

Horse spurs quest for new course

Although still "in the infant stages," a new course offering in horsemanship is very real, according to Chuck Hudson, athletic director.

The wellspring of an "English" horsemanship course, in addition to the non-credit "Western Riding" class already offered at the College through Horsemanship West, came from the donation of a horse named "Silent Partner" by the president of Pioneer Savings and Loan, Ward Cook.

It's not just any horse. Silent Partner, a 12-year-old gelding jumper currently housed at Horsemanship West, has won hunter and jumper competitions in equestrian shows throughout the west coast. Cook said he wants the horse to keep jumping and keep winning ribbons. But the main reason for the donation was to further interest in horsemanship at the College.

"The horse has to stay in condition. I know he could help riders further their careers in equestrian, and even help people to learn how to ride English. That would do as much good to the horse as the people riding him," he said.

While horsemanship classes have been offered at the College for the past 10 to 11 years, "there hasn't been a lot of student interest," said Hudson, who's in charge of the horse curriculum, a division of P.E. and athletics. "That's one of the reasons why it's been offered as a non-credit class. Most of the people who take the class simply want to learn how to ride Western."

An English-riding class would offer a somewhat different blend of riding expertise.

Holly Roessner, assistant trainer at the Lake Oswego Hunt Club, has been riding English "ever since I could remember," she said. One activity of English riding that stirs the most common romantic vision is the fox hunt, currently termed "drag hunt." "They don't use foxes anymore," she said, "instead, they make a trail by way of a scented bag the dogs follow."

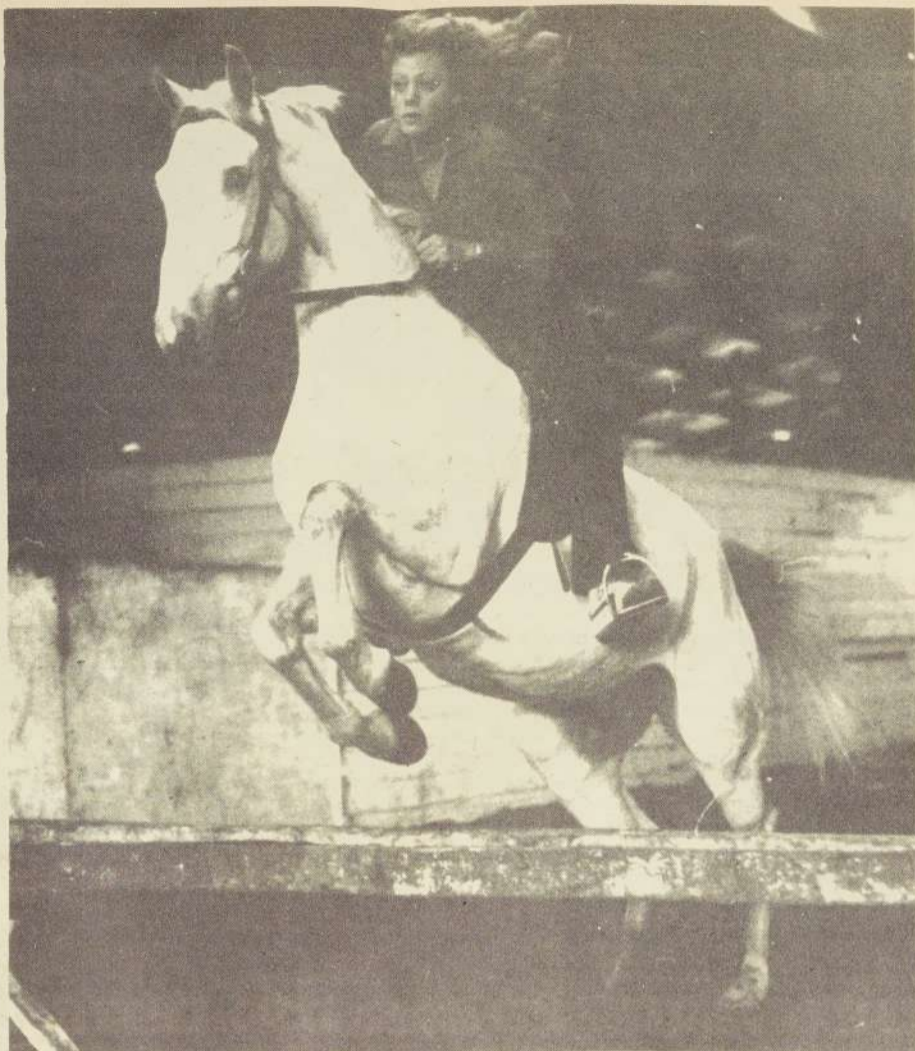
The dogs can sometimes lose the scent. But Hoessner said the artificial bag doesn't diminish the excitement of a fox hunt. "The feeling is still very exhilarating. The horse is jumping obstacles at top speed. Sometimes, they do get off the track to follow a deer in the deep woods. While this isn't desirable in competition, it can be very fun. Fox hunting is both elating and tiresome at the same time," she commented.

