



# Through The Lens

*It Was The Most Amazing  
Thing I've Ever Seen!*

*by Johnny Johnston*

I have been around horses for over 50 years. Never mind how much “over.” I have seen everything imaginable concerning a horse’s behavior, human behavior, horse behavior caused by human behavior, and horse-herd behavior.



Well, I thought I had. Then Rose Corey invited me to her ranch, Creekwood Farm, in Puyallup, Wash., for a Chuck Kraft demonstration about horse handling. Chuck is a good-sized fellow; well, he is big is what he is—linebacker large to be accurate.

Chuck calls his demonstration “horse handling.” The horse gets handled with great intensity, and that’s putting it mildly. Chuck doesn’t look at the horse, he doesn’t talk to the horse; yet, he keeps the horse’s undivided attention at all times.

He uses the most simple tools imaginable—a “carrot-stick” stick; a piece of rope about six-feet long tied to the carrot stick; a Parelli™ halter; a rope lead about 20-feet long attached to the halter; and, most importantly, a ferocious “saber-toothed tiger”—a white plastic bag tied to the line on the “carrot stick.” The “saber-toothed tiger” plastic bag is then unleashed. The horse instantly goes ballistic trying to avoid being savaged by the monstrous beast that is flying through the air in totally frightening and unpredictable ways.

The convolutions and contortions the horse goes through would make the average Olympic gymnast proud. The instant the horse puts pressure on the Parelli™ halter he realizes that he has problems larger than a white plastic bag. If you want to see a horse come to a sudden stop, let him feel the release of the pressure on the halter! Chuck then strokes the horse with the carrot stick, line and bag still attached. The horse may shy a little, but a little pressure on that Parelli™ halter and the “whoa” is right there.

Everyone was shocked at how rapidly the horse settled enough to allow Chuck to stroke him with that carrot stick. The Parelli™ halter has no provision for a chain under the bars or under the lip; Chuck merely held the lead rope and allowed the horse to put all the pressure on the nerve points. The horse learned amazingly fast to stay near Chuck if he wanted to be comfortable.

Once the horse learned his spatial limits, Chuck began work on his left eye. The audience was informed that horses have two eyes. (By now, everything Chuck said came as a new revelation—have you ever heard of the word “awe?”) He went on to state that what a horse knew in the left eye he didn’t know in the right eye. Chuck then proceeded to use the saber-toothed tiger (white plastic bag) on the left eye to the point that the horse completely accepted it. Chuck by now wasn’t even holding the lead rope. The horse would move around Chuck, but not away from him.

Chuck then stroked the horse (never pat the horse—that’s impact, and impact is punishment) on his neck and body, and the horse totally relaxed, which was illustrated by the loosening of his jaw and licking. This was a horse that was rated un-trainable and unmanageable, as stated by a well-known trainer.

There was a couple of other interesting things Chuck taught us—if the horse is blinking, he’s thinking; if he’s not, he’s hot (ready for trouble). When he gives the release (the licking relaxing motion), he’s got the new thought imprinted.

Everyone began watching for these signals. You would think the horse scored a touchdown when he gave the release; the applause and cheering was loud.





The right eye came next. It was instantly obvious that Chuck had told us straight. That horse nearly came unglued when that “saber-toothed tiger” started whirling around his right eye.

We all noticed that the Parelli™ halter was very persuasive in showing the horse his spatial limits, and in no time the horse was in Chuck’s space getting stroked. “Lickin’ and Chewin’” should be Chuck’s theme song ... “Lickin’ and chewin’ instead of bad doin’, and no more kickin’, rather be lickin’ ...” Well, at least I can photograph horses. I know, no rap songs; don’t worry, I will certainly stick to my day job.

The horse in question was an 8-year-old, unmanageable, intractable, dangerous animal. Less than 2 hours with the charming and well-spoken Chuck (when he could keep his microphone straight), Kraft made a completely different animal out of him. Chuck used the carrot stick and line all around his legs and feet, then picked his feet up several times and that was the session. The horse proceeded to follow him around like a big pet. Chuck emphasized the need to

stroke the horse for good behavior; although, he said the best reward is the release of pressure. Chuck told us to stroke as though your heart is in your hand. Every time the horse gave in, Chuck immediately released all pressure and spent a long time stroking him. It was the best example of positive reinforcement I have ever seen.

Then came the star of the show—a yearling that was very fast and aggressive with his feet—all four of them.

We learned that a horse reacts in 1/200th of a second, while a human reacts in .2 of a second. Thus, the horse wins. The colt’s barn name was “Killer.”

“Killer” had a left jab that was lightning fast. His right cross was supersonic. His ability to whirl and kick with his back feet was becoming legendary. They brought “Killer” to “horse handler” Chuck, to show him the error of his ways and to keep his feet to himself.

Chuck then introduced “Killer” to the famous white “saber-toothed tiger.” He showed fantastic athletic ability for a long and exciting time. His eye never blinked for the longest



time! Then—it happened. He stopped staring and began blinking and then began chewing and licking; the crowd went totally bananas! We were exhausted! Everyone was amazed! This was something that every horseman and horse lover should have witnessed. If you ever, ever get a chance to see this demonstration, grab it. This will be one of the most memorable days in the history of your horse-loving life. The truly remarkable thing is that the horse wasn't harmed.

The next step was the rope around each of the legs. This taught the horse to think down to his feet. Suddenly, you can now handle feet and legs without risk to life and limb. Horse-shoers are some of Chuck's biggest fans! This didn't take too long, as the horse had learned that he really wasn't going to get hurt if he just relaxed and let it happen. And then, he got a whole lot of stroking.

Chuck then proceeded to handle the colt's legs and feet and use a pick and trimmer. This was a colt that would do serious damage to any available part of your anatomy and was a dangerous animal two hours ago!

The finale was the most spectacular scene that any of us had ever seen. Ever. Chuck took a multi-colored parachute, waved it all around, above, under, on both sides and then on top of the colt's head. He then got under the parachute, right by the colt's head, next to this formerly dangerous, treacherous, frightening animal; he stayed under there for a long time. You really had to be there.

It was the most amazing thing I've ever seen. <sup>16)</sup>

