

# Equus Medendi is especially helpful in healing humans, especially vets

By BILL BROWN

This is a story of Equus Medendi — how horses and humans communicate with each other experientially for emotional growth and the understanding of how to address some of the severe problems that confront the veteran — whatever the age or state in life.

Both Winston Churchill and Ronald Reagan were quoted saying, "There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man." Many veterans are finding out all about equines.

Not all returning veterans are handicapped with problems such as Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, depression, substance abuse, communication and relationship problems including deeply hidden anxiety. However, there are large percentages of American veterans who are living their lives heroically trying to conceal the struggles. There is help for these veterans. Help comes to the veteran in the memorable form of Equine Assisted Therapy and Learning. Beside the help, it is fascinatingly fun.

The combination of certified equine specialists, veterans and horses becomes a source of healing for the veteran's heart. Each client is helped to think "outside the corral" to see the healing solutions. This is accomplished as the veteran becomes acquainted and even friends with a horse.

## Equus Medendi

As a veteran who has been acquainted with some of the ailments mentioned, it was a privilege to go through the program. Sharing this story can be additional therapy. The author would not have had the courage to share it with anyone else.

The title relays the mission: "equus," for horse and "medendi," for healing.

The program is locally run by Angie Sheer, a certified equine specialist with the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association. Sheer uti-

lizes her training while working with clients and horses alike. Some of the horses, as rescue animals themselves, have been through as much as the human being. Sheer has worked with horses for over 20 years, rescuing many.

Sheer is assisted by Jeff Allen who is the chairman and Third District member of the Veterans Advisory Committee. These two are exceptionally adept at understanding the mood of the horse as well as the person making the attempt to take communication with the horse to a higher level.

## Equine people

The author has known his share of horses riding on them in the Arlington National Cemetery. I knew the horses that pulled the caisson during the funerals for General McArthur, General Eisenhower, President Kennedy and Astronaut Edward White. The nobility of the caisson was matched by the calm poise of those horses that carried the caskets of hundreds of fallen heroes as well as national dignitaries. Over 45 years later, I still remember the personalities of the horses I was most familiar with.

However, what was learned when taking part in the program made a difference in seeing solutions to tasks. It has helped to take a calmer approach to problems; to look for patience in dealing with dogs, people and, yes, some politicians. Connecting with the mind of a horse quite often gave a relaxed security allowing breakdown of the obstacles in tackling personal challenges.

As a veteran, this confidential program took me through a session a week for six weeks. Some sessions opened the mind to new possibilities. The Equus Medendi corral is a safe place.

Anything said stays in the corral. Except in cartoons, horses do not gossip, lie or deceive. However, they can read human intentions instantly.

## Session collapse

One day we were working

with two horses, Skye and Bentley. They weren't responding to us at all. The exercise was to have them follow us into a spot between two posts that were leaning against the corral fence. This was to be done without ropes or halters as if free range horses. In fact, all sessions were run without any physical attachments or restraints. This was totally psychological. The ropes and halters were purely mental.

Building trust was paramount. How do you acquire the trust of a horse that has the freewill to turn tail and walk off? That day the horses were not responding. In fact they did turn their tails towards us and put their heads out over the corral fence as if to tell us we were, well, "horses-tails" ourselves.

How does a 200-pound human get a 2,000-pound animal to budge purely from the animal's own mindset? Unlike dogs, horses don't follow people around just because we think they should.

It took over a half hour before we exhausted everything we knew to get them to even move. Then, Allen and Sheer interrupted the session mercifully. They were standing there with "the look." We learned to recognize their "look" when we were doing everything we should, except thinking. We weren't finding anything new. I was so concerned about not breaking the rule, the only rule of the session, that I didn't think of other ways to handle the situation.

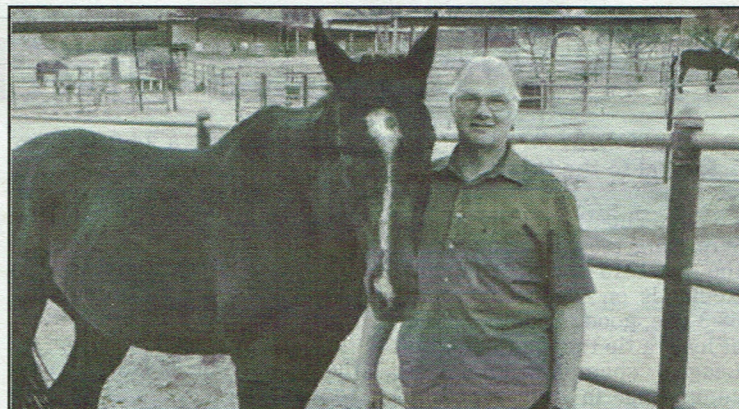
We tried everything we had learned in earlier sessions thinking it would be enough to get Skye and Bentley to be as responsive as they had previously. Then Sheer and Allen broke their silence with, "What are you thinking or are you thinking?" Oh, man. That was harsh, or so I thought. Of course I was thinking; trying to find a solution to get the horses to move between the two poles.

