

*New York Times* bestselling author of  
*The Man Who Listens to Horses*

**Monty Roberts**

# FROM MY HANDS TO YOURS

*Lessons from a  
Lifetime of Training  
Championship Horses*

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO VIOLENCE-FREE TRAINING

ALSO BY MONTY ROBERTS

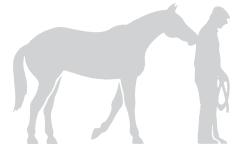
*The Man Who Listens to Horses*

*Shy Boy: The Horse That Came In from the Wild*

*Horse Sense for People*

# From My Hands to Yours

---



*Lessons from a Lifetime of Training  
Championship Horses*

## Monty Roberts

illustrations by Jean Abernethy

2002 / MONTY AND PAT ROBERTS, INC. / SOLVANG, CALIFORNIA

This book is designed to provide information on how to train horses using Monty Roberts' methodology, concepts and practices. It should be purchased with the understanding that at no time is the author responsible for the implementation of his concepts, methodology and practices. The hands that hold the reins are entirely responsible for the actions of the horse. Should readers not fully understand the implications of this book or be in a position to carry out these techniques, they should seek the advice of professionals.

The author urges the reader to watch videos and become familiar with the information available concerning the training of horses without pain and restraint. The author further advises that before you start to use these methods, you should attend a clinic or course to better understand the concepts.

Every effort has been made to make this manual as complete and accurate as possible. The author is not responsible for others' interpretation of the methods, or any ensuing results.

This book is intended to be educational. The author, Monty and Pat Roberts, Inc., and publishers shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person, horse, or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused or alleged to have been caused directly, or indirectly, by the information contained in this book.

Copyright © 2002 by Monty and Pat Roberts, Inc.

All rights reserved.

Printed in China.

Drawings copyright © 2002 by Jean Abernethy

Flag Is Up Farms®, Monty Roberts®, Join-Up® and Dually™  
are service marks, trademarks, and/or trade dress of Monty and Pat Roberts, Inc.

Book design and typography: Studio E Books,  
Santa Barbara, CA [www.studio-e-books.com](http://www.studio-e-books.com)

Photos: Jean Abernethy, Ben Allen, Caroline Baldock, Laura Davis, Bus Jackson,  
Jane Fallaw, Milne, Dennis Murphy, Frank Nolting, Michael Schwartz, Lavoy Shepherd,  
Harpreet Singh, Lucille Stewart, Thaggis, Anna Twinney, Werbung Studio, Bremen, Germany,  
Sasha Wöehler and Monty and Pat Roberts, Inc. archives.

Published by Monty and Pat Roberts, Inc.

Post Office Box 1700

Solvang, CA 93464

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Roberts, Monty, 1935–

From my hands to yours : lessons from a lifetime of training championship  
horses / Monty Roberts ; illustrations by Jean Abernethy.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p. ).

ISBN 1-929256-56-6 (hardcover)

1. Horses—Training. 2. Human-animal communication. I. Title.

SF287 .R62 2002

2002010931

# Contents

---



Preface / xi

Introduction / xiii

## **Chapter 1 / The Nature of Equus**

Survival of the Fittest / 3

Communication and Body Language / 6

## **Chapter 2 / The Language of the Horse**

The Language of Equus / 11

Equine Vision / 18

The Intuitive Horse / 22

## **Chapter 3 / Building Trust**

Trust / 26

Equine Orientation / 28

The Round Pen / 29

Footing / 31

Mouthing / 33

## **Chapter 4 / Join-Up**

The Process / 36

Join-Up / 37

Join-Up Day One / 40

Join-Up Days Two Through Four / 78

The Dictionary of Join-Up / 83

## **Chapter 5 / Forming Partnerships**

Creating a Willing Horse / 93

Training with Choice / 96

Adrenaline Up, Learning Down;

Adrenaline Down, Learning Up / 98

## **Chapter 6 / A Look at Tradition**

Techniques I Find Questionable / 101

The Whip / 101

Single-Line Longeing / 104

Feeding by Hand / 107

## **Chapter 7 / The Wonders of the Dually Halter**

How To Use the Dually Halter / 110  
Loading Your Horse, Trailer or Truck / 115  
Walking Through Water / 125  
Your Horse and the Farrier / 127  
Your Horse and the Veterinarian / 132  
The Difficult-To-Mount Horse / 133

