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Tintagel Enterprises, LTD Westhampton, Massachusetts

by Rebecca Hurst

Stallions, mares, and young stock all exist happily in the same barn at Tintagel Enterprises, Ltd, the business of Sarah Hollis, owner and trainer of Andalusians in Westhampton, Massachusetts. The current breeding herd has around 20 members with two stallions standing at stud: the great black Regaliz, who's eight, and Diego MC, a rare and stunning copper chestnut, who's four.

Regaliz, who is on the cover of this issue, is a magnificent black stallion whom Sarah found after a long, hard search for the handiest, hardiest, and healthiest Andalusian line from Spain. She had booked her mares to Regaliz' sire, but when the opportunity came for her to purchase a son, she jumped straight on. In November, 2000, the proud black stallion stepped off the truck after a long trip from sunny California, looked around, and seemed to say, Sarah is convinced, "Brrr, it's chilly here. Where's the food?" He fit right in, though little knowing, at the time, that he was coming to live with a group of horses known not only for their show ring accomplishments but for their artistic endeavors.

Sarah's first Andalusian, bought in 1990, was Uther, show name, Castle Oak Pendragon. He is known not only for his many show ring wins but for his expressive features, his humor and slightly high strung bouncy personality. He was not always the star he is now, Sarah says. "He was a gangly youngster when I got him, with no attention span or self-control whatsoever. He was just a jumble of instincts and raw talent. To teach him anything, I had to channel this energy; and thus began for me a long study in behavior and motivation."

Sarah's love and admiration for this horse are obvious. She goes on: "His expressions, his magnetic presence, his childlike ability to project and express emotions as they come, with no limits, no labels, and no fear, is his star power. While his wisdom has evolved over the years, his naiveté has remained. He has a wide-eyed innocence that's convinced the world is put here just for him to enjoy."

And, indeed, anyone visiting the barn at Tintagel is immediately greeted by that big white face happily beckoning them to come on in; and seeming to say, "Isn't it a wonderful day to be alive?" Uther has been photographed by many different photographers and has appeared in numerous books, calendars, magazines, and videos; and he continues to be in demand by those wanting to capture his essence on film.



PHOTO: KATHERINE L. ORTIS
Castle Oak Pendragon (a.k.a. "Uther") is known not only for his many show ring wins but for his expressive features and personality.

Escorial is another one of the super horses at Tintagel, though he's a Half-Andalusian and carries the nickname "Pony." Sarah describes him as a jester and clown who keeps everyone laughing with his antics.

He, like Uther, is fully liberty and trick trained. In fact, Pony even has a talent for inventing his own tricks. He too has his own share of photographer fans. If one needs a horse to lie down on command or to rear on command or just to make a funny face, one just asks Pony. He's always happy to oblige.

So what makes the Tintagel horses so incredible and personable? Sarah would say it's the way they're treated and respected. Most clients walking into Tintagel for the first time notice the atmosphere and how happy and relaxed all the animals seem. The most common comment Sarah says she hears is "Man, ALL these horses hang their head out to say hello and greet

you with ears up."

"It's a sign of the handling and healthy living," responds Sarah.

So what makes these horses so interactive? Most of the horses at Tintagel are clicker trained. And now Sarah is utilizing the newer and more exact Bridge and Target system which differs from classic clicker work, yet is still operant conditioning (OC).

"Using OC helps develop the animals' sense of participation and enthusiasm," says Sarah. The training at Tintagel is truly holistic. "What I do different lies in understanding the animals' motivation for doing whatever the behavior is," says Sarah. "They have to be healthy and comfortable in their bodies. Most negative behaviors I see have a physical reason at the root of them. You can train the horse to be mentally obedient by many of the current popular techniques, but if the body has some issues the emotional acceptance will never come and the horse turns into a dull robot. Submissive, quiet, and dealing with their discomfort, the horses don't say a word in their defense. They don't dare try and explain or express themselves. Some would call it well trained, I call it cruel. My horses are all very well disciplined; they have to understand the

hierarchy for safety's sake. But after that initial lesson is learned, a partnership develops that transcends the simple 'I'm dominant, you're submissive'."

Training starts for any horse with the basics of yielding space and focus. With the foals Sarah raises, these lessons start at birth. "The horse has to be taught HOW to learn, not just WHAT to learn." As these early lessons are mastered, more complexity is added. Sarah uses her knowledge of trick and liberty training to gain a horse's trust by introducing non-habitual, non-threatening movements and activities into the horses' routine. She likens it to learning any art form, whether dancing, painting, or writing. "You have to start with learning and studying the technical elements, say playing scales on the piano over and over until they become unconscious. This takes quite a bit of discipline. Then, as the body masters the techniques and skills, the expression and art start to emerge, first with mental intent then from an emotional subconscious level. It takes a long time."

This is how the horses at Tintagel get their special look: they feel free to express their inner thoughts and feelings and they are equal partners in whatever work is required. The emotions have been tempered and refined to be expressed in appropriate ways so this level of freedom can happen. Having all aspects of their lives understood, treated and cared for – the physical and health side, mental comprehension and then the emotional aspect – is what gives Sarah's horses a real difference. Whether in the show ring or in photographs, that difference is obvious.

You can see one of the more recent projects involving Tintagel horses when the book *Heart of the Horse* is released by Barnes and Noble this fall. It's a book of black and white photographs; and all the horses in it, but one, are owned or

trained by Sarah Hollis and were photographed at Tintagel over the course of a year. Look for Regaliz making his artistic debut. Future projects include working with Paula Josa-Jones for her Equestrian Dance Theater Performance "Ride." Pony is working with dancer Ingrid Schatz to see if a combined horse and human liberty dance act can be incorporated into the show.

The spirit of these horses will live on in the art they have inspired.

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PHOTO: KATHERINE L. ORTIS
Sarah Hollis and one of the foals at Tintagel Enterprises Ltd.