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JOE CAMP IS LIVING HIS PASSION TO HELP HORSES  
LEAD MORE NATURAL LIVES

## “Love, Hope & Persistence”

BY DUTCH HENRY PHOTOS COURTESY JOE AND KATHLEEN CAMP



Joe and Saffy share a private moment

“It’s about living a life with a purpose, on purpose,” Joe Camp believes. While only discovering the spirit of the horse seven years ago, Joe has rapidly become a highly respected advocate for horses. By combining his passion to improve the lives of horses worldwide with his relentless drive to never quit until the goal is achieved, Joe has already moved mountains.



Joe (right), Kathleen and friend on a Texas trail ride.

You may know Joe Camp as the author/creator/director of the beloved Benji movies and novels. The theme of every Benji movie is “Love, hope and persistence.” Love for all. Hope always exists. And the most important ingredient of all—persistence to keep trying until you are successful. Not only are love, hope and persistence at the very core of Benji’s story, they are the reason you know the Benji story at all. Joe so believed in Benji’s story, he knew it must become a movie. After approaching the folks in Hollywood and being told *no*, Joe’s determination and persistence kicked in. He knew folks would fall in love with this dog and his story. So he raised the money for the budget himself and got the movie made.

Then when the big distributors said no, his love, hope and persistence carried him onward again as he formed his own distribution company, and Joe and Benji traveled the county making personal appearances, tirelessly promoting the movie. That devotion and determination caused the first Benji movie to be the third highest grossing movie of the year. It is that same love, hope and persistence that drive him today to make the world a better place for all horses.



Joe doing what he loves best: being among his horses no matter what the elements

### FROM MOVIES TO HORSES

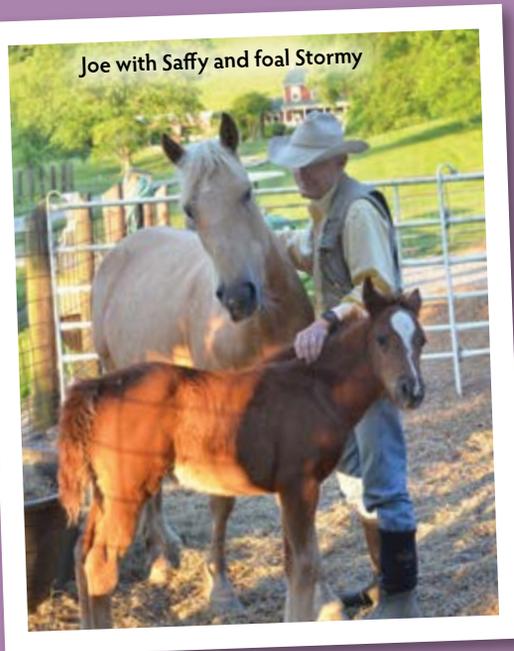
What prompted Joe to divert his life’s path from movies to horses? What was the spark that lit the fire in his soul to devote his life to researching, promoting and teaching a more natural way to care for horses?

In 2005, Joe and his wife Kathleen moved to a house in the country, and Joe kept pointing out how nice it would be to have a few horses milling around in the stalls that came with the property. So for his birthday, Kathleen surprised him with a trail ride and day of horseback adventures. This was quite a loving thing for her to do, because unbeknownst to Joe at the time, Kathleen’s childhood experience with horses had not been

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“The more he learned, the more Joe knew he had to share what he learned. Not only what he learned from science, clinicians and folks steeped in the natural care world, but what the horses taught him, too. The revelations he discovered about horse care, horses’ lives and how much both humans and horses were missing, how much better it can be, ignited in him the passion to be not just an advocate but also to be a teacher.”



Joe with Saffy and foal Stormy

good and had left her with a deep and total fear of them. But she knew Joe had loved horses from afar, and at this time he needed something positive in his life. The birthday ride was a great success, and within two weeks they owned three horses: Cash, Sojourn and Scribbles.

Before their horses arrived, the Camps made the obligatory run to a tack store to stock up on all the perceived necessities every horse owner simply must possess. While there, Kathleen picked up a magazine and noticed an article about a fellow named Monty Roberts. The article detailed a few books about learning to live with and partnering with your horse, so they bought them. Joe studied Monty’s lessons on “Join

Up” and had a pretty good understanding of it by the time the horses settled in. He and Monty have since become friends, and Joe will tell you he learned the very core of his beliefs from the teachings of Monty.

Joe was introducing Cash to Monty’s “Join Up” when the world moved under his feet, and Cash gripped his heart. “Join Up,” briefly described, is a way to connect with your horse by working with him in a round pen, asking him to stay out at the rail until you give him the choice to come to you or not, to say “I trust you,” by turning your back to them. “Join Up” teaches you go from predator to friend when you turn your back. This was Joe’s first experience with working with a horse, and he did not know what to expect.

### THE FIRST EPIPHANY

Joe asked Cash to move around the outside of the round pen, and when he sensed the time was right, turned his back. And waited. He waited wondering, his mind racing. Cash’s whiskers brushed his cheek. His breath warmed Joe’s neck. Joe’s knees weakened, his eyes flooded. Tears washed down his face. Hugging Cash’s neck, Joe promised him he would do everything in his power to give him the best life possible.

