

Work on the lunge

by Mary Kint

Inland Communities Chapter (ICC) held a 3 day seat clinic (November 18-20, 2005) with Erica Poseley. Michelle Mahdavi and Tracy Robertson deserve a big prize for putting this together. The attendance and interest shown demonstrated how hungry lower level riders are to improve their seats. The clinic had only one empty spot. Before the three day event was completed, people were asking, "When can we do this again?" The Friday night presentation and dinner was well attended. At least forty auditors and riders enjoyed Erica's lecture/discussion. Sixty auditors attended over the three days. This is a fantastic turnout for a chapter that covers a very large geographical area.

Erica started off by sharing that at the Spanish Riding School the riders are on the lunge line for about 2 to 5 years. Then the riders are allowed to ride a school master for a number of years and after that they are allowed to train a young horse. Through her video, Erica was able to demonstrate how seat flaws affect the horse. Slow motion was frequently used to make these points. I know that I need a lot of work on my trot seat, but after seeing the video, I realized that I have to correct my seat at the canter also.

Erica was very flexible and adapted to individual rider needs. Some riders were not able to benefit from a lunge lesson because their horses were not suitable lunge lesson candidates. Erica worked with the rider and horse team as is. Those of us who had horses who could be lunged with a rider, benefitted from being able to totally concentrate on ourselves and not have to deal with our horses.

Auditors in attendance on Friday showed intense interest. They were getting down on their knees practicing exercises that Erica demonstrated on how to use your quads for posting. Everyone was also activating muscle groups in the back, lower back and abdomen as Erica was instructing and demonstrating. The clinic was beneficial to both riders and auditors. Erica was responsive to auditors, answering questions and demonstrating for auditors' benefit as well.

I rode two days in the clinic and found it very helpful. It

was great to have the feed back that I am on the right track and that I had made improvements on the second day, as I was trying to implement all that she had been teaching. It is a lot of work and takes a lot of concentration. I learned that I can break down what I need to do into segments. It is difficult to try to concentrate on everything all at once. But instead, concentrate on my scapula for a few minutes to get the right muscle tone, then my latissimus dorsi under my arm pits, then my abdomen and lower back...then the legs. My biggest struggle is to keep my thighs down and back and laying against the horse properly. I have read books and viewed videos on the seat, but I find participating in this clinic (both riding and auditing) to be far more helpful.

In watching other riders, I discovered we all had similar problems, maybe with some slightly different variations. Erica shared that it is not the horse that keeps us at Training Level but our seat. In America we don't have the benefit of school masters and the schooling tradition that Europe has. Thank you CDS for your generous grant and the Dressage Foundation for making this clinic more affordable, and thank you ICC for making this clinic possible to enable me and other riders to learn some tools for working toward having an effective correct seat.

