

Notes from Manuel Trigo Clinic  
Saturday 2/1/2014 and Sunday 2/2/2014  
Notes from Sandy Whisler

Some Caveats from Sandy:

I was not intentionally writing these notes for others to read, so as I took them I included some rephrasing to help me remember and understand what I was seeing and hearing. As a result, although I believe that I have the gist of what Manuel said and was trying to explain, there are undoubtedly some things that I have wrong or incomplete. If you see these, please send me corrections or your own explanations of what you understood.

I will usually use 'snaffle' when I mean top rein since that is what I am used to and have in my notes.

I wrote most during the first group for each session and later added just what was additional or that I missed the first time.

I would also like to say that I really enjoyed seeing all of you work with your horses. It is difficult to try really new things in front of other people with an excited horse away from home. You all did a wonderful job! I am glad I get to try these things alone at home first ☺.

### **Saturday Morning before and during group one.**

Serreta—a type of cavesson. Used instead of snaffle.

Ride with two reins—1) snaffle or serreta (on top) The serreta must be correctly shaped to the horse's nose. Each horse needs his own.

2) and curb (on bottom)

A rider who does not respect the horse will hurt the horse's mouth with the snaffle. He will also hurt the horse's nose with the serreta. With the serreta you can see damage. With the snaffle you cannot. You must be light either way or you can hurt the horse.

Manuel reviewed British, German and French style of holding reins in a double bridle.

**French:** curb comes in bottom of hand, snaffle comes in top of hand. Reins cross within hand (note—picture in Manuel's book shows curb exiting between first and second fingers, while snaffle exits bottom of hand where curb enters).

Teach in following sequence:

1) Snaffle/serreta action. To understand action of snaffle, hold whip by butt between thumb and first finger. Make tip of whip move up and down by barely moving thumb (and wrist if

necessary?) a) The snaffle lifts the neck. Use upward little ½ halts and vibrations. b) Use the snaffle to bend without pulling back by twisting wrist (turn fingers up) and, if necessary, by lifting hand up. **DO NOT MOVE HAND BACKWARDS.** Initially must give outside when ask for flexion so that horse is not blocked. At the beginning, also ride with the hands high.

## 2) Curb action

Use for long and (not too) low. Close finger on curb and send the horse forward with the seat. Stretch neck forward—not down. Neck horizontal.

## 3) Keep poll up with snaffle and use curb to flex (vertical poll flexion).

4) Bend horse in lifted and flexed position. Lift hand and turn wrist to bend at the poll. Release hand to straighten.

Bend head 90° while walking forward. The horse should not change the walk. Eventually, the horse should bend with the turn of the wrist. Initially the bend may require a lot of action of the inside hand in an upward direction.

Halt with impulsion. Do not pull. Lift in front and sit the horse on the haunches.

In the walk, use the seat to cadence the horse.

Horse should halt in one step from any gait. Use the top rein upward. Do not use leg or seat during halt now. Eventually will use leg.

To practice timing the leg aids with the horse's hind legs, make a sound every time the horse lifts the inside hind. You can affect the horse only when the leg is in the air. Have someone help from the ground to be sure your timing is right.

Use legs in time with hind legs of horse.

Use hands in time with front legs of horse.

If you touch the horse in the correct time with the leg, he will stretch. If you use the wrong timing, he will contract.

With a young horse, develop the following in order: Good walk, good shoulder in, good trot. Don't canter until these are good. This should take 2-3 months.

Q: Why do lateral work? A: To improve collection.

Collection is (should happen?) every day when the rider is on the back. Use shoulder in to collect half of the horse. Collect ½ the horse to the left and then ½ the horse to the right. Shoulder in is the best collecting exercise.

Sit back (not tipped forward). To ride in collection, ride like you are king of the world

Exercise: Make good transition to canter. Canter three steps: up, up, up then transition with the seat to walk. Look for reaching, rhythmic walk.

Exercise: Walk → shoulder in –maintain enough lateral position → canter (as above—3 strides) then → walk long and rhythmic.

Exercise: walk → drop reins → trot → pick up reins. No reins in hand when you do the transition.

Keep your center of gravity (stomach) ahead of the horse's center of gravity.

Trot: Rise in a slow cadence to slow cadence of the horse, but cover more ground.

Exercise: walk → lift with snaffle to elevate → immediately drop reins completely and → canter

Train yourself not to depend on the reins. This is lots of work for the rider, but is accessible to everyone.

### **Saturday morning. Group 2.**

The walk is very important. Start with reins loose.

Focus on the forward/backward motion of the horse.

Use no legs.

