

**Hello, my name is Pavlov.
Ring a bell?**

In the acknowledgements at the back of **DRESSAGE *Unscrambled***, I thanked my teacher of many years, (the late) Anders Lindgren, for showing me that dressage could be both good AND not deadly serious.

This story is not going to be about a certain occasion 25 years ago. Then Major Lindgren was probably as old as I am now—which ain't exactly young—and I was meeting him in a hotel lobby for dinner. We were waiting for his wife, Puci, to come downstairs, and the Major suggested we might have a beer. We strode into the lounge which was nearly empty. He leaned his elbow onto the bar and with a straight face announced to the fetching young woman working there, "We are two young lions working for World Peace. We must have a drink!"

Nor is this the tale he related of his younger days as a cavalry officer, a story which pre-dated the Meatloaf scene in *Rocky Horror* but similarly, until their youthful excesses were reined in, involved motorcycles careening up and down the stairs of an ancient castle in which his company was bivouacked.

As Major Lindgren explained, the circumstances which prevailed in the Swedish cavalry of the 1950s allowed a relationship to the horses which sixty years later we rarely find. For one, the pool of horses to choose from was vast. He likened it to a modern senior officer calling down to the motor pool to have 20 Humvees sent up to headquarters. And if, upon testing them out, a few that arrived were found not to be suitable, well, send them back and requisition a few more. In the cavalry the horses that didn't make the grade as officers' mounts could be put to lots of menial tedious tasks. Have them pull the cannon or haul a fat private around the back roads of Uppsala.

The luxury of being able to say, "No, this horse simply isn't going to make it," is not available to most of us in this day and age. The economics of horse purchases is once you've bought it—and realized you've made a mistake—you're pretty much stuck with it. Who can afford to "eat" 30 or 50 thousand dollars and start over? Consequently, a lot of bad riding takes place as trainers bend their principles and go to the tack trunk to find forceful solutions to horses that were never meant to do what they were being asked to perform.

In addition to exiling a rogue to cannon hauling, in the closed cavalry culture, the officers could pass the government-owned horses back and forth from one rider to another.

The story Lindgren told was of a particularly vexing animal who could do all the Grand Prix—except for the passage. For whatever historical reason when his rider put his leg on the horse's sides to ask for passage, the horse just blew up. It was ugly. These were the days of showing where towards late afternoon the officers would gather in the bar to regale one another with their triumphs and disasters, and the regular rider was lamenting his inability to get through a Grand Prix test on a horse with such obvious physical talents.

Picture boys being boys. Picture *Top Gun* with spurs and more than a few rounds of drinks. Lindgren had brazenly declared that HE could show the horse successfully, and amid some raucous teasing and the placing of wagers, he was primed to prove it or eat crow.

As Anders told me the story, the horse became his to train, and every day after his ring work, he would hack out cross country to one particular place---the top of an embankment below which was nestled a railroad track in a man-made gully. Each day at ten after eleven, a train would chug by, drawn by an old wheezing steam engine, belching smoke. The train would come up behind them, and nervously the animal would start to prance. As he did, Lindgren would begin to whistle. Day by day, the routine would be repeated until the horse would associate the whistling with the new pace and perform it on command without the train being present.

When Maj. Lindgren took the horse to a show, the other officers lined the rail, hoping to collect on their bet, eagerly expecting to see the horse bolt and blow when it was time to put the aids on to make passage.

That time arrived, but instead of the dreaded seat and leg, the horse heard the whistling and began to passage in a perfectly relaxed way. Some watchers wanted to cry foul, but the judges in their glassed-in booths heard nothing, and simply scored what they saw.

The wager was won. Yes, we can admit that some trickery was employed, but sometimes it's all about making sense to your horse. Cut through the fog of confusion. Make his job obvious and simple. And arrange a circumstance in which he can feel rewarded. Classical? Probably not, but an example of outside-the-box thinking that riders lacking creativity would never come up with.

And besides, haven't we all heard that famous advice which dwarfs all others: *as you labor, whistle while you work!*