

Jane Myers Independent Seat Clinic, Mudgee, February 2011

It was with equal excitement and trepidation that I signed up to attend a clinic run by Jane Myers called “The Independent Seat”

As a nervous rider who absolutely loathes being “watched” the thought was terrifying..... but the opportunity to finally have a chance to “get it” (whatever ‘it’ was) was alluring. I grew up around horses and have ridden on and off all my life, but riding – in every aspect – seems to have changed a fair bit since I was a child. Back then we would grip pound notes between our knees and the saddle and if you could keep it there for the whole hour you could keep the money!! Now it’s all about RELAX.... relax your leg relax this relax that.....and that just has me flopping about the place like a sack of potatoes! Not to mention that getting older and having children seems to alter your status on the Brave Scale.... and not feeling safe in the saddle anymore can make some rides downright unenjoyable!!

We started our lesson working as a group (phew) and the class was a real mixture of both horses and riders (double phew) Jane assured us that it was ALL ABOUT THE RIDER not the horse – the first plus point about the clinic. As long as your horse will walk and trot steadily around the arena, that is all that’s required..... which considering how much concentration we are going to be putting into our own bodies, asking anything else at this stage would be counterproductive to say the least. The first thing we had to establish was how our lower leg and ankle behaved when standing up in the stirrups.

Jane has an incredible ability to explain “the feeling” that you are trying to achieve, in a way that everyone can understand. This is the point that the magic starts to happen. You could practice standing up in your stirrups all you want, but without Jane’s constant commentary on what to be looking for, what to be feeling and what NOT to be feeling - you may well not change the way you sit on a horse. Suddenly lower legs move back, pelvises start swinging, ankles start finding a point of balance...and lo and behold seats start to emerge!!!! Everyone is amazed at the new sensations they are experiencing, not to mention how exhausting it is to achieve the “relaxed look”

As we progress through standing at walk, trot, finding our new balance at rising trot and finally the holy grail of sitting trot, all the horses in the group noticeably relax and seem much happier too as their riders find a new point of balance and suddenly “quieten down” their signals.

After the group session, we have a quick rest – at which point you realise just how hard you have been working, when your legs collapse beneath you upon dismount!!! Everyone has a twenty minute one-on-one session with Jane to concentrate on whatever they want. Jane actively encourages people to ask questions, tell her how and what they are feeling and what is and is not making sense. There is certainly no chance that one would come away from this clinic not understanding at least the basic platform on which they can practice and work towards improving themselves as a rider.



Myself? Ecstatic, elated, exhilarated....a few magical moments of floating when it all came together and my horse and I finally moved in unison. I came away exhausted but at last I had an idea of what it felt like to have the beginning of an independent seat – and the feeling of not only security in the saddle, but the freedom through your horse that comes with it.

Jane helping me sort my ankles out !!