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Dear Mom & Dad,

My first week of horsemanship camp at McGinnis Meadows Ranch was a blast! They are feeding us really well and I even got my own room! The bed is sooo comfortable and there's even a robe and slippers for me to use. It snowed a little which made it feel Christmassy and one of the wranglers decorated the dining room plants to look like a Christmas tree. Goofy fun looking! Don't worry about me getting cold though, the lodge and our rooms are heated just right. In fact, the place where we ride, the indoor arena, it's heated too! We bundle up to go outside in the mornings, catch up the horse we are going to ride, bring him in and by the time we have the horse brushed, we no longer need our coats. It can get warm enough to grow palm trees! Just kidding, but it is so nice to not have to wear bulky coats and gloves to ride in all day.



The horses! Let me tell you about them! How kind and gentle they are; so forgiving of my clumsiness! They are all taught the Buck Brannaman Style of horsemanship by the wranglers so they are perfect to learn with. Our teacher, Shayne, is amazing. He's been on the road riding with Buck for like 17 years! He started us out on the ground with our horses and showed us how to move them where we wanted them like they are our dance partner. You know how I love to dance so I could relate. But being a girl I have to learn how to LEAD the dance!

Shayne really took his time with us showing us each little nuance to communicate with our horses so that we weren't offensive. He rode my friend Heather's personal horse for a couple of days; really helped us to see how to teach and support a young horse but still be the leader. Her horse, Adelaida (I can never remember her name and

keep wanting to call her Andromeda), would get unsure of herself and would move around a lot, but Shayne just persisted calmly in whatever he was asking until she figured out that all was okay. It was neat for Heather to see because she so wants to do right by her young horse. On the third day Shayne had her go ahead and ride Andromeda (easier to spell) and coached Heather through her rough spots (I mean Heather's rough spots as we could see how hard her horse was trying to do all she was asking).



Boy, this is going to be a long journey getting ourselves smooth, and consistent and clear in what we want from our horses. They word it as “ask” the horse, but it’s not talking, it’s through our body language. Heather did so great. She’s got the “want to” but comes across as unsure at times so her horse would get lost. Not for long though as Shayne was always there to talk her through. I appreciated his honesty with her on what she needed to do to support the horse but stay safe! Here’s something cool - we’d be working on something with our horses in the arena and Heather would just laugh out loud heartily with joy on those moments when she was in sync. You can truly feel those moments when you and the horse are together as it literally feels you are walking on a cloud. No pressure, or pulling, and you honestly don’t feel the horse’s feet touch the ground! Those moments are addicting! After our rides we’d all talk about what we felt – it’s cool meeting people that feel this same desire to learn more.

There was this other guy here this week, Derek. He’s from Canada and guides hunting and pack trips. I sure liked his openness to learn. He rides all the time and I often see the turmoil people have when they are introduced to a different way. Not Derek though, he saw the results of the changes Shayne taught us and man he did some nice riding this week. Shayne said his horses all improved this week. In fact, he said we ALL improved our horses this week. Heather said at the end that she wanted to make it through the week without her horses needing a wrangler to “fix” them!

Well I know I just wrote a book here, but this horsemanship camp is the BEST! Thank you for sending me. I can’t wait for what we do next week!

Hugs! Your Kid,

Dori

