



THE HORSE GAZETTE

PROMOTING EQUINE ACTIVITIES, BUSINESS, AND KNOWLEDGE SINCE 1996

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BRANNAMAN CLINIC DELIVERS

By Lisa Bockholt

Dan "Buck" Brannaman is just your ordinary, average forty-two year old guy. Sort of. At first glance one would think he's just a laid-back, quiet sort of fellow who's comfortable swinging a rope, wearing boots and chaps, and working around horses. Sounds simple enough. But that's just on the surface.

Buck Brannaman is not just someone who has gained more knowledge and developed more skill about horses than most, eager to share what he's learned. He is a master horseman. To really get to know Buck one has to spend some time with him. Not necessarily a lot of time. In some cases there is no doubt just a brief encounter would do. But the more time one might be able to spend, the more rarely they might be blessed by the opportunity to have done so. Of course, one way to get to know Buck is by reading his autobiography "The Faraway Horses". The book chronicles his life with an abusive father, devastating loss of his mother at an early age, the removal and placement of he and his older brother into foster care, his career as a trick

roper (he holds two titles in the Guinness Book of World's Records), his entry into the clinician circuit, marriage, divorce, re-marriage and parenthood. Entwined throughout the book are stories of the horses he's met and helped along the way, and those that have helped him too. And, while many in the industry have tried to creatively find ways to personally connect themselves to the best-selling book "The Horse Whisperer" (and subsequent movie by the same name), "The Faraway Horses" also serves to set the record straight. The characters "The Horse Whisperer's" author Nicholas Evans created are fictional in nature, but Evans needed a basis for their development. The substance of Tom Booker, the novel's main character is indeed, Buck Brannaman. Not only did Brannaman provide novelist Evans with the life-like inner make up and hands-on techniques of a real-life horse whisperer, Brannaman was later hired as a consultant on the movie set by Robert Redford who purchased the rights to turn the book into a blockbuster film. (One of Buck's own horses played

Rimrock, Redford's mount in the movie). Whether or not you even own a horse, Buck's book, "The Faraway Horses" is, itself, a great read, placing you squarely in the middle of Buck's world as he lived it. But to be in the middle of Buck's world as he has come to realize it for what it is today, well, you need to do that in person.

Brannaman recently gave a four-day clinic at an indoor arena in San Angelo, Texas. Hosts Jeannie and Ben Choate have sponsored the event for the past four years. They had ordered one of Brannaman's roping videos and Jeannie's husband Ben liked Buck's teaching style. They checked Buck out on web. The closest clinic to them was in Arizona. Ben wanted to go. Once there, he invited Buck to come to Texas, offering up a site in San Angelo as a possible clinic host facility. Sometime later, Buck contacted the Choate's with an interest in coming to Texas. The Choate's agreed to sponsor the clinic, which basically meant securing an arena and helping with the advertising. "The first few years were tough", said

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L to R: Cadet Captain Jose M. Ochoa riding Patrick, Cadet Captain Dario Marquez on Trucha, Cadet 1st Lt. Dhilendy Garcia on Precious and Cadet Command Sergeant Major Jose De la Rosa riding Buddy.

NO KIDDING...FULLY FUNDED BY THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM!

By Marilyn Short

It's unbelievable to find a school that actually funds a Cavalry Color Guard. Not just any school, Rio Grande City High School...a PUBLIC school! Okay, so it's not unusual for a school district to provide the uniforms and sabers for a JROTC unit, but to supply 4 horses, a mule, all tack, a wagon, flat-bed trailer, 5-horse trailer and Ford F250 truck...that is very unusual!

The Rio Grande City High School JROTC Rattler Battalion established the 12th Cavalry Memorial Unit in 1998 as a living history to the cavalry soldiers who served at Fort Ringgold and left a lasting impression along the Texas border. This unit complements the rich heritage and traditions unique to the South Texas border region.

Rio Grande City High School's JROTC program was established in 1995 and consisted of 25 Cadets. Today they have over 200 cadets in the JROTC program.

The development of the Color Guard was brought about by the school board president, the school board and the Mayor and is fully funded by the school. No services are donated for the Color Guard - the school pays for all board, feed, shoeing, and veterinary expenses.

The Color Guard consists of 4 of the 25 Cadets riding horses and carry the American flag, Texas flag, Rio Grande City JROTC Unit flag and the 12th Cavalry flag. Two cadets are chosen to drive the mule and wagon, with the wagon representing a supply wagon. Four backup riders and 2 backup drivers are also chosen for the school year.

Out of the unit, four 10th, 11th or 12th graders are chosen as primary riders and two drivers are chosen each year by their leadership skills, dedication, and responsibility. "We also look at their overall behavior in school and their ability to become role models for other students," said MSG Marco A. Pena.

There are no riding or driving prerequisites. The only requirement for each cadet is to have a positive attitude and be willing to learn how to handle the horse and mule. A "can do" attitude. Those chosen to represent the Color Guard are required to participate in additional training on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00-4:00 pm on the school grounds and the horses, mule and wagon are brought to



L to R: Cadet Corporal Felipe Gracia and Cadet Major Isabel Zurita driving Ater.

HORSES AS THERAPISTS

By Ingrid Edisen

Part 3 of 3

Excellence is the result of caring more than others think is wise, risking more than others think is safe, dreaming more than others think is practical, and expecting more than others think is possible. - Stable Life Solution's motto

"The mission of SIRE is to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities using horseback riding and related therapeutic activities."

"With hippotherapy the horse controls the rider; with therapeutic riding, the rider controls the horse." -as related by the program director of ROCK

Imagine for a moment that you have been trained to help people with either physical or mental "handicaps" and know of horses that need a job to do. Put that together with a healthy slew of volunteers and other

therapists and you have a huge synergy of a win-win situation. Such is the case with three horse-related programs in the state: SIRE (Houston area), ROCK (Austin area) and Stable Life Solutions (San Antonio area).

SIRE stands for Self Improvement through Riding Education. ROCK denotes Ride on Center for Kids. Stable Life Solutions turns its attention to more of the psychotherapeutic end of the spectrum. SIRE and ROCK are not-for-profit (501(C)(3)) organizations. Stable Life Solutions is a for-profit organization and does offer a sliding scale payment plan.

"SIRE does not really focus mostly on the physically handicapped. We serve those with physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral disabilities," said Program Director Joelle Devlin. It has two locations, she explained.



Thank You!

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THE HORSE GAZETTE
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