even greater degree than required by a six metre circle.

The hind feet must follow the front feet and be placed either on top, in front of or behind the imprint of the fore foot; if placed to either side the horse is not straight or is incorrectly flexed. To achieve correct flexion you must use your seat and back. The inside leg holds the horse forward, preventing it from dropping the shoulder in the turn while the outside leg controls the quarters, stopping them from falling out while turning. If your horse comes in with the quarters while cantering on a straight line, it is NOT your outside leg that prevents or corrects that. This had to be done by taking the



A straight horse.



Riding forward—a young horse ridden forward and down to achieve engagement of hindquarters for correct development.

shoulder in to make the horse straight. If you can ride your horse truly forward it cannot put its feet sideways; in other words, all corrections for these faults are to learn to ride your horse honestly forward. Your inside rein indicates the flexion or turn, while the outside rein keeps a firm contact.

All aids with your hands should be an INDICATION ONLY and of no duration. You ride your horse with your seat, legs and back. It is entirely up to you what kind of a mouth your horse will have!

To make it quite clear once again, you are NOT pulling your horse in with the reins, you are riding him into your forever forward reaching hand. You ask him with your seat, back and legs to engage his quarters more and more actively and by doing so, gradually come to carry more weight behind and lighten the forehand which will then bring about the desired head-carriage in the correct way, a relative elevation. Any backwards action of your hands in a misunderstood attempt to lift your horse's head will only result in a loss of the hindquarters, a picture too frequently seen. There is no shortcut in the education of a horse and while aids like running reins etc. can be successfully used in the hands of an expert they can be deadly for an amateur. You can do nothing but damage by starting at the wrong end—the head. It is with the repeated exercising of your horse's inside leg by riding him correctly on rounded lines, (where he has to bend his inside leg more to track true) that you prepare him systematically on both reins for a greater engagement of the quarters.

This cannot be done with short cuts, it is gymnastic exercising and it takes TIME. It is absolutely essential if you cannot feel how your horse places its hind legs and have nobody with a trained eye who could watch, your only help is to find a sandy patch and a nice big rake. It can teach you all you want to know. By the time you have ridden a turn, got off your horse, studied the foot fall, raked it all smooth, mounted again and rode another turn for the umpteenth time day after day, you will develop



Gymnastic exercises over cavaletti—no interference from rider's hands.

Right:
Uphill—weight out of the saddle, freedom of horse's head.

a feeling in your seat for what your horse is doing with his feet, and that is something which separates riders from the passengers! It is essential to gain this "feel" one way or the other for your further training, so don't think you are wasting your time when you are raking the arena for the thousandth time....

Another part of your horse's education which should start in his first year is cavaletti work and riding cross country. I firmly believe that no horse can be trained successfully for any of the three disciplines without having been schooled basically in all three.

So back on to the lunge we go for our first cavaletti. At first we only use one trotting cavaletti, then three, then five. Approximately 1.52 (5ft.) to 1.67 (5ft. 6ins.) apart, we let the horse just trot over them without side reins, allowing him to stretch and lower his neck. This again is an exercise to engage his back correctly. The poles can be 0.2 metres (8in.) high although I use only round poles so that any knocks cannot have severe consequences.

Right:
Downhill—leaning forward, watching the ground ahead. Legs firmly on the horse, hands supported.



If your horse negotiates these cavaletti without rushing, and with good even rhythm, you can place a small obstacle behind the trotting cavaletti, at a distance of 3.5m. The obstacle should not be more than 0.6m (2ft.) or 0.75m (2ft. 6ins.) at this stage of the game. Eventually this work can be done under the rider and done quite frequently. The rider's hands should extend towards the horse's mouth and not ride up the mane! Again under no circumstances must the rider's hands act backwards!

If your horse is doing this work under a rider, make quite sure that you keep your horse straight before and after the jump. As far as his cross country training goes, a little climbing, jumping logs and small ditches, riding downhill (straight!) is all you want to do in the beginning; it is to give your horse balance, make him engage his back well and let him learn to handle himself on uneven ground.

Whenever or wherever you are riding, you should always ride with a purpose, not just flopping along. Not that there is anything wrong with just flopping along for relaxation, you can have lots of fun riding in the bush, (after all, how many little girls who learn Ballet at school end up as Prima Ballerinas?) But if you have set foot on to our infinite road you must stick to it like glue and work on progressing a little further each time you ride.

"Where there is a will, there is a way"
Sign above Neckerman's stables in Frankfurt, Germany.)

Leg Yielding

Leg Yielding is the most basic lateral movement and should be practiced before the horse is ready for collected work. As the horse is quite straight, except for a slight bend at the poll, looking away from the direction in which he is moving, it is comparatively easy. The horse is quite literally asked to yield to the pressure of the rider's leg, and to move forwards and sideways. Although this exercise is easy, if the rider knows what he is doing, it can be dangerous, as the horse is

only too willing to use anything as an escape from harder work. If the rider does not succeed in keeping the horse absolutely straight, then the exercise is of no value.

Leg yielding may be carried out either "on the diagonal" or along the wall (or long side of the arena), if ridden on the long side the angle of the horse to be the direction in which he is moving, should not be more than 35 degrees.

Unfortunately we very often see a poor leg-yield performed rather than a correct shoulder-in.

Shoulder in is a very much more demanding exercise, as the horse has to be flexed throughout his body, uniformly from the head to the tail. A very common fault here is a tilted head, a severe fault and more often than not caused simply by the rider's hands, or through the inability of the horse to flex properly.

Naturally the lack of flexion is also "man made", as is practically everything, as riders forget that the corner comes before any two track work...if the horse cannot flex through the corners, how can he maintain a flexion he never had??

Having done all the groundwork you might think that you can relax—but you can't! As I say so very often: "Riding is not for pleasure, riding is very hard work!"

If you DON'T find it a challenge to make something better out of your horse—to make him more supple, submissive, obedient and finally more capable of doing anything better because of a thorough and planned gymnastic education, then I cannot help you. Every milestone I reach on my road is a new thrill to me and the sight of the next one a never ending enticement to eventually succeed in making your horse your partner in a dance, over jumps or across country. Each correctly ridden turn, dead straight line brings you a little closer to your ultimate aim.

By "ultimate aim", I do not mean partner only in Dressage I mean partner and friend in every sense of the word, a friend that will carry you safely and with a minimum of effort and greatest comfort for you and him to the top—be it in Show-jumping, Hunting, Eventing or



Above: Shoulder-in. Flexion throughout the horse.



Above: Quarters-in or Travers. Horse clearly flexed.

Dressage. Whatever your goal may be, the basic training is the same for all.

So back we go to further gymnastic exercises. If your horse is going correctly, which means on the bit with good engagement of the hindquarters, lively and submissive with good rhythm, correct flexion and able to negotiate a

corner tracking true, then you may start two-track work like shoulder-in and quarters in. Both exercises increase the suppleness of your horse, as in fact all exercises do if correctly carried out.

To be able to correctly school your horse in these things you really need a square, preferably sand and at least 20m by 60m. That however does not mean that from now on all your schooling will be done here. Part of your schooling must be done in this confined and precise area though or you have no way of knowing whether your horse is really going "shoulder-in" or has in fact fallen out with the quarters. You cannot be sure in the open whether your horse is straight or crooked, no way of knowing how good your corner is.

The best preparation for a shoulder-in is once again a well ridden turn which you simply continue until your horse's forehand has left the track and the shoulder is in fact in. If you ask him too early, you are not taking the shoulder in but allowing the quarters to climb out.

If you have ridden the forehand off the track, flexion maintained around your inside leg, you then ask him with your inside leg to go forward-sideways while your outside leg is guarding the quarters and preventing them from falling out. The hind feet, although coming closer together do NOT cross the track of the inside hind foot follows the track of the outside front foot, thus making three tracks. A few steps are quite enough at first. It is a strenuous exercise and trying to maintain it for more than a few steps in the beginning is only inviting trouble.

This is something entirely new to your horse and you must be generous in your praise and have great patience in making him understand what you want from him. As it is virtually impossible to learn riding in Australia on a schooled horse, nearly everybody here has to learn on a green horse. If the rider has fully understood what he is trying to teach his horse and is applying the aids correctly it is still possible to achieve what he has set out to do, but he must be

patient and never blame the horse. Always seek the fault with yourself—check your position! The most common fault in trying to shoulder-in is the rider's loss of position—the inside leg going back instead of staying at the girth and looking away from the direction in which he is going.

Another exercise of equal value to further your horse's gymnastic education is quarters-in. You start exactly the same way as you start nearly all two-track work at least in the beginning of the schooling—with a correctly and well ridden corner. Only instead of continuing the corner you keep the flexion you have achieved in the corner and while you are asking your horse to continue to go forward, before you finish the turn your outside leg keeps his quarters in. Your inside leg urges him to go on, the front legs, not crossing, stay on the track while the quarters are in, off the track, the outside hind leg following the track of the inside front leg. This also should only be done for a few steps in the beginning and later on be increased.

But with all those fascinating exercises nibbling on your first two-track work, you must not forget that now and always, your horse must go forward and should not be schooled in the square only. He should continue to be jumped over schooling fences, trotted over cavaletti, taken cross-country, and last but not least, should have a day off a week. Horses like to be horses and are happy to be allowed to be themselves by having a day in the paddock. They resent fussing too much like having seven rugs on, hoods, bandages, etc. Do what has to be done and then leave them alone, they will thank you for it with a happy disposition. They were not created for us, we snatched them away from their freedom to make them our friends, not slaves.

Having nibbled at two-track work as far as shoulder-in and quarters-in, we can increase our demands. Instead of asking for only a few strides, we ask for half way down the long side and then finish off by either returning the horse to the long side straightening him out, or by riding him forward off the

track into a change of rein through the diagonal of half the school.

When practicing quarters-in you must always straighten your horse before reaching the corner otherwise you will invite a falling-in of the quarters through the turn. The other movement out of quarters-in is to ride it in to the track-straight and immediately off into a shoulder-in. The shoulder-in can be carried on into the corner as it will "melt" into the turn to come out straight after completion of the turn. However, these exercises are perhaps a little advanced at this stage, as your horse can easily cheat you if you have no experience and have not developed the necessary feeling in your seat as yet, so if you don't have a schooled person on the ground to correct you, your best bet is once again the sturdy rake and study of your tracks.

