

PURE PARELLI ON TOP, DOWN UNDER

They say that a journey begins with a single step. I didn't know when I put on my martyr hat and insisted on buying the polo pony that wouldn't, couldn't and didn't—which everyone said was untrainable, impossible and good for nothing but dog meat—where that one step would take me.

by Sophie Love

Five years, another unloved, unwanted, pony later and that meandering, crazy-paved path, has taken the three of us 14,000 miles from the rains of England to the dry plains of Australia. In a time of change, Parelli has been the only constant!

I was first introduced to the Parelli concepts by someone who was trying to sort out the mad, bad, crazy pony. She didn't make any difference to the horse, but she talked a good talk and got me interested, so I had one lesson and invested in my Level 1 pack.

Three months? It took three months before the world's spookiest pony could stand still, let alone get used to the Savvy String whirling around! It took three years before I could catch her on-time, every time, in my time frame, not hers! And we were disheartened right from the start by the idea of Trailer Loading—this was the horse that hated the trailer so much she secretly arranged to have it stolen out of her field so she didn't even have to look at it!

And then life got in the way and we made progress in baby steps until the horse that wouldn't load was flown, with her best friend, to the other side of the world! Progress indeed!

When the dust had finally settled and we all felt like we were somewhere we could call "home," checking in with Parelli Australia was a priority. Only to find that all the Equine Ethology confusion and weirdness that had been

bamboozling me in the UK was also prevalent here. (Which just goes to show there's no point running away—your problems follow you wherever you go!)

But there was light at the end of the tunnel—I was informed that Sue Shoemark and Neil Pye were in Australia to open the all new Parelli Office. Thank you, God!

PURE PARELLI

The office is now situated at the Parelli Centre, in Wilton, New South Wales. About an hour from Sydney and three hours from Canberra. Easy to find and what a find! 25 acres to play and practise in—honeycomb, dam, plenty of barrels, jumps, challenges and toys to keep you and your horse occupied for days on end.

I was privileged to be able to watch Australian Helen Topp teaching one of her first clinics in Australia after qualifying as a 3-Star Instructor. Helen has complete integrity and neutrality—she is the most wonderful and natural horseman and inspirational teacher having spent the last four years studying full time with Pat and Linda. Helen passed her Level 3 at age 15, at the time the youngest Level 3 graduate in the world, and has since gone on to take three more horses to Level 3 (the first task in Level 4 is to take at least two more horses to a Level 3 standard.) Watch this space for more about this amazing lady!

On the Sunday night of this intensive Level 2/3 course, Neil and



AUSTRALIAN SAVVY CLUB ADMINISTRATOR, ALISON BICKLEY

photo courtesy of Sue Shoemark

SOPHIE AND HER HORSE, BABY



photo courtesy of Sophie Love



NEIL AND SUE AT PARELLI AUSTRALIA

photo courtesy of Sue Shoemark

Sue sat down with the students in order to shut down the rumor mill about Parelli in Australia and set out the facts, so we could move forward with confidence and clarity.

They explained that four years ago Parelli in Australia and the UK was licensed out, but since the licensee has chosen to evolve in a different direction, the contract was recently terminated. Suffice to say that Parelli has claimed back control over the territories of Australia and UK and is setting up a satellite office in Australia, with all equipment, Savvy Club product and publishing, coming from the USA. So if you want Pure Parelli, that's what you'll get from here on in!

IN THE SADDLE

Venetia Raymond is the Manager of the new Australian office. Like many of us, her love of horses happened by accident, not design. Growing up in Sydney she had no exposure to equus, but freed from the strictures of schooling, aged 21, she escaped to Forster, on the New South Wales central coast, for a holiday and discovered the thrills (and spills!) of trail riding. It was the start of a life-long love affair. Such was her enthusiasm and passion, she was offered a job at this idyllic holiday retreat and stayed for three years, getting a solid grounding in stable management and riding skills.

