

# The Positive Life of Harriet Bunker

By Amy Herzog

Harriet Bunker is a horsewoman who believes in a positive approach to teaching both horses and people.

She grew up riding and competing hunters and jumpers for Colonel Robertson and at one point had the opportunity to ride for Bernie Traurig, whom she credits as a big influence on her riding and training skills. Later in her career, after winning the National Sports Festival, now known as the North American Young Riders Championship, she was offered the opportunity to work for Rodney Jenkins, another great influence on her training methods.

It was during her time working for Rodney that the idea of opening her own business was planted. Returning from a grueling trip to Florida with Rodney, Harriet decided to take some time off to attend The College William and Mary in Virginia, earning a degree in economics. After graduation, Harriet decided that riding and training horses was her calling. Leaving Virginia she headed back to Colorado to offer her services to riders and at that time there were very few people training young riders in Colorado so it provided the perfect place to get started.

Harriet has owned and operated Bunker Stables in LaSalle, Colorado, for 15 years, where she rides, trains and teaches lessons. "I love what I do, and I would ride whether you paid me or not. I think of myself as more of a horse trainer. I want to find out what makes them work; I win at the horse shows, but I really think of myself as a horse trainer. There are some people that are very good show ring riders, but not necessarily good horse trainers," she said, adding that she really enjoys working with young horses.

Bunker Stables is a full service barn with about 20 stalls, an outdoor ring and access to trails. Harriet teaches clients at all levels and also teaches horsemanship. Her time with Bernie Traurig and Rodney Jenkins allowed her to develop a positive manner of teaching clients and horses.

"Talent is not born, it is grown," said Harriet, referring to a



*Harriet (standing) with former working student Melanie Newkirk, on Harriet's old grand prix horse O'Lady, owned by D & H Partnership, at Hobby Horse Farms Fall Show.*

*Photo courtesy of Harriet Bunker*

book called "The Talent Code." "You talk about consistency and practice, something to spark the kid that makes them really want to do it. You can't character assassinate people, I think that's the worst; some people believe that if they beat you up that is going to make you better."

Harriet's horse training methods also revolve around positive reinforcement, as she believes horses need to have clear boundaries, discipline and positive reward. As each horse is different and learns at their own speed, Harriet takes the time needed to help the horse reach their potential. She is currently working with an eight-year-old who was rescued from a kill pen several years ago and has improved leaps and bounds from the time she got him.

This summer is proving to be quite an active show season for Harriet who has Courtney Fredrick, and her friends and professionals Allison Kroff and Ivy Rejent and others coming to ride and show with her. She is also working on her judge's promotion to get a large "R" and sitting in with Julie Winkel in Upperville, Virginia as Julie judges.

Harriet has trained and sold horses to Hap Hansen, Richard Keller, John McConnell, who went to the World Cup on So Dark, and Danny Foster, who went to the Olympics on It's Casual. "I learn every day, the horses teach you every day. and I love what I do," Harriet said.

*About the writer: Amy Herzog is a freelance writer and photographer who has been riding hunter/jumper's since second grade. She has a BA in Communication from DeSales University in Center Valley, Pennsylvania.*



*Harriet competing in Arizona.*

*Photo by S. Sylvester Photography*