Two-track work is the highlight of your work, but must not tempt you to forget to carry on with trying to improve the transitions into the different gaits as well as the transitions from ordinary paces into extensions and vice versa, as well as the beginnings of collection. Beware here!! Do not start at the wrong end without "push", shortening your horse in front and enabling him to fall out behind. The elevation and consequent shortening of the neck which we are aiming for is the RESULT of the true engagement of the quarters NOT THE CAUSE!

The quarters will never engage themselves if you pull your horse's head into "position"; the quarters will simply fall out to become what is known as a leg-goer without back engagement and there are quite enough of those around already!

He will just pull himself along giving the impression that he is broken away behind the saddle—in fact two separate horses—and he will offer you only a four time canter as a result of this, hind-legs dragging along behind instead of bouncing under your weight.

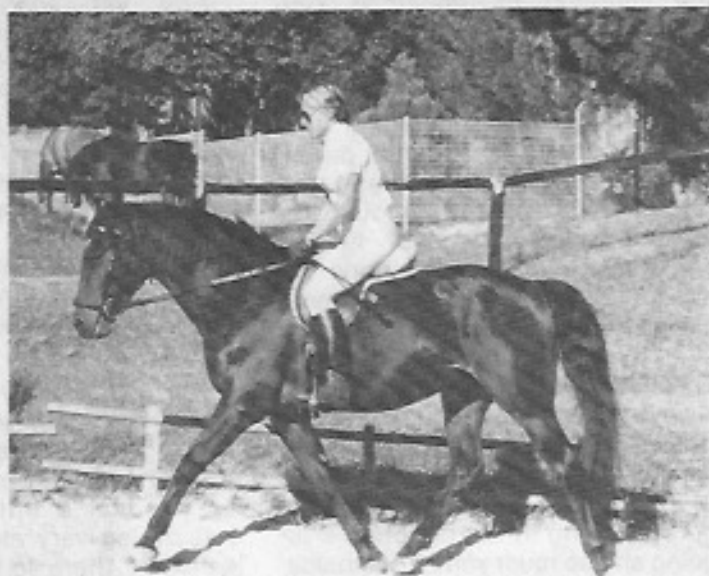
If you do a transition from ordinary to collected pace, the rhythm must not change, only the length and elevation of the stride. In the

collected paces, the strides are shorter but more elevated and therefore should keep the same timing as the longer, flatter stride.

The outline of your horse must be flexible and change with the different paces. In the extended paces, the neck must lengthen and lower to allow the longer strides of the front legs to come down where they are in fact pointing, not fall backwards because the rider did not encourage his horse to lengthen and lower.

Very often the rider, in a misunderstood conception of keeping the horse on the bit, hangs on and his horse starts "climbing". Unfortunately this is very often seen in spectacular photos, the distance between the diagonal on the ground being only two thirds of the diagonal in the air. This is strictly Circus and not a classical extended trot. When you ask your horse to extend you must encourage him to lengthen and lower without surrendering contact (of course, the horse must remain on the bit), his stride should lengthen visibly and he must not run and alter rhythm. It is not a matter of putting more strides in, it is strictly a clear

*Working trot—
balanced but
without collection.*



lengthening of the stride which also becomes flatter, while in ordinary and collected paces the strides are shorter and more elevated and should sparkle with impulsion.

Don't murder impulsion while trying to collect your horse, this has to be done with great tact and very carefully and gradually. It's an almost continuous; check—ease off—push, without ever hang-

ing on or pulling...the emphasis is on the "push", the never ending "push".

Nothing is sadder and more depressing than to watch a so-called Dressage horse executing the collected phase of a test by simply slowing down to a mere crawl which results in all paces being completely out, the extended canter ending up as just an ordinary canter, while the ordinary and collected canter ends up with the horse scratching a hole into the ground standing on its head!

The horse should be bouncing with impulsion and give the feeling of cantering uphill, not into the ground. No "hand work" will rectify this, I cannot repeat it often enough that the hands are merely indicators to signify to your horse what you want him to do with the massive impulsion you have created with your "push".

While we will come later to the halt, I would like to mention a criticism which was passed on one of the Olympic riders in Munich "...not ridden forward enough into the halt".

The desire to ride forward must never leave you and should at all times be clearly visible in your horse—even in the rein-back!

If your horse is going in true collection, the slightest ease-off of your hands plus the bracing of your back will shoot him forward into an extended movement; there is not



Riding forward...a young horse. Forward and down, with active engagement of the hindquarters for correct development.

the slightest hesitation—if you have to kick and kick and kick again, your horse was not collected, merely asleep.

If shoulders-in, quarters-in and the definition of the different paces are quite clear, and your horse has reached the desired amount of collection you can go on to the half pass. This is best done by changing out of the corner and asking him to return to the long side by going forward-sideways. The shoulder in this exercise must always be leading, even if the horse has reached the ultimate of being parallel to the long side. The flexion is around the inside leg with the horse looking in the direction it is going and so must you! Your inside leg is of course on the girth while the outside leg is behind it, determining the amount of sideways movement, while the inside leg determines the forward movement.

It is therefore quite important to carry this out correctly if the rider is not looking in the direction he is going. In the beginning you may choose E or B as your marker after your change out of the corner to make it easy for your horse you keep it more "forward" than sideways". He does not have to be parallel to the long side either, although he must lead with the shoulder, not with the quarters, as this is nothing but an evasion. After having reached the long side you must straighten your horse and change the flexion as you change the position of your legs, as your outside leg now becomes inside leg and vice versa.

Here again as in all your work, don't overdo it and be generous in your praise. At times when you have been particularly pleased with him it does not hurt to get off there and then. He will remember the pleasant finish and try and please you again.

When you do get off, please take both feet out of the stirrups before "gliding off". Any horse can suddenly get a fright and take off dragging you behind, besides it creates an unpleasant pull on the saddle which he already has to suffer when you get on. If you "glide off" it is more pleasant for him and a lot safer for you!

And yet another gymnastic exercise for your horse; the counter canter. Counter canter simply means that you are cantering on the outside leg, maintaining the flexion. What sounds so easy is however very difficult as the horse must be quite supple to maintain it and one has to start this very carefully so as not to cause the horse to free himself from this gymnastic exercise by changing legs.

The easiest way is by starting with riding a 3m. loop away from the long side of the manege. You may at this time exaggerate your leg position a little, taking your outside leg very clearly back and keeping it there so that your horse cannot misunderstand you. The flexion which remains always around your inside leg must be maintained, which means that the horse is actually flexed to the outside.

If you have successfully done the 3m. loops you can gradually increase the loop until you touch X in the big arena. So that this exercise does not become monotonous you also do the loops from the centre line and eventually round a corner by changing diagonally through the school and carrying the counter canter around the first rather generously rounded corner.



Counter canter—while maintaining the canter flexion to the right the horse is turning left—returning to the long side after a loop.

if he has successfully gone around this first corner, maintaining flexion and tracking true, pull up immediately (before you get too greedy) and praise him. Praise is always better than punishment and much longer remembered by your horse.

Naturally as you are practising counter canters, shoulder-in, quarters-in, half pass and transitions, you should not forget that about 50% of your work should be what I call "free work", meaning that we are not in an arena, not on the bit, but on a loose rein, ridden forward, be it at the walk, canter or trot.

When going in this fashion do not let your horse "fall in" or "fall out". Your legs must still be there, you can never relax. When negotiating little things like the wall of a dam, a log, some practice jumps, I like to surrender contact and leave it to him as I believe it keeps a horse mentally alert and interested if he has to make his own decisions. He should not be under constant complete control of his rider. It does not hurt at all to ride on the buckle in extended paces, but you should also ride extended pace with contact forcing the quarters to really engage and "shooting" the horse along. And always in between walk on a loose rein, stroking his neck—your way of saying "thank you" to your friend.

When you "shoot" your horse forward and urge him to go faster and faster, he may just feel playful and kick up—please do not punish him! I consider this a lovable side of horse character, sparkling and happy, and I do not look for a perfect machine, but a happy friend. In fact my horse squeals with delight when we nibble at a forbidden racetrack before a competition or warm up "extended" for the Easter Show in Centennial Park.

True, if you "indulge" your horse, as many people would call this, you are taking a small risk that he may be feeling playful when you want to ride a test, although chances are that he got rid of the "squeal" while warming up, especially if the two of you have a good understanding and particularly if you can

leg; your outside leg keeping the horse going forward and your outside leg controlling the sideways movement. Similar to the half pass, only the degree differs as the horse has to go on a larger circle with his front legs than with his hind legs—larger exactly by the difference between his hind legs and front legs. In the canter pirouette this comes a little closer together through the extreme collection and consequent elevation of the horse. But first things come first so let's perfect the walking pirouette. As we have done it in a rather large half circle to start with, we gradually make this half circle smaller and smaller.

Before you start a half pirouette check with your outside rein and then INDICATE with your inside rein that you want your horse to turn. He must not throw himself against your outside leg and turn around the middle (or worse, around the forehead) and he must be obedient and attentive to your slightest indications. All this of course will only happen if your horse is honestly "on the bit".

This wonderful all embracing phrase really means that he is "on the aids" as there is no such thing as being on the bit without being on the aids or being on the aids without being on the bit!

The degree of training novice, elementary, medium and advanced has nothing to do with this. A novice horse well schooled and ridden can be "on the bit", submissive, obedient and full of impulsion while a so called medium or advanced horse may have smuggled his way up the ladder without being honestly "on the bit". You can read the "tell tale" signs everywhere! For example, in transitions. Like downward from extended to collected canter when horses with wide open, gaping mouths are pulled back into a slower canter which is seldom a collected one. Or you can sense it when riders do not even try to extend for fear their horses will not come back and the whole medium or advanced test is ridden at something between ordinary pace and half asleep.

