

**April 15-16, 2006**  
**Dressage Clinic**  
**Rose Folly Farm, Markham, VA**

Kay Brady and Miranda Kettlewell both did the three day dressage clinic with Patrice Edwards over the Easter weekend at Rose Folly Farm, Markham.

Patrice is one of the founders of the TTT (Teaching Trainers for Tomorrow) Group in the UK. The focus for the clinic was straightness or "Creating the Ambidextrous Horse". The following notes were from the Charles de Kunffy lecture, as retold by Patrice Saturday evening:

### **"Creating the Ambidextrous Horse"**

95% of all horses are left-handed (Charles means hollow left here) and escape through the right shoulder. The horse tries to change the rider to be as crooked as he is, but what the horse wants is not what he needs. The horse must be ridden straight before aiding or suppling the horse in order to bring ambidexterity.

The horse's spine moves to you: you become his spine as it transmits from bent elbow to horse's mouth. Presenting a straight line of support prevents him making you crooked. Remember that elbows are critical in keeping the spine straight. Most horses tend to fall in on a right circle and out on a left circle. Keep your heels well away from his sides when wanting to correct your leg from his crooked desire—so that it can be brought around the horse's ribs--and always put his shoulders in front of his quarters to straighten.

Good exercises for straightening the horse are Shoulder In left, Haunches In right, Half Pass right, and right lead canter. Keep the right rein steady in both directions. The looser left rein creates a vacuum for the left hind leg to step into, and the right rein stabilizes the right shoulder. If the horse falls to the right, even the contact and the position to guide the horse and micro-manage him. You become straight by pretending to be straight.

Straighten the horse, then supple him by working both sides, thus changing the crookedness. Self carriage is encouraged by releasing either rein for a short period.

Aiding – Use more right rein and more left leg and seat. Rehabilitate the horse and then amplify the gaits.

Patterns – Help with alignment by keeping hind feet tracking up to front feet on the arc of a bend. Control the forehand with the reins and with refinement. Ride the hind legs forward. Straighten the right side with the rein. By becoming his spine from elbow to mouth, you support his spine. Bend with seat, not just reins. Collect the right shoulder and create vacuum with left rein release so left hind can step up.

Alignment of the spine is the first goal. Suppleness creates more harmony. Slow the tempo to that of the shorter hind leg. Equality comes first and then amplification. Listen for the pause between beats. That is what creates the cadence.

In striving for suppleness, remember that the rider is in charge of the shape, the stride, where the hind leg moves, and in what fashion. The rider's leg should bend, displace, energize, and herd; these skills move the horse along if the crookedness has been corrected, but they cannot work efficiently on a crooked horse.