



## About

Jaeme Duggan

French School, Art-Form Dressage (*Master Instructor*)

My goal is to continue the traditions of my teachers, Mark Russell and Jean-Claude Racinet. Seeking lightness of the whole horse through release of the jaw, and release of the aids. Finding balance for the horse and balance for the rider, in body and mind.

**Veritas:** In Roman mythology, **Veritas**, meaning *truth*, was the goddess of truth, a daughter of Saturn and the mother of Virtus. It was believed that she hid in the bottom of a holy well because she was so elusive. .

**Veritas Classical Horsemanship:** Finding the truth in balance, posture, freedom... the beauty of art. The joy of movement in lightness found within each horse. The belief that every horse can do some Haute Ecole. But above all, riding needs to be simple and playful for both human and equine.

~~~

I had, by all accounts, an amazing childhood...

I can't remember a time I did not dream of horses. For my seventh birthday I was gifted three, ½ hour riding lessons. The rest, as they say, is history. I began cleaning stalls, up to twenty on a Saturday, in return for riding...

As a teenager I was incredibly privileged to groom for a very active New England Dressage Association competitor. I braided and read tests pretty regularly from April through November. As a



[click to add a caption](#)

groom, I also got to audit some amazing and spectacular clinics and symposiums on a regular basis. The most memorable and impressionable of these was with Sally Swift, who took a kind interest in the grubby groom, and really involved me in the day, asking me questions and making sure I understood what I was seeing. It would not be for a decade or more that I would realise how profound her impact was on me as a teacher.

During college I found a 4,250 acre working cattle, horse, sheep, and dude ranch. At one point I had ~110 horses and ponies, from part-draft to Thellwell ponies in my care. I learned more about trusting a horse, and working with a horse as a partner during that time than perhaps at any other time in my life. I was also blessed to work with Lew Sterrett, a direct student of the Dorrances and Ray Hunt.



a longtime, and current student

At that time I became certified as a CHA Instructor, obtaining the level of Master Instructor and Clinic Instructor. One of my favorite things was travelling the East Coast, teaching and certifying other instructors how to \*teach.\* Not just riding, but teaching, learning styles, personality types... I did that until I changed jobs in 1999 and could no longer travel to keep up with it. Since then I have kept a handful of private students. I also volunteered,

using horses with children of families in the homeless shelter system and special adults, and Special Olympics.

Through CHA, early on, I met Jo-Anne Young and Cathy Daggett at Houghton College in NY. Both would become amazing mentors, and through them, and Houghton College, I would meet and ride with Walter Zettl, whose kindness, tact, timing and philosophy led to a paradigm shift in my idea of what dressage could and should be.

Until that time all of my exposure had been German School based. I'd ridden or studied with trainers such as Eric Horgan, Michael Poulin, Bill Woods... I'd read Mueller, and The Principles of Riding, and of course The Complete Training of Horse and Rider. I was riding a young, lanky 1/2 Arab mare, and the German School just wasn't working. I had access to the best of the best--and it was a disaster with her.

And then I rode with Walter. And I watched him teach. And I saw lightness, and release of aids. While he, himself is not French School, neither is he entirely traditional German school. Due to geography, I was only able to ride with Walter half-a-dozen times or so. Those rides had exponential impact. I watched every minute of clinic I could, in absolute awe of the timing of his teaching.

About the same time I began to be enchanted with Jean-Claude Racinet in the old Dressage & CT magazine. My mare became injured, and I took the risk and wrote to him, asking advice. To my delight he wrote back, beginning lessons via correspondence; and when he was close, travelled two hours each way to come work on her personally. I have no doubt he saved her life. Working with him changed mine. Seeing in person the flexions of the jaw, the CHANGE in a horse with the releases, the sheer simplicity... I knew this was what I had to pursue.

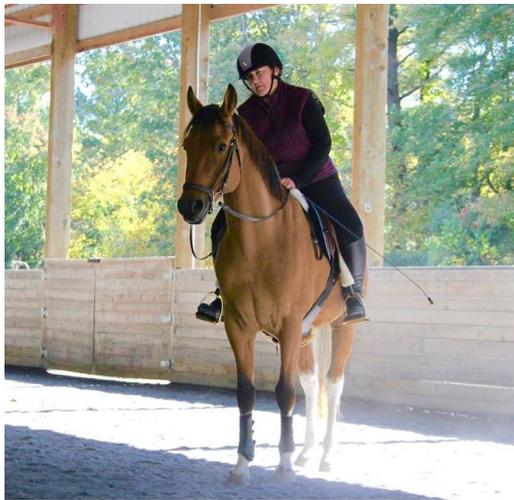
I had a new, young stallion, and I found a teacher, much closer--only five hours one way--who specialized in baroque stallions. I went to watch Vitor Silva work, and was mesmerized

by patterns resembling mandalas... work which felt far more like ballet. And in many ways it \*felt\* like ballet--in the blood, sweat and tears that went into the basics at times. But in addition to working with my stallion, I had the opportunity to ride Lusitano schoolmasters over, and over. To learn that piaffe, passage, half-pass are gymnastics, not goals. To use them. To define and refine my in-hand work in the Portuguese, or 'close' in-hand style. To teach the horse all movements on the ground first, without the burden of the rider.



click to add a caption

I had the privilege of studying a dozen years with Vitor. I would travel, arrive by lunchtime or so, and stay until late into the night. In later years I would stay over. I was invited to participate in the inaugural Trainers Workshop. Eventually the mission and focus of Sons of the Wind evolved. By this time, my little stallion was the first horse I had brought by myself from unbacked through working piaffe, passage, half-pass and changes. Vitor rode him very occasionally, and said he was 'not an easy ride.' I found that untrue... by the end of our partnership, I thought it and he did it. Physically he was tough, but mentally, he was a blast.



click to add a caption

Teachers come when we are ready for them. Little did I know in June of 2013 when I went to audit a Mark Russell clinic that he would be the teacher I was ready for. Mark's credentials seemed the epitome of what I was looking for--French school, trained with Oliveira, with a little side of working western. I knew from the moment I started watching, he was the real deal. The close in-hand work, PLUS Baucher releases. Absolute balance, and yet as casual about it all as you could ever wish, and as positive as

any human I've ever met.

At this point in my life, I don't need to pay someone to yell at me. I appreciate the trainers and coaches who were tough, and I don't mind being called on, but there are people you meet who make you feel better just by being around them. Mark was that.

I'm shattered by Mark's loss, because I feel like I had so much more to learn from him. I had just found him. Like the best teachers, he believed in me more than I do. It wasn't long after his passing I realized the only way to overcome his loss was to continue on with what he was teaching me. And, to teach others.

\*\*Style of saddle doesn't matter, and I will continue to pursue my fascinations with Vaquero horsemanship and Doma Vaquera and Working Equitation... All are welcome, as 'dressage' will benefit every equine.



click to add a caption

---

[Publish Update](#)