

Westfall

HORSEMANSHIP



Even as a young child growing up in Maine, Stacy loved horses and rode whenever she had the chance. She got her first pony, Misty, when she was six. Her mother Sherri was Stacy's only instructor in riding and training until she went to college. As Sherri looked on she would ask questions that prodded Stacy to think deeply about the mindset of the animals. "Why do you think Misty just did that?" or "How do you think you could get Bay to want to cooperate? What is she thinking?" The habit of getting inside the horse's head, of thinking like a horse, became second nature to Stacy.

She also learned directly from the horses. One of her favorite memories is of "accidentally" teaching a horse to sit. While riding with a friend in the winter the girls accidentally backed a horse into a pile of snow. The horse lost its footing and sat on the snow. As the girls laughed Stacy decided to set up the situation again. It wasn't long before the horse would "sit" on anything she backed it up to.

Stacy always had a desire to train and to teach. When she wasn't at school you might have found her training her dog to navigate obstacle courses in the yard, or giving a riding lesson to a neighbor. With no professional trainers to observe in her area, she relied on the insights instilled by her mother and the instincts and lessons she learned from the horses.

When she was 13, Stacy got her first horse; her Dad had promised her one — if she got all "A"s in school. Stacy rode Bay bareback wherever she went. In fact, Bay was her mode of transportation to work — seven miles each way — until she turned 16. She and her mother rode almost every day and Stacy eventually started to compete in many events including jumping and barrel racing. While other teenagers were playing sports or shopping at the mall, Stacy was riding horses. In high school, through the urging of a teacher, she found a college in which she could pursue a major in equestrian studies — the University of Findlay in Ohio. She studied under traditional-style training instructors including Steve Brown and Clark Bradley. She also worked for champion reining trainers Mike Florida and Dan Huss. To all of the knowledge she learned from these mentors, she applied the "think-like-a-horse" technique that had served her well in the past.

In 1994, while at the All American Quarter Horse Congress, Stacy met her future husband Jesse — himself a talented reining trainer. They married three years later and then established the Westfall Horsemanship training facility in Mt. Gilead, Ohio. They have three young boys, Caleb, Joshua, and Nathan. Stacy often teased that she was pregnant three years straight.

Like any good trainer Stacy's aim has always been to have the most clear and precise communication with her horse as possible. Her goal in her reining was to make the reins unnecessary. While others have approximated that goal, Stacy made it a reality. In 2003 she won the National Reining Horse Association Freestyle reining competition riding with no bridle — and with not so much as a neck rope. She has gone undefeated for two years straight in major freestyle reining competitions and in 2006 she won twice while riding bridle-less AND bareback.

When in 2006 she entered the prestigious Road to the Horse colt starting competition, Stacy heard from more than a few people that she couldn't possibly win. After all, she was facing some legendary trainers. When the competition was over, Stacy was named the winner, after a convincing performance that clearly outshone her competitors.

That little girl from Maine has grown to become one of the country's top clinicians and competitors. While Stacy continues to compete, start young horses and train, she truly loves to explain to people what her Mom encouraged her to learn — to discover the "why" behind what the horse does..

With Jesse, her invaluable coach, she tours the country offering clinics and making educational appearances at expos and other equine events. She is building the Westfall Horsemanship approach to create a program that is efficient and effective — with resources to compliment the clinics such as DVDs, equipment and an information-rich website.

