

In my quest to read everything “Horse Related” I had read Mark’s *Whole Heart, Whole Horse* book. I was so moved, I ordered five more copies as gifts to a small group of novice and expert horsewomen who spent marvelous Sundays at my ranch in Brownsville, CA, learning the ways of the horse and enjoying impressive pot lucks. To my surprise, two of these friends insisted on gifting me an all-expense paid weekend to watch Mark in action, which was only a day’s drive away.

Little did we know that the gift of a weekend to audit a Mark Rashid and Crissi McDonald clinic in March of 2017 in Nicasio, CA would lead to Masterson Method folklore status.

Well, that weekend clinic changed everything. As my friends and I sat marveling at this magical, softer side of horsemanship, my friend got one of Crissi’s business cards. The bottom line said, “Certified Masterson Method Practitioner.” She showed it to me and asked if I knew what Masterson Method was. My eyes widened. I had bought Jim’s book and thumbed through it, but never acted upon it. What is the phrase? “When the student is ready the teacher will come?”

“Yes, I have the book!” was my reply. Upon returning home after a euphoric experience in Nicasio, I pulled the book out. Ok, Bladder Meridian. Let’s give that a go on my Mustang, Spanky. One afternoon, Jen, one of the ladies who enjoyed my ranch, was at my barn when I brought Spanky into a stall. I remember saying to her, “Let’s see if this stuff works.” Jen stood just outside watching as I started at the poll and moved slowly down his neck. In the first few seconds, his eyes glazed over, his ears dropped and Jen and I were both stricken with amazement. “Whoa, something just happened!”

Well, I ordered the Beyond Horse Massage DVD immediately and studied it section by section, testing it out as I went along. Oh, my! As we all agree … yes, indeed … this stuff REALLY works. All of the ladies at my barn were fascinated by the “Method” and immersed themselves in learning and practicing. We worked on my horses, took pictures of those signature yawns, and started posting on Facebook. The requests for us to come work on horses were so overwhelming, we had to limit our drive time to a one-hour radius. Our little band of amateur practitioners consisted of Tracy Park, Jen Reiff, Loretta Reiff, Judy Askins and me. One day, early on, as we were all assembling at my ranch to head out to work on horses, I was the last one to join the group. As I bounded out of my house in a rush, I exclaimed, “The Masterson Method Mobile Response Team is on the move!” Well, that was the moment the MMMRT was born.

Since that day in 2017, Judy and I have traveled to Colorado to audit a Mark and Jim show, and completed two Weekend Seminars with the divine Sandy Vreeburg. I remember the 4-hour drive over to Watsonville for our very first training, saying to Judy, “What if our teacher doesn’t have a sense of humor?” Years later, at our second Weekend Seminar with Jim Masterson himself, I remember relaying that story to him over a delightful road house dinner with a small group of MM folks. His reply was “Sorry about that.”

So, Judy and I returned to the group with training and even more enthusiasm than before. We have all done subsequent trainings, though none of us became certified.

We never took compensation for our efforts. In fact, we became known for arriving carrying a pastry box, brimming with neighbor Krishna’s home-made Bear Claws. We always made the day “an occasion.”

The natural progression was ordering custom MMMRT caps, gifting them to our instructors and a few deserving recipients, and traveling all around our local Sierra Foothills working on anything equine and having the time of our lives. We had arrived!

Since Covid came crashing down, the MMMRT has gone dormant, I'd like to think, only temporarily. We are all still practicing on our own horses, so our skills are far from rusty, and our personal herds couldn't be happier having us all to themselves.

There are two important incidences I would like to share. I just got a little teary and goose bumpy writing that simple sentence.

One of our first outings as a group happened on New Year's Day, 2018. We went to my sister, BJ's little ranch in Grass Valley, CA to work on her 27 year old Morgan mare, "Joy" (God's most perfect horse as she likes to say) and her 20 year old Tennessee Walker gelding, "JJ." They were in stalls across the barn aisle from each other, easily visible. Tracy started working on Joy, who loved the work and held nothing back from Tracy's magic touch.

JJ, is a gentle, sweet soul who was once a very high level show horse, but was subjected to the horrific practices of the "Big Lick" world. My sister had to change the latching devices on her stalls when she rescued him, as they were 2 x 4's that secured the doors. If you swung one up to open it, he would retreat in terror. From years of concussive pounding, JJ has a rotated coffin bone that requires a 2-hour appointment for special shoeing, by his vet and farrier working in tandem every 6 weeks, just to keep him comfortable. He is obviously unrideable and very high maintenance.

BJ, Jen and Judy went into JJ's stall, not at all sure that he would be able to take that much "presence." I stayed out in the barn aisle with my phone ready to snap pictures of the work. Keep in mind that JJ had never allowed my sister to see him lying down. Everyone settled in and gave him a moment to relax. Judy started Bladder Meridian. I heard her say, "I've never taken so long to get this done, but he's releasing so much, I want to give him the time he needs." I think she took about 20 minutes for one side.

Then, Jen stepped up to start the meridian on the opposite side. She barely got to his withers, when she looked at me and said, "I think he wants to lie down. "Do I let him?" I said, "I don't know how you stop him." Down he went. He laid down with three people IN HIS STALL! He rested his nose in the shavings and then just gave up and flopped over on his side, fully prone. We were terrified. We thought we'd killed him. He slept for 50 minutes and the only reason he stirred was a slight noise in the stall. I would have loved to have known how long he would have napped.

It's important to note that at this time when we were just starting to work on horses, my sister, BJ was an admitted skeptic about the Masterson Method. That changed that day as she sat in that stall watching her beloved JJ, release, as Jim says, "A lifetime of stress."

The other notable session happened on a cold, snowy day, when I was the only one who could get off of the hill to make the appointment in Penn Valley, CA. I was to work with an Arab mare. The owner, a lovely young woman with a kind face greeted me and introduced me to her friend, a human massage therapist who was interested in the work. I explained a little bit about the

levels of pressure I'd be using, the benefits of the Techniques and even demonstrated how lightly we worked by using "air gap" and "egg yolk" on her arm. I invited them both into the stall to watch. Several Techniques into the session, I asked the massage therapist, if she would like to try bladder meridian on the other side, since I had completed the first side. She stepped up and began. The mare panicked, flew out the back door of the stall into her paneled run area. I was horrified that she would hit her head as she backed out at full speed and flip over. The women were petrified. I assured them it was ok, and "I would get her back". I calmed the lovely Bay mare down and walked her back inside. The massage therapist said, "Oh, I guess this really IS light touch." So, onward we went. All was well again, and the mare was responding beautifully. Then I asked the owner if she would like to try. She came around to work on the mare's neck. The massage therapist and I were standing together behind the owner a few feet away. Suddenly, the owner collapsed to the ground and began sobbing uncontrollably. She managed to say, "You have no idea how difficult the last two months have been with her." I was a puddle, myself.

If you're reading this, I don't have to tell you that The Masterson Method has enriched all of our lives. Not only do we have the knowledge necessary and privilege of helping these horses, but have built a loving community around the people, the horses and the work. I delight in the global reach that has become a reality for Jim and all of his practitioners, certified and not, and am flattered to have been asked to share our story, one with a beginning, a middle, but certainly, not an end. Stay tuned for more adventures, brought to you by the MMMRT.