



Pat Parelli

Keep it Natural!

Article Sophie Love Photo COCO

"If all I did was teach you to think like a horse and truly understand their psychology, you'd have the keys to be able to do whatever you want with horses, and to win their hearts." Pat Parelli

Pat Parelli was obsessed with horses at an early age. He was born in California's bay area and hung around the racetracks and the stable yards, just to be close to these magnificent creatures. From nine, he was a regular and reliable little worker, enthusiastically helping with whatever he could, ears and eyes open for every nugget of wisdom. The more he watched, listened and learned, the more he developed his own ideas about raising foals and training horses.

When he was 13, a trapper called Freddie Ferrera, who'd admired Pat's passion and persistence, decided to take him under his wing. In the long, hot, summer holidays Freddie would teach Pat

how to be more natural with all God's creatures, and how to pay more attention to, and be more in tune with, the natural world.

At just 17, Pat launched himself into rodeos, where his favourite event was the Bareback Buck. He was a natural! But he also had a good coach in John Hawkins, and won the Bareback Rookie of the Year title in 1972 - his buckoff average just 4%. Pat soon realised that rodeo wasn't a career for a lifetime, and he wouldn't bounce forever. He saw how difficult it was for the older athletes to swap the adrenaline and applause for something more staid and secure. He then decided that he'd concentrate on training horses and began a business starting colts.

However both the horses and the customers were unpredictable, and equine and financial frustration soon set in and Pat was prepared to give up horses altogether. He hated the assembly line approach to breaking and making horses and very nearly gave the game away altogether.

Then three significant events changed his life:

- He met Tony Ernst, from Australia, who was not only a student of the horse but was a disciple of Kung Fu martial arts and a master musician.

Tony taught Pat that his mind was a muscle that should be honed and used to its full potential. He learnt about the Kung Fu disciplines of discipline, body control and mind-body mastery, and he learned to harness his inner strength and will, to be pro-active rather than reactive and to strive for perfection.

- He began to work under the tutelage of Troy Henry, a master horseman from Clovis, California, who specialised in training and developing both horse and rider for competition using psychology and communication.

Troy made Pat understand that the horse was a prey animal, and that its mental and emotional processes were completely different to a human's. Mr Henry was intolerant of people who did not know how to think like horses, but once he saw how invested Pat was in making the change in himself, he started to teach him everything he knew.

Pat became fascinated with the idea of training mules to be able to perform like horses.

The mules taught him the importance of reverse psychology, the principles of safety and comfort, as the only real incentives, and developed his savvy about how to get a prey animal to "want" to perform. Maybe most importantly they taught him patience, patience, patience! And in 1980, Pat founded The American Mule Association.

Pat was a dedicated student of horses and

horsemanship, and he also began to develop his own style of teaching and started expanding these principles. He demonstrated what he learned in the ring – he was successful in reining and cutting events, with both horses and mules.

In fact, he nearly won the 1983 Snaffle Bit Futurity on a mule called Cissy. This resulted in a big boost to his training career, but also a rule banning mules from the competition! Nonetheless, Pat was invited back the following year to give a demonstration with a mule doing the same reining pattern. He did it – but this time without a bridle!

So, by this stage, Pat had really learned to communicate with horses and he loved taking a problem or inexperienced horse and teaching it to become responsive and to want to do what Pat asked. But then he had to give it back to its owner! He soon learned that if the rider didn't have enough savvy, the horse would regress. He finally decided that he couldn't go on training horses to listen to humans, if the humans didn't know what to say or how to say it! So he searched his soul for a way to help people become more savvy with horses.

Pat knew that horses were easy once you understood their simple thought processes, and why they would do what they did. He also understood that you needed to be the leader of the herd – to have mental, emotional and physical control of yourself and then to use horse psychology and body language to communicate effectively and neutrally with horses. If anyone could learn that, they would have exceptional results and relationships with horses. The challenge, therefore, was to find a way to teach people these basic, simple skills and rules.

Unlike the taciturn horsemen who had taught him, Pat had the gift of the gab. He had the right mix of humour, passion, power and honesty and he soon discovered that he had a natural talent in explaining what he had learned. So he began to give "lessons," but had no idea that one day he would be able to help people on a much larger scale.

