

CHRIS LOMBARD HORSEMANSHIP

Newsletter #9

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"Here's your gun," Ron the head cowboy said as he passed me a loaded revolver in its' holster.

I took the holstered gun from his hand and looked up at him. "Last time I fired a gun I was a teenager," I said. My father was a Maine State Policeman and gunsmith, but he had passed away when I was 13.

"You gonna feel like you can handle it?" He said looking me in the eye, asking the question directly.

I thought about it. Then looked him back in the eye. "Yeah."

Ron is currently the head cowboy at the Rancho de la Osa guest ranch in Arizona, where I use to work as a cowboy six years ago. I don't know his age, probably in his late fifties I guess. He's a seen it all and done it all cowboy, who knows the horses, the land, and the job. He currently runs a great operation at the ranch looking over the horses, cattle, and the guests. I got along with him great and really enjoyed working with him. I was visiting my old ranch with my friend Charlie, and since they were very busy at this time and they had more guests than they could really handle, and since Ron was quite sick and couldn't really work, Charlie and I were put back to work running the rides. This was okay with me - I loved that job.

One of the new rules Ron had instituted was that all cowboys and wranglers, if they felt comfortable with it, carried firearms. There were definitely viable reasons for this: the ranch was right on the border in one of the hottest spots for citizens of Mexico to illegally cross into the United States; banditos roamed the desert there ready to rob these people (knowing the people crossing the border were carrying their life savings); drug runners had been running drugs back and forth over the border in this area for years; and the wild dogs that had plagued our cattle, plus other desert creatures that could be dangerous. So there were reasons sure enough, even if the main reason was just as a deterrent.

Still the ranch was a very safe place, and all the rides had been nothing but completely safe through the years. So with that in mind I decided I would take the gun and just be safe and leave the first chamber empty.

Three days later we were taking a large ride, 20 guests or so, along a hilltop, heading back to the ranch with great views in all directions. There were four of us running the ride. Cammy was leading, Charlie was in the back, and Ron and I were out-riders, meaning we could just ride wherever we pleased. I was riding Jake, a 12 year old bay Quarter Horse who was maybe the toughest most athletic horse I have ever ridden. I knew him well, we had history.

"What's that over there?" asked a guest.

Ron pulled his horse, Chewy, to a fast stop and stood up in his stirrups to get a better look at the three shapes that were running along a dry river bed at the bottom of the hill. "It's them wild dogs that been taking down our baby cattle!" he shouted and in no time he was back down into the saddle, his spurs to the side of Chewy, and he was in a dead gallop down the rocky hill, crashing through brush. "Come on, Chris!" I heard him shout as he darted around mesquite.

For a split second I thought about where this could lead. But I had to go. I couldn't let him go alone.

I turned Jake down the hill and asked for speed. Jake gave it, as was his way. We cut and turned around rock, cactus, and mesquite, creating little landslides in the dirt as we went. I leaned far back in the saddle for balance. We crashed through the brush until we hit the dry sandy riverbed and with nothing but open air ahead of us now I asked Jake for his strength - galloping - and we hit his full speed, sand churning and exploding underneath us like the wake from a boat.

Up ahead was Ron, galloping, right on the heels of the wild dogs... and he was taking out his rifle from the sheath tied to his saddle...

HI FOLKS, Chris Lombard here, and I hope you are getting along well this winter. It's snowing as I write this so I thought I would start out with a story that takes place in the desert. With my spring schedule filling up I am excited for the warmer weather that is coming our way. How's that for positive thinking during a snowstorm on January 7th?

IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

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As always, please feel free to forward the newsletter along to anyone you think may like it, or let me know if you would like to be taken off my newsletter list.

THE BEGINNING WITH THE HORSE

This past November I produced my first horse training DVD entitled "Beginning With the Horse". It was a lot of fun and a lot of hard work, and I am very excited about how it came out. It is not a "starting the horse to ride video" though. Beginning With the Horse focuses on how we can establish a foundation of respect, confidence, and communication with the horse on the ground and in the saddle for horses and owners of all levels and all styles of horsemanship. It is for beginner and advanced riders alike. It runs about 2 hours long with the first hour devoted to groundwork and the second hour devoted to riding. It is still in the editing process and should be available in March.

HORSEFLIX.COM

A friend of mine, horse trainer Karen Greenberg of Mt. Desert Island, told me about this website - www.HorseFlix.com[1] - and I love it. Horseflix is just like Netflix, where movies are sent to you via the mail and you have a while to watch them and then you just put them back into a prepaid envelope and pop them back in the mail and then

more movies are sent to you. Horseflix focuses solely on horse videos though from feature movies to training to documentaries. They have many dressage videos, all the Parelli videos, Clinton Anderson, Mark Rashid, and many others. My favorites so far have been Klaus Ferdidand Hempfling's "Dancing With Horses", and check out "The Path of the Horse" for a great documentary.

THE NORTHEAST HORSEMAN'S CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW

I will again be doing two presentations at this years Northeast Horseman's Conference at the Augusta Civic Center on January 17th and 18th.

