

*Adventures
of the*



*Blue-Eyed
Stallion*



by Sylvia Burrago

Adventures of the Blue-Eyed Stallion

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY HUSBAND **BRYAN** WHO HAS FOR MANY YEARS INDULGED MY PASSION FOR HORSE TRAINING, AND TO **GINA ALLISON** WHOSE LOVE OF HORSES IS MATCHED BY HER CREATIVE LAYOUT IDEAS. AND TO **LINDA TYGANHOF**, ANOTHER HORSE LOVER WHO INTRODUCED ME TO COMPUTERS ENABLING ME TO PUT THIS TRUE STORY TOGETHER FOR PUBLICATION.



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Part 1

Banquo

Arrives





The many trees cast shade everywhere





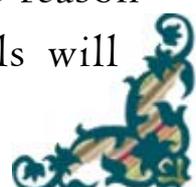
As the trailer door opened. I could see a very different world than the high desert of extreme cold and heat and severe sun where I had been. In this new place the air seemed softer and full of interesting odors. There were other horses curious about my arrival. I could hear them neighing and prancing. When I backed out of the big four-horse trailer, I saw lots of flowers lining the arena. They looked delicious. The orange trees around the arena were short enough that I could easily reach the sweet fruit. The huge oak trees were circled with more pretty flowers. And flowers were also by the trees that lined the property. The many trees cast shade everywhere, which is very important to me





because I am a cremello colored stallion with sensitive pink skin. I thought, how nice, I won't have to wear that ridiculous fly mask. I always had to wear it in the desert to keep the delicate skin around my eyes from getting sunburned. Most horses have dark skin except under white marking, so they usually have little to worry about. But me! I must be careful.

I was led to a very shady paddock with nice soft ground to roll in. As I investigated the corral, I could hear people remarking about my blue eyes and cream colored coat. I saw riders on horses much smaller than I am. I later learned that these were Arabians, except for the palominos which were American Saddlebreds. Oh yes, that's one reason why I'm so special. My foals will





always be palominos when I am mated with chestnut mares. Most horse breeders try a palomino to chestnut mating, but they only have a fifty percent chance for the spectacular palomino color on the foals.





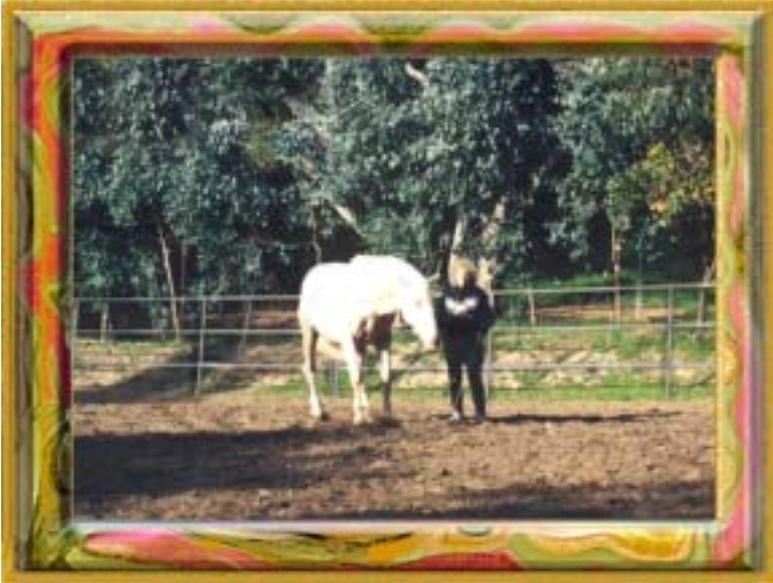
Another reason I am very special is that I am a Swedish Warmblood. My breed was developed for the strenuous demands of jumping competitions and the elegant art of dressage, sort of a ballet for horses. And like a ballerina, it takes years of practice to do it well. The jumpers often do three-day events which include exciting cross country courses, dressage, and stadium jumping. These competitions are very popular and are included in the Olympics.

So why am I here to study with this lady who trains exhibition and trick horses? Well, my owners, Sharon and Michelle, decided I should do something different and fun for stallion parades and other places where stallions are displayed. They wanted everyone to know what a





nice guy I am. With dressage and jumping, the horses are so busy working that an audience



has no idea what their personalities are really like aside from athletic ability.

I was quite content in my new quarters, but Sylvia, my





trainer, was making something special for me. She was afraid I would soon step over the five-foot fence because I am a very tall horse. Over the next few days, fence panels six feet tall were being put together and a nice stall too. Soon I was moved into the new corral and all the tools she and her friends were using to put up the walls in the stall section fascinated me. There was a gate they had shut between the corral and the stall, but I managed to reach through and grab some very interesting things like hammers and screwdrivers. But my favorite thing to grab is rope, especially lead ropes. Sometimes Sylvia would halter me and let me have the rope and lead myself! She gave me a large red ball to play with, but it didn't interest me until

she attached a thick rope to it. Then

I could really swing it



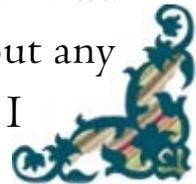


around, then let it go, and watch it fly. It's so nice having toys to play with and being able to go outside. Many stallions are locked up in stalls and become very unhappy.

