

The Box

By Pete Dillingham

They were skilled riders! These veterans had traveled up and down steep slopes, through deep rivers, and “bush-wacked” (getting wacked by bushes) through many virgin trails. The posse we rode with were as good as any saddle bum in the county, except for one thing.....they were falling out of the saddle like flies. One critter got its back leg caught in some vines, did a “jitter bug” (that looked like ‘Band Stand’), and flung its partner to the next county. Another galloping horse saw a “horse-eating” squirrel and jumped left the rider went right A third rascal got some “wind under its tale”, did some playful bucking, and gave its passenger flying lessons. I started watching the riders more closely and it happened again. A “booger” popped up and a horse made a small step sideways. The rider got tense, nearly lost a stirrup (and saddle), and the horse almost put another notch on its gun. These incidents inspired a solution that can help anyone.....horse person or not.

I saw relaxed riders, traveling down a trail with an imaginary box approximately 4 inches outside each shoulder. When a catastrophe occurred, the rider’s shoulder broke the invisible box. The passenger got rigid, their hips didn’t float with the motion of the horse, and “TIMBER”!

The outcome of all that was Equicise. “Pete” you are saying “you’ve eaten too many ‘Fruit Loops’, what in tarnation are you talking about?” Equicise is doing exercises while sitting on a horse. These controlled games develop a rider’s ability to move outside that imaginary box with confidence and flexibility. It’s like practicing a fire drill.....the more you practice, the better you respond. Students who have taken that series of lessons have returned from “near death” experiences with smiles on their faces. They’ve learned to be comfortable “outside the box”.

Lessons we learn in the saddle can foster us in our daily walks. Routines are a way of life with most of us. The patterns we fall into provide us productivity, confidence and contentment. However, if we never leave the confinement of our comfort zones (the “box”), we pass up opportunities to reach higher achievements and joys. Changing professions, moving to other territories, tasting new foods, listening to different thoughts, challenging old thoughts are paths great people, societies, and nations have traveled. If we never safely break the box, we will eventually hit the ground.