

What I Wish I'd Known Then

By Charlotte Bredahl-Baker

On Clarity and Leadership

One of the most important things I wish I'd known then is to always give the horse the benefit of the doubt. I have been ballroom dancing for years and it has given me a lot more empathy for the horse. When I dance with somebody really good (usually a professional teacher), I feel like a good dancer, and I have no trouble figuring out what my partner wants me to do. The reason is that his lead (aids) is very clear. On the other hand, when I dance with somebody much less experienced, I find myself constantly second guessing what he wants me to do. I feel like I don't know what I am doing and I lose my confidence. I can only imagine what a horse goes through.

Now, in my riding, I always try to make sure I give very clear aids and if I have mistakes I take responsibility, instead of blaming the horse. If a horse is anticipating movements, it is usually because the rider's aids aren't clear enough and the horse doesn't have confidence in the rider. Whenever a horse gives me trouble I try to figure out what I am doing wrong, instead of assuming the horse is trying to be bad. My goal is to be that really good leader (dance term), my horse can have total confidence in.

Charlotte Bredahl-Baker is a USEF "S" judge. She has represented the U.S. in many international competitions. In 1992 she and her horse Monsieur were part of the Bronze medal winning Olympic Team in Barcelona. In 1997 she and her horse Lugano were part of the Silver medal winning U.S. Team at the North American Championship in Maryland. In 2005 Charlotte and Komo won the CDS and the USDF regional Championship at Grand Prix. In 2005 Charlotte also won the CDS and the USDF regional Championship at Prix St. George on Eskada. .