

# Between the Reins

T H E H A R R Y W H I T N E Y I N S P I R E D N E W S L E T T E R

## PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY SHEA STEWART

### Disclaimer

This newsletter is an all-volunteer effort designed to reflect the horsemanship approach taught by Harry Whitney. While Harry will offer his thoughts and ideas, he does not take personal responsibility for the content of student contributions.



Over the years, I have had many discussions with Harry Whitney about horse's primary and secondary thoughts while in a training setting. For instance, a horse can be focused on a job like working a cow, yet hear a noise and give that noise an ear flick. Or you may be working a horse at liberty in the round pen and the horse will be tuned in with your every step, eyes focused on where they are going, yet their ears might be moving around in different directions as they keep track of the world around them in their secondary thoughts. While out on a trail ride, a rider should have their horse's primary thought with them on the trail, or at least be able to call it back if

the horse mentally leaves, with just a slight touch of the rein or

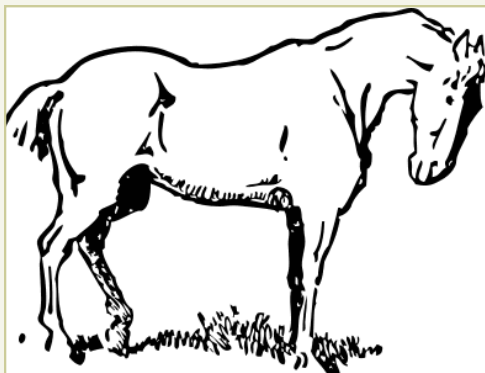


Pony a Pony

a pat on the leg. One of the first times I consciously became aware of this was many years ago when I was riding a very nervous Peruvian Paso out in the desert in AZ. I decided to hunt for Fulgerites which are

rocks made when lightning strikes the sand. About the 5th time I stopped and got off to pick up a rock, I noticed that I didn't have to do anything to stop the horse, and he started looking around on the ground with me. He stood when I mounted, he walked as if he were looking for rocks as well. We were both so focused on this that we lost the rest of the riders and neither one of us cared. I noticed he would give the other riders a slight ear flick, but his primary thought was completely on our job.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Hello Friends of Harry!

Between the Reins, the newsletter, has undergone a makeover!

The newsletter will now be smaller and will be published on a monthly basis.

Additionally, daily quotes and photos are available on our newsletter Facebook page: [facebook.com/betweenthereins](https://www.facebook.com/betweenthereins).

Thank you for your support! Sarah O'Brien, Editor

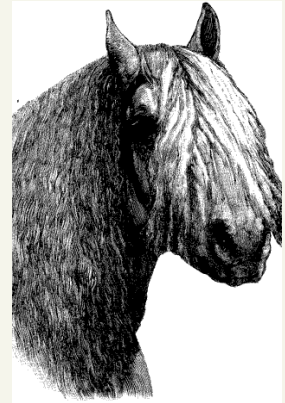
## PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY, CONT'D

This is a concept that I have built my own horsemanship on for many years. It has been such a normal part of my horse handling that I really didn't put much conscious thought into it. This was just a way of being. When I used to start horses for people, I would never get on them until they actually looked at me. Not through me like they do when they look at people as giant grocery bags, but

really look at me when I call on their primary thought. I learned through the years that once this moment happened, it was a game changer in how the relationship progressed. We could work interactively instead of me feeling like I was pushing a body around. I focused on this even with seasoned saddle horses who came in for training. This was always the first thing I worked on with

every horse who came in for training. That connection to their primary thought.

Over the past few years, my business has evolved more into equine Cranio-Sacral therapy, and teaching lessons. And not so much taking on training horses. So I have found myself trying to figure out how to connect with a horse who is not connected at all, in a very short amount of time.



**"That connection to their primary thought..."**

*"We were just barely in this horse's secondary thoughts."*

Before I treat a horse, I use the assessment portion to try and connect with them, to try and get the horse to put me in their primary thoughts. One of my first horses that I treated a few years ago who was not a horse in training with me, was this very large 17 hand eventing horse. High-headed, spooking and bolting across the arena with every little leaf that blew, and barely gave me or his owner a slight ear flick. We were just barely in this

horse's secondary thoughts. My trainer self wanted to start working with him to get some kind of communication going. My Cranio-Sacral self saw multiple old head traumas and wondered how he could think about anything with all of the compression in his head. So I stood there wondering how I could start treating him without getting trampled! About half-way through his session this horse really let down, turned and looked

at me, sniffed my hands, and for the first time I felt like he had put me in his primary thought. This felt like the same connection that I look for when training a horse. So this really got me thinking. Once this horse started feeling some relief, he was physically able to let down and he wanted to be present with us. When I mentioned this to his owner, I realized that this concept of directing your horse's thoughts or being

able to call their primary thought is not regularly thought about out there in the horse world.