Michelle and Sharon told Sylvia I didn't need a corral, just the stall was enough. But Sylvia said I would be learning many things that would help to prepare me for going out in



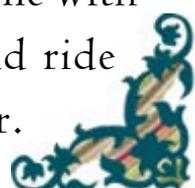
public. Time in a closed stall doesn't teach anything and can lead to frustration. I already knew this as I hurt my leg because I was kept in a stall for months without any turnout. That was before I





came to California. So I was learning many things. I didn't spook much, just sometimes when those cats raced up the trees suddenly. Those little things can make so much noise!

But they are cute. A little black one with white paws and whiskers would ride on Sylvia's shoulder.





Sometimes it would jump onto her from a high perch. Other times it would climb up her jeans and jacket to its favorite place, her right shoulder. She would walk all over doing chores and that cat would stay on her shoulder until she finally had to put him down! Besides “shoulder” kitty, there was “mini” kitty, a beige, “nasty” kitty, a huge, fluffy black and white, and a black cat that was just “kitty.” There was a little white and gold fluffy dog that was always bouncing around.

Yes, there were things to see here. Cars going up and down the hilly road. Sylvia would get mad at the noisy fast ones with squealing tires and noisy radio. “That kid’s going to kill someone or be killed,” she would say to me.

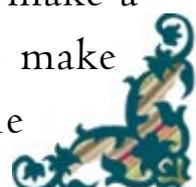




I also got used to odd noises, including Sylvia's tractor, a noisy green diesel. She used it to keep the ground soft in the arena and corrals. It also had a front loader she would sometimes use for trimming trees by locking it in place and climbing up in the bucket with a saw. "Safer than a ladder," she would say.

I also heard compressors and chain saws. This is an oak forest and the trees need frequent attention to get rid of dead wood. Sometimes I would hear loud "booms" from nearby Camp Pendleton. I live right next to the shop and can see in a window. Sometimes there is an odd hissing buzz with lots of sparks flying. This was a welder used to repair or make things out of metal. Sylvia used it to make a

special latch for my corral to make
sure I couldn't open the





gate. She told me, “You are so good at undoing ropes that you might undo latches too.”

I’m four years old and I’ve really had no training at all. Michelle warned Sylvia, “He’s not even been taught to tie.” “Well, he’ll learn,” Sylvia replied.

So my lessons began. I learned to follow the directions of a whip. As horses learn most easily by vision, this was easy work. Pointing to my shoulder told me to make the circle around Sylvia larger, and pointing to my hind leg meant to make it smaller. If I made a mistake, she would correct me with a rope she held attached to a special noseband. I learned to trot and canter circling her in this way. I

was quite happy with this work until she

lengthened the rope and used a whip

with a lash. I was terrified

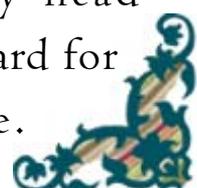




and tried to race off. She managed to hold on to me muttering to herself, “some idiot chased this horse with a lash whip.”

She brought me in close to her and comforted me. “Don’t worry, Banquo. We can fix this. It will just set us back a few days.” It took about five days to get me moderately comfortable with the lash. I also discovered it could go straight up in front of me to help me to learn to stop. I always wanted to come to her and press my head against her shoulder. She laughed at this and said, “That’s very nice, Banquo, but you’re a big boy and soon you will have to act more like an adult.”

I was introduced to saddle and bridle. Sometimes I would keep my head moving away making it very hard for Sylvia to bridle me.





“Okay, no more games.” She tied me close to the rail and easily got the bridle on me. I was introduced to side reins, one at a time. It was always on the inside and Sylvia would change it when I worked in the other direction.

I would obey my same whip signals while testing the limit of the one side rein. Soon I could handle an outside rein at the same time with the inside rein a bit tighter to give my neck a little bend. She would always stop and reverse the length of the reins when we changed directions.

“I know this is boring, Banquo, but its good for you to learn to stand quietly while I adjust the reins. Patience is essential for both of us.”



I would also get sessions tied at the rail learning to move

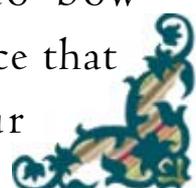




away from a light touch on my side. Sylvia was too short to mount me the way she considered correct. She just had to climb up. Still tied at the rail, I learned I could take a step or two when her heel touched my side. My front legs didn't have to move. I just had to move my hind legs sideways.

Just a few steps to the left then to the right, and she would slide off and pet me. She'd take the saddle and bridle off and then she'd take me to a big corral so I could roll. Next to eating, rolling is probably the most fun for me to do.

This seemed like a very full schedule, but soon I had another thing to learn. "You must be a gentleman and learn to bow elegantly. It tells your audience that you've finished your





performance and you are graciously asking for their applause. I know it's a bit confusing now,



but with a little practice, it will become as easy as eating.”

Well, I was a bit awkward. Sylvia could help me with a rope on my left front leg so I knew we here

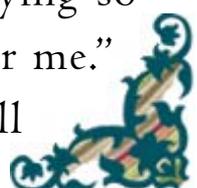




to put it, but my right leg just didn't know where to go after my left knee touched the ground! "Don't worry, Banquo. Once you learn to stay down on your left knee, then I can help you position your right leg." I wasn't so sure about that. Sometimes I would kneel on both legs. Sometimes my right leg would curl around my left knee. Sometimes I would just give up and lie down! But Sylvia would always reassure me that I was doing fine. She even started feeding me carrots after each attempt. This was so encouraging that sometimes I would beat her to the signal, which was a light tap on the front of my leg. I would start the bow before she gave me the cue.