Look for regularity, big steps, slow cadence. Try for the slowest possible cadence without using the reins. Use seat.

Said to several people: remove the weight from the stirrups.

Without your legs, get faster cadence at walk just using the seat. Then bring back to slower cadence and bring horse higher.

Your seat is your first aid.

Repeatedly take up and completely drop reins (show me your hands). Practice taking reins up in the French way.

Play with the position of the neck. Use contact on top and then on bottom (always light). Then push forward and stretch the neck.

Alternate levels of contact. Make yourself totally adjustable.

Top 100%; bottom 0%

Put wrists forward—0% on top and 100% on bottom

Then 50/50

Then 70/30

Then 30/70

Half-halt means to give an upward (snaffle) movement (small).

Teach the horse to stay up after you release the half halt.

When horse stays up, ask for flexion (not sure if he means jaw flexion or at the poll here) with the curb. Close the pinky side and open again as soon as you get flexion. (I think flexion of the jaw at this point.)

Push with the seat into hands in a correct position

For lateral flexion:

Give outside

Twist inside wrist

Lift inside hand if necessary

Wait and don't move—ask and hold

Use outside rein upward if horse drops the poll

Never bend more than 90°

Do the same at the walk

Exercise: figure 8 using only twist of each wrist.

Exercise: halt use two fingers (first and thumb) to make contact (a few grams) with snaffle. Lift hands with two fingers maintaining the contact and engage hind legs—horse will halt correctly. Use seat to engage hind legs. Seat → no legs → halt with top rein

Biggest difficulty is the circle. Maintain the inside leg like a post to bend around. Outside leg behind the girth. Use whip behind the leg if he does not respect it.

Exercise: do this occasionally as a test, not all the time

In walk. Make a circle with only the outside rein—drop the inside rein completely. Don't allow the outside hand to cross the neck. Point with the inside toe where you want to go

Also be able to do in trot. Make a circle in each corner of the arena.

Level 2—circle with outside rein in walk and trot.

Ride every circle correctly.

For young horse: want to bring withers up with top rein in walk and trot. 3 weeks to 2 months  
Be fair. Lift and stretch forward.

### **Saturday morning. Group 3.**

Walking—control action with seat

Start with long reins. No leg.

Slow the cadence with the seat

Do slow cadence with long steps

If you hold, the cadence will speed up.

Looking for slow cadence with same impulsion

in walk → Shoulder in at walk → circle at walk

Exercise: pick up a slow trot without touching the reins. If the horse is too quick, rise more vertically.

He used a slow metronome (63 b/m?) to help riders slow the posting to control the horse.

If you must use a lot of inside hand (e.g. left) to keep flexion and elevation, and the whip is in the inside hand, cross the butt of the whip to the right hand (you are not switching the whip, just temporarily holding the whip so you can effectively use the inside hand).

To halt:

Use Snaffle --light, up --and halt

Use seat to engage

If need to use hand, don't pull, but be like a mule. Don't allow horse to move you.

For afternoon, no spurs and no gloves

### **Saturday afternoon. Group 1- 3**

{I was in the arena much of the time helping with the exercises for timing of the hind leg. I did not get to take as many notes—sandy}

Now we start using the leg and develop feeling in the hands  
Want correct action of rider's leg on same side as horse's hind

Exercise: shoulder-in on a circle (like leg yield on a circle in German school) use leg in time with inside hind to accentuate the step—step more under.

Use legs in time with step three times, inside, outside, inside and observe the horse. If slackens pace do it again and again watch the horse—teach the horse to go without constant nagging

Develop the correct timing for leg, seat, whip—need to tune yourself up.

#### Counted walk

Slow with cadence

Do by feeling the reins alternately –synchronize with shoulder.

Walk of horse is like water oozing out of eyedropper...drop develops—step slowly and then the drip is the touch of hoof to ground.

Hands high and synchronize with shoulders of horse.

Use when front hoof leaves ground.

Don't use legs for counted walk. Will use legs in Spanish walk.

Don't train counted walk. Use it occasionally to test yourself.

Strides should not be shorter, just slower.

Horse needs to be free to move at the walk.

## Sunday morning. Group 1

Six main rules.

### 1) separation of the aids

Use one aid at a time seat → leg → hand  
Hand → seat → leg  
Develop sensitivity in fingers

### 2) release of aids

Turn on the brain of the horse  
Aid then release  
Tell the horse once and then silence. Let the horse think about it.  
Aid—freeze in position and let the horse work. If loses requested action, do a micro-correction.

### 3) Moderation of the aids

Try to use less and less, but get the same response.