Determined to further her equine education, Venetia moved to Maitland and an Arab Stud where she soon realized she had the "want to" but not the "know how" to deal with these capricious and headstrong creatures, so she moved back to Sydney where she bought two horses of her own. One was a young, feisty Appaloosa who drove her to find expert help in the guise of a local riding instructor. For six years she spent all her spare time advancing her riding skills and became interested in Dressage—Venetia was fascinated by the skill required to get a horse to move with that level of precision and grace. By this time her equine family had expanded to three (a Trakehner jumped the fence and had his wicked way with the Appaloosa!) and she schooled the latest addition in the classical dance of dressage. They began to compete together, and Venetia became addicted to bettering their performance each time out. But when her arms ached all the time and she had calluses on her fingers, she realized that there had to be a better way—she was carrying her horse around, and they were both becoming more tense and frustrated with every passing day. Where was the FUN? So she stopped. Cold turkey! And she didn't ride again for almost six years.

In 1999 a friend took her to Melbourne's Equitana and she saw Pat in action. It was as if a door had opened and she could finally see a way forward. She came home with all the gear and her Level 1 pack. She was hooked. Luckily she had some great instructors on her doorstep and quickly passed her Level 1 with Tony Lander. Venetia was half way through her Level 2 with Neil Pye when her mare got one of those mysterious paddock injuries that never

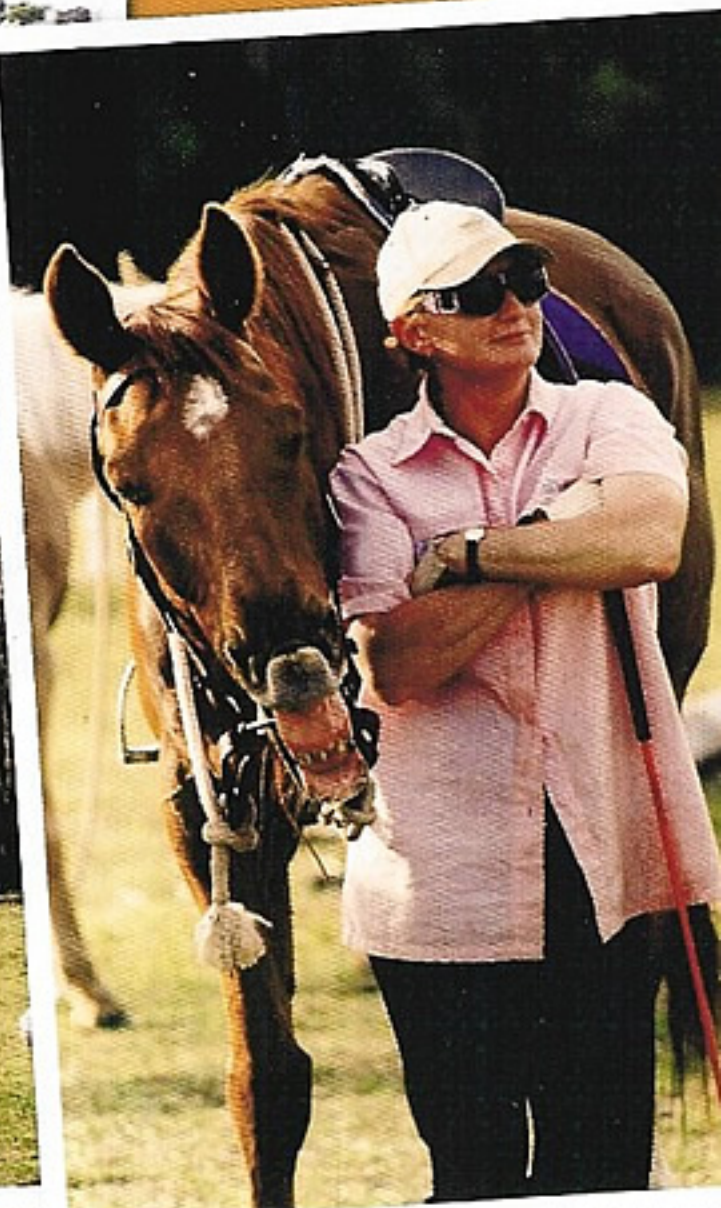
went away, and had to be retired. Back to square one! But with a lot more savvy and a lot more fun!