The only rule in this session was to get the horses between the poles, simple enough. We could not break or bend the rule. They needed to be between the poles. We pushed, prodded and coaxed but even politicians would have responded better.

## Responses

Our leaders gently opened a discussion on what was going on with us human types that may cause the horses to refuse to respond. It turns out that I, for one, didn't have the calm assertiveness I needed to command the situation. I didn't have the right energy.

Under the expert guidance I was able to open up the feelings that were bothering me; feelings that prevented the desired communication. Eventually, at



Bill Brown with special horse Skye

the moment I took a deep cleansing breath releasing my frustrations, something happened. Bentley turned his head around and looked at us.

## The object

Both Bentley and Skye turned to look at us as we began thinking "outside the corral" and realized the solution. It was not against the rule to allow the horses to stand next to the leaning posts as they were. It was not against the rule to move the poles. So the answer was right in front of our faces. All we had to do is pick up one pole and place it on the opposite side of the horses from the first pole. This positioned the horses between the poles, the object of the session, without having to even move the horses.

The sessions Sheer and Allen present allow the veteran to learn to think healthier and "outside the corral." Sheer, has trained under Monty Roberts in Solvang. Roberts is widely known as the original "Horse Whisperer" and the bestselling author of "The Man Who Listens to Horses." Sheer must have been a good student.

## Open air

Since the late 1960s, the world has heard ever increasing amounts of statistics, information and evidence regarding the damaging effects of Post-Traumatic Stress disease. Veterans who have issues needing psychological therapy after spending time in war zones are given such therapeutic aid outdoors in the fresh air and in country settings with the assistance of certified people and some very intuitive horses.

Trust isn't easy to come by. These sessions are held in the fresh air. The horse ranch gives a person the feeling of calm.

The program helped me learn patience while seeking higher trust levels including understanding what that means. I was definitely challenged but not in a threatening way.

For the veteran the ranch is a place of greatly reduced tension, except horses are bigger, stronger, somewhat intimidating and can mash down on your foot.

## Leadership

Anger and hostility are also released. Advancing toward a horse while hostile is counter-productive as the horse runs away. The additional benefit is the inclusion of a certain awareness of one's own body language, non-verbal communication and (best of all) energy levels.

Brought out in the open, these issues facilitate empowerment to build trust and leadership.

Learning trust, leadership and patience at the ranch showed me that it is possible to learn these characteristics at previously unknown. Capturing and connecting the intellect of a horse and human mind is unforgettable. Before all this, I felt the only way to communicate with a horse was a bridle, reins and spurs. The first day Skye followed me around the corral wherever I went was remarkable. It was as if he wanted to be with me. Imagine that. I went fast, so did he. If I turned corners so did he. It was extraordinary. Learning to be the "herd leader" and have a horse do something I wanted it to do, without the force of a bridle or rope was liberating. It is easy to see why, in the Old West, a man was shot for stealing another man's horse.

"Horses are dynamic, powerful, curious, social and highly sensitive living beings," states the EM brochure. By utilizing these characteristics this therapy can be highly effective. Like humans, horses have distinct personalities, attitudes and moods. "They provide vast opportunities for metaphorical learning possibilities." Whether the need is to overcome depression or develop confidence, this equine assisted program shows that working alongside a naturally intimidating animal such as a horse will "create confidence and insight when dealing with intimidating and challenging situations in life."

## Acceptance

Over the past few years Equus Medendi has gained support from the mental health community at the Loma Linda Health Care System as well as the Department of Veteran Affairs and Disabled American Veterans in San Bernardino County. Currently Equus Medendi provides veterans with free equine-assisted therapy sessions throughout the Inland Empire and High Desert areas. The primary clients are military veterans and their families. Anyone interested may contact them at 951-941-0056. Equus Medendi is without charge to any American veteran who asks.

## WE PAY CASH RECYCLING

**GOLDEN STATE RECYCLING**  
32210 Dunlap Blvd., Yucaipa, CA, 92399  
(909) 570-4002

WE BUY ALL TYPES OF SCRAP METAL

**\$107 LB.**  
#1 CRV Plastic

**\$201 LB.**  
CRV Cans

Se Habla Español

- ◆ Glass Bottles
- ◆ Metal
- ◆ Copper
- ◆ Aluminum
- ◆ Brass
- ◆ Radiators
- ◆ Insulated Wire
- ◆ Car Batteries
- ◆ Electronics
- ◆ Appliances

**HOURS: Mon-Fri 8am-5pm • Sat 9am-2pm Closed Sundays**  
[www.goldenstaterecycling.net](http://www.goldenstaterecycling.net)

## Reach Over 6 Million Californians

...in over 200+ community newspapers!  
One Order...One easy payment...they're waiting!

**Contact (916) 288-6019; (916) 288-6010**  
[www.Cal-SCAN.com](http://www.Cal-SCAN.com)