There are naturally more signs, such as lifting the head and pressing the back away, in up or down transitions, resisting in the rein back, resisting in the move off, and in short generally not doing what the rider asks willingly and instantly while remaining supple and full of impulsion.

If your horse is "on the bit" you can ride on any length of rein, the rein almost being like a stick you can push forward or shorten, and the horse willingly searching for, and accepting the bit wherever you put it. The Grand Prix horse whose head is almost in the vertical position and with a great degree of elevation should nevertheless be able to do a novice test in the correct outline of a novice horse. If his neck is frozen in the elevated position his training was not correct. Do not forget that you are dealing with a living animal and not a machine. His head is not pulled into position but that position is the result of your training.

This part is possibly the hardest to understand and so many good horses fall by the wayside because of being pulled into position with the help of a jawbreaker. However, until Australia has an equestrian centre with trained horses, trained instructors and a Government grant to keep the whole establishment going, (as in all other "horsey" countries) this will continue to happen, and so far an equestrian centre has failed to eventuate here.

I know I am wandering a little away from my theme but adequate instruction belongs very much to "part of the way to the top" so maybe one day Centennial Park will be the Equestrian Centre of the Southern Hemisphere and give our young riders the chance they deserve and are able to get only overseas. Selection must not be a question

of money but material and a centre supported by the Government could make sure this was so. We hope that one day this will all happen and also that a Horse Show, and I mean a real Horse Show, not a Royal Easter Show, will draw crowds of 60,000 as is common overseas. A glamorous spectacle catering to all parts of the horse world; driving, hunting, eventing, jumping and so on. So far we almost had to fight for it all alone with the rare help of our "golden man" Franz Mairinger who put Australia on the international equestrian map.

I suppose we had better get back with it though and try for the beginning of the canter pirouette and the preparation for flying changes.

The canter pirouette requires a high collection in the canter, the horse must almost canter on the spot full of impulsion, retaining the correct footfall. To start your canter pirouette you again check with the outside rein and INDICATE the half turn with the inside rein and once again start a rather large circle as with the walking pirouette. If the horse has done a few strides forward sideways, honestly turning around the quarters, you should ride him straight forward and try for a stride more next time. This will not only make it easier for the horse when learning but will show you without doubt whether your inside leg can hold him forward which is the beginning and end of all riding.

Gradually you can increase the number of strides until you are capable of carrying out the large half canter pirouette which you then gradually tighten until you can turn on the famous saucer of the Spanish riding School!

**THE INFINITE ROAD TO THE TOP
continues with another big lift-out instalment
NEXT MONTH**

THE FLYING CHANGE

To prepare for the flying change you have to school your horse in such a manner that you can canter on from the walk at any place, any time and on either leg, which means literally that you must be able to canter him on in the corner of the arena on the outside leg or in a tight circle on the outside leg. You must be able to ride 10m. circles in the canter without the horse even looking or feeling like breaking ever! I go further still in the preparation as I ask my horse to canter a certain number of strides at a time, say down to two or three, and then walk and then canter on on the other leg and change again through the walk to the other one and so on. If all this works without any trouble then I condition the horse to change at a certain spot, say when going diagonally to change rein and then on reaching the other side like F, M, H or K, walk and canter on as I change the flexion. By keeping the walking paces down to two or three I am instilling the thought in the horse's mind that we will change legs at this point. Eventually instead of bringing him back to the walk I ask him to change in the air by taking my former inside leg clearly back into the new outside leg position changing the flexion at the same time. The former outside leg will slip forward into the new inside leg position by itself. If you have prepared your horse so carefully you should have no trouble getting him to change in the air. Otherwise though, NO HOPE!!!

If you have achieved the ability to execute a flying change at a certain point, you then change at different points. By the way, it is generally accepted that a flying change on to the left leg is the easiest to start off on.

Personally I have not found this so, as by the time I have started the flying changes my horses are

working evenly on both reins, however, there are horses with a clear "chocolate side" and this means mostly that they find it easier to change on the left leg first. If you have achieved the change on to both legs equally well and your changes are correct you can also change after a certain number of strides. "Correct" means quite a lot: (a) that your horse is straight before, during and after the change; (b) that he changes in one stride and not in time instalments (like changing first in front in one stride and then sometimes several strides later with his hind legs or vice versa); (c) that he is correctly flexed to the leading leg.

If you have not achieved that do not try to go on! Go back to walk-canter, canter-walk, counter canter reprises etc. on both reins. However if your flying changes are perfect, then there is no reason why you should not try to change after a certain number of strides. To do this you must make yourself

familiar with the rhythm of the canter stride and start counting to yourself one, one, one... To be extremely conscious of the rhythm is your main requirement and you must concentrate on this. Secondly, you must be a perfectionist with your leg position and the flexion of your horse. The clearer you are in the beginning the finer your aids can become later on—but under no circumstances must your horse be confused with "wishy washy" aids.

Once again if something goes wrong, seek the fault with yourself—99 times out of 100 it is your fault. Start off with say 12 strides and then change—at first just one change again but decidedly after a set number of strides. If you have succeeded then try one more after a set number of strides. It is wise to give yourself plenty of time, say ten to twelve strides to prepare yourself for the next change. If you can do, let us say, five changes every ten strides then start coming



Flying Change...canter truly 'uphill' and the change carried forward. The horse 'tuned in' to the rider.

down in your number of strides but do not be greedy, take your time. It never pays to rush!

Step by step you "count down" and eventually you are down to every fourth stride and if all your other work kept pace and is good, away you go into your first start into the Advanced Test or the Prix St. Georges. Remember here as

always, forward is everything! Do not let your horse dig a hole into the ground while he changes. He must change forward, otherwise he can never be straight.

I will not take you any further on this infinite road to the top but in my next article I shall start to analyse the different dressage tests and their pitfalls and traps for young players, so that you can

ride even your first dressage test with confidence as you will know what it is all about, where the difficulties are and what the judges are looking for,

Once more let me remind you that ABOVE ALL COMES YOUR POSITION and when this is right

CHAPTER 4: How to Ride a Dressage Test

Let's start with the Novice, the one I feel should be the lowest test, the beginning of the ladder. All the unofficial Preliminaries and so on tend to drag the standard of Dressage down, as almost anybody is willing to have a crack at them. If you have not schooled your horse sufficiently to be able to ride a simple Novice test, well you just HAVE to do more work at home and that's all there is to it! (By reasonable Novice test I mean that you should score at least 50% of the marks, which really only means; Sufficient!)

I do feel that sometimes judges are marking far too hard in the lower tests, almost taking delight in "murdering" the poor competitor, but planned Judges' Schools would help this situation.

As in my previous chapters I will not try and teach you how to ride; this cannot be done through the printed word. You can only learn on a horse with a good instructor, and even then it is a lifelong process. I will simply try to analyse the different tests, point out what you must observe to be successful and what the difficulties are.

The best way to prepare yourself for a competition is to draw the test you are going to ride on a sheet of paper, to scale and with all the letters. Then you sit down with your "map" in front of you, the test beside you and pencil in your hand.

Look straight ahead towards C and ride determinedly forward. Should your horse deviate off the centre line, don't try and "steer" back on to it as this will only result in overshooting to the other side. Ride FORWARD on to the centre line, otherwise you will end up doing "brandy loops".

Approaching X you should be quite clear in your mind just how progressive your halt has to be and prepare accordingly. There is no reason why you should not be able to stop right on the marker if you have prepared in time and correctly. The halt should be square and straight of course, but if your horse is nervous and obviously not going to stand still, square or straight anyway, NOW is NOT the time to teach him a lesson; your best bet is to write off the few marks you will lose, (it won't be 10 if your entry was good and your move off wasn't bad) you salute crisply and move off. Leave such incidents mentally behind you and don't brood over them. Tackle the next movement as if nothing has gone wrong!

2. C turn right.

In a Novice test you are not expected to do a very tight turn as your horse could not flex to such a degree, but one does expect to see a smooth turn and not one that throws the horse off the centre line to the other side. The horse should be able to put one or two clearly straight strides in on the short side before commencing the next turn. The footfall must remain two-track through the corner.

If your horse cannot flex enough to negotiate a turn properly, (the

imprints of the hind feet should fall in one line with the imprints of the front feet and not to the side of them), then he is not really up to this test, and will only learn to "fall through the corners". He should learn to flex on large circles first. You will probably say that most judges don't notice that anyway, but that is not the point. YOU must know and if you want to go on with your horse he MUST go correctly.

B Circle 20m diameter.

A 20m circle, not last year's Easter egg! A proper circle at B is right in the middle of the arena with X being the centre point. In other words, you remain 10m away from X while turning the circle. If you draw it on your "map" you will find that it takes you just 4m short of G and D. So you should know exactly where you have to cross the centre line to make a perfect circle. You should just touch the long side exactly at E and leave it again on a continuously rounded line. You must NOT stay on the long side for a few strides, as so many do or neglect to touch it at E. In both cases, it is not what was asked which is an accurate 20m circle, and the judge has every right to mark you down.

3. Ordinary trot sitting.

The mere fact that you are sitting does not mean you can slow down; it still is "ordinary trot" and the tempo must remain unchanged, even though you might find it a bit uncomfortable. The hind feet touch the ground in the footprints of the fore feet.

E turn right, B turn left.

Here again the flexibility of your

LET'S TACKLE THE NOVICE

1. Enter at ordinary trot. Halt, salute, proceed at ordinary walk.

Enter so that you are already straight when approaching the gate.

horse determines where you start the turn, but you must be on a straight line between E and B and stay straight for some strides, crossing the centre line at right angles and not sailing across diagonally as is so often seen.

4. Ordinary trot rising.

Don't forget that as long as it is an ordinary trot the tempo remains the same, not suddenly more animated because you feel more comfortable rising. Circle as in movement No. 2.

5. Ordinary walk at K

Again you prepare your horse in time so that you make this downward transition exactly at K. If it takes you until A before your horse walks, you not only have a very badly schooled horse but you also committed an error of course and the judge would be quite entitled to ring the bell. After all the only demand on your horse's ability is that the movements of the test be

carried out on the markers and correctly, correct circles, corners, dead straight lines. (In other words exactly as asked for in the test.)

