

Same Old Way

By Suzy Hopkins

I have been fascinated all of my life by how horses are groomed, ridden, shod and trained just as they have been since the first relationship between mankind and this gentle, helpful animal. Mongols, who live south of Siberia in the north of China, have had a relationship with horses that we would call domesticated since 1206, the reign of Genghis Khan.

Curry comb: a rubber, wood or metal brush the size of a person's hand used to loosen the dirt, sweat and loose hair from the body of a horse. Since horses enjoy the currying process they feel quite positively towards the groomer. The expression 'currying favor' has become something a person does to get in the good graces of another person.

Saddles were not used by the Native Americans. They rode bareback. A type of saddle was used by the Arabian people which was extremely brightly decorated. (The Arabian people kept their horses in the tent with the people and other animals to prevent theft.) Stirrups were introduced when knights started riding their draft horses for battle. It was not easy to stay on these huge animals in 75 pounds of armor without stirrups. If you say 'something has saddled something else' means it has burdened that thing.

Bridles are shown in most ancient paintings of horses and riders. They vary in style and harshness of bits. Native Americans used one rawhide cord tied around the lower lip of their horse which left their other hand free to do whatever needed to be done. The expression 'reining-in someone' comes from the horses.

Horse shoes were introduced in England in the early 1400's A.D. mostly on draft horses used to work the fields. They needed traction because English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh fields are not necessarily flat like in America. The expression 'riding rough-shod over something' refers to a horse's shoes that have become loose and are damaging whatever they travel over.

This is what I find interesting. You can't groom, train or ride a horse with your smart phone or any other gadget. You must communicate directly, just like the old way.