"That's very nice that you're trying so hard, Banquo, but just wait for me."

Then she would pet me all





over so I would learn to relax and wait for the cue.

The air became crisp and cold after an unusually warm spell. I was feeling more and more energetic as I adjusted to all this exercise. One morning Sylvia said, “Banquo, you’ve been watching the Arabs too much. You’re snorting and holding your tail like a tall flag.” Oh, I was feeling good!

Finally the day came for the first ride. “Usually we do some work on the long lines first, but I think I can help you more from the saddle because you’re doing so well with your leg cues, and you’re pretty calm about most things. And I’m tired of climbing up to do your work at the rail. Now, I can use the mounting block.”





Part of my groundwork was following a rein attached to the side of the cantle in a tight circle. This had become pretty easy, so when





Sylvia asked for this under saddle it made perfect sense to me and I just followed that rein. She called it a leading rein. She would frequently change directions so I was almost doing serpentines. “Once I feel you won’t take off, then we can do some straighter work.” All went well until I saw an upturned red cart. I spooked. Sylvia reassured me. Then she dismounted and walked me over to the cart and set it down properly. “See Banquo, it even has hay in it. Nothing to be frightened of.” I took a mouthful of hay and readily agreed. She took me back to the mounting block and the lesson continued. “Well,” she said as she got off later, “I can still walk so it must have been a good ride!.



I thought it would look pretty to plant some

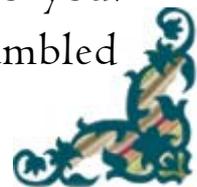




flowers around our corral, Banquo.” Sylvia was lugging a bunch of greenery. When people come to see you, the plants will make a pretty background on the bank next to your fence,” Sylvia noted as she planted another dark pink geranium. The ever-present kitty was on her shoulder as she sorted cuttings. “These tall purple irises will be stunning.” The kitty was not impressed. “And to hold the steep bank behind this side of your corral, some trailing African Daisies.” The kitty looked bored and shut one eye. “And some mint and Society Garlic at the top.” Kitty shut the other eye. “You know, Banquo,” she pushed a garlic clove into the dark soil, “You are going to see many things that don’t make sense to you.”



Kitty woke with a jolt and scrambled



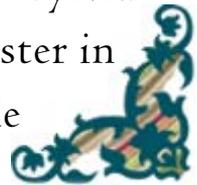


a bit for the shoulder perch as Sylvia stood up.

“Huge arenas with banners and bleachers!! Loudspeakers that crackle and hiss!! Noisy spectators!! Applause!! Just learn to trust the whip signals and the bit, and I will keep you safe. Eventually you will learn to tolerate the strange places where you will be displayed. Fairgrounds, show arenas, other ranches, parade routes. Maybe you will even learn to like going places. But at first it may be frightening.”

My lessons were early in the morning so I could be back in my shady corral by the time the southern winter sun was shining on most of the arena. Here it was January and yet there was record-breaking heat. Some tiny biting gnats had survived the frost so Sylvia

hung an automatic pesticide mister in my stall. “Just come inside





if the bugs get bothersome.” Even though she fly-sprayed me every day, I was much more sensitive than the other horses. Sylvia took advantage of the weather and washed the manes and tails on her pretty palomino mares. “The weather is fine for us, Banquo,” she said as she cleaned my corral, the little black kitty on her shoulder as usual. “But think of my plants. They don’t know what to do. A few weeks ago we had record freezes all over the state. Farmers lost much of their citrus crops. And now, this record heat!!”

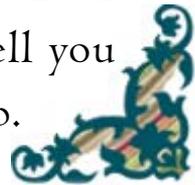
The kitty seemed very attentive to the manure rake as the contents were scooped up and dumped in a two-wheeled cart, the kitty’s head following the tool’s every motion.

“One advantage with the heat is that
I needn’t worry about you





catching a chill after you work up a sweat. When it was so cold we had to work slowly so you wouldn't sweat. Your liberty work is still doubtful when the lash whip is behind you. So we must go back to the line for a while. But your response to the other liberty cues is coming along reasonably. You're beginning to have fun and enjoy it. The bow is not perfect yet, but it is much better than last week. You're starting nicely under saddle and soon we'll start Spanish Walk." I looked up, still munching hay. That sounded like a lot of work. "It will be confusing at first. We spent all this time on the bow teaching you to put your leg back, and now you will have to do the opposite, hold it forward, up to the horizontal. Don't worry. I'll give you a cue to tell you when each leg comes up.





We're a bit short on time to put this movement together, but I think you can do it well enough to 'wow' an audience by February."

Under saddle I was learning to walk steadily, with my mouth being light on the reins. We continued with the "turn on the forehand" that Sylvia had started with me at the rail. I could do about half of one. I also learned to stop and back up. We worked under the oak trees to keep me in the shade. "I hope we get some overcast mornings soon so we can use the whole arena.

If not, we'll just have to start much earlier. Now that we're trotting it's easier for you to have a rail to follow until you learn to rely entirely on the reins and my legs.