Change rein at free walk according to the F.E.I. Reglement is "a pace of rest in which the reins being stretched to their utmost, the horse is allowed complete freedom of his head and neck".

Keeping him on a long rein at the free walk seems somewhat contradictory to me, as you are not actually allowing your horse the complete freedom required in the F.E.I. Reglement; the only way I feel it could be interpreted is that by riding him on a long rein you are perhaps in a better position to keep him straight going across the diagonal.

6. C Ordinary trot. Before reaching M, ordinary canter right.

The strike off point is in the corner to help the novice horse to strike off on the correct leg naturally so make use of it; don't

be in a mad rush to canter on as soon as you trotted, wait until you turn into the corner and then strike off.

7. A circle right 20m.

The circle takes you straight through X and you should touch the long sides 4m past the corner marker on one side and 4m before the corner marker on the other side.

The circle is completed when you return to A and after A you MUST go into the corner and not sail along the just ridden old circle line! This is very important as you are changing rein straight after the circle, so you need to ride a good corner otherwise your turn on to the diagonal from the corner marker is way away!

At X trot—again prepare your horse so that you can trot exactly at X, not before, not after. When reaching M, turning on to the long side canter on. Again you can use the advantage the test has deliberately given a Novice horse here.

9. Same as before.

10. Ordinary trot sitting.

Don't forget, the tempo does not change! Then stroke the horse's neck. This needs to be done only once but for long enough for the Judge to see that contact has been completely surrendered and that your horse is not "hanging on". The outline of the horse should not change and its tempo not increase.

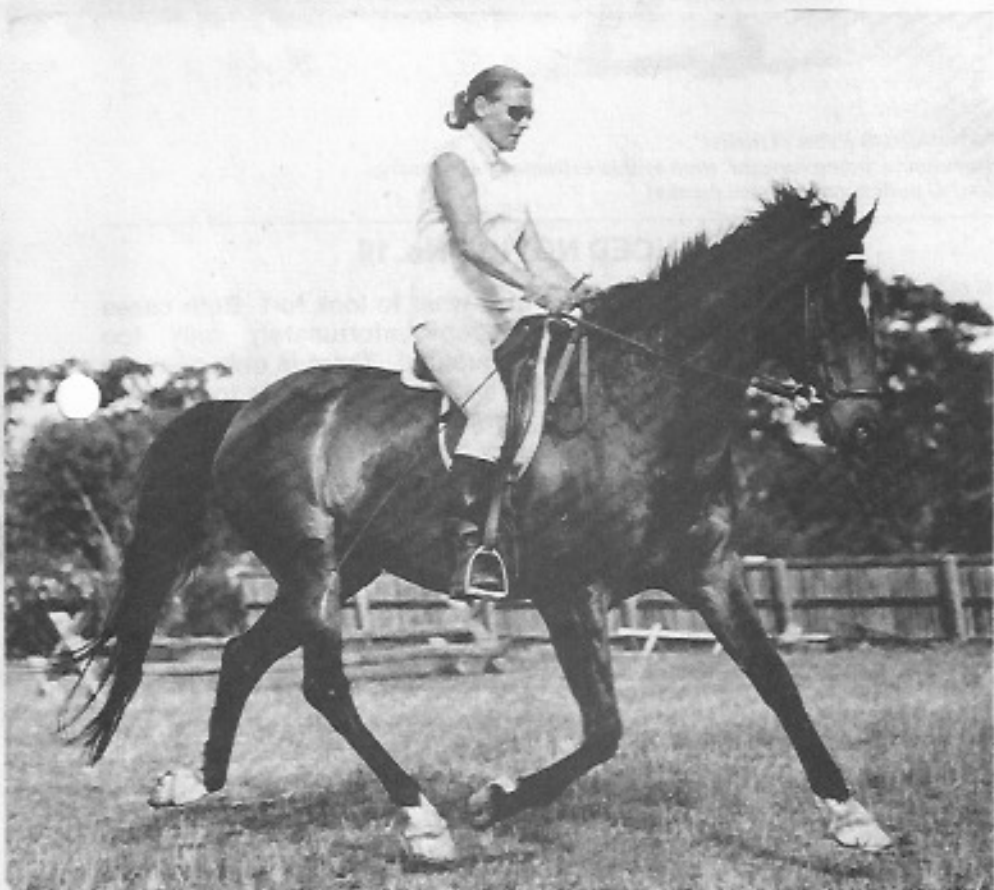
11. Same as before.

12. An ordinary canter right.

Make sure that your horse canters on at A, which means on a straight line, and that he does not put his quarters in, he must go forward and do a decent turn.

13. K Ordinary trot sitting.

When your shoulders are at K your horse should trot, so once again prepare in time! Turn down centre—be careful with your turn, first ride well into the corner so that you have plenty of time to turn on to the centre line. It is better to "undershoot" than "overshoot",



FORWARD IS EVERYTHING!

Riding forward at the strong trot...the moment of suspension.
Note that the diagonals are the same length.

Betty Kiggen Picture

as overshooting the centre line will invariably result in a "brandy-loop". Always look FORWARD so that you will get to the point you should be riding to, prepare in time for the halt once again. When you salute and take the reins in one hand, make quite sure that one rein is not longer, allowing the horse to tilt his nose. After you have finished the salute, allow the horse to chew the reins out of your hand and stretch, then move off FORWARD! After this you may turn and head for the exit. Actually here again we have the term "long rein", but without the free walk, so you just keep a light contact on a long rein while still in the arena. Once you have passed the gate I always dismount immediately and make my horse comfortable without obstructing the next rider's entrance!

You should practise parts of your test at home and once or twice run through the whole test against the time. It is a good idea to check when you are not experienced, whether your horse is dying or running before you submit yourself to the critical eyes of a judge. All in all your horse should present a happy picture, or better still your combination should. It will if you are in harmony, relaxed and happy. Your horse should be obedient but not timid or nervous, should be supple without demonstrating this with bucks, and above all, should go forward and not dig a hole in the ground.

Neither the spectators or judges should in any way worry you, this is merely a testing ground for you and your horse on your road to the top, so don't let anyone harass you or let your nerves get the better of you. After all, it is only a sport, a hobby and meant to give pleasure, not to make ourselves and our horses' unhappy and miserable.

I have so often seen grim faced riders warming up their horses, looking as if they hate every moment of it. Naturally you must concentrate when you are in the arena, but that does not mean you cannot enjoy the ride, and it does not hurt at all to let your horse know that you are pleased with him by giving him a gentle stroke along the neck.

Learn your test by heart, even though you are allowed to have a caller, it does not pay to be lazy here, as your attention should be on riding your horse to the best of your ability and not on listening to your caller. You must know the

test so well that it feels like driving home when you are riding it. If you don't have to think about it, it just FLOWS and all your attention and concentration is on the horse.

Hold your head high and ride forward—good luck!



FORWARD IS EVERYTHING!
*Sometimes 'going forward' even at this extreme is necessary...
but NO pulling on the reins please!*

ADVANCED NOVICE No. 19

A test with a few more movements and slightly more difficult than the Novice test.

While you entered the Novice at the rising trot, you now enter sitting, which gives you a much better chance to keep your horse straight on the centre line.

2. The circle has been cut to 15m which means that it takes you exactly to the quarter line instead of to the opposite long side. It also means that your horse must flex better so that he can track true on the smaller circle line. If he crosses his hindlegs, falls in with the shoulder, (in other words, is not flexed correctly) then you have to do some homework. It is no good trying to go on if your basic work is faulty. Please don't think that winning means everything, it might only mean that the others were worse or that the judges had no

idea what to look for! Both cases happen unfortunately only too frequently! There is only one way to success and that is to be completely honest with yourself and your trainer and not try and cut any corners. You will pay for it later!

3. Large half pirouette to the left.

This is the introduction to the half pirouette in the walk that you will find in all tests to come, right up to Grand Prix. Very sensibly in this test, nothing more is asked for than a large half pirouette with allows you to school your horse in the correct way. He must be kept at an even walking rhythm, the quarters describing approximately a 2m circle. If you stick to that size you should of course have returned to the long side before H. Don't forget to change the flexion when you have completed the large half pirouette. Your trot

should be evenly established by the time you are going into the corner, just a fraction better than in the Novice.

4. Reins in one hand.

It does not state in the test in which hand but it stands to reason that the judge wants to see clearly, so you must drop your inside hand in a completely relaxed way. Any tension in the rider will show up clearly in a tense hand.

5. Ordinary walk, ordinary trot sitting and ordinary canter left.

In other words the transition from the walk to the canter is progressive as a few trotting steps are allowed and as it makes it possible for you to still canter on in the corner, you may as well take advantage of this.

6. Circle 20m.

The same as in the Novice—make sure that you touch the long sides at the right places (4m before or after the corner marker) that you go through X and that you remain on a continuously rounded line with correct flexion.

7. Show some lengthening of stride.

After completing the corner

when your horse is straight again, you ask him to lengthen his stride. You do not increase the number of strides and let your horse run, but you must clearly lengthen his stride. You ask him to shorten his stride again before you reach the next corner, that is all that is required at this stage, as it is not yet an extended movement, only the beginning of it.

7. Serpentine one loop of 5m.

The very mild beginning of the counter canter. By taking your horse away from the long side at the corner marker and riding a loop which takes you on to the quarter line between X and E, you must keep the flexion to the left at all times and keep your horse straight, don't let it offer you a two-track movement.

9. Change rein—approaching X ordinary trot sitting and at X ordinary canter right.

The most important thing is once again to keep your horse straight, to bring it back to the trot in time to change the flexion for the strike off at X precisely and not 10m behind X. This is the increased degree of difficulty in this test, that you have to do the strike off at a marker and not simply "before M".

10. Ordinary trot at B.

So let the transition take place at B exactly if possible and turn in time to get yourself properly on to the centre line without "brandy loops"!

11. Ordinary Walk.

Make sure that your horse goes forward into the walk, that you don't load the forehead by pulling back and therefore allowing him to swing his quarters out to avoid their engagement in the down transition.

