

I Believe in a Dream

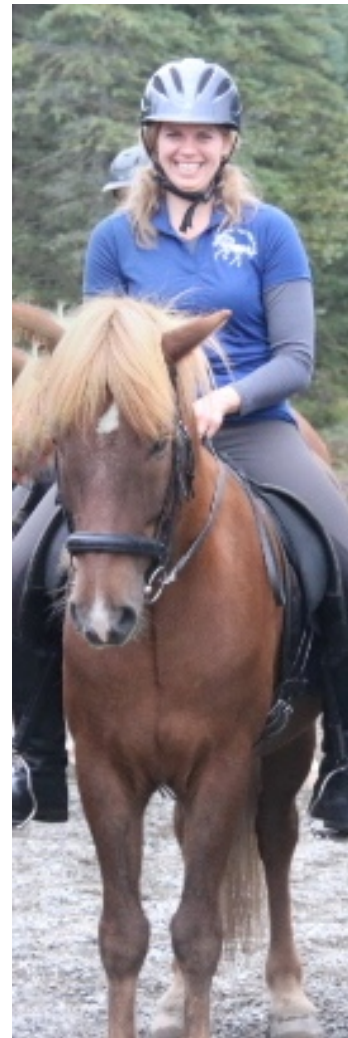
A Tolt in Harmony experience by Janet Mulder

I entered the arena on the very first morning of our Tolt in Harmony clinic in late August. It was misty and dim. The regularly empty dressage arena was set up with an office on one side and a spectator tent on the other. From the office came the beautiful sound of classical music welcoming and peaceful. Calmly, a tall gentleman approaches my horse and me.

“So Janet, tell me about your horse” says Trausti Þór Guðmundsson. I start with the regular this is who he is, where he came from, what we have been working on, etc., I end with “he gets really bored working in the arena, we do most of our work on the trail.” A sparkle comes from Trausti's eye with the reply “If he is not interested, you must become more interesting! It is this simple.” “But how?” I ask, “Please teach me how I can become more interesting”. Then Trausti had a question for me “What is your dream?” This hit me like a rock, do I tell him what I really dream of with my horse or do I give a safe answer, something that is reasonable and attainable? I was nervous. I gave the safe answer. “I would like to develop my horse into one that others can ride and I can get the gaits and tempos when I want them.” “You have ambition!” Trausti declares. Then we begin.

We begin in walk, Trausti guides me through tempo changes, connecting with my horse, getting his attention and bending, bending, bending. He reminds us “all this walk work really is Tolt in Harmony. The Tolt will come. Sunday you will see.” He tells us. We believe, we wait, we learn and we see.

Trausti spent three days with our group. He accepts only 10 riders into his clinics and prefers to have 3 days. He teaches the details. The things that are easily overlooked, which hoof is moving when and is it at the same stride length and tempo as the others? If not, why and how are you as the rider going to manage the situation? Although Trausti focused on the details, he continuously reminded us that horsemanship is simple; “it is as easy as staying married!” Trausti has the ability to make it simple, he can explain each moment on the horse and tell you how to



work in the situation you have. You don't have to be an advanced rider to understand his plain language and anecdotes. Horsemanship is simple when you have it explained clearly.

Trausti and a group of friends and colleagues have been collaborating to develop Tolt in Harmony established in 2013. It is a training system that requires positive horsemanship. Tolt in Harmony is based on the classical training scale; Rhythm, Suppleness, Contact, Impulsion, Straightness and Collection. Riding the Icelandic Horse in even tempo slow tolt, circling in both directions is the basis of the riding tests. It is a new program and continually being developed. There are currently three levels in Tolt in Harmony and a four-gait test. You can find these on the Internet.

Details were the focus of the clinic. The details that connect us to our horses and the attention to detail Trausti displayed in his presentation of Tolt in Harmony. I enjoy every horse event that I attend, but this was the first that I truly wanted to observe as much as I wanted to ride. Trausti was able to engage the audience in learning while he was continuing to work with the riders in the arena.

Sunday afternoon came, the clouds lifted and the rain stopped. It was the participants' turn to show what we had learned. Each rider was given the Tolt in Harmony Test 1. Trausti was able to keep us in pattern by telling us what each step was as he judged and a scribe kept track of our scores and notes. We were tested on four elements each on a scale of 1-10, as you ride higher levels the judging becomes more critical. You are expected to have progressed further along the classical training scale. Tolt in Harmony was ridden in tolt and some very nice demonstrations were given. The top three scores were shared: 7.625 for Bernie Willis and Prinsessa, 7.25 for Janet Mulder and Prins, 6.75 for Stefanie Flynn and Kappi. The weekend closed with Trausti reminding us to look for our homework because after all, competitions are just a competition in who does the best homework. He writes training plans for each participant that is privately shared and available after the clinic online.

I've always described the development of my horse as moments of brilliance. My goal is to have more brilliant moments closer together. Trausti is able to teach me tools to harness the brilliance. In the words of one of the masters of my generation, horsemanship comes down to three things; patience, curiosity and fantasy. My real dream is to develop the connection with my horse so when we ride together we dance in rhythm, balance and harmony. I believe that by using patience, staying curious and remembering the fantasy, my horse and I will realize this dream.

Learn more about Trausti Þór Guðmundsson at:

<http://tolthinharmony.wordpress.com/tihinternational/>

<http://traustisridingschool.weebly.com/>

<http://Icelandhorses.is>

