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Paying Homage to Horses

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STAR POWER:
In Penn Grove,
singer Jewel among
those pushing for
equine recognition



Four of the graduates of the Reis Ranch horsemanship course Saturday watch others demonstrate methods they learned during the program.

Paying homage to horses

By **TIM TESCONI**
and **JEREMY HAY**

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

In a small dirt arena in Penn Grove on Saturday were a dozen horses whose riders included a housewife, a technician at Optical Coating Laboratory — and Jewel, the pop singer twice featured on the cover of Rolling Stone.

Surprisingly, perhaps, once she sang the national anthem, not all eyes were on Jewel, who for much of the past three months has been taking horsemanship classes at the Penn Grove ranch of cowboy and horse whisperer Dennis Reis.

"I didn't come to see her, I came to see Dennis," said Janis Laurain, 53, of Santa Rosa, watching the riders wheel their steeds around a bouncing, 7-foot-high red ball.

Laurain was one of about 300 people who paid between \$36 and \$65 to attend a show celebrating horses and featuring graduates of the fourth 90-day Reis Ranch universal horsemanship course.

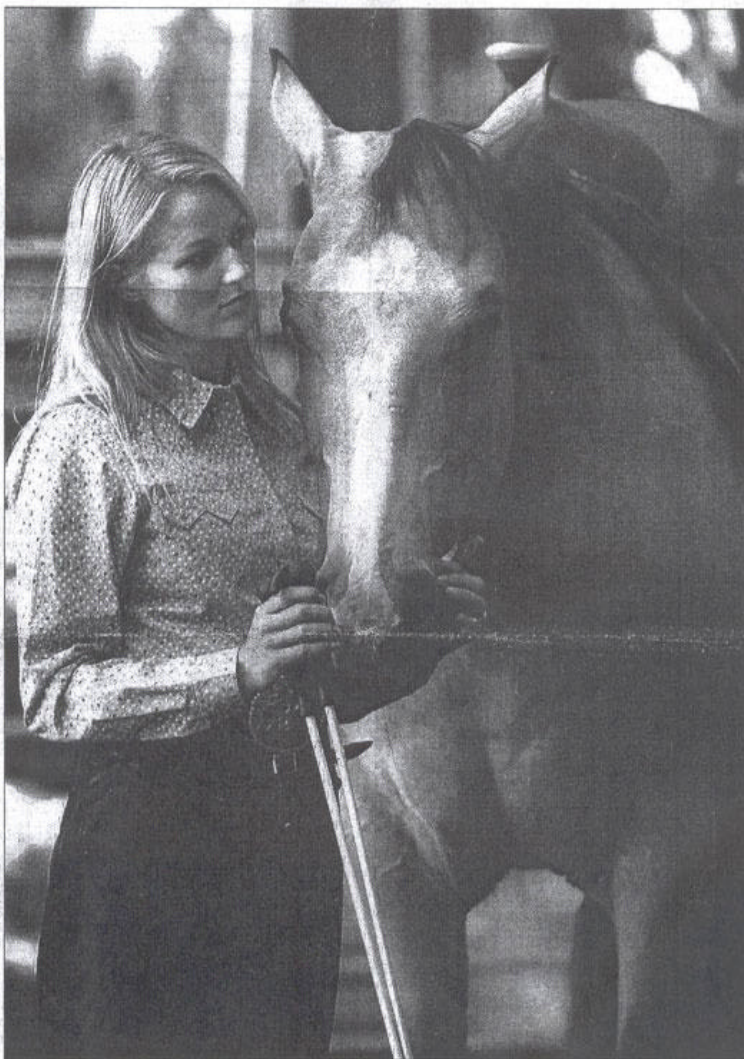
The event also was a chance for Reis to press his campaign for a national holiday honoring horses.

And while she shunned the spotlight, the singer with the single name — who flew in Thursday from Germany, where she was promoting her CD "0304" — promised her star power to the effort.

"Everybody enjoys horses, they're part of our history," she said, seated astride Chance, a 16-year-old buckskin gelding she acquired after meeting him on the set of "Ride with the Devil," the 1999 film in which she co-starred.

She wore dusty bullhide cowboy boots and a light blue shirt sprinkled with white squares and dark blue

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Photos by KRISTA JEREMASON / The Press Democrat

Pop singer Jewel, who for the past three months has studied horsemanship with Dennis Reis of Penn Grove, on Saturday takes a moment with her 16-year-old buckskin, Chance. Jewel and others are championing a horse holiday.



Dennis Reis, left, Ty Murray, center, and Jewel wait for demonstrations of horsemanship to begin at Saturday's graduation ceremonies.

"You just learn how to talk the language of the horse. It makes your actions really match your intentions."

JEWEL, pop superstar who just completed a horsemanship course in Penn Grove

HORSES: Petition seeks national holiday to honor horse

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horseshoes. And through the day, she shared laughter with her boyfriend, Ty Murray, a nine-time world champion rodeo rider known as the world's greatest cowboy.

He, too, has trained at the ranch the last three months, embracing both Reis' approach to horses and the campaign for a horse holiday, which had its first success last year when California lawmakers made the second Saturday in December the "Day of the Horse."

It didn't take much to get Jewel and Murray, who has a ranch in Texas, in the saddle.

"There's a Ground Hog Day, for gosh sakes. It seems fitting America should honor the horse," said Murray, 33. "You can't pick up a history book that doesn't have a picture of a horse in it."

On Saturday, Murray joined

Reis as master of ceremonies for the five-hour show, which illustrated Reis' philosophy that the relationship between human and horse should be built on trust, respect and negotiation.

Instead of constraints such as mouth bits and neck ropes, Reis, 45, a tall and lanky cowboy, teaches nonverbal communication to gentle and rassure horses.

"You just learn how to talk the language of the horse," Jewel said. "It makes your actions really match your intentions."

At one point Saturday, the riders steered their apparently unrattled horses between the arena fence and a Penngrove fire engine with its lights flashing and sirens blaring, a scenario generally guaranteed to send a horse rearing and bolting.

"That's amazing," said Shan-

"There's a Ground Hog Day, for gosh sakes. It seems fitting America should honor the horse."

TY MURRAY
Champion cowboy

non Hughes, 15, of Santa Rosa. "I didn't know people could do that."

"We're not doing pet tricks here," Murray said, "but working to get horses that will follow our feel through all kinds of adversity."

For the past year, Reis and his fiancée, Deborah Fish, manager of the Reis Ranch, have been asking horse enthusiasts

to sign petitions supporting the national horse day. They've collected an estimated 10,000 signatures, with plans to approach a U.S. senator about drafting a resolution setting aside a day for horses.

On Monday, Reis sets out for a two-month tour through 13 states in the Midwest and the East Coast. At his horsemanship clinics he will accept National Horse Day petitions now circulating in the towns where he's scheduled to appear.

Jewel will return to work, with, perhaps, a small sigh at saying goodbye to the life of a Sonoma County horsewoman.

"It's been nice to be able to get away from my job — just to be normal."

You can reach Staff Writer Tim Tesconi at 521-5239 or tesconi@pressdemocrat.com and Staff Writer Jeremy Hay 521-5212 or jhay@pressdemocrat.com.



CHRISTOPHER O'NEIL/The Press Democrat

Horsemanship instructor Dennis Reis leaps over nine-time world champion rodeo rider Ty Murray at Reis' Penngrove ranch last week.