12. Here we meet again with the free walk on a long rein.

The F.E.I. regulation describes the free walk as a pace of rest in which, the reins being stretched to their utmost, the horse is allowed complete freedom of his head and neck. As a long rein is stipulated

here, you are expected to have a light contact and not surrender the reins completely. The F.E.I. makes no demands as to the length of stride, however some judges here expect an extended walk. To avoid confusion it would be easier if the national tests would follow the F.E.I. rules more closely. Movements 12-19 are as in the movements 2-9

20. Again sitting trot down the centre line.

Halt at G, salute and once more leave the arena at a free walk on a long rein. As it is asked for in this test you have to abide by it—all in all it is a very good test, well thought out and a sensible preparation for the next step.

THE ELEMENTARY TEST NO. 25

I shall not repeatedly remark on movements which I have already analysed, only movements which are newly introduced in each higher test, or where the degree of difficulty has been increased.

In this Elementary test we find for the first time collected and extended paces which means your horse must have been schooled to a much higher standard than the Novice horse. Do not take this too lightly, it is indeed a big step.

2. As the F.E.I. regulation states for the collected trot: "the horse's steps are shorter but he is lighter and more mobile". This is a tall order but quite clear, so do not be misled and try and pull your horse together—he has to be PUSHED together and must show shorter and more elevated steps while remaining light in hand. There has to be a clear and visible difference between the ordinary trot and the collected trot, it is not a slower and "half asleep" pace!

Unfortunately there hardly ever is an Elementary horse which shows any collection, most of them keep trotting their merry way around the arena. If yours should be one of them, don't compete in a test at this level until you do your homework!



A correctly ridden corner...the base for future collecting. Note that the inside hind foot follows the inside front foot exactly.

3. The circle is now only 10m diameter, getting closer to the ultimate requirement of a volte in the higher tests (6m diameter). The flexion of your horse has to be increased to cope correctly and rider and judge should be clearly aware of the increased demands.

4. Extended trot.

As in the small arena you don't have very much room to develop a responsible extended trot, your horse has to be very responsive indeed to your aids. Here again you asked for the extension as soon as your horse has completed the corner and is straight on the diagonal. As stated by the F.E.I.: "The horse covers as much ground as possible. He lengthens his stride, remaining on the bit with light contact. The neck is extended and, as a result from great impulsion from the quarters, the horses uses his shoulders, covering more ground at each step without his action becoming higher".

You execute your half halt before reaching K so that you are doing an ordinary trot at K and not miles after.

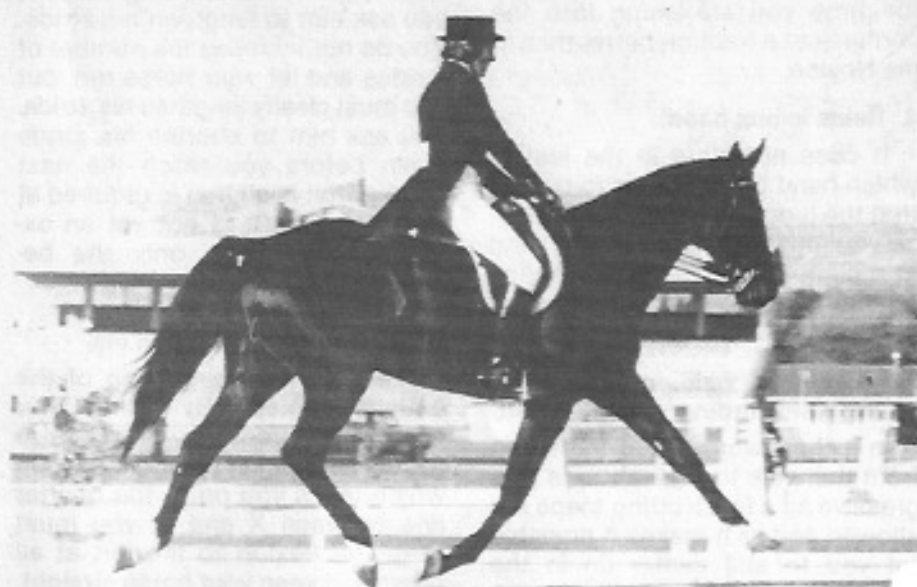
5. Change rein at extended walk.

Again I shall quote the F.E.I. Reglement: "The horse should cover as much ground as possible, without haste and without losing the regularity of his steps. The hind feet touch the ground clearly in front of the foot prints of the front feet. The rider lets the horse stretch out his head and neck without, however, losing contact, the head being carried in front of the vertical".

Once more you come back to the ordinary walk just before H so that your horse is doing the ordinary walk just before H so that your horse is doing the ordinary walk at H.

6. Half pirouette to the right.

The horse should turn smoothly maintaining the exact cadence and sequence of the footfall of the walk. The inside hind foot forms the pivot and should return to the same spot each time it leaves the ground. If this foot is not raised and returned to the ground as the other hind foot the pace is no



An extended trot...the horse is completely relaxed and yet going with everything truly forward. The frame is lengthened and this is the moment of suspension, when all four feet are off the ground. Jackpot, competing and winning the Australian Title at Expo '75 in Adelaide.

longer regular."

The proper half pirouette is much harder than the large half pirouette of the advanced Novice. If your horse's quarters are not properly engaged you will invariably end up being "grounded" or turning around the middle, either one will do nothing to further the training of your horse or yours either for that matter.

7. Ordinary canter left direct from the walk.

And it does mean just that, your horse has to strike off from the walk, without any trotting steps whatsoever. This again is a further step towards the higher tests, where eventually you will be asked to canter on from the rein-back. If your horse cannot canter on from the walk, you should really not be competing in this test. It is not a question of "giving it a go", as one so often hears, it is a way of gradually going up through tests which have been suitably selected to make sensible schooling of your horse possible. Even if your horse should have won himself out of a lower test and you know very well that he is not ready for a higher test, then go on competing in the

lower tests H.C. until your schooling has caught up with his grading.

8. Loop 8m.

The same as in the advanced Novice, only taken another 3m towards X. Clearly observe the flexion, if you cannot maintain the counter canter you are not ready!

9. Canter on a long rein.

This naturally should not present you with any problems if your horse has been correctly schooled.

10. Extended canter half way around the arena.

It means of course that you are not required to go into the corner the way you are expected in the collected paces. To avoid confusion I quote once again from the F.E.I. reglement: "At collected paces the horse must describe one quarter of a circle of approximately 3m radius. At ordinary and/or extended paces, the horse must describe one quarter of a circle of approximately 6m radius". This still sounds pretty hard in the small arena and is indeed not easy, but as you start preparing to come back to the ordinary canter as you are rounding the corner, your stride

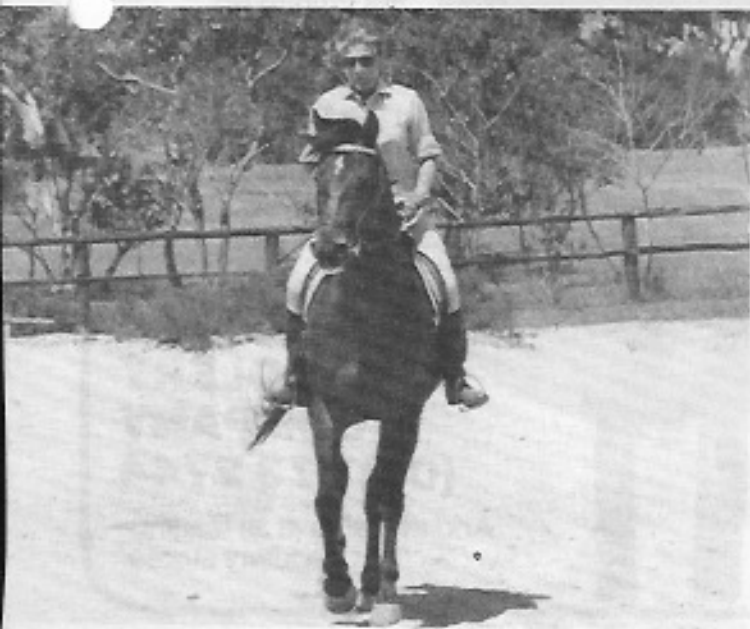
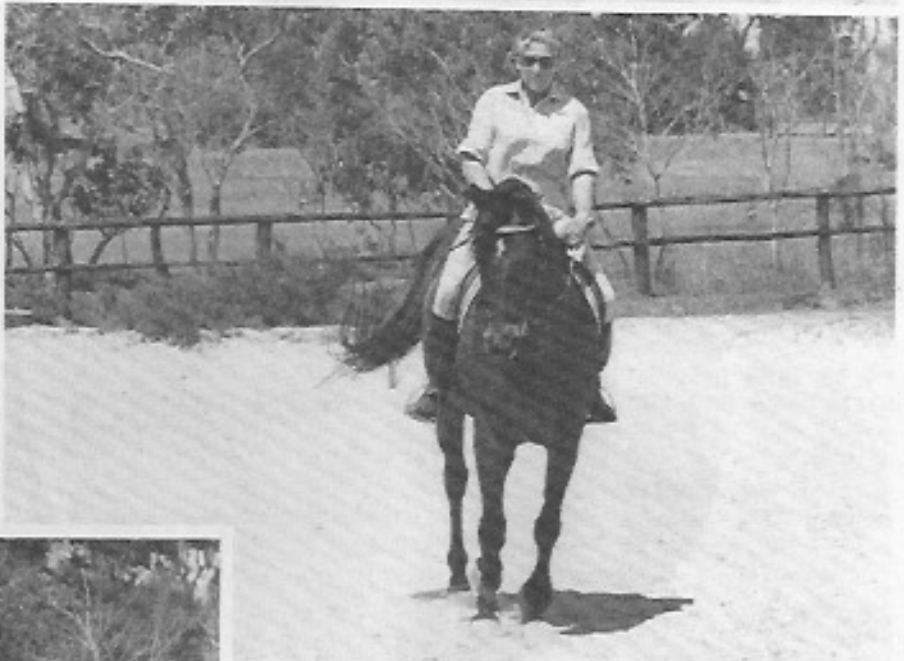
is beginning to shorten and you should be able to negotiate it quite comfortably. There has to be a clear difference in the length of stride and in the outline of your horse.

