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Linda riding into a vet check at the Tevis Cup Endurance Ride in the Early '60s; her first ever Tevis Ride

LINDA TELLINGTON-JONES: THE JOURNEY

By Dutch Henry

How did it come to be that one woman, driven by an unrelenting passion to understand, teach, and heal would forever change the way humans can relate to their horses and other animals? TTEAM, "Tellington TTouch Equine Awareness Method" was developed by Linda Tellington-Jones about 40 years ago to do that very thing. The name has since been shortened to Tellington TTouch® Training. The second T in TTouch stands for "Trust." I think it's highly appropriate

considering it was her “Trust” in the animals and people she met on her journey that shaped her.



Horses were always a part of Linda's life, here she is at 4 years old checking out the world from atop a tall horse

THE EARLY YEARS

Linda was six when her family moved to a farm near Alberta, Canada. In those pre-school bus days, Linda rode the two and a half miles to a one room school on her first horse, Trixie. She credits Trixie with teaching her the fundamentals of riding, and even giving her the first hint of how horses think and feel. Trixie had earned her name honestly as she was constantly full of tricks, challenging Linda often. A few years later, the family moved to a dairy farm on the outskirts of Edmonton, Alberta. Briercrest Stables, one of the top show stables in Edmonton, was a mile and a half from their farm. She'd often admired the talented horses and riders while passing by. At her father's urging, she inquired as to whether she could clean stalls at the school in exchange for lessons. But when the instructor saw her ride, Linda was assigned to riding two or three horses almost every day after school. This continued until she was 15.

THE GIFT OF A BOOK

One day, when Linda was 12, she was riding home from Briercrest when an elderly man hobbled up his driveway with a cane and handed her a well-used book. He told her he'd been watching her ride back and forth each day and he wanted her to have it. He explained he was a Veteran of the Spanish American War, and the book showed how the U.S. Cavalry started horses with ground driving, so they never bucked. He had seen horses at Briercrest being bucked out in the round pen by the trainer. One of Linda's jobs was to ride the young horses with their heads tied to the saddle horn of the trainer's horse for the first few rides. Linda laughed when she told me she always credits her short stature to how many times she'd been bucked onto her head.

That book was Linda's first introduction to ground driving. The technique immediately made sense to her, and she understood intuitively how it makes perfect sense to the horse. At the time, they were just about to start a young Thoroughbred mare and Linda decided to give ground driving a try.

Together, the mare and she figured out how to do it, and when the moment to ride came, Linda stood on a straw bale beside the tall mare, climbed on, and they calmly walked around the paddock. From that moment on, “bucking out” was a thing of the past.



One day a Spanish American War Veteran gave Linda a book on how the U.S. Cavalry started horses. It included ground driving as a way to gently start horses. Linda mastered the art and was able to introduce the technique to people all over the world. Ground driving is still very important part of the Tellington TTouch Method

THE POWER OF A SMILE

At age 13, Linda began “catch riding” at the 9-day Edmonton Horse Show, one of the largest in Canada – that is, acting as a substitute rider for horses who, for whatever reason, have no riders. Professional breeders would bring horses to the show and hire catch riders to show them. At this young age Linda would have only a few moments to get to know the horse and go out to compete and win. And win she did. Her entire premise as she rode those strange horses was to make it as much fun for the horse as it was for her. Her mother would stand at the rail and would call out to Linda every time she rode by – “Smile dear, smile.” This gentle support instilled in Linda the power of a smile. All of the horses taught her they could feel her smile, instilling in her the success of co-operation rather than domination.

MARRIAGE AND A CAREER

Linda was 15 and “catch riding” a horse named “Bouncing Buster” in the Edmonton Jumping Sweepstakes. Linda won the sweepstakes. A gentleman named Wentworth Tellington was sitting next to Linda's mother in the stands. Wentworth had graduated from the last Officer's Training Cavalry class of Norwich University in Vermont the year Linda was born. He was an officer and played polo at West Point. Wentworth had become a successful oil company engineer who had been transferred to Canada where they met. Three years later, Wentworth and Linda would wed.