That promise drove Joe to set out to learn all he could about living with and caring for horses. Surprisingly, the more he learned, the more he became convinced that most horses were not living the way they were genetically designed to. Confined to stalls instead of moving about, fed diets high in sugar, bits in their mouths and shoes nailed on their feet. Over time Joe’s passion, combined with a relentless pursuit into the science of the health of horses based on the natural and wild horse model, gave Joe his motto, “No stalls, no shoes, no sugar.”

Joe’s first real shock came early, when he read that hooves were supposed to flex when the horse moved. That each foot acts as a heart pumping blood in and out of the foot and leg. The shock was amplified by the fact that Cash had shoes on the front but not on his rear feet, and all his “advisors” were recommending he waste no time in getting those hind feet shod. He stunned them all when he told them he’d be removing the shoes all around, on all his horses.

Joe discovered Pete Ramey, who Joe says knows more about the inner workings of the hoof than anyone he’s ever met. He recommends all of Pete’s books to everyone as well as Pete’s 14-hour DVD, “Under The Horse.” He continued to explore the science of true horse health through maintaining a wild horse model as the guide to a happy, healthy horse. He set his sights, with love, hope and persistence, on a goal of making the lives better for horses all over the world.

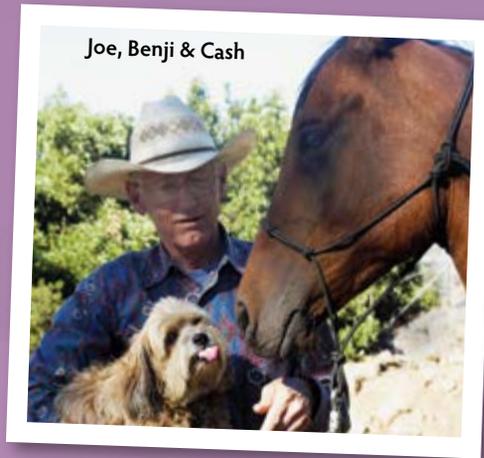
### “WHAT’S IN IT FOR THE HORSE?”

Joe kept asking himself, “What’s in it for the horse?” He discovered the wisdom of Ray Hunt, who opened each clinic with this sentence, “I’m here for the horse.” Joe will tell you it was Ray and his mentor Tom Dorrance who first promoted “looking at things from the horse’s perspective.” Joe will ask you, “If you truly want a relationship with your horse, is there any other perspective?”

The more he learned, the more Joe knew he had to share what he learned. Not only what he learned from science, clinicians and folks steeped in the natural care world, but what the horses taught him, too. The revelations he discovered about horse care, horses' lives and how much both humans and horses were missing, how much better it can be, ignited in him the passion to be not just an advocate but also to be a teacher.

How could he teach? How could he get the information he'd learned and continues to learn, in the hands of as many people as possible? Writing and promoting were the skills he'd honed razor sharp in the days of writing movies and producing and promoting them as well. Joe believed there was a reason this all came together. There was a reason the final Benji movie did poorly, and from the grips of depression at that time he'd turned to horses. Had that movie done well, Joe believes he would still be making movies and would not have discovered horses. Would never have met Cash. With the knowledge Cash caused him to seek, and the skills honed as a writer/promoter, Joe took hold of this new challenge with all the love, hope and determination he'd had promoting the first Benji movie.

His best seller, "The Soul Of A Horse—Life Lessons From the Herd," now in its 11<sup>th</sup> printing, has touched hundreds of thousands of lives with its gentle telling of living with horses and advice on how to go from owner to partner and how to know the soul of a horse. Joe



Joe, Benji & Cash

also has 12 other books in print including his just released "God Only Knows."

He writes articles for many equine publications about natural, healthy horse care on a variety of subjects from nutrition, lifestyle, barefoot hoof care, training and relationships and health maintenance. And of course he continues to dig and research more facts that will help horses all over the world have better lives. Often he will guest blog sharing his insights. And he maintains a very informative and fun blog of his own at <http://thesoulofahorse.com/blog/>

Joe's website, "The Soul Of A Horse" ([thesoulofahorse.com](http://thesoulofahorse.com)) is so packed with information and fun stories and videos that you could happily get lost there for hours. Everything from just having

fun learning to hear your horse, to a healthy diet and proper hoof care can be explored at your leisure.

Thank you, Benji, Cash and Kathleen for giving us such a remarkable teacher as Joe Camp.



Dutch Henry is a writer and novelist who writes about "People & Horses Helping Horses & People." He resides in Virginia with his wife of 36 years, Robin, and a horse, dogs, cats and chickens. Dutch also does Therapy For Therapy Horse Clinics at therapeutic riding centers across the country to help horses maintain proper posture, movement and body carriage—because therapy horses can use a little therapy, too. You can reach Dutch at [dutchhenry@hughes.net](mailto:dutchhenry@hughes.net)—he would love to hear from you. His novel, "We'll Have the Summer," is available on Amazon and at [www.dutchhenryauthor.com](http://www.dutchhenryauthor.com)

## *giggles on the trail*

true stories shared from our Trail Blazer readers



Illustration By Troy Palmer Hughes

MARK PANKAU FROM CALIFORNIA SHARED THIS STORY: Last summer, after a long trail ride, we stopped at a water hole, pulled saddles and waded into the creek with the horses. My friend's mare decided to take a nap while standing belly deep in water. Her head would drop to where her nostrils would go below the water and start blowing bubbles till the intake breath and she would wake up enough to lift her nose above the water and proceed to sleep and drop slowly again to blowing bubbles... this went on for at least an hour... up and down... wake and sleep! too funny... Happy Hippo!