11. Serpentine 3 loops with simple change of leg on the centre line.

The simple change of leg is done through the walk, after one or two well defined walking steps the horse strikes off again on the other leg. The horse should be straight before being flexed to the new leading leg. The changes must be smooth, the horse completely submissive and going forward, not fighting the down transitions or throwing his quarters against the inside leg anticipating the strike off.

To ride any test is not as easy as it may look. Carefully examine the test you intend to ride, draw your "map" and be honest with yourself. You are NOT schooling your horse if you let him two-track about a 10m circle or if you pull his head in to give the impression of a "collected" horse. You may be able to fool the judges and still score, but for what? In the end you are only cheating yourself and all the blue ribbons in the world won't give you a correctly schooled horse which can go on, so beware of the temptation: "to give it a go".

TO SCHOOL A HORSE IS THE GREATEST DISCIPLINE OF ALL!



Top Picture.

The Half Pass to the left...the horse must be flexed around the rider's inside leg.

Picture Above:

Half Pass right...again the horse flexed around rider's leg and clearly looking in the direction he is going.

Picture, Left:

The Half Pass at the canter, with the horse flexed in the direction in which he is going.

**NEXT MONTH...
MEDIUM TEST No. 35**

MEDIUM TEST NO. 35

You may present your horse in the snaffle still, which is wonderful and I would certainly take advantage of it, as later on you MUST compete in a double bridle. You also compete for the first time in the large arena, which is also wonderful and gives you so much more opportunity to show off your horse's paces. If you should have been in the bad habit of using a caller up to now, the time has come to be on your own, as all F.E.I. tests must be performed by memory, so you must get used to handling that.

1. All collected trots are "Sitting", so here you have an easy entry as you are sitting while entering and again moving off sitting. This provides a wonderful opportunity to present a straight horse!

The turn to the left should be $\frac{1}{4}$ of a volte, so don't turn too soon, there must be a straight line before you reach the corner.

2. Shoulder-in between H and E.

Continuing the corner until the shoulder is off the track you then start your shoulder-in movement until your shoulders have reached E where you ride your horse forward and on ONE track on to the circle line (8m). The flexion is maintained throughout the whole movement until after the corner at the end of the shoulder-in movement. When you have completed the circle you once again ride just that little bit further until the shoulder is off the track, and continue the shoulder-in movement once again until it melts into the corner at the end of the long side.

This is by no means easy and to carry it out correctly for good marks, your horse had indeed to be supple, submissive and truly in front of you.

When you have completed the circle you once again ride just that little bit further until the shoulder is off the track, and continue the shoulder-in movement once again until it melts into the corner at the end of the long side.

3. The only "relaxation" is the length of the short side, where your horse may go straight, because as soon as you have ridden the

corner with correct flexion, you have to start the half pass at X. It makes it a little easier if you arrive just a shade before X on the centre line to give yourself enough time to unhurriedly straighten your horse and then flex it to the other side and ride half pass to M. Although the definition is that the horse be parallel to the long side, the shoulder should always be a shade in advance. Under NO circumstances must the quarters lead. Returning to the long side at M means once again a straight horse before the change of flexion to the left.

4. The shortside to catch your breath or rectify a lost position, a well ridden corner as the correct preparation for the next movement, the extended trot. Turning on to the diagonal you wait until he is straight and then ask him to extend. If your horse is going correctly you will be able to sit deep, in fact you will practically be sucked into the saddle and the extended trot becomes a delight to ride as well as a criterion for the judges.

5. Same as before, a demanding trotting session in this test.

6. About the only break you get—rising to the extended trot.

7. At F collected trot again, and your horse must come back from the extended trot without any hesitation and maintain impulsion.

E turn right, X halt. After you have ridden him forward into the halt and kept him attentive, you indicate that you want to rein back, count his steps and firmly ask him to canter on. This should be done without any trotting steps. Counting the steps back, you do not wait until he has completed the fifth but give him the aid to canter on just before, so that he will commence the canter directly after the completion of the five steps. This takes a bit of practice and is not as easy as it may sound. At no stage should your hands pull back for the reinback, just close them and do not let the movement cut forwards.

8. Track to the right.

Make quite sure that your horse is cantering on one track, particularly as you are turning on to

the centre line. The straightness of your canter is very apparent to the judges, so YOU have to be sure. At X a circle right, bringing you back to X with a little bit to spare so that you have plenty of time to execute a correct simple change of leg. Your horse must be straight and not fall into the next circle while striking off. Hold him well forward in all these transitions.

9. Extended canter—at long last you are doing this in the big arena and really able to ask your horse to extend. Once again wait until he is straight after the corner and then extend to the best of his ability, bringing him back to the collected canter before K so that at K he is cantering collected and able to execute a beautiful corner. On the other long side, ordinary canter with the stroking of the neck and again a transition to the collected canter—let it be clear, don't hobble along at a nondescript pace.

10. E turn right, B turn left.

Now you can show how well your horse is schooled. Can you match the turn on to the straight line between E and B with the turn at the counter or do you have to sail away from X to maintain it?? If your horse is not schooled well enough it looks better if you adjust your first turn to the one in the counter canter, it presents a better picture than one tight and one large turn.

11 and 12. Same as before.

13 and 14. **Half pirouettes.** This time the hindquarters not describing a large half circle but a tight turn, maintaining the foot fall of the walk and correct flexion.

15. Change rein at extended walk.

The horse should cover as much ground as possible, the footprints of the hind feet clearly overstepping the footprints of the front feet. Head and neck stretched without surrendering contact.

It does not mention in my copy of the test how to leave the arena, but a safe bet is that it will be at the free walk on a long rein....

WHICH TEST?

The very first of the F.E.I. tests, described by the Federation as "a competition of medium difficulty". It comprises exercises to show the horse's submission to all the demands of the execution of classical equitation, and a standard of physical development which will enable him to carry them out with suppleness and lightness and without unnecessary effort.

Everything in this world is relative, including the statement that this is a test of medium difficulty. If you are correctly riding Grand Prix already then of course it is only a medium difficulty, but if you just venture out to ride your first F.E.I. test then this is a test of quite formidable difficulties and you had better not underestimate it!

2. Enter at collected canter.

First of all make sure you have ample room for your entry. You should have a clear 20m around the arena, however you don't always have it here due to circumstances beyond the control of the organising body. It does not really matter as long as you have enough room to have your horse straight before you actually pass through the gate. It gives you a very poor start if you enter practically turning on to the centre line.

At X you have to halt from the canter—a tall order, an instantaneous but not abrupt stop. The horse should stand motionless and attentive, the weight evenly distributed over all four legs, ready to move off at the slightest indication.

After saluting you move off at the collected trot and begin a very strenuous trotting session. As not stated otherwise every trotting movement is "sitting".

3. Down centre a circle 8m to the left leaves you exactly 2m short of the long side, which is easier to gauge than the 8m.

4. As soon as you have completed the circle you begin the two-track to H. You maintain the flexion from the circle but make quite sure that your horse does not lead with the quarters when you start the half pass.

5. **ordinary trot—collected trot.** It must be clear what you are doing, it is NOT just a matter of going slower. I feel I cannot repeat this often enough because when judging you are painfully aware of the "dying" trot movements of some horses.

6 and 9. Same as before.

10. Turn right, halt, rein back 5 steps, proceed at collected trot.

This is much easier than the canter strike off after the reinback as both movements are diagonal and the transition can be perfect if you take care.

11. Collected walk.

This is the first time collected walk is demanded, a difficult movement. It is slightly shorter than the ordinary walk but shows greater mobility. The hind feet touch the ground behind the foot prints of the fore feet, the steps should be higher with all joints bent more markedly. Sometimes you see horses who have a naturally good free walk just striding along within the imprints of the fore feet. This is incorrect and should be marked accordingly.

12-15. Has been analysed previously.

16. Collected canter left. S track to the left.

You must make sure that your horse is absolutely straight in the strike off and that you canter on when your shoulders are above I. Then you continue to ride a straight line towards S, turning left the same way as you would take a corner (1/4 volte). The moment your horse is straight again on the long side you ask him for ordinary canter. Once again, your horse must strike out more forward and cover more ground as in the bouncer collected canter with its shorter stride.

18. On two tracks.

Again beware and not let your horse lead with the quarters. He must be perfectly straight before you take him off the long side, shoulder first for the two track to X. There is plenty of time for that if you have ridden a good corner,

the best preparation for all movements.

X change of leg.

If well executed it seems to be all one flowing movement, the straightening of your horse and the change of leg in the air with the simultaneous change of flexion and the start of the two-track to the right to M.

20. Change rein at extended canter.

A welcome movement before your pirouettes, as it gives you the chance to activate your horse's quarters as you extend him and carefully maintain the activity when taking him back to the collected canter.

21. Proceed to L, half pirouette to the right.

The half pirouette should take about three canter strides to execute, and as there is hardly a horse in the world who can execute it on the famous saucer of the Spanish Riding School, you will note that the half circle the hind legs are describing will have to go to the right of the line, as the left will go to the left, as will later on in the full pirouette.

Arriving back at K, you should change the leg forward on a straight and then ride the corner, your horse must not fall into the turn as he changes.

22. Same.

23. Down centre line and circle left at 10m at counter canter.

As you are on the right leg you maintain the flexion to the right as you are riding the circle to the left, arriving back at X your horse once again is straight for one moment before executing the change of leg in the air when you change the flexion to the left and start the circle to the right. Returning to X again you change the leg back to the right and continuing on the centrelines you turn right at C to go towards your first counter changes.

25. Five changes of leg every 4th stride.

Knowing the length of your horse's stride you should be able

to put the changes so on the diagonal that your first and last change is an equal distance away from the corner marker. This makes a much more polished performance and is not very hard to work out.

26. The same applies here of course, only you have to be more careful when you start as you change every third stride. The changes should be fluent, just another canter stride, no contortions of rider or horse. There should be no deviation from the straight line.