## **Chapter 8 / Tools of the Trade**

The Foal Handler / 134  
The Horse That Bucks / 137  
The Head-Shy Horse / 146  
The Rearer / 150  
Hoof Rings / 155  
Balking / 157

## **Chapter 9 / The Into-Pressure Syndrome**

Into-Pressure / 159  
Starting Gates / 164  
The Pull-Back Horse / 170  
The Cinch-Bound Syndrome / 174

## **Chapter 10 / Imprinting Good Behavior**

Catching Horses / 177  
The Barn-Sour Syndrome and Separation Anxiety / 178  
The Shying Tendency / 180  
Foal Imprinting / 181  
The Growing-Up Months / 184  
Eleven Months to Starting / 186

## **Chapter 11 / Creating a Willing Performer**

Respect for Sensitivity / 188  
Stopping Your Horse / 189  
Turning Your Horse / 193  
Changing Leads / 196  
Backing Your Horse (Reining Back) / 201

## **Chapter 12 / Conformation**

Conformation Defined / 204

## **Chapter 13 / Questions and Answers**

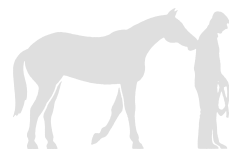
Questions and Answers / 212

Appendix: A Retrospective of the Career of Monty Roberts / 221

Glossary / 229

## Chapter 1

# The Nature of Equus



### Survival of the Fittest

My concepts and training methods are all based on an understanding of the nature of equus. I have spent a lifetime studying horses in the wild, and also in domestic surroundings. Understanding the nature of the horse is primary to becoming a “trauma-free” trainer and to the use of Join-Up, the technique of starting horses that I explain in detail in Chapter 4. These ideas work because they are rooted in the natural instincts of the horse. To master these concepts and to achieve clear communication, man is required to learn the horse’s language.

As with humans, the relationship between horse and man takes time to develop. As relationships are formed, it is critical to stay true to the instincts of equus. Horses are individuals. They have different personalities, abilities and levels of sensitivity, much like people do. With this in mind, you should realize that you cannot simply apply traditional methods to all horses. Until you learn to communicate in their language, you are not likely to effectively deal with their individual needs. When you do, I have found that horses will work as willingly with man as they do with one another.

There is a great deal of evidence that over

the millennia horses have been much abused by people. Yet amazingly, they continue their efforts to be our partners. Now with the use of their own language, we can read their responses and establish a true working partnership.

Many people say to me, “It was not until I saw your work that I realized that I already use many of your methods.” They speculate that their horses were their teachers. Some people who achieve high levels of success with horses are so in tune with them that they seem instinctual in using a reciprocal and understandable body language. I believe that it is likely that their awareness is so deep in the subconscious that they have no idea why they are so effective with horses. People who provide for their horse a comfort zone, leadership and

*“I did not create my training concepts. I only discovered what nature already had in place.”*

*—Monty Roberts*



10 The horse starts to move off the fence, coming closer. Both ears are locked onto Monty.



11 The horse approaches Monty, while Monty remains passive with eyes down, inviting the horse to take that final step.



12 This is the "moment of Join-Up."







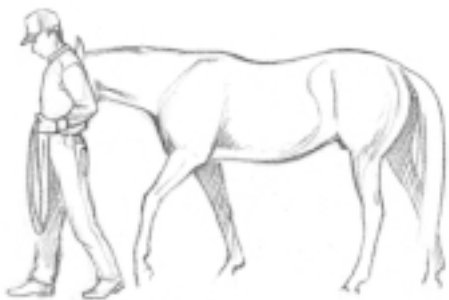
13 Monty invites the horse to follow-up, first turning clockwise.



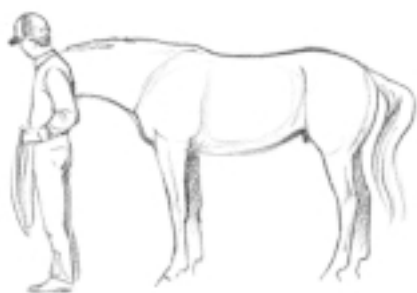
14 The horse continues to follow-up with Monty in a clockwise motion.



