

420 West Ellnor Avenue
Shelton, WA 98584

Mary Anderson

Telephone (360) 427-8562
Fax (360) 427-2994 e-mail MAnder1689@aol.com

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John Lyons

Dear John:

At age ten our daughter started taking riding lessons, but became increasingly uncomfortable and unhappy.

Now I know her discomfort was perfectly reasonable. She didn't understand why one horse would stop when she pulled back on the reins while another would go faster. One horse would ignore kicks to its sides while another would wheel around and take off. But riding lessons concentrated on riding, and success was measured by how fast a student could get the horse to go, not on the relationship between horse and rider.

Over the course of a year we bought two horses. Dannie continued with lessons, although she was miserable and frustrated. The lessons ended when the instructor had Dannie in tears, afraid to get on the horse.

I can't count the number of times I wanted to sell horses, truck, trailer and tack, take the money and go to Hawaii. Fortunately my husband and I take turns at giving up. He convinced me that things would work out.

For months Dannie refused to ride. We let her be around the horses on her terms, grooming them, leading them, 'practicing showmanship', she called it. All this time she was trying to tell us what she needed. But we didn't know how to listen.

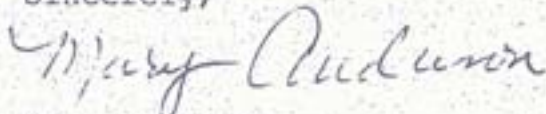
I saw a flyer advertising a John Lyons Certified Trainer, and attended one of Susan Arndt's clinics. By the end of the day, everything made sense. During Dannie's lessons, the focus had been on riding, with no attention to the horse except as a vehicle to be punished if it misbehaved. Dannie had no confidence in her ability to control a horse on the ground, so it only made sense that she would be afraid on its back. After listening to Susan, watching her handle several different horses, I knew this was exactly what Dannie needed.

Susan's calm, quiet confidence, her ability to explain and consistently demonstrate why a horse acted the way it did, all made sense. Susan had the tools and skills needed to turn things around for Dannie and her horse.

After three sessions with Susan, the change has been dramatic. Dannie has gone from being intimidated to handling her mare with confidence. The mare has gone from being unhappy and irritable to friendly and willing. Dannie now has a trainer with the skills to help her become a partner with her horse, rather than a passenger on it. Susan's ability to recognize and work with limitations, both equine and human, has helped Dannie move forward rapidly.

We were fortunate to connect with Susan. Otherwise our horse story wouldn't be continuing on such a positive note.

Sincerely,



Mary Anderson