

TRAINING, BOARDING & BUYING

Positive approach leads to more confidence and less stress.

As they move along in their careers, some trainers stop riding or showing and only focus on teaching and training. Philip Klipa had been on that same path until recently. The Los Angeles Equestrian Center-based hunter/jumper professional recently stepped back into the show ring after many years. Along with coaching and training clients in his Marlay Farms program, he plans to continue competing, along with riding in a clinic—in this case with Bernie Traurig—another thing he hasn't done in many years.



“When I was a junior I watched Bernie ride and win on some of the most amazing horses,” Philip recounts. “I even remember their names.”

Philip has 40 years of showing and training experience and has worked alongside some of the greatest legends of the sport. He began training with George Morris as a junior and continued with Morris well into his amateur years. Through his junior and amateur years, Philip won numerous reserve and champion titles at major shows including Devon, Washington, the Pennsylvania National, Atlanta, Blowing Rock, Middlesex County, Monmouth County and many others. Earning the High Point Large Junior Hunter Championship at New York City's Madison Square Garden was one of many highlights.

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“It was my experience riding with George that enabled me to travel to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and teach,” Philip explains. “I did that throughout the 90s and it was an amazing opportunity. Kids there start jumping at fence heights over 3’6”. There are no lower divisions.”

In 1987, Philip moved west to work for Karen Healey, a lifelong friend.



“Karen loves to teach and I learned a lot from her. I’ve known her since the fifth grade, when she used to help me with my algebra homework. Well, actually it was less frustrating for her just to do it.”

Philip started his own business in 2001 and his emphasis has always been to make riding, competing and horsemanship a positive experience for clients. He welcomes all, including beginners of all ages.

“It’s important to me to help riders develop more confidence,” he explains. “I particularly enjoy working with Adult Amateurs. I wasn’t always a professional. I showed in the Amateur Owner

division along with competing against the professionals in the First and Second Year Green divisions. Believe me, I know what it's like to be fearful. And I hate it!

"I do as much as I can to create a positive experience for riders: to be kind and supportive. Everything has to be part of the solution and not part of the problem," he continues of his philosophy. "You may have a wonderful horse, but it may not be the one for you. Again, is it part of the solution or part of the problem?"

"It's important for riders to walk out of a lesson feeling successful and I do everything I can to facilitate that. Yes, things happen: 45 minutes of a rider's lesson are great, then, in the last 10 minutes, that rider slips off. Well, if you ride horses, you fall off. Do not let your fall become more significant than the previous 45 minutes of the ride. Your fall does not cancel out all the good that you accomplished in the lesson. I do my best to nip that kind of thinking in the bud. The goal is that, when you tell your friend about your lesson, you tell them how good you were, step by step, as we do, and, oh, by the way, I fell off. The fall is no more significant than that."

Accumulating positive experiences is the key to building confidence, Philip stresses. "The more confidence riders have, the less fearful they are. The less fearful we are, the more present we are. The more present, the more we can think and being able to think gives us a much greater chance at making the appropriate choice. And that, in turn, gives you a positive experience, which makes you less fearful. And so on..."

"Staying positive is a quality that hasn't come naturally to me," the trainer adds. "It's a quality that I've had to nurture over many years. One thing I know is that nothing good comes from being negative at the barn. I have no place for it."

For more information on Philip Klipa's Marlay Farms at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center, e-mail pdklipa@icloud.com or call 310-486-2269.