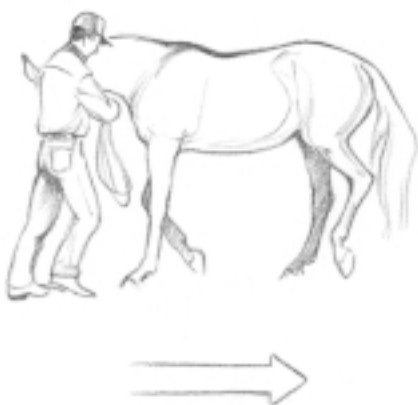
15 Monty reverses direction and invites the horse to follow-up in a counter-clockwise direction.



**7.3 The handler's correct position is at the horse's head and at all times parallel.**



**7.4 Correct "halt" position of both horse and handler.**



**7.5 Correct "backing" position while schooling with the Dually.**

self-administered discipline. You should always *pull* the Dually halter, not jerk it. On the other hand, if your horse fails to walk forward sufficiently, then grip the lead and walk briskly forward directing the horse to advance his position so his nose comes close to your shoulder.

You should move about the round pen quickly once the horse has his nose in the proper position. The next step is to walk briskly, then stop abruptly. Most of the time a horse will go forward for a few steps instead of stopping with you. Your leading hand should grip the line and firmly school the horse back into the desired position.

The next step is to walk straight forward again, expecting the horse to follow with his nose at your shoulder. Should he fail to do so, the lead rope squeezes and shrinks the Dually, drawing the horse forward into the desired position again. This activity should continue until you can walk briskly anywhere you choose, stop at will, and restart with the horse's nose remaining at you shoulder.

Having accomplished the procedures described above, you are now prepared to add the back-up to the scenario. I find it effective to walk quickly and halt abruptly, facing the same direction as my horse. At this point, I back myself up passing close to the horse's



**7.6 The Dually in action, tightening across the nose. Note that the lead is snapped into the "training" ring.**



**7.7 The horse has moved into a position that requires the handler to “school back.”**



**7.8 Schooling back is one of the most important maneuvers in the education of your horse.**

shoulder. When I reach the horse’s front leg, I grip the lead rope and school the horse with 3 or 4 backward steps in unison with mine. I again walk forward briskly for 15 to 20 steps, and repeat the process. I do this until my horse will back-up with me without requiring tension on the lead. The horse should execute these movements synchronizing his motion with mine. I want him to mirror my body motions to trigger his responses without the need for pressure on the halter. These movements should be accomplished with 2 to 3 feet (approx. 1 meter) of lead line between the hand and the halter.

If, at this point, I have accomplished these procedures effectively, I should have a horse who is relaxed. He should be walking with his head fairly low. He should, with some regularity, lick his lips and chew, which tells me that his adrenaline level is down and that he is volunteering. I like to be able to stop at any point during this level of work and rub my horse’s ears and all around his neck and head without him acting nervous or reticent. Experience has shown that if I get it right, I will often have a horse that yawns periodically. I have found this to be a positive sign of cooperation.



**7.9 Bird’s-eye view, showing the length of rope between the handler and the Dually.**



**7.10 The handler gives a reward for positive actions.**

The horse trained extrinsically will probably be reluctant to go into the gate. Once he is forced, the horse trained in this manner will be nervous and unruly. His mind is likely to be thinking backwards. He is likely to concentrate on his hip or hocks, where the whips were applied previously. It is at this point horses will often tend to incriminate the footrails and will develop a phobia against them. The intrinsically motivated horse is happy to go into the gate and looks forward to competing. During the second session, he still finds his rider remaining quiet. When the gates spring open, this young horse reacts more quickly, and passes the older horses earlier than he did the first time. I find that three or four of these educational sessions will produce a racing prospect that is far more effective at the starting gate than the extrinsically motivated individual.

In 1991, I was called to Germany to deal with a three-year-old Thoroughbred. Lomitas was a beautifully conformed, well-bred chestnut that had earned the title, "Champion Two-Year-Old in Germany" in 1990. Due to circumstances not entirely known to me, Lomitas had obviously concluded that starting gates were a dangerous place to be, and he was willing to fight tenaciously against entering them. Nine men were unable to achieve loading through force. I met him, did Join-Up with him and convinced him through communication and trust that there was no reason to fear the starting gate. Lomitas was the 1991 Horse of the Year in Germany, and the highest-rated horse ever produced in that country through his performances and earnings.