Sometimes people would come look at me. I always liked





to be petted and I enjoyed the attention. They talked about their Arabian mares and wondered if I would be a good match for them. Sylvia told them that I should be ideal in many ways. As all the mares were bay, the foals would be either buckskins or palomino, both popular and flashy colors. She elaborated on my mellow personality, such a good complement to the sweet, but sometimes very hot and tense Arabians. “You’re all novices. You want relaxed offspring that are easy to handle.” She continued, “The hot, prancing horses are exciting to watch, but in your own back yard they can be lots of problems. And many trainers won’t deal with them. They can be like exploding firecrackers. It takes lots of skill and experience to handle them properly.” My size was

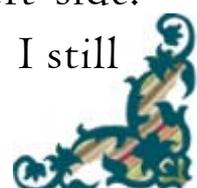




also mentioned as a big plus, as I'm about two hands taller (one 'hand' is four inches) than most Arabs.

Sylvia had begun to teach me the bow under saddle. Until now she would be on my left side and tap my leg. She also had to hold my head straight with the reins so I wouldn't lie down. However, during the second bow under saddle I managed to sneak in a lie down. "I thought we were over that, Banquo.... When we do the lie down, which we will do much later, we will do it on your left side, not your right. I know when you roll, you like to go down on the right side, then roll to the left. But with the other tricks you're going to learn, we will need you down just on your left side.

Trust me there's logic to this." I still





didn't understand, but I tried to do better.

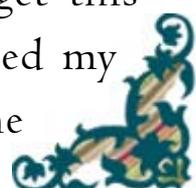
The next day, after our regular workout, liberty cues, saddle work, and the bow, we started Spanish Walk. Well, this is a funny walk, in fact, not a walk at all. Sylvia cross-tied me in the stall so I couldn't take but two steps forward or back. With short whips in each hand she tapped the back of my right front leg and my shoulder. I got upset at this and struck straight out with my front leg. "Good boy," she said as she rubbed my face. I blinked my eyes in confusion. "Yes, that's just what I want. Now see if you can do it just with the shoulder whip.: Well, now it was so easy I was doing it by myself with no cue. "Good boy, for trying to give me so much." Now that I had the idea on the right leg, she repeated the process on





my left leg. She had feared I would be confused and try to bow, but I learned almost instantly on that leg. Then she would ask for one leg, then the other by tapping each shoulder.

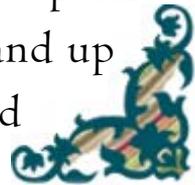
Great, Banquo, we can get this going right away.” She caressed my face with both hands. She





always petted me a lot, but I could tell she was especially pleased with my progress today.

After a few weeks our routine changed. Our usual program was turning circles bitted to the cantle, a good stretching exercise. Then work on a line attached to my snaffle bit. Then liberty with side reins. Then liberty without side reins. Then work under saddle. “I want you well warmed up and relaxed. This will help keep surprises to a minimum.” But today she said, “I think we should start putting your work in a logical order for performance. So we will start in the saddle and begin putting Spanish Walk together. And I’m going to ride you to the arena so I can use the block instead of stepping on the fence rail to get up on you.” I gave her no problems and up in the arena we started





Spanish Walk. She would tap my neck and as I had learned in the crossties, I would lift my leg, sort of. “Oh, Banquo, don’t get lazy. Do it just like in the crossties. You need lots of work on the right leg.” She’d make me do it several times until I got the leg higher. “Your left leg is excellent, but this right one is a bit uncoordinated. Just like in the bow. You must be a left handed horse.” Just like people, horses are weaker on one side.

“Well, that’s what training is for, to help balance your strength throughout your body.





Now if only I had a trainer to do the same think for me!” Then she continued with other work under saddle ending with my bow.

“Really, Banquo! You shouldn’t need the whip anymore to tap your leg. Just rubbing your elbow with my heel should be all the cue you need.” And I didn’t need it except for the first bow. “Now, that’s more like it. But you still need practice waiting for the ‘up’ cue. It’s not graceful to pop up too soon. You need to stay down for most of the applause. So as long as I rub your elbow, stay down.”











Part 2

Advanced

Work







I had a full view of the arena from my corral. In the afternoons the sun would start setting behind the eucalyptus trees lining the far side of the arena. The orange trees, laden with their delicious fruit, were between the tall eucalyptus and the arena fence. Usually, Sylvia would be riding one of the pretty palomino mares or a dark stallion with an extremely arched neck. He seemed to float in slow motion, as if he didn't want his hooves to touch the earth.

“What's he doing!” Asked an onlooker.

“This is passage,” she replied. “See how light he is. You don't really need the reins.” She let the reins loose and he maintained the elegant cadence. He has a lovely feeling for this type of work.”

Then the horse began skipping!

“What's that?” The onlooker seemed puzzled and awed.





“Just flying lead changes every two strides. The dressage people call them “two tempo changes.” Later, she finished the workout with something I knew.....the bow. Only this horse knew to stay down as long as Sylvia rubbed his shoulder gently with her heel. Maybe I’ll master that someday.

Sometimes a man and lady would be riding a palomino and a cute, very stylish bay mare. Sylvia would give them pointers so they could ride the horses better.

“You’re working too hard. Don’t use your arms and shoulders. Just use the little fingers. Just vibrate the reins lightly.” Sylvia then got on the horse to demonstrate. She trotted the mare through lateral movements.

“Here’s renvers.” The mare very gracefully trotted haunches out. “Here’s travers.” She made a smooth





transition to haunches in. “Here’s half-pass.” The mare stepped lightly with her neck beautifully arched, trotting diagonally across the arena.

“This mare can do it all, and light as a feather. . . .did you see what I was doing?”