Wentworth had a desire to give back to young people, and soon after their wedding, accepted a position at Chadwick School, a private residential preparatory school in Rolling Hills, California. Linda had plans to enroll in college, but was approached by Mrs. Chadwick, director of the school, to consider being a dorm mother and an eighth grade social studies teacher – Linda accepted. She was comfortable with teaching as she'd been teaching riding for several years already. The school had a stable, and Linda continued to show and teach riding lessons. It was there, in 1958, that Linda instructed her first handicapped student, years before Hippotherapy came to the United States.



Linda and Wentworth Tellington in the early years

THE GYPSY SPECIAL WAY

Two years later, Linda and Wentworth, along with a partner, purchased a Thoroughbred farm. Soon after settling in, Linda had the biggest shock of her life. An older gentleman came to their farm and introduced himself as William Caywood, her grandfather. She'd never known she had a living grandfather. He had been training at racetracks in Florida for years. Her grandfather was 80 when he decided it was time to find his granddaughter. In his youth he had earned quite a reputation as a winning jockey in the southern states, and had been hired by an agent for an Austrian Count to travel to Moscow and ride the Count's horses. He was so successful he stayed on and became a trainer at the Moscow Hippodrome. Most of the handlers and trainers in Russia were Gypsies because it was widely known they had a special way with horses. One of the Gypsy grooms taught Linda's grandfather their form of horse massage. In 1905, her grandfather was awarded the honor of top trainer at the Moscow Hippodrome with 87 winners. He attributed his success to two things: Every horse in his stable was rubbed with short little strokes all over his body for 30 minutes each day. And he would never enter a horse into a race unless the horse told him it was feeling fit enough to win. When he told her that, Linda felt as if it were her introduction to animal communication.

Her grandfather stayed on, relaying many valuable secrets about training race horses regarding feeding, exercise and health, both physical and mental. And, of course, that magical Gypsy horse massage technique. Her grandfather's teachings influenced how Linda conditioned and trained her endurance horses. In 1961, in the first of many endurance rides, she placed in the Top 10 in the Tevis Cup and took first and best conditioned in Jim Shoulder's Oklahoma ride, 100 miles in one day. She finished six and a half hours ahead of the second horse, and set a record that stood for 7 years. Her grandfather's teachings also played a large role in the first book she and Wentworth co-published, "Physical Therapy and Massage for the Athletic Horse," in 1965.

This is the first of a two part story of Linda's journey to becoming one of the equestrian world's most influential people in the horse human relationship. We've seen how a spirited horse named Trixie set the stage for Linda's quest for knowledge, how an old book first channeled her creativity, and how her husband and grandfather helped her to see beyond any limits... Be sure to watch for your next issue of *Natural Horse* for the rest of Linda's journey to create "Tellington TTouch Training," where you'll read about others who, in key moments along the way, influenced her thinking and her life. Read about how, at a low moment, Linda declared she was leaving the horse world for good. Aren't we, horses and humans, lucky someone changed her mind? Who was that person? I'll tell you in Part 2. ♡



They have one last summer to consummate a lifetime of love, to cry, laugh...remember. When a troubled teenage girl and an injured horse turn to them for help, Mary and Sam Holt find enough room in their own large and breaking hearts to show the girl life's glories and restore a champion's will. A magnificent story about life, love, and horses.

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- Today Tellington TTouch is worldwide with over 10,000 practitioners in 30 countries on six continents assisting individuals and small groups in learning the Tellington TTouch Method.
- The Tellington TTouch Method balances the horse physically, emotionally, and mentally. It is easy to learn and do, and can be done safely by anyone.
- The 3 phases that create the magic are: the Tellington TTouch, Learning Exercises from the Ground, and the Joy of Riding.
- Practicing TTouch with your horse enhances your relationship on the ground and in the saddle.
- The Ultimate Horse Behavior and Training Book, Linda's 20th book, just out, takes you step by step in learning the *Tellington TTouch Method*.
- You can learn to follow the magic in the tiny circles and open new worlds for you and your horse. Go to www.ttouch.com to find out how.

About the author:

Dutch Henry is a freelance author who writes about "People & Horses Helping Horses & People" and novelist who resides in Virginia with his wife, Robin, of 36 years, horses, dogs, cats and chickens. You can reach Dutch at dutchhenry@hughes.net. He would love to hear from you. His novel "We'll Have the Summer" is available on Amazon and Dutch's website, www.dutchhenryauthor.com.