Cougar came into her life as a potential for the riding school. Not only was he way too dangerous for the students, but Venetia liked his style (we know she likes a challenge!) So she badgered the boss to sell him to her, and Neil Pye helped her get this crazy, right brain, bucking bronco into left brain listening and thinking mode. Four years on, watching Venetia and Cougar in harmony—the skill, the understanding, the concentration, the savvy are remarkable—a joy and privilege to witness.



VENETIA AND COUGAR

photos courtesy of Venetia Raymond



(To those of you just starting out on your adventure with Parelli, go and watch someone at Level 2 or 3 playing with their horse—they will inspire you to be the best that you can be—to stop shouting and start listening, to turn your frustration and anger into laughter and tears of joy as you learn to communicate—both finally speaking a language that the other understands.)

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Venetia knows what she's talking about. She understands what you will be moving through—emotionally, physically, intellectually—and will help you get where you want to go. Venetia is also a familiar face and voice to almost all Parelli Australia students as she has run the Australian office



REGALO, VENETIA AND SUE

since 2003—there's not much she doesn't know about Parelli in Australia, so if you're confused, make the call!

Venetia is very excited about the return to Pure Parelli: "the main task for us in 2006 is to launch the Parelli International Savvy Club in Australia, so we can communicate with students on an on-going basis—inspiring and motivating them to have exceptional relationships with their

horses. To that end, we will honor the annual subscriptions of people who have been confused by the recent changes, and now find they are subscribed to Equine Ethology's Club. We are also running a series of ads in the horse magazines, detailing the advantages of the REAL Parelli Savvy Club to help students differentiate between the two. Please tell your like-minded friends to contact Parelli and register their details so we can keep in touch with them and keep them abreast of Parelli courses, developments and tours."

And what does the future hold for Parelli Australia?

"By the time you read this Alison Bickley will have joined me here in the office. Alison is working in Level 3, like me, and has made the commitment to move herself and her horse up to Wilton from Albury to help me run the office and be on-call for Savvy Students Australia-wide. Pat and Linda will host a Savvy Conference on March 10 & 11, 2007 in Australia—as soon as the details are confirmed (and as long as we have your contact details!) we will give you all the information!"

Venetia isn't just the caretaker for all us Australian students, she also looks after Sue and Neil's four horses, and Linda's three, including the very special Regalo who led Linda to Pat all those years ago. He's retired now and happy to enjoy his life in pasture at the Centre—so when you go, look out for the grand old man whose tricks have

sparked a great love story, and given those in pursuit of a better understanding of the hearts and minds of equus, a simple path to follow.

Linda is responsible for the wonderful new home study kits—everything you need to revolutionize your relationship with horses for ever more, literally in a box! If you haven't seen them—beg, borrow or buy one! Linda breaks everything down into bite-size chunks and makes it fun, easy and accessible. She really "sets you up for success"—explaining everything with her inimitable wit, and the wisdom of someone who has also been a student of Parelli. All of a sudden the Parelli concepts "click" into place and become achievable. When YOU know what you are doing, where you are heading, what it is supposed to look like and you are trying to achieve, your horse will understand.

For many of us, the path to Parelli begins when we buy that impossible horse, little knowing that we are embarking on a fascinating journey where frustration, rigidity, fear and despair will be transmuted into communication, fluidity, respect and joy. It's like a modern day Pilgrim's Progress...on the road to a seemingly impossible dream—true understand-

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ing, love and respect between horse and rider. I remember the first Savvy Times cover I ever saw with someone riding bareback through the waves and I thought "THAT'S what I want—that's what I dream of."

Parelli makes the impossible possible and the miraculous mundane. It gives us the tools to make those dreams come true. It doesn't matter if it takes a lifetime, we'll get there one day and meantime I am learning that it's great to have a goal, but enjoy the JOURNEY—one step at a time. 🐾

**LINDA AND PAT ARE EXCITED
TO BE HEADING DOWN UNDER!**

**SEE THEM LIVE
MARCH 10 & 11, 2007, AT
THE SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL
EQUESTRIAN CENTER**