* Saturday the 17th at 2 p.m -- How Horses Think and Learn: An understanding of horse training philosophy

* Sunday the 18th at 2 p.m. -- Finding the Confidence You Need: How to work through your anxiety and fears

So if you're not doing anything come on by and let's talk horses.

THE CABIN FEVER CLINIC AT PINELAND FARMS

On Saturday January 31st I will be doing a clinic at Pineland Farms' Broadpark Facility (heated indoor) in New Gloucester, Maine, with the clinic being sponsored by www.NickerNews.net.

The clinic will start at 9 a.m. with me working with participants and their horses on groundwork until 12 noon where there then will be a lunch break. During the lunch break I will be doing a bareback and bridleless riding demonstration (I love doing this) and certified equine massage therapist Ashley Hutchinson will be doing a massage and saddle fitting demonstration. Then from 1 - 4 p.m. I will be working with clinic participants and their horses on riding (I will not be starting any horses to ride - horses must be walk/trot at least).

Cost to participate with your horse for one session (either the groundwork session or the riding session) is \$75, and to participate

in both sessions the cost would be \$130. If you want to just come and watch, the auditing fee is \$15. Make sure to bring a chair and some lunch.

To sign up to participate with your horse go to www.NickerNews.net/events.aspx. There you will find a complete description of the clinic, the registration form, and directions ******(make sure to have the directions - it is somewhat hard to find this place even though it is right near Gray town center).

This should prove to be a great day that will cover many different things, and it will also be a great way to get out and do something horsey during the cold winter months. If you like, please go to www.ChrisLombard.com/clinics/php for more info on my clinics.

Ron was at a gallop, trailing behind the dogs, and now he had his rifle in his hand.

With Jake being one of the fastest horses on the ranch I was able to catch up in no time and when I yelled "Coming up behind you, Ron!" I could see a look of surprise on Ron's face when he saw I was there with him so fast. He then put his rifle to his shoulder, took aim at the dog closest to him, and pulled the trigger.

Click.

Something in his old rifle had jammed and it couldn't fire. He yelled at it, all frustrated, and then looked to me.

"Ride up on there and shoot 'em!" he yelled.

As I remember it, it feels like a long time, the thinking I did at that moment. It was probably only one seconds' worth really. But I thought about the dogs. They were mangy. Two were scrawny and one was huge. They were wild and looked it. But they had lives and they were just trying to survive, like all living creatures and I remember now what someone once said to me about horses - that all living

creatures value their lives just as much as you do yours. It's a simple thing to say really, but think about it. Even the tiniest thing on earth thinks its' life is just as important as yours.

But these dogs had killed the ranch cattle, the young ones. There was no real right and wrong here, just who was going to survive.

But I couldn't shoot at these dogs. And I had never shot at anything from horseback. And I didn't know if Jake was gunbroke. So with all these things in mind I came up with a different idea...

"You're the better shot! Take the gun!" I yelled to Ron as I held my pistol out to him. Still at a gallop we rode up beside each other, me holding my gun out to him and he holding his rifle out to me. We then looked each other in the eye - someone was going to have to let go of their reins and grab the other guys' gun in order for this mid-gallop exchange to work. Since I was the guy who wasn't going to be doing any shooting, I decided it would be me.

I let go of the reins and quickly snatched the rifle from Ron's hands and with his now open hand he took the pistol from mine. With no steering Jake veered off course. I grabbed the reins and got him going in the right direction again as Ron ran up ahead after the dogs.

And then I remembered...

I rode up fast behind Ron and tried to yell something to him.

"The first two chambers are empty!" I yelled. On that particular day, I only loaded four bullets into the revolver, leaving the first two empty.

But he didn't hear me and he went to fire.

Click.

He looked at the gun and then tried to fire again.

Click.

"Misfire!" He yelled. And then I can't say some of the stuff he yelled after that. He brought his horse to a stop, still cursing his two guns. I came up beside him, already a bit embarrassed. I could

feel my cowboy reputation was about to take a hit on this one.

"Ahhhh... the first two chambers are empty," I said to Ron, out of breath from our run.

Ron looked at me in disbelief. He then immediately laughed, knowing me I guess and he figured my reasoning for leaving the first two chambers empty. We walked Jake and Chewy back toward the ride, talking about the chase, and how well the horses ran.

Cowboy work is a lot different than the horse work I do here in the Northeast. Out there on the ranch there is a raw, deep feeling to how the horses see their lives, their work, and their survival. What I remember about that day the most was how Jake ran so hard, ready to follow me and my decisions. It's more than training out there I guess, it's about survival. And in that, I remembered how that way of life out there for the horses and their riders is what led me to my first real bond with a horse, Alto. And how Alto led me to understand things that I know feel with my horse, Rocky.

Look out, Rocky. For tomorrow's session -- I'm going to introduce you to something called "gunbroke"...

WELL THAT'S ABOUT IT FOR THIS NEWSLETTER. As usual I want to thank everyone for your support, and as I say and mean, it is truly my good fortune that you have me come out to work with you and your horses. I hope you have some good horse times this winter.

Thanks~

Chris

www.ChrisLombard.com

"You have to do it from inside yourself. There isn't any trick."

Ernest Hemingway