“No,” the lady said. “I can’t see you doing anything at all.”

“That’s what I mean! You’re working too hard. You’re way too strong with her and she resents it.

Just get on, relax, and don’t move except your little fingers and calves. It’s so easy.”

The lady got back on and did a little better.

“Your arms are tense. She can feel that tension through the reins. To have her relaxed you must eliminate the tension from your arms.”

“Are my arms tense?” The lady was genuinely puzzled.





“Yes!” Sylvia took hold of one of her arms and tried to move it.

“Look how tight you are. Now you take my arm and feel the difference.”

Wow, I really am tense, and I didn’t even know it.”

“Yes, and not only does it confuse the horse, but it will make you too tired to ride like that for very long. You fix this and you will have a joyful relationship with Tsoignee. Then you can learn to do the lateral movements. That’s where she will look spectacular.”

Aha!! So this is some of the dressage I’m supposed to learn later this year. I don’t know. I have a lot more weight to suspend in the air than those Arabians. And my right front foot seems to have a mind of its own





sometimes. That will make those skipping lead changes quite a challenge.



Sometimes horses were turned out in the arena just to run and frolic. The Arabs and palominos both flagged their tails as they raced, zigzagged, and leapt into the air. People were enchanted with their antics and their beauty.





Then a little bay with four white socks was turned out. Oh, I know this. Sylvia is directing him with the whips just like she does for me. Yes, there's the reverse off the shoulder cue. And there's the circling in from the hind leg! I had never seen anything like this before.



Next came the bow, which I





now know. But what's this, he's going from bow to lie down!

“Sit!” Sylvia said. The horse raised up on his front legs to a sitting position. He waited

patiently until Sylvia swung a leg over his

back, then had him get up. Well,

this is something else new.

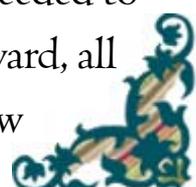


Oh, wait! Now they are doing Spanish Walk with no bridle or saddle on the horse. This is getting interesting. She finished the performance with the bow.

“Not bad for a twenty-nine year old,” Sylvia remarked to an amazed spectator who asked, “How do you train him to do that? I can’t imagine how you do it.”

“I made a video about it called Exotic Training and Tricks for people who are curious about this kind of training. It’s very hard to explain this type of training, but on the video people can actually see how some of it is done.”

Then she brought out a palomino mare and again performed the bow and the Spanish walk. She was teaching the pretty mare to proceed to do figure eights forward and backward, all with no reins. Then slow





graceful turns on the haunches, in both directions. And she was singing all the time in some strange language. And then there was that advanced movement, the piaffe, also without reins! And she then ended the work out with a bow and then backed the mare half way across the arena





to the gate, also without reins, for a spectacular exit..

Two days later, Sylvia taught me to lie down on the correct side, the left. She had me stretched out on the ground, with my head down as well. This was very easy work. Lazy tricks

I can learn very fast!! But



before she would let me get up she had me do the “roll up.” In the roll-up, my neck came up with my head facing my tail. Then my front and back legs would fold underneath me while I still lay on my left side.

“See, Banquo, you need to get up gracefully. You stop in the “roll-up” for a few seconds before you get up and it really helps your coordination. Also, you need to learn the difference between the bow and the lie down cues. This work should make it more clear to you. When your head is straight forward, you bow. When I pull your head around with the right rein, you lie down. Then I let out the right rein so you can straighten your neck and lay all the way down. You’re working very hard on your Spanish Walk, and I really appreciate it. So,

this trick will give you a little rest from the hard work.”





She stroked my head and neck and fed me carrots in both the lie down and roll-up positions. Yes, it was nice to just sigh deeply and do nothing but chew for a few minutes.

“We’re so lucky with the nice weather, Banquo,” she said the next morning. “You’re making much faster progress toward the Spanish Walk now.” I had learned to lift my legs just from the touch of the rein held high.

“Now it gets tedious, Banquo. With lots of practice we get fewer and fewer normal walking steps between the lifts until you can do it every stride. I’m lightening up on your other work a bit so you will have more energy and concentrations for this. “You are going to be spectacular, you’d better get used to applause.”



When we finished the next day’s workout, I gave Sylvia a hard





time about the bow. I felt I should be allowed to get up anytime I wanted. After all, Didn't I go down properly? But Sylvia gave me lots of extra schooling making it clear I was not supposed to pop up at will.

"Banquo, I've been too easy on you because you're a bit awkward. But you've had enough experience now to know what it's all about." I still had doubts and started up from the bow position. And Sylvia did a strange thing. She growled at me!!

"Don't you dare." That did it. I didn't want to hear her growl again. I stayed down even longer than directed.

"Sometimes you horses need a bit of overkill to get the idea."

Michelle and Sharon came to see me one day and were amazed at my progress. Other people were there too. Sylvia showed them



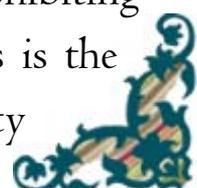


how she warmed me up turning circles off on rein.

“He’s not finished yet in the ground work. See how he still fusses with the bit? He’s just not convinced yet. He needs this work until he gives up trying to avoid it. . Normally I wouldn’t ride a horse at this stage, but he’s so mellow I can compensate under saddle.”

After explaining this, Sylvia removed the rein and proceeded to show how she was trying to remove my last bits of worry about the lash whip. She used a long rope so I couldn’t run off and flicked the whip low at my hind leg. Sometimes I understood and came in to her. Other times I got too excited and she had to hold me with the rope until I remembered to circle in.

