



By Mardee Rochelle

On April 21, a band of 16 of Sharon Brandes Myers' illustrious students, all PVDA members, and most of us boarders at Chimney Hill Farm, formed a caravan to travel to Performance Farm in Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, the home of Dr. Cesar Parra.

On April 23, everyone returned to their respective homes star struck and awe inspired.

Cesar was the ultimate host at his lovely new facility. We had expected to set up our chairs in the corner, out of the way, and watch horses being ridden. Instead, for three days, Cesar gave us a step-by-step commentary of every ride, not only of his own, but those of his riders as well. Even if Cesar had not uttered a word, just to be allowed to watch one incredible horse after another, each ridden in the exact same way by exceptionally correct riders to create the relaxation and the energy, well, we all came home better riders just for watching.

And with every word, Cesar's obvious love for the horses came through loud and clear, along with his desire to share his knowledge.

Cesar believes in long warm-ups. The horse is ridden long and low until the horse is relaxed. He can spend 15 to 20 minutes just at the walk—"As short as possible, as long as necessary." In this walk, the relaxation is developed. Cesar says that he hypnotizes the horse at the walk so that at the trot the horse will do what he says!

Once Cesar is satisfied with the walk, he goes to rising trot, still asking the horse to be long and low in order to

really stretch the back. Cesar asked, "Why ride long and low when you need the horse up later?" and answered with, "because it gets rid of tension and is the way to strengthen the back." He repeated the flexions left and right at the trot. Then on to canter, repeating the work of the trot, to develop relaxation and a few steps of sitting trot to finish the warmup.

The first walk break after the warmup is ridden at medium walk so that the horse doesn't have to be brought back from too stretched out. The first trot work starts the development of collection, so shoulder in and half pass are ridden. When the horse gives, Cesar gives. But he's always asking for more. If it feels good, he says, try harder. Then another break, this time at extended walk. Then the canter begins and depending on the level of the horse, half pass is ridden, then single changes, tempi changes and working pirouettes. After the canter, another break, ridden at extended walk, then piaffe and passage.

Here, from my notes, are more catch phrases on training:

- "Legs quiet until kick, don't nag"
- "Quiet and light until you need the power"
- "Every day a little bit better" (my favorite)
- "First the quality of the gait"
- "Ask nicely, then wham"
- "Quiet the tempo, get the power"
- "Let go of inside curb in corners"
- "Stop whining, stop blaming the horse" (no one was doing that!!)

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*Performance Farm continued from previous page*

- "It's all good—I have time"
- "Stay cool!"
- "Must take breaks"
- "Develop the movement without tension"
- "Tense in canter, back to trot to regain relaxation"
- "Hot horse, rider must stay very cool"
- "Lots of stretching because horse needs suppleness in back"
- "Bend from tail to ears, hold outside rein"
- "Horse used to swing under contact because of tension, now because of relaxation"
- "Work with what you have and make it better"
- "Get supple again, stop and correct if necessary"
- "Never ride without a ground person"
- "Swinging, tail quiet, legs breathe"
- "Amateurs stop when it's bad, keep going when it's good, and it should be just the opposite."
- "Takes a lot of betters to get good"  
(credited to Kathy Connelly)
- "Never let the front end know the rear end is being punished (keep hands quiet when using the whip!)"

We would all like to thank Cesar and his staff for their incredible hospitality. Thanks to head groom Jen, to the



**Pictured (front row) Patty Jepson, Sharon Brandes Myers, Mimi Shepherd, Lynn Everhard, Jan Denno; (back row) Sally Tomlinson, Hewan Tomlinson, Barbara Conner, Cyndi Krolezyk, Mardee Rochelle, Anne Petrenko, Julia Claypool, Kay Duvall and Kathy Levit. Not pictured are Carole Koller and Chris Robinson.**

assistant trainer Katie Riley, working students Claudia, Danielle and Emily for allowing us to watch their training sessions. Another thanks to Ashley Peterson, a Cesar student and Region 1 Young Rider who was trying sales horses along with all the other activity, in front of an audience, which had to add to the tension of riding strange horses. And of course the fabulous horses—Galant du Serein, Fürst Fabio, Escape and all the others in various stages of training.

And last but not least, Chimney Hill's own Mimi Shepherd fell in love and came home with a new horse!



For more info about these two clinics call Peggy Pariso, 301-924-3956 or e-mail [gracepariso@aol.com](mailto:gracepariso@aol.com).

## PVDA Education Series 2006

- **September 16 & 17, 2006: USDF Region 1 Adult Rider Clinic w/Jan Ebeling**  
Wyndham Oaks, Bucklodge Rd., Boyds, Maryland

**Rider Cost:** \$250 Private lesson each day including auditing for one groom/guest. Stabling costs extra.

**Auditor Cost:** \$35 a day/\$60 both days USDF members; \$45/\$80 nonmembers. Preregistration with USDF encouraged. University credits available.

**Application to Ride:** Applications and videos are being accepted by USDF and *must be received by them on or before August 1, 2006. Please go to the USDF Web site ([www.usdf.org](http://www.usdf.org)) for full information on applying, application forms and the selection process.*

**Featured Clinician:** Jan Ebeling has been a major force in U.S. dressage since 1998 when he first began riding as a U.S. citizen. Jan rode Gucci to a 1998 Reserve Championship at the I-1 Championships in Gladstone, N.J., a part of the Bayer/USEF Festival of Champions. In 2000 he won again at Gladstone with Ricardo and took the I-1 Championship. He was Reserve Champion at the 2002 Championships aboard Liberte. His third and fourth place finishes with Felecianna and Liberte at the Festival in 2003 earned him the right to represent the U.S. at the 2003 Pan Am Games in the Dominican Republic. Jan was the highest ranking U.S. Rider finishing fifth overall individually and clinched the gold medal for the U.S. team. He and his wife own and operate their own training and sales facility in Moorpark, California. More information is available at [www.usdf.org](http://www.usdf.org).

- **November 17, 18 & 19, 2006: 2007 New Test Clinic with Axel Steiner**  
Wyndham Oaks, Bucklodge Rd., Boyds, Maryland

**November 17 is an Open Riding Clinic.** Slots are open to all members on a first come, first served basis.

**November 18 & 19 is the New Test Clinic.** Riders will demonstrate new test movements, how to correctly ride them and what the judges will be looking for. Demonstrations of Training through Grand Prix over the two days.

**Featured Clinician:** Axel Steiner, one of only two "O" judges in the U.S., is a successful and popular rider, trainer, and clinician. *Costs and rider information to follow.*