The Author, on Jackpot, with Colonel Nybalus, President of the F.E.I. Dressage and International Judge, after winning the three top tests at the 1978 Australian National Dressage Titles.

The slight "canterflexion" changes of course, every time the horse changes the leg, but this does NOT mean that his legs don't track absolutely true on one straight line!

27. MF Extended canter.

Your horse will be happy to lengthen neck and stride once more and you should be able to produce a more animated collected canter after the "refreshment" to the extended movement.

28. A down centre line—L Halt rein back 5 steps—canter right.

As already analysed, there must be no trotting steps before the strike off, your horse should flow into the canter straight from the rein back, and he must be STRAIGHT!

29. As before.

A very nice test to ride, however it should not be attempted if you are not sure that your horse has mastered all the new difficulties that face him in it. He should be light and submissive and full of impulsion and you should be able to put up a memorable performance, not struggle through.

While the National tests are more or less designed to guide your training, give you an assessment of your horse's ability, here you start the real competition. Here you ride to be able to rub shoulders with the Best one day. This is the beginning of true competition in my book.

Treat this test with respect, it is much harder than you may think. Sit down and analyse it the way I



have done and ask yourself honestly if your horse is ready for it.

If you cannot carry out the new hard movements like collected walk, half pirouette at the canter and the counted flying changes, then it does not make any sense to compete as you are really only riding medium level.

The three F.E.I. tests are the ULTIMATE in Dressage and should not be dragged down with a mediocre performance, they should be a delight to watch, a delight to judge and most of all a delight to ride for the competitor.

Do not forget the first Commandment in Riding:

RIDE YOUR HORSE FORWARD AND STRAIGHT.

Grand Prix Riding starts with going forward and tracking true.

Let's start at the beginning: what does tracking true actually mean? It means that your horse's feet follow each other on the same line, the right hind foot follows the right front foot and the left hind foot follows the left front foot.

They may overstep, cover or fall short of the imprint of the front foot, but they must not step to either side of it. This does not only apply to a straight line, but also to the rounded line, the "corner".

When you set out to start serious training you must make yourself familiar with the feeling you experience when your horse is going straight and how it feels when it is *not* tracking true, which means either falling in or out in relation to your line, dropping the shoulder in the corner or on a circle line.

At first you will be unable to feel it, and the best way to develop the feeling in your seat for this is either to have someone on the ground who knows enough to see, or if you can not enlist any help, look for a sandy place and start raking and reading the hoofprints of your horse. In time you will get very sensitive to the footfall of your horse and the slightest "slide" will make you feel distinctly uncomfortable.

If your horse is young and green, or if he has been raced or ridden badly, then you will often find that he is crooked even on a straight line. Take great care to make him straight and don't ask him to go on any circle smaller than 20m diameter. If he is bent to the right he will find any rounded line to the left extremely difficult.

Patience is needed if you are to succeed, as this is not simply a disobedience but a physical impossibility for him. Always imagine someone asking you to do something you have never done—like walking on your hands and feet while keeping your knees straight... regardless of any force your trainer may apply, if your back has not learned to flex sufficiently, you would not be able to carry it out! While your legs are opposite each other when riding on a straight line, your outside leg must go a little behind the girth when riding on a rounded line. It can prevent the horse from falling out with the quarters, if your inside leg is capable of actively engaging your horse's inside hindleg and encouraging it to step forward instead of sideways and across.

The correct tracking of this inside hindleg means that the horse will have to life and bend a little more, as the step of the inside hindleg is just that little bit shorter, so it means gymnastic exercise, and your horse will not do this on his own accord. So the rider has to stay "tuned-in" all the time to make the horse step forward and underneath the combined weight, the horse will always and automatically cross out with his inside hindleg, as he then does not have to flex in his body or bend his joints more than necessary.

With a green young and stiff horse it is best to trot and walk alternately; the canter should not be attempted until the horse has been under saddle for a sufficient length of time to find his balance again under the rider's weight and to be relaxed enough and simply to carry out the trotting exercises without trouble. He must also be fit enough to tackle the canter, as in the canter, one leg carries all the weight at times, and if his muscle

tone is not good and his joints are not firmly supported, you could do permanent damage as is so often done in the racing world, when 18 month old horses are broken in by 15 stone breakers.

If he is ready to be cantered, then he must be cantered at a medium canter, so that his hind-legs are really actively engaged and not just dragging behind in a sort of four beat gait.

How long can all this take? I would say between six weeks and six months, depending on the problems you had when you started.

An Ex-Racehorse of mine was mentally and physically so "muddled-up" and had such wrong muscular development, that I spent two years just riding her on a completely loose rein to make her forget her unhappy past, to let the muscle under her neck disappear and build up the right ones, to allow her to get confident about the bit again. It was well worth it, she went on to become the leading Dressage horse in Australia.

Even if making the foundation takes a long time, if you have a good horse, it is well worth it, as it teaches you a lot of things you may have never otherwise learned, and you have built such a solid foundation that you can put a skyscraper on top! Forever changing horses is not the answer, it is only an excuse for your failure as a trainer and rider. You are only wasting time by trying one horse after the other and discarding it... doing this you spend years looking for the right horse...years you could have spent training ONE horse correctly.

There are thousands of people who change horses like shirts, but they never get anywhere, and if you look around you will find that the top riders *stick* to their horses and simply keep on working.

Success comes from correct and persistent schooling, from the friendship and understanding you develop over the years, it does not come from searching for the magic "right" horse, or force, or inconsistent work.

Avoid all tension when working your horse, use your head when

you strike resistance, because you will teach your horse to fight if you keep fighting and punishing him all the time—teach him co-operation instead.

At this stage of training the voice is an invaluable training aid, if your horse will walk, trot and canter to the voice command, you have the best opportunity to make the "touch buttons". When you are trotting and want to come back to a walk, simply say "walk" and sit down, stretch and close your hands taking great care not to pull back or hang on, and your horse will carry out the transition all by himself and more correctly than he could if you would pull him back and load the forehead. If you give him enough time he will use his hind-legs to brake, as he used to do by himself, long before you ever came on board. Remember: it is never the horse that hangs-on, it is always the Rider! Once you have taken up the rein with a firm contact and if you start to pull him up, the horse cannot get away from your hands, he HAS to hang on and consequently load the forehead, it is you, who must remember that an aid must remain an indication only, it is you and only you who can break the deadly pull...

What is Dressage?

The word "Dressage" is often misunderstood, it simply means: "training of a horse in obedience and deportment; execution by horse of precise movements in response to its rider." So says the definition of the new (1978) Oxford dictionary. Looking up the famous 1895 Larousse French dictionary, the word Dressage appears—with the definition: "action, maniere de dresser".

How often have I heard the condemning words: Sissy Sport, boring...and yet without doubt, Dressage is the most demanding equestrian discipline, as it demands more and longer periods of concentration, and a high degree of suppleness and sensitivity in rider and horse.

It is impossible to explain Dressage without going a little into its history.

From the beginning of time until very recently, man could not have existed without the horse. It helped him get food and filled a vital role as a riding horse in wars, even including the last world war. It was the training of the horse for war that was the very beginning of Dressage, as only a schooled horse was of any service to a warrior. The better trained the horse, the greater the chances of survival...it was as simple as that.

In Socrates' pupil Xenophon we find the founder of the Hippologie, his books "Peri Hippikes (the art of Riding) and "Hipparchikos" (the duties of a leader of Ridersmen) are the oldest known books on this subject, and still valid.

There was another Greek before him, Simon, who had also written about the art of riding, but this work was destroyed and we know of him only through Xenophon.

Xenophon, as the son of a wealthy patrician in Athens, was obliged to keep a horse and to ride it at festivals in honour of Athen's goddess Pallas Athene, as well as riding his horse in war. The reliefs by Phidias in the Parthenon demonstrate these festivals beautifully.

His life was devoted to horses, so it was only natural that he wrote "instructions" for other young and wealthy Athenians, who were obliged to keep and train their horses. Thus the world was left the very first book about the art of Riding. His teaching remained valid through the centuries...it was written in 369 before Christ...and even today, almost two and a half thousand years later, it is still one of the classics.

Other horsemen have followed him, though only a few and very much later. Names like Caraciolo (16th Century), Newcastle (1675), Gueriniere (1751), Seeger (1865), Seidler (1880), Steinbrecht (1885), Caprilli (1907), Heydebreck (1935), Josipovich (1945).

Their teaching influenced the development of the Art of Riding as did others, sometimes in the wrong direction, like Baucher, who at first searching and erring, became a true artist in the saddle. Baucher became l'Hottes' teacher

and friend, warning his pupil imploringly from his deathbed: "never to let his hands work backwards..." A warning that should be prominently displayed in every arena and never, never be forgotten!

There were others, like Italian Fredirico Griso, who recommended the cruelest and crudest methods to get obedience—in fact he went as far as to suggest that a wildcat, tied onto a stick, mouth and claws free, be placed against the croup of a resisting horse. His pupil Pignatelli became Director of the Riding Academy in Naples, and although a product of Griso, he was the first to start thinking along the lines of animal psychology.

Maybe it was the cruel methods he learned as Griso's pupil that made him aware of the fact that mere muscle was not everything, and that the rider had to be able to understand his horse's emotions and character to obtain satisfactory results. It was after all, one's own life that depended on the horse's training in war!

Pignatelli's master pupil, Pluvinel, went to Paris to the Court of Louis XIII and built the Riding School in the Tuilleries. The necessity of having manageable mounts in war-torn Europe, helped Dressage, and only in Europe Dressage developed.

Pluvinel's book "Manege Royal" stimulated the German Pinter von der Au to develop the balanced seat. The standing position, so far in use on account of the armour worn by the knights, had been in use until then.

With the invention of this seat—in use today—an enormous step forward had been made, as only through this a positive influence over the horse was possible and it enabled one of the greatest Masters to influence the Art of Riding dramatically in a positive way.

It was Francois Robichon de la Gueriniere, Louis XIV stablemaster and author of the classical book, "Ecole de Cavallerie". He recognised the importance of relaxation and submission, the purity of gaits and the necessity of gymnastically exercising the horse. In fact, he invented the "shoulder-in".