“I’d like to have a law prohibiting chasing horses with whips. This is the hardest part of his liberty



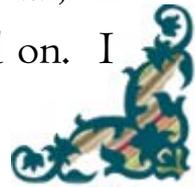


training, getting him to accept the lash as a directional cue, not a propulsion cue.”

Next, Sylvia took off the longe line and put both side reins on me and showed them how I understood the whip signals to reverse, speed up, slow down, and spiral in to her.

“Now watch this trot as I bring him in straight. See those legs shoot forward, and see how beautifully he arches his neck? It was so exciting to find out that he has such a spectacular trot. The biting rig teaches him to use his body more powerfully and in better balance. I always do some of his liberty work like this with him bitted up. Isn't it nice that he can learn to obey the whip cues and the bit at the same time.”

Then Sylvia rode me. As usual, she climbed up the fence and hopped on. I



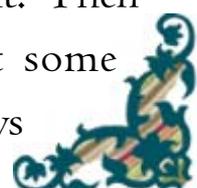


think she didn't want to be seen scrambling from the ground to get up, although she said it was to save her left knee from getting tweaked.

“First I like to do small circles, just like he starts his ground work, reaching low with his head and neck, stretching the outside muscles. He's so much better now. He used to lead with his shoulder, not following his nose, but he's doing it just about right now.” We came out of the circle and proceeded to the rail.

“The shoulder-in is coming along. And we need to teach him renvers and travers too. That will help him to stay steady going straight which he needs to help him do the Spanish Walk. You'll see he gets crooked now and then.”

We trotted and cantered a bit. Then we tried Spanish Walk. I got some spectacular lifts, but not always





at the right time. But they were impressed anyway, and applauded, even when Sylvia explained that it wasn't quite right..

“He’s giving too many lifts. He needs a few normal steps to learn how to keep his hind legs going. But he definitely has the idea. We just need lots of practice together.” Then we ended with a very good bow.

Michelle and Sharon were amazed.

“I can’t believe you’ve done all this in two months. He wasn’t even broke to start with.”

“And he’s a long way from being broke,” Sylvia said. “Just because I can get on and make him do some things doesn’t make him broke. Maybe just ‘well started.’ Like doing musical scales, it takes constant repetition over a long time before

responses are automatic. In the one month

we have left I think I can get





him good enough that Michelle can display him and have fun doing it. But six months would be ideal. There would be no doubts left in his mind.

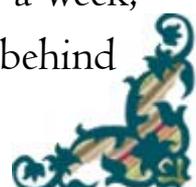
“A nice thing about this horse is that he doesn’t hold a grudge. I really worked him hard on the bow yesterday. I really got after him. And look at him. He’s just as sweet to me as ever.” She had slid off me and was rubbing my face.

Michelle and Sharon had to go. Then the other people who had been watching me complimented Sylvia on my performance.

“You’re doing a great job on him. Everyone was so impressed.”

Sylvia had one more ride on me the next day, and the the rain came.

“See why we work seven days a week, Banquo? Then we don’t fall so far behind





when it rains. Anyway, we both deserve a little rest. That is, you rest, and I'll catch up on housework."











Part Three

Putting it

All

Together





Well, Banquo, I've been thinking about your music. You're going to be marching elegantly like a soldier on parade, so you must have suitable music. For the dressage I think the majestic Grand March from Aida would be just right. It's bold and majestic. It's far too powerful for my smaller horses. But for you I think it will work very beautifully. Another thing I like about it is its elegant simplicity. The tune is easily remembered. Your music should not be too complex and detract from you. The great Italian





Opera composer, Giuseppe Verdi, was commissioned by the Egyptian government to write this opera for the opening of the Suez Canal over a hundred years ago. The story is about Egypt's conquest of the Ethiopians and the Grand March is really a victory march. Radames is an Egyptian soldier in love with an Ethiopian slave, Aida. And many animals may march in this parade, not just horses. So the piece itself was designed as an accompaniment to some strange action, rather than being a solo unto itself. I have heard that at the Arena in Verona, Italy, they perform a huge outdoor version sometimes with camels and elephants too. If only we had opera on such a scale in this country! Then you could be in it too!

“For your trick work I thought the March of the Wooden Soldiers from Babes in Toyland would be fun. It even has a fanfare just before the actual melody starts which will announce you before you enter the arena.”



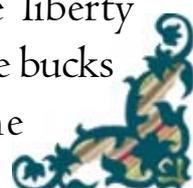


This Victor Herbert operetta isn't done anymore, but the march has endured as a classic. The moronic toymakers made the wooden soldiers six feet tall instead of one foot tall. It's a lucky thing that they made that mistake because the huge toy soldiers save the heroine of Toyland from having to marry the nasty villain. Just imagine when you do the Spanish Walk that you are knocking down the villain's henchmen!

“To me the best things on earth are fine horses and fine music. And imagine putting both together! Even the Olympic Games now has a musical dressage competition. Just think, Banquo. Maybe someday you'll be in it!”

I missed a few days of training because of rain. When we went back to work I was full of bucks!