The class of "hunt seat" pertains to the style of riding and jumping, "and how the rider performs on the horse. There are also equitations in grooming and in general, how the rider and the horse look together," she said.

"Dressage," probably the most poetic classification of English equitation, is somewhat synonymous with the floor exercises of a gymnast, Roessner said. "Here, the horse is expected to go through special patterns of movements. Not only is the exactitude of the pattern judged, but the style and grace of the horse and rider together. Generally, you could call it the 'overall harmony' between horse and rider."

Roessner continued that Dressage is probably the most basic classification of English rider because "it teaches balance, and allows the horse to become more responsive to the aids of the rider, his commands and reign movements."

English riding can be learned separately from Western riding, according to Roessner. Additionally, "you can teach a Western horse to ride English," Roessner said. In high scale competition, judges prefer a thoroughbred horse over a purebred Western horse, she added.



Jeannie Scoggin, junior rider for Richard Shrake, trainer-owner of Horsemanship West, and two-time national champion in junior riding, talked about the economics of English riding. "While the top-notch junior horses are about the same cost in both English and Western riding, on the lower levels, the Western horses will run in the price range of from \$12,000 to \$15,000, where English horses can cost up to \$25,000 and more."

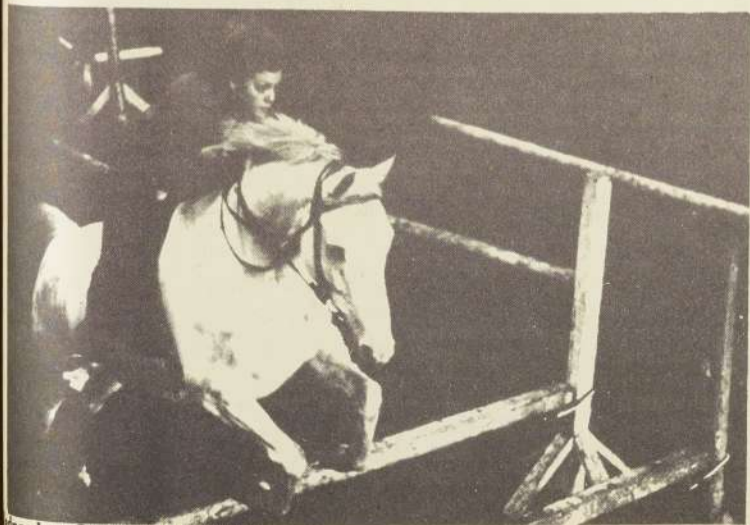
English riding has been termed the "elite class" of riding. English riding has made it all the way to the Olympic level of competition, whereas Western riding has the world cup status, according to Scoggin.

Scoggin and Roessner agree that a different type of fear is felt in large-scale Western and English riding. Scoggin said, "The risks are different in Western riding. You're involved with cattle, and the events like roping are more fast-paced." Roessner added, "English riding involves solid obstacles to overcome. The horse and rider have to have a lot of confidence in each other's abilities."

Confidence is a quality in large supply with Silent Partner, according to Ward Cook. "The horse loves to jump. He can make the rider look very good."

A coat as white and soft as down, and the form of an old pro, the 16 hand-high gelding has most assuredly raised the eyebrows of both Shrake and other trainers at Horsemanship West. But according to Bill Anton, development director at the College, who accepted the gift horse, "Students here have to start telling people they are interested to get the class off the ground." From Ward Cook's perspective, Silent Partner wouldn't mind getting off the ground with CCC students, either.

Jenny Huck, assistant trainer under owner Richard Shrake tests her courage. Atop 'Silent Partner', the white gelding jumper donated to the college in late September. After trying out the gift horse Jenny said, "Boy, he sure loves to jump!"



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