### 4) Optimization of the aids

Timing  
Use the aid in the correct moment

{Sandy—I apparently missed five and six—did anyone else catch all six??}

Try to practice all of these together

Always get a preparatory movement well before you ask for the next.

Example: develop a good shoulder in before ask for canter

Exercise to practice all steps together

Walk on long rein

Pick up reins

Develop good impulsive walk with a slow cadence

Keep same power and cadence in a 10 m circle

After good 10m circle, shoulder in

Look for calmness and power

Circle again (especially if you start to lose the good shoulder in)

Shoulder in should be in 4 tracks. Make hind and front legs cross. 40 -45°

Have the horse a little up in shoulder in so he can engage the inside hind

Look behind you to see the angle is correct

Repeat circle, shoulder in, circle, shoulder in

Jaw flexions on the snaffle

Horse must swallow—releases TMJ (temporomandibular joint)

Poll flexion is NOT jaw flexion

Use the curb for poll flexion and the snaffle for jaw flexion

If using a Serreta, close fingers on curb also for jaw flexion?

Outside hand asks for jaw flexion

Try with horse straight—if trouble, try with horse bent

Use of curb rein.

Don't use top, just take contact and use curb for jaw flexion

When release top rein, use curb for poll flexion

Exercise: Right at the walk → halt → jaw flexion → walk

Jaw flexion in movement relaxes the horse—will be in the best balance possible

Can be used to rebalance the horse

20/20 rule {I missed something here did anyone get it?}

Do 20 jaw flexions of each of the following from each side

From the ground (in front?)

From the ground from the side

When riding

Exercise: Halt → jaw flexion → shoulder in → canter → halt → jaw flexion → back → canter

Exercise to collect the walk: walk → jaw flexion → higher → jaw flexion → collected walk

The balance will change

Exercise: Walk → jaw flexion → higher → jaw flexion → collected walk → canter

Don't give the reins in transition

Don't need speed

Exercise: halt → jaw flexion → back → canter

Sandy's question: outside hind on ground during back = strike off into canter?

Manuel's answer: feel when it is right—should be reflexive

### **Sunday morning. Groups 2 and 3**

The bosquero (sp?) shows how the horse moves. It swings with the walk. When you shoulder in, it should still swing in the same way. Judge can see this—very revealing.

#### **Backing**

Snaffle to prevent the poll from dropping

Alternate legs close to the girth

Lift your butt a tiny bit

Practice backing in a circle and then in a straight line.

Only use the seat and legs

To circle when backing

Shorter use of inside leg--stays closer to girth, longer use of outside leg—moves further from girth.

Keep outside leg slightly behind the girth.

Not like a pirouette. Do not use the outside leg to turn the horse with pressure

Just move the legs shorter, longer, shorter, longer to make longer steps on the outside and shorter steps on the inside—horse will turn

Use hips to move forward. Use emphasis of hip: right, left, right, left

Inside hand should be lower than outside hand in shoulder in (?).

### **Sunday after lunch**

Focus on neck extension and three types of resistances

Q: How do we teach the green horse how to extend? Simply release reins? Maybe he will and maybe he won't.

A: Condition a basic reflex to get neck extension.

Bend neck 90° for 5 seconds (twist of hand for 90° bend) with poll the highest point

Give reins—horse will extend

Do this at halt, walk, trot and canter

You must be fair—if the horse gives, don't take more; give him a break

Give and the horse will straighten. Do not straighten the neck for him

Later, supervise with top rein—do not allow him to go lower than the level you set

Get bend to inside, release and push a lot forward into walk  
Bend for 5 seconds, release and drive (inside, outside, inside) three times.  
Don't lose the cadence  
Bend 5 seconds, release and push 1,2,3—then surf  
Give lots of rein—supervise with top rein

Teach your horse ideas at the walk  
Gymnasticize at the trot  
Canter a lot using the same tools

Three types of resistances

1) resistance of force

Horse resists with the jaw—(locks the jaw?)

Fix with jaw flexion

2) resistance of weight (horse is on the forehead)

Fix with upward ½ halt

Take and release

3) resistance of inertia

Horse is not responsive to the leg

Fix with the whip

Use leg and seat lightly—use whip if response is insufficient

All of this is dynamic—it happens quickly. You must learn to feel.

Fix in order: weight, then force, then inertia (1/2 halt up, then jaw flexion, then whip for response)

Inertia is the tip of the iceberg. You must with fix jaw flexion (resistance of force) and ½ halt (resistance of weight) first.

Used quadrilles to encourage coordination of these

### **Other notes**

Don't try to fix a problem that does not exist.

Competition dressage horses walk very badly now.

Never frame the horse by bringing the hand back