

# It's all about horsemanship.

"I've figured out things in the last three days that I've been trying to do for two years," commented Darrell Walder on the last day of Don Halladay's natural horsemanship clinic held at the Neudorf's arena in Edwin, Manitoba.

"Don's given me the tools to fix my problems - he's an unbelievable instructor. I'd like to take him home with me but I don't think Randee would let me."



*Darrell Walder demonstrates how the power of body language (and the finger!) can move a horse's hip.*

*Text and photos by Linda Hazelwood*

Don Halladay and his wife Randee spend April to October each year travelling Canada coast to coast mentoring natural horsemanship students in the Parelli program; Don is Canada's top licensed Parelli instructor as a 4 Star Instructor, and is among the highest rated Parelli instructors worldwide. In April 2010, he achieved a Level 5 in On Line, Freestyle and Liberty and Level 4 in Finesses.

Don is classed as a "Senior Horse Development Specialist", while Randee is also a licensed Parelli Instructor. Students get the "two-fer-one" deal with Don and Randee.

Winters are spent looking after business at their home in Rocky Mountain House, AB, and they often go down to the Parelli Ranch in Ocala, Florida, to increase their horsemanship skills with Pat and Linda Parelli. Don said, "It's a continual learning process, to keep passing information on to our students."

Don and Randee used to be full time ranchers with a cow/calf operation but they always had their five-year plan to deal with their future. When Alberta suffered a massive drought in October 2002, Don and Randee decided not to bankrupt themselves trying to keep their cattle, but to put their plan into operation and move into horsemanship. While some neighbours stayed to try and weather the market, Randee said, "We have no regrets about getting out. We get to be with horses all the time, and meet people who want to be with horses too."

She admitted the travelling can be

tiring but made a distinction; "We can be tired because of the travel, but we are not tired OF the travel." They both love all the seven provinces they visit throughout the year as each one is unique. "We wouldn't have made our lifestyle change any differently," she added. The ranch gave them the people and business management skills. "We were more mature when we started, and possibly because of that, have a greater respect for people."

They don't limit their travelling just to Canada and the US; they have students in the Bermuda and Cayman Islands too. They have played with the Cayman Pony and taught students who ride mostly English in the few stables on the island that maintain riding school horses that are often brought over from the mainland of the United States.

During their time in the U.S. they like to ride in the many national parks that are open to horses one being the short grass part near Sanger, Texas. Looking into the future they see many more opportunities to explore with their horses.

In 2007 Don gave himself a new challenge; cutting. Working with his new horse, Smart Koki Joe, Don put the hours in and then entered the January 2008 Arizona Cutting Association 5-day show at Buckeye, Arizona. When the dust had settled and the last cow had been cut, Don was presented with the award for the winning average in both the 2000 and 500 Class. Cutting is scored with a lower end 60, high end 80. Don and



Don demonstrates a fine point using the grass track. His horse is S.S.Maverick, son of Sailing Smart, world champion reiner.

Koki marked a 72 in the 2000 class and 74 in the 500 division. (2000 and 500 classes are for riders that have not won over those dollar amounts respectively in competition. there is no restriction on how much the horse has won.) Don pursues his passion of cutting each winter and looks forward to continued learning from many of the great cutters in north America.

On the last day of clinic series in Edwin, the fourteen Level 3/4 students honed their groundwork skills in the morning, and riding skills in the afternoon.

After a classroom session to review their progress so far and answer questions, including a detailed discussion on bits and how the different styles work on the bars and tongue of the horse's mouth, it was time for a groundwork game in the arena. Each handler/horse team chose a space and lead ropes

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were removed so the horses were at complete liberty - they were to play the "Property Game". The concept is that the space next to the handler belongs to the horse (his property) and if he leaves that space the other handlers will not allow him to enter their spaces but will move him away until he voluntarily realises his only safe space is by his handler. It's a game which should only be played by experts as alertness, quick reactions and supreme horsemanship skills are required to be confident around those loose horses in the arena. Mostly the horses stayed by their handlers who worked on softness and decreasing the pressure required to move a foot or the body, but every so often one horse would decide to investigate the rest of the arena and then it was "heads-up" for all concerned.

Darrell Walder (pictured page 6 working with Rio) said he had been working with his horse for four and a half years. "I try to do at least one or two [Parelli] clinics with Don Halladay each year. I'm after never-ending self-improvement in Parelli natural horsemanship." He added, "I love to work the cutting flag with Rio and trail ride when I can."

After lunch was riding time. Don and Randee had mowed tracks into one of the Neudorf's grass fields, marking out three 20 meter circles and a full dressage arena, complete with quarter sections. Because of the number of horses involved over the four-day clinic, this was much safer than using stakes, ribbons, cones etc.



English, Western or just riding - something for everyone.

It was also very useful for the riders when practicing travers and renvers, helping riders focus the feet: front on track, hind on the grass and vice versa. Don worked his group very hard on direct rein, indirect rein, explaining half halts and other aids to focus the horse. The eclectic group included riders whose focus was dressage, trail, endurance, ranch work, etc., and Don switched back and forth between terminologies to make sure everyone "got" what he was teaching.

Flying lead changes were a challenge for some riders and Don explained, "It's a lot of work. You must know what to do, have it in your mind before your horse can do it." He added, "The biggest thing to wreck your lead change is to look down and see if you got it!" He explained that the rider must plan for legs - hands - seat in that order. "It's legs before hands or you will crossfire behind."

After an intense session of circles, serpentines, loops, transitions and patterns, Don sent the riders away to

play with barrels, ropes and a reining pattern, to put into practice what they had been learning.

To round out the day he had riders work on walk/trot transitions, building up to extended/working trot transitions which saw some wonderful riding. As a cool down (!) the fourteen riders worked on military drills and precision riding. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't but everyone had a great time and the day finished on a successful note.

After an intensive workout horses and riders were ready for home - some with further to drive than others. Kevin and Susan Glenister were destined for Dryden, Ontario. The four days had rounded out twenty-eight days of horsemanship clinics already this year for them. But guess what? They'll be back working with Don and Randee again next year. 🐾

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[www.horsesinmotion.ca](http://www.horsesinmotion.ca)  
Photos from the event can be seen at [www.horsecountry.ca/photogallery](http://www.horsecountry.ca/photogallery).

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