“I didn't expect that, Banquo. I thought you were warmed up enough with the liberty work. I think I'll have you work the bucks out between you and the





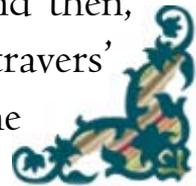
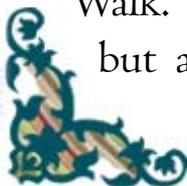
bitting rig. I want no part of it, and I'm too old to out muscle you. Blow off steam where you can learn something from it."

She worked me extensively practicing my liberty work, much of it at a gallop. And I learned to respect the side reins, even though I had so much energy I didn't want to stop.

"Just a few days off and you've become sloppy on your liberty cues as well as bucking under saddle. Well, I won't make that mistake again. I had no idea you were in such great condition. And I'm very impressed how you handle yourself at such speed in the slippery mud. Now it's back to a longe line to clean up those liberty cues."

After reviewing the liberty cues she rode me again and I was much, much better.

I'm impressed with your progress in Spanish Walk. You're still crooked now and then, but as your 'shoulder-in' and 'travers' improve, it will be easy for me





to keep you straight. Most people don't realize that horses are one sided, just like people are right or left



handed. So we do these exercises to make you equally flexible in either direction.”





Three more days of rain came and I had four days off as the arena was pretty muddy.

“Have you got cabin fever like me?” Sylvia asked. “I think I’ll turn you out in the arena for a while. No work, just roll and have fun.”

I did just that while she picked fresh grass and dandelions for me to nibble on.

The next day we worked on the high east side of the arena as the footing stays pretty good there. It was still pretty muddy everywhere else.

“A few days off and you’re trying to rear and buck. Well, we’ll just spin circles until you keep your neck relaxed. You need more of that work anyway. I know that when your neck gets tense, it’s a prelude to mischief.” But she seemed quite pleased with the rest of the lesson.

“Your Spanish Walk is almost ready to put together. Your lifts every stride on each side really have the impulsion I want. The shoulder-in and travers are





getting easier too. And I can keep you straight much longer. A few weeks without rain and you'll have it. But there were more days of rain in the forecast.

As the days warmed up, the African Daisies started blooming. "Aren't they pretty, Bankie?" Sylvia had nicknamed me. With the shoulder kitty in his



usual place, she proceeded to plant another bank with a beautiful plum colored ice plant.





“Your bank is too shady for this plant. It does better in full sun.” She liked it so well she planted another bank too, farther away.

“You must learn to spit this bit out like you do the snaffle.” This new bit had a big copper roller and I just had to clench it with my front teeth. I wouldn’t turn loose. This made it hard for Sylvia to get it on or off me. So she took it to the shop and somehow turned the big roller into a little one.

“That makes it a lot easier. Once you can spit it out consistently, then I’ll give you another big roller. I know you really enjoyed it.”

“Your liberty work is getting quite good. Now that you can obey the cues in spite of the excitement of a gallop that means that the training is really getting solid in your brain. Now it’s fun for both of us. Remember how terrified you were of the whip with the long lash? Now you spiral in beautifully when I point it at your hind leg.”





Michelle and Sharon came to visit and were impressed with the liberty work.

“Wow, his bow is great,” Sharon said.

“He was so difficult about it the last time were here.”

Michelle put on her chaps and rode me. She was amazed how steady I was and light to the touch of hand or leg. Sylvia hadn't worked me on canter but I easily cantered around the entire arena without a mistake.

“I'll leave canter for you to do. He seems very easy at it.” Sylvia said.

“Yes, he's very easy, and quite a smooth ride,” Michelle replied.

“Now find a soft place and have him bow,” Sylvia commanded.

“I don't know how,” Michelle said.

“Just rub his left shoulder with your heel.” Michelle did so and I gracefully descended on my knees. All





the old resistance was gone and now I accepted this totally as part of my routine.

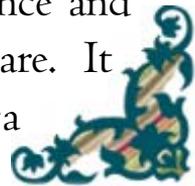
“Smooth as glass, eh?”

Sylvia was so proud of me that I behaved so well for Michelle’s first ride.

“Now, I’ll open the gate and you back him out of the arena. This is how you make your exit. I’ll have him doing it so you don’t even need the reins. That way both hands are free to acknowledge applause.” I was still a bit sticky about this as we had only worked on it for a few days. But Michelle managed to back me out of the arena.

Because I had to pass some important tests for becoming an Approved Stallion, the three of them decided to forego the trick work and for now and just work on preparing me for those tests.

“I’ll finish the backup out of the arena because it also goes to help him with balance and knowing just where his hind legs are. It will help him to be extra

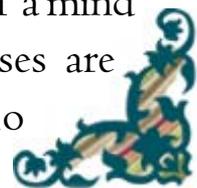




smooth in the downward transitions. Also it will give him much more confidence in your signals, to know that he can back up safely over a distance. He must trust the signals totally to do it with no reins. I can incorporate some of the required jumping into



his liberty work. And the better he gets in the lateral work, the better he will go straight for your tests. It will be interesting to see how much of a mind he has for jumping. Some horses are naturals like my palomino

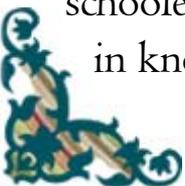




Saddlebreds. If I were a kid again I'd love to be flying over jumps on them. In fact, I competed on a Saddlebred when I was a teenager. Just point her and she did the rest. She never refused, even when they raised the jumps for a jump off! I was not a



schooled jump rider. My stomach was always in knots.”





After discussing my future for a while, Michelle and Sharon left. Sylvia came to my corral and pulled some weeds for me to eat. She started arranging the flowers on my bank.