### ***The Monty Roberts Blanket***

In 1992, I designed a piece of equipment to help the horse by protecting his vulnerable



**9.9 The protection afforded by the blanket, from a side view.**

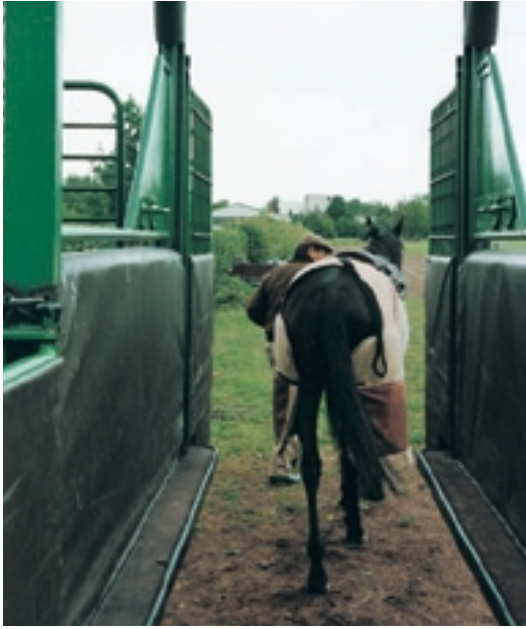


**9.10 Monty, with Simon Stokes up, schooling a young horse to the starting stalls with the blanket.**



**9.11 Attachment of the blanket to the starting gate, as Monty watches a horse being schooled.**





**9.12** The side (running) rail that often is the cause of the problem.



**9.13** The training gates at Bremen, Germany, racecourse. Simon Stokes is up, with Monty schooling from the ground. Note that the gates do not have a running rail.

areas. It is a double-carpeted blanket that fits behind the saddle and drapes over the hips down to the hocks. The primary objective was to cushion the effect of rails that run along the inside walls of the starting gates. These are protrusions found in all gates designed to protect the feet and the legs of the jockeys. The blanket protects the sensitive sides of the horse from the annoying stimulation of the rails. A ring is attached to the rear of the blanket into which a rope is snapped. This allows an attendant to pull the blanket off as the horse leaves the gates.

I was educated to the need for and efficiency of the blanket by Prince of Darkness, a very large and athletic Thoroughbred colt. Trained by Sir Mark Prescott of ewmarket, England, Prince of Darkness could be a perfect gentleman, or a killer on a moment's notice. He considered the starting stalls to be small and frightening, inducing claustrophobia. He would fight like a tiger to protect himself from the invasive walls. When I was observant enough to protect him with the blanket, he became a winning racehorse. There was never any need for force.

I always complete Join-Up with the horse first, and once trust has been established, I school with the blanket, taking the horse through the stalls with the gates open. Depending on the severity of the problem, this can take from one day to several months. I make every effort to end each session on a positive note, leaving the horse time to consider the advantage of this added protection the next time he enters the gate. Horses of this type should wear the blanket through each schooling and on race days. It is counterproductive to allow the phobic horse to rediscover the rails he considers abusive. I do not advise that the blanket is discarded once the horse is working well and leaving the gates normally. Remove the protection, and the horse might return to the previous condition and refuse to



**Lomitas, on his way to being named German Horse of the Year in 1991.  
Monty is leading, with jockey Terry Hillier aboard.**