In 1982 three close friends (Dr Bob Bradley and Jeff and Kat Hobson) convinced Pat to take his teachings "on the road." He practiced for weeks, formulating all his ideas, learning and skill into a presentable package. He was a natural at inspiring people to strive for greater things with their horse and he had the ability to deliver the information and identify the techniques with which to accomplish it.

In 1983, while performing bridleless at the California Livestock Symposium, Pat met

three master horsemen who were to become mentors - Tom Dorrance, Ray Hunt and Ronnie Willis. Pat hosted several of Ray Hunt's Clinics and spent considerable time with both Dorrance and Willis, expanding his equine understanding and expounding his beliefs and ideas.

A few years later the world's leading equine behaviorist, Dr R M Miller, observed one of Pat's bridleless demonstrations and realised that here was a horseman whose teaching was closely aligned with his own philosophy, both on influencing the horse's mind and on foal imprinting. Dr Miller made the prediction was that by the time Pat was 40, he would have become one of the world's leading horsemen and teachers. He wasn't wrong!

Dr Miller wrote a three part series on Pat's concepts in Western Horseman magazine entitled 'A New Look at Old Methods'. Realising Pat's extraordinary talents as both a natural horseman and a gifted presenter, Dr Miller encouraged him to go full steam ahead with his clinics.

So, spreading steadily out from the American west coast, Pat responded to interest all over the USA. His continued collaboration with Dr Miller and an invitation from promoter Bob Berg took him to Australia. Canada, Mexico, Hawaii and Europe were the next destinations. With hundreds of clinics under his belt, his program had passed the test. Pat's systems proved universally effective for both people and horses.

From here, it became a case of the tail wagging the dog. People were asking for more - more information, more clinics, and more supportive programs. It became clear that some kind of system was required that could help people who loved horses - no matter where they lived.

So Pat developed the 'Savvy System.' A simple program for students to learn and practice at home with their horses. They could learn just the basics, for safety and 'Savvy' communication, or they could move through the Levels to become Master Horsemen and Women too. Pat also started developing, and continues to develop, instructors around the world to increase the accessibility of his teachings through qualified and reliable sources.

Nobody had heard of natural horsemanship 13 years ago. Today, Parelli Natural Horse•Man•Ship has become one of the most exciting revolutions in horsemanship, attracting attention from all facets of the equine industry. It is becoming one of easiest, and most popular, ways to develop expertise with horses and more and more people are making the change from normal to natural. It doesn't matter whether you're into polo or

penning; cutting or cross-country; racing or rodeo; dressage or endurance; show jumping or barrel racing; Pat's dream of making people more horse savvy provides the foundation for excellence.

It is Pat Parelli's vision that one day the term 'natural' will no longer have to precede the word 'horsemanship.' Horsemanship shouldn't be mechanical. They are living, breathing, feeling and thinking creatures too! With enough savvy, horses and people can have fun, achieve excellence, experience partnership, harmony, and unity... naturally, through understanding, communication and psychology, rather than force, fear and intimidation.

If you want to improve the relationship with YOUR horse, call 0800 023 4813 and ask for your FREE 'What is Parelli' DVD! 🐾

WIN TICKETS TO



Parelli™

Linda and Pat Parelli are thrilled to be hosting Australia's largest celebration of Natural Horsemanship on the 10th & 11th March 2007 at the Sydney International Equestrian Centre. They have given Australian Performance Horse readers the opportunity to win three pairs of tickets (worth \$145.00 each).

Answer this simple question on the back of a post card and send to: -
Parelli Australia
PO Box 260
Picton NSW 257

Q. WHERE WILL PAT & LINDA PARELLI BE ON THE 10TH & 11TH MARCH 2007?

Entries must arrive at Parelli Australia office by 5pm on Monday 15 January. Winners drawn after that and notified by phone or email by Friday 19 January. Please ensure your NAME, ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBER and EMAIL ADDRESS are written clearly under your answer. **GOOD LUCK!**