“Look how these African Daisies have grown? Didn’t I tell you they would be beautiful? They’re almost covering the entire bank.

We were in South Africa years



ago and saw them in many places. That plum colored ice plant and the Disa lilies also grow wild there. I hope you can see the pretty colors.

“The experts are still undecided as to whether horses can see colors. I hope so. Those daisies are deep violet on the outside and pale purple on the inside.

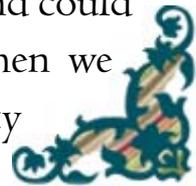
“You’ll be leaving next week to return to your fathering obligations. With modern reproduction techniques you will have many offspring from mares you never even meet. Some will even be in other countries!

The next morning Sylvia laid out a huge plastic pipe for me to trot over. I refused, backing away from it.

“Now, Banquo, don’t be such a chicken.”

She had me walk beside her over the pipe.

With her next to me I lost my fear and could soon walk over it by myself. Then we started doing some liberty





work over the pipe. Easy! But when she raised it off the ground and expected me to jump it, I took off.

“Okay, Banquo. We’ll put the longe on to steady you.”

Now I had no choice but to jump the pipe. At first it was so exciting I tried to take off again.

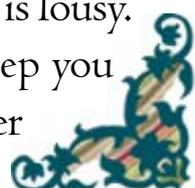
“Here, here, here,” and the lash snapped at my hind leg, reminding me of the liberty cue to spiral back to her. But I was still snorting and shaking with excitement.

“We need to practice until you can jump calmly. Excitement makes you clumsy. You take off too late then you have to go straight up to avoid hitting the pipe.”

So over and over the jump I went. Gradually I settled down and became quite good jumping it.

“Too relaxed and you tick the pipe with your back feet. Too fast and your take off is lousy.

What seems to work best is to keep you very relaxed then ask for canter





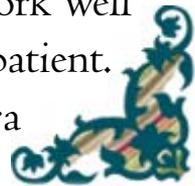
a few strides from the jump. That seems to give you the perfect impulsion without that excess excitement.”

Each day I would improve, and each day Sylvia would raise the pipe. Seeing it higher would trigger that excitement and we would go through the same process to calm me down.]

“You’re pretty predictable, Banquo. I think you only need to jump three feet high for the test. That’s only eight inches more than what you’re doing now. Some of your jumps have been high enough to clear three and a half feet. You’ve come this far in only three days, I’m sure you’ll have no trouble satisfying the jumping requirement.

“I’ll miss you when you’re gone. You’re so delightfully different from the hot horses that I’m used to. Just calming them down takes a lot of time. They are smart and fast. They learn in a hurry and want to work in a hurry. But to work well they must learn to relax and be patient.

That’s why they take extra

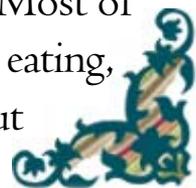




time. You are not hot or high-strung at all. You take a lot of time because you need much more repetition to understand. That seems to be a characteristic of warmbloods. Mentally, you are just late bloomers. Maybe that's why warmblood horses shown at high levels are usually at least eight years old. Many great competitors are in their late teens."

I didn't really want to leave. I had never had so much attention. Except for those few rainy days, I always had lessons every day. Often Sylvia would leave me out in the big arena for the day if she wasn't using it for the other horses. I could find the best soft spots for rolling. Reaching over the top rail I could pick oranges. Reaching under the bottom rail I could nibble grass and dandelions. Sylvia would bring me tall grasses from other parts of the yard. If you didn't know, a horse's main occupation is eating. I am no different that way. Most of

my waking hours are occupied with eating,
or thinking about eating. But





finally one day, Michelle and Sharon arrived with the huge trailer, and it was time for me to leave. I had one last lesson in the arena as we showed off my new talent, liberty jumping.

“He needs some warm up as he tends to take off after the first few jumps. So keep a line on him until he stops that. Use that hind leg cue to remind him to spiral back to you.”

I acted exactly as Sylvia predicted. Once she had me settled down it was Michelle’s first time to work with me on the liberty cues. Sharon came prepared with the video camera so they could review Sylvia’s cues. Sharon started coaching right away.

“No, no!! Your whip needs to be higher and more forward.”

“Great, you’re catching on fast and can coach her when the cues get sloppy. That will help so much.”

Sylvia came in the arena to show Michelle the bow cue.





“The bow is the finish. Don’t ask for it and then do other work. Put him away or just leave him here. If you have him bow too long he will lie down. Review him in the biting rig occasionally. That will focus him on bowing. Liberty work in the biting rig keeps him rounded and highly collected. You can alternate with total liberty where he can have complete extension. As you know he does need both to develop properly and this is a delightful way to do it....”

Then they wrapped my legs, put me in the trailer, and I was on my way back home. As the big trailer pulled out the driveway the last thing I saw of Sylvia’s ranch was the tall Cape Plumbago hedge with masses of light blue flowers.







.....the last thing I saw of Sylvia's ranch was the tall Cape Plumbago hedge with masses of light blue flowers.....





Finis







A Note from the Author

Adobe Pagemaker 7.1 and Adobe Photoshop 6 was used to create this book. I am grateful to be able to learn these new skills that don't require the physical energies of horse training which are now, unfortunately, quite limited.

The creativity, confidence, and compensation I've applied so much in horsetraining, I now have to apply to my life.