## Outstanding Performers Started by Monty Roberts

<u>NAME</u>	<u>BREEDING</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION OF EVENT</u>
<b>WESTERN DIVISION</b>		
MISCHIEF	Paycheck/Babe	Hackamore Championship, Salinas, 1948, 1949
PATRICIA	Paycheck/RO Mare	Hackamore Champion, Gilroy, 1955
FIDDLE D'OR	Bras D'Or/Fiddle Miss	World Champion Hackamore Horse, 1961, 1962
JULIA'S DOLL	Poco Rey/Spanish Springs Julia	AQHA ranked 3rd in USA, 1964 AQHA Pleasure Honor Roll, 1964, 1965 AQHA Champion, 1964
MR. TIV	Johnny Tivio/Night Mist	World Champion Reined Cow-Horse, Reno, 1986, 1987
<b>RACE HORSES: GERMANY</b>		
QUEBRADA	Devil's Bag/Queen to Conquer	Champion 2- and 3-year-old, 1992, 1993
RISEN RAVEN	Risen Star/Aurania	Champion 3-year-old, 1994
CABALLO	Königsstuhl/Carmelita	Champion Stayer, 1996
MACANAL	Northern Flagship/Magnala	Champion 2-year-old, 1994 Champion Sprinter, 1995
LAVIRCO	Königsstuhl/La Virginia	Champion 2-year-old, 1995 German Derby winner, 1996
SURACO	Königsstuhl/Surata	International Gr. I Winner, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997
MIDDAY GIRL	Black Tie Affair/Midnight Society	International Gr. I Stakes Winner, 1995
APIA	Cox's Ridge/Approved To Fly	International Stakes Winner, 1996
LOCO	Sadler's Wells/La Colorada	International Stakes Winner, 1998
HAMMOND	Acatenango/Happy Gini	International Gr. II Stakes Winner, 2000
DIAMANTE	Acatenango/Dawn's Side	International Gr. III Winner, 2001
HAPPY CHANGE	Surumu/Happy Gini	International Gr. Winner, rated 96.5 on Free Handicap
SILVANO	Lomitas/Spirit of Eagles	Horse of the Year in Germany, 2001 International Gr. I Stakes Winner of over \$3.5 million
SABIANGO	Acatenango/Spirit of Eagles	Gr. I Stakes Winner; second-highweighted 3-year-old in Germany, 2001
<b>RACE HORSES: USA</b>		
GLADWIN	First Landing/Dungaree	Hawthorne Gold Cup Handicap, Amory L. Haskell Handicap
BAHROONA	Poona II/In Regards	Champion 2-year-old Hollywood Park, Graduation Stakes
SHARIVARI	Hugh Lupus/Shari	Champion 3-year-old, Champion Sprinter, New Zealand Horse of the Year, 1967
DORRENO	*Tirreno/Dancing Doe	Longacres Derby Handicap winner, International Gr. winner
AN ACT	Pretense/Durga	Santa Anita Derby Champion Gr. 1 Champion 3-year-old, 1976



## Glossary

**ALPHA MARE** A female horse who is psychologically equipped to lead the family group. It is an inborn tendency, which is nurtured through maturity.

**ASSOCIATION SADDLE** A saddle designed by the Professional Rodeo Cowboy's Association to be used in competition on bucking horses.

**BELLY OVER** A procedure by which a handler legs a rider onto the back of a horse, leaving both legs on one side of the horse and the rider's head on the other side, so that the rider's belt buckle is on top of the saddle.

**BLINKERS** A hood-like arrangement that restricts the vision of the horse.

**BREASTCOLLAR** A strap (generally leather) which attaches to and passes from the right side of the saddle to the left side while traversing the chest of the horse. It's used to keep the saddle from sliding back.

**BUCK STOPPER** A piece of quarter-inch cord (generally nylon) that is tied so it passes just under the upper lip of the horse and circles the head. It usually has a browband and a length of cord that travels the crest of the neck and attaches to the saddle. It causes discomfort when the horse bucks.

**CASLICK** A procedure that partially closes the vulvic labia of the female horse to reduce air intake.

**CHARGEY** Used to describe a horse that is anxious to go forward at a more rapid rate of speed than is wanted by the rider.

**CUTTING** The sorting of cattle. It generally refers to separating one animal at a time from the herd while on horseback.

**DORSAL** Areas on or near the back.

**DUALLY™ HALTER** The trademarked name of a particular halter invented by the author.

**DUMMY** or **MANNEQUIN** A term used for an inanimate human form, for example stuffed human clothing used to simulate a rider.

**FLANK** An area of a horse's anatomy considered transitional—that area between shoulder and rib cage, or hip and belly.

**FLANK CINCH** A belt-like object generally fixed to the Western saddle and back from the normal cinch. It's used to anchor the rear portion of a Western saddle.

**FOAL HANDLER** The name of a piece of equipment designed by the author, used to control untrained foals.

**GANGLION** Spider-web shaped group of nerves generally associated with the more sensitive areas of the horse's anatomy.

**GASKIN** Refers to the area of the hind leg between the stifle and hock. The tibia and fibula are the bones of the gaskin.

**GIDDY-UP ROPE** A braided, cotton-fiber rope with a tassel on one end and loop to fit over wrist on the other. It is used as an aid to create forward motion while riding.