I hear riding instructors talk about disrespect, or disobedience, and I wonder if this is the depth of their knowledge of a horse's mind. Is this their way of understanding when a horse is present or not? I think when a person uses these words they are anthro-

pomorphising, as if a horse can understand a human's idea of what is right and what is wrong. For me I see horses as either mentally present or not, and all of the varying degrees of it. Then I wonder what is driving the horse to be mentally gone. What is driving a horse to have its primary thought on everything but the human? Is there an emotional aspect? A

physical one? Is it a training issue or a pain issue? Do they live a life with people who talk at them?

But the bottom line is, when you are out there with your horse, how easy is it to call on their primary thought in any given situation? Can you identify the drive behind their thought? Is there a physical block? Does something hurt? Is there an emotional block?



**Shea can be found at: [StewartRanch.net](http://StewartRanch.net)**

**NEWCOMER'S CORNER  
BY: LAURA LINELL**



**Laura attended her first Harry clinic this year at Mendin' Fences in TN.**

There's a saying in the world of martial arts that "you can only fight the way you practice." I would amend that for the world of horsemanship to "you can only ride the way you connect." As a first time attendee at a Harry Whitney clinic, I became aware that Harry connects with horses very differently than what I've seen elsewhere. In fact, by comparison, many other methods seem to skip connection.

The first two days of the clinic I felt the way I do when I try to back up with a trailer: I'm trying for the same spot, but everything I'm doing in order to get there seems turned around, confusing, and awkward. But then I began to see. Harry is reading the horse in order to help him drop a thought that's

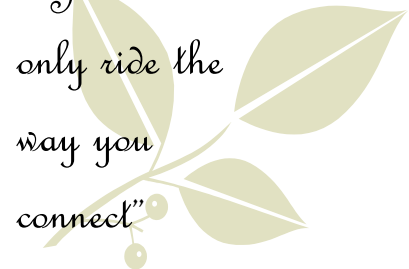
not good for him. Often it takes firmness to get the horse to drop it, but Harry is very effective in bringing this about because he first gets the horse to focus on him. Then, through clarity, firmness and sensitive release he helps the horse drop the thought of habitual, problematic reactions in order to try something else, something better. It works. The horse is attentive, searches, and tries. Harry is quick to release when he sees the try. The horse begins to relax and begins to trust. He becomes a safer mount.

Examples of this in action would be very helpful, but how do you describe an attitude, philosophy or intuition? Someone could go through the very motions that Harry does and completely miss the essence. It's not something that can be packaged as Ten Easy Steps or Fifty Terribly Difficult Steps. It really is an out-working of a philosophy of being reasonable and of giving to the horse, rather than getting. He's helping the horse find a new way of being here. What wasn't apparent to me at first is that Harry's approach helps the person find a new way of being here, too. It's like a cir-

cle. My horse helps me become aware of my energy. Am I frustrated, anxious, impatient, unsure? Even if I don't know, my horse sure does. I reset. My horse responds. We respond to each other, and it grows.

In essence, Harry's goal is not to make the horse do something. It's not to take something from the horse, but rather to give. Offer a better choice, build the horse's confidence, establish and strengthen the connection between horse and rider. It's a gift to both.

*"You can  
only ride the  
way you  
connect"*



**SOMETHING NEW FROM HARRY  
WHITNEY PHOTOGRAPHY!**

Need a little help to keep seeing things from the horse's point of view throughout the year? Harry Whitney Photography has put together a 12 month calendar for 2013, featuring photos that Harry has taken of horses during his travels, and has added one of his quotes to each photo. It's never too early to start planning a

visit with Harry at a clinic or at his ranch in Arizona, and this calendar will help you plan and organize for the upcoming year. It is also a great gift idea for the horse people in your life. You can purchase a calendar directly from Harry when you attend his clinic(s), or you can order online at [lulu.com/spotlight/equinephotos](http://lulu.com/spotlight/equinephotos).





# BTR



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HERE IS A PREVIEW FROM HARRY'S  
2013 CALENDAR!



*"So they're started, so they go." -Harry Whitney*