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Hollywood Horse Stories

By Stephen Schochet

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A recent Hollywood rumor was that Tobey Maguire injured his back during the making of Sea Biscuit doing horseback riding scenes, making him unable to star in the sequel to Spider-Man. Although it turned out to be false, he rode a mechanical horse in the film, many actors have had close calls working with horses.

One example was Michael Caine, whose first movie Zulu (1964) required him to ride a horse after a hunting expedition, which after several embarrassing takes almost bought his career to a premature end. "I thought you said you had riding lessons!" said the angry director. "I did!" said the beleaguered star. "And the first thing I learned was I never wanted to ride one of these bloody things again!"

He wasn't the only one. Jack Nicholson took a hard fall in The Missouri Breaks (1976) which he shrugged off saying, "It would have hurt if I was a real person instead of a movie star."

Some performers get along famously with their horses, the relationship can go on for years. Gene Autry had Champion trained to jump through a ring of fire at rodeos, the stunt always worked perfectly until Champion aged and Gene had to replace him. Gene exhibited no concern when he was advised by trainers that the new Champion was not ready for prime time his first night on the job. "It'll be all right boys!" reassured the cowboy through swigs of tequila. The big moment came, the new horse rode out with Gene toward the burning ring and came to a dead stop, sending the famous cowboy star flying to complete the stunt on his own. The crowd gasped but luckily Gene was more drunk than hurt, he simply got up and took a bow like it was all planned.

Most stars won't take chances. David Niven bribed a trainer fifty dollars so he would get to ride a gentle nag while filming *The Prisoner Of Zenda* (1937). He brought his animal next to Raymond Massey's stallion, and both reluctant riders prepared for the director to call action. Suddenly Niven noticed a shadow above him, Massey's horse had risen on it's hind legs. Niven realized his nag was in heat and dived out the way as Massey's stallion came down on Niven's mare. He watched stunned as the helpless Massey bounced on top of what now looked like a giant rocking horse!

Stephen Schochet is the author and narrator of the audiobooks "Fascinating Walt Disney" and "Tales Of Hollywood". The Saint Louis Post Dispatch says, " these two elaborate productions are exceptionally entertaining." Hear realaudio samples of these great, unique gifts at www.hollywoodstories.com.

The TOP 7 Mistakes Horse Owners Make

By Andy Curry

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Mistake #7 - Assuming You Can Get On Any Horse And Simply Ride

Not all horses are the same. Some you can get on and easily ride. Some are so green that you could be easily injured if you have little or no riding experience. The ones easy to ride are typically older horses. They have been ridden the most and will be the most forgiving of a beginning rider's mistakes. The younger horses will be the hardest to ride unless they have been thoroughly broke.

Mistake #6 - Assuming A Horse Trainer's Technique Is The Only Way To Train A Horse

When novice horse owners begin to experience problems with their horse, they go looking for answers. The first place they look is in books. When the author of the book explains a training technique, the reader assumes that's how it's done by everyone. But when they can't train their horse with that technique, they assume a dumb or untrainable horse. What novice horse owners need to know is that there are typically lots of ways to train a horse to do one thing. If you try something and it doesn't work, try something else.

Mistake #5 - Not Riding A Horse Enough

New horse owners experience problems with horses not because the horse suddenly went sour, but because they don't ride their horses enough. About the best thing you can do to have a good horse is to ride it and ride it and ride it. Don't ride him just once every couple weeks. Horses need to be ridden a lot to make them a good riding horse.

Mistake #4 - Thinking A Problem With The Horse Is The Horse's Fault

Although a horse may have some problems, they are typically a result of the horse's owner. There are rarely horse problems - it's more likely there are problem riders. For instance, if you can't get your

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horse to ride away from home (this is called "Barn Sour") it's likely because you don't have control over him. You can establish control with various techniques such as Doubling.

Mistake #3 - Not Understanding How Horses Think

Horses do not think like dogs or cats. Horses are a prey animal which means they run from scary things. They have thousands of years of the "flight instinct" built in their brains. To successfully train them takes patience and understanding that they are naturally fearful and cynical.

Mistake #2 - Not Knowing That Every Interaction With A Horse Is A Training Exercise

Every time you interact with your horse you are training him. Even if your horse is well trained with the lead rope, you are training him every time you use the lead rope. Even when you pet your horse, you are training him. Novice horse owners must think through what they do when working with their horse

because they can easily and unknowingly affect a horse's behavior.

Mistake #1 - Riding A Horse With Little Or No Understanding Of Horsemanship

A typical novice horse owner will ride their new horse not knowing horse-riding skills. It is important to have an understanding of riding techniques because horses react to leg pressure, how you sit in the saddle, whether or not the rider is tense, and a whole host of other things.

Let's face it. Horses need to be understood for a horse owner to be successful with his horse. The best thing novice horse owners can do is learn how to ride, learn how horses think, learn what works good to shape horses' behavior, and understand that constantly riding a horse is just about the best thing you can do to have a good horse.

Andy Curry is a nationally known horse trainer and author of several best selling horse training and horse care books. For information visit his website at

. He is also the

leading expert on Jesse Beery's horse training methods which can be seen at

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