Since the days of Griso, Vienna had schooled the specially Lippizaner in a primitive wooden riding hall, then, stimulated by the French Master Gueriniere, Vienna rose to her heights—Fischer von Erlach built the beautiful "castle for white horses", that has no equal in the world. Then, not only the court enjoyed the glory and beauty of the colourful demonstrations the masters gave, but millions of enthusiasts from all over the world have watched the dance of the white stallions in Fischer von Erlach's magnificent "castle".

The masters were also anxious to find more ways to train horses for use in the different cavaleries of Europe. A German, Ludwig von Huhnersdorf, wrote the book about how to train in the most natural way and in turn prompted the great riders of that time to come to recognise the methods valid today.

Names like Weyrother, Seidler, Seeger, Oeynhausen, Steinbrecht and Josipovich became the masters of their time, producing pupils and followers in Meixner (Spanish Riding School), Bros. Stensbeck, Count Westphalen, Walzer, Watjen, Burkner and Seuning. In spite of the fact that these masters demonstrated the right and classical way with great success, the world kept producing riders of great talent who went on the easy "Circus path". In James Fillis, the world was presented with a genius, a man who could do anything with horses, and who consequently found a lot of admirers and followers. Germany at the same time produced Plizner, an acrobat in overbending, who ill treated his horses by spurring their flanks bloody so that they had to be packed with ice on return to their stables. His horses presented a pitiful picture...tense and frightened, they were unable to collect or even work harmoniously.

So after mistakes, misunderstandings, false and correct roads, truly great masters and purely magicians (as every art seems doomed to have) Dressage took a very big step by making its first appearance at the Olympic Games in 1912.

The first Committee ever to tackle a task of such magnitude, did so with great tact and the awareness of the great responsibility they carried by laying down their demands based on solid training and a degree of difficulty possible for all participating nations.

Correctly, Dressage was seen as the very base for all equestrian disciplines, and to insure correct training, five jumps had to be taken in the canter. High school movements were allowed, but not taken into consideration. Four flying changes had to be executed in a straight line, without stipulating the number of strides between the changes. Ten Nations competed, eight European and two American.

With the birth of the Equestrian Olympic Games, a sad light was cast upon the method of judging and was there to stay!

The first world war brought all Riding competitions to a crashing halt and afterwards a sad change took place; the sensible demands of the first Games were abandoned, the demands were increased and became more specialised, the jumps removed from the competition. While several riders were able to compete in all three disciplines in 1912, it now became more specialised.

In 1928, Germany's brilliant rider Freiherr von Langen won the Olympic gold medal in Dressage, also competing in the Showjumping.

The Olympic tests started to have a decisive influence over the road Dressage was to take. Once again a war brought riding to a standstill, only to be started again with even stricter demands on horse and rider. The new tests make it virtually impossible for all but a few specialists from the "old Riding Nations" to compete; the young countries are virtually out of it, with their only chance for Olympic equestrian success being to compete in Showjumping or Eventing, where the talent and big heart of the horse with a balanced rider could give the "young" countries an almost equal chance. Indeed, we find winners from all Nations in Showjumping and Eventing but not in the Dressage, which

was to remain the exclusive Discipline for a handful of European countries and the Soviet Union.

It seems that the demands are still growing, consequently the danger of erring becomes greater, as there is a disastrous shortage of correctly trained Masters, so very often every Tom, Dick and Harry sees fit to call himself an "Equestrian Academy" and the road to failure is inevitable.

Australia was extremely fortunate in having Franz Mairinger for a quarter of a century. Without exaggeration, he was the man who put Australia on the International stage, ironically in Eventing, while his greatest love was undoubtedly Dressage.

It was Franz who made it possible for Australia to begin to take more than a passing interest in Dressage and it was for his horse "Gay Pam" that the first F.E.I. test, the Prix St. George, was put on at Sydney Royal in 1963, and of course won by him.

Here is a short list of the winners of the F.E.I. tests as they appeared for the first time in Australia—to stay!

1967 Intermediaire
"Trossach"—Tina Wommelsdorf
1972 Freestyle
"Jackpot"—Tina Wommelsdorf
1974 Grand Prix
"Jackpot"—Tina Wommelsdorf

In 1975 the very first National Dressage Championships of Australia took place in Adelaide, S.A. with these results:

Freestyle
"Jackpot"—Tina Wommelsdorf
Intermediaire
"Jackpot"—Tina Wommelsdorf
Grand Prix
"Jackpot"—Tina Wommelsdorf
"Equardo"—Nita McAuley (eq. 1st)

Adelaide would have had the greatest number of entries ever in the F.E.I. test, possibly with Sydney last year's National Championships a very close second. Brisbane and Melbourne, who were hosts to the two Nationals in between, did not succeed in getting all leading riders.

Results of the 1978 Australian Championship in Sydney with

Col. G. Nyblaeus a Judge:

Freestyle

"Jackpot"—Tina Wommelsdorf
Intermediaire

"Jackpot"—Tina Wommelsdorf
Grand Prix

"Jackpot"—Tina Wommelsdorf

The top competitions here are November to May.

It was a long, hard road for Australia to get nationally so far that the F.E.I. Tests have become a standard feature on nearly all programs, but with the guidance of Franz Mairinger it was possible. Whether it will be possible for her to continue this way without the great Master who closed his eyes forever on May 1978 is another question. There are so many wrong turns on the road to the top, so many temptations to try so-called short cuts which simply do not exist.

Dressage demands total dedication, patience and love for your horse. It takes a long time to train your horse, you need an enormous drive to push yourself and the horse, and there cannot be a deadline. You must enjoy every step of the long road, every corner should be an enjoyable challenge, not a bore. While competition will give you an assessment of your work, it should not be your motive.

Dressage will teach you self discipline to a degree no other sport can, without it you will never amount to anything, and your happy or unhappy horse will tell the tale. If you are able to listen to your horse you will learn to be an understanding, sympathetic, compassionate being, in full control of yourself. It will also teach you to be generous and absolutely honest, as you cannot succeed in any other frame of mind.

It is also the most rewarding sport, you don't need others, only your horse and an adequate ground to train. The exquisite joy you can feel when you have gained the happy co-operation, even if it was for one difficult movement only, when you have been able to make him understand the aids which in time become so light and fine that they are invisible. This is yours and yours alone, this incredible

feeling of being one with your horse, the ultimate aim in the Art of Riding.

You may have felt similar exhilarating moments in your life, maybe skiing virgin powder snow at great speed when the snow follows you like a curtain, or skiing on water, when it is like a mirror and you are carving your pattern in the early morning sun. Maybe it was flying a little plane, sailing the ocean or planing over the stiller waters. It could have been riding cross country or jumping the big wall on the showground. The exquisite feeling of being one for more than a glorious moment, you may only achieve in Dressage, when you are dancing to the song of wind and sun, free of gravity, far away in a world of your own.

The ability to stop training when it tastes best or when things have gone wrong is one of the most necessary qualities of a trainer. A horse must always return to his stable or paddock in a peaceful and relaxed state of mind, not dripping with sweat and quivering with fear because of harsh and cruel training methods. If your horse shows restlessness in the stable, does not want to drink or eat, then the training session was too severe for him. Only a compassionate and sensitive trainer will be able to assess this and alter his program accordingly.

People who fail often get so frustrated that they resort to coarse, often brutal methods. These can only fail, as a tense and frightened horse may jump or gallop, but he cannot dance in complete harmony with his partner, the Rider.

Over the centuries several, later great masters, have been guilty of erring in much the same way, and while on the wrong path have contributed less than nothing towards the development of Riding. Only after recognising that it is absolutely necessary to understand the psychology of the horse and to work in such a way that the horse can remain happy and relaxed is it possible to obtain co-operation.

Dressage is an art and as all Art is doomed to suffer extremes and mistakes, particularly when the

"Masters" leave or ignore the Law of Nature. As Fillis was an Artist when riding "Percival" and "Makir" in their pure Gaits—he became more like a magician when inventing gaits like trotting backwards, cantering on three legs and other unnatural tricks. That he could still charm the public is only too understandable, as their ignorance is great. Nature must remain our guide for ever, we must strive to maintain and if possible improve the natural gaits of the horse, without ever asking too much, as every horse has its own specific limitations, through its inherited conformation, character and mental capacity.

The way we keep our horses in Australia has given us a clear advantage over anybody keeping a horse in the "old countries". Here it is I who has to do every little task for him, whereas in Europe the groom is there to take over the moment you finish riding, so you will never know whether your horse is thirsty, hungry, happy, lonely or bored. You know less about him than you know about a casual acquaintance.

Having come from Europe, I used to resent all the extra work at first, but have long since come to cherish it, I know my horses intimately, I know their very mood, their little problems, their pride and their reluctance, their exuberance and their fears, their anger and their obvious joy. In fact they quite simply became members of our family!

It was with pity that I read an interview with H.G. Winkler in which he was asked whether "Halla" would come to him when called; Winkler answered that this was just a fairy tale, horses did not know their names...Halla was the mare that brought Winkler the most valued Gold. He was said to have been "one" with the mare, and yet he missed out on the most precious part of Riding, the friendship! All my horses have known and know their name, they all come when I called, in fact my youngest friend, just four years old, comes cantering up with such obvious pleasure that I almost feel embarrassed.

When I walk through the paddock they will rub their noses on my shoulder, nibble my hair while I scratch their mane. This tender and precious relationship has given me a much deeper understanding and satisfaction, I feel almost humble when my young horse comes to me for security or reassurance when frightened by something strange or unexpected. Tail up in the air, nostril blood red, snorting loudly, he dances over to me as soon as I walk into the paddock. Neck arched high, still snorting he will stand perfectly still beside me, my hand on his neck.

This can happen only in Australia, where freedom is a way of life and where your life with horses can be so much more than a fleeting hour of your day...to me, all this is part of Dressage, not riding a little square; it is understanding nature, enhancing it, preserving it. It means being one with another living being, perfect harmony with a calm and balanced horse mentally and physically executing with you what you indicated to him with the finest, invisible aids, in perfect harmony and in the complete absence of force.

This—and only this—is Dressage!

