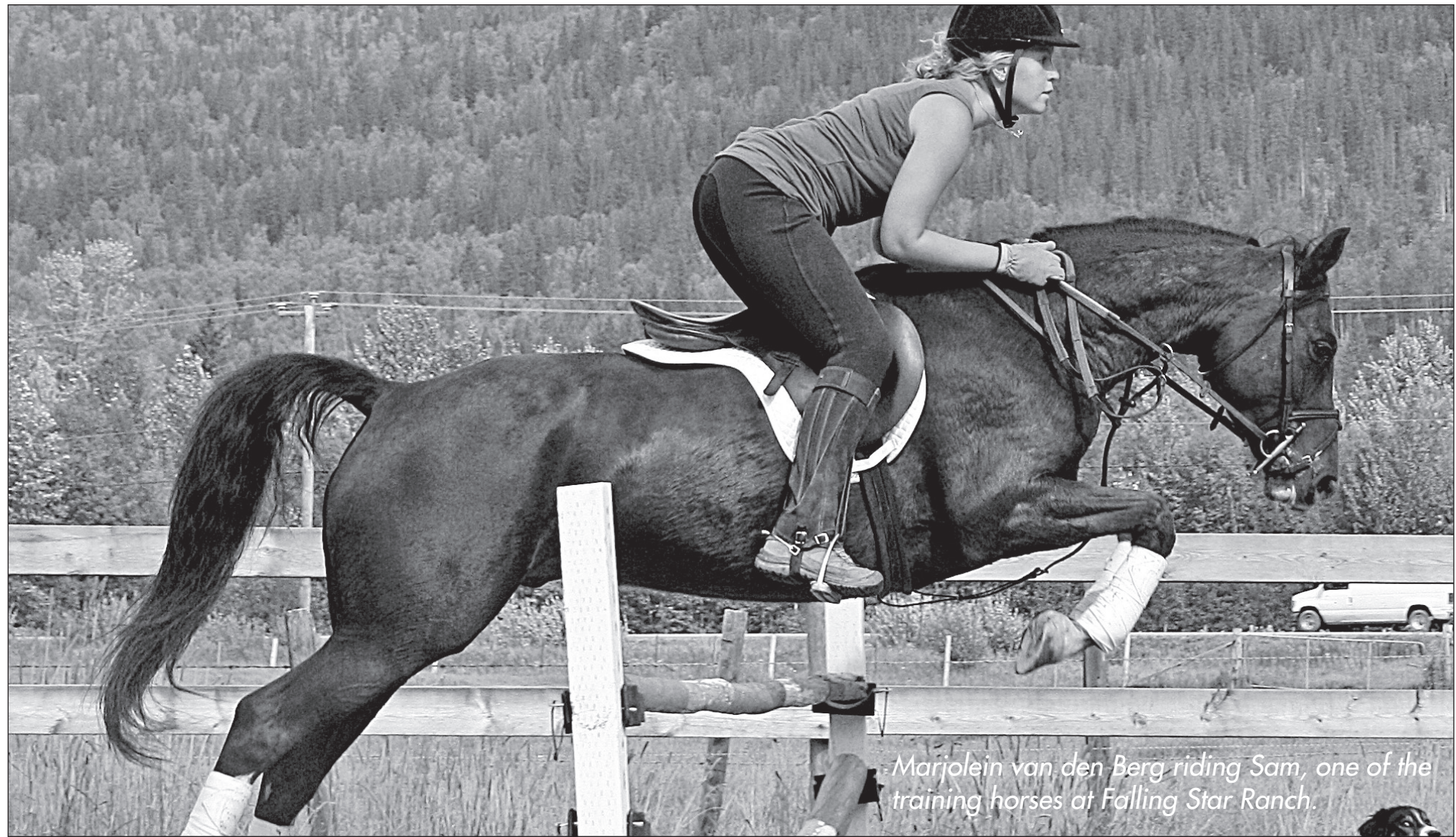


Dutch horse enthusiast reaches silver level certification



Marjolein van den Berg riding Sam, one of the training horses at Falling Star Ranch.

JOSHUA ESTABROOKS
EDITOR@THEVALLEYSSENTINEL.COM

A young Dutch woman has recently been certified as a coach and trainer by Chris Irwin, one of Canada's top trainers and clinicians, with the silver level in both groundwork and riding.

Twenty-one-year-old Marjolein van den Berg, who is staying at Falling Star Ranch in Dunster for the second year in a row in order to advance her horsemanship skills, has been riding horses since she was six years old. "I took riding lessons for 10 years in dressage and jumping," she said. "Between the ages of 10 to 15, I had two riding lessons a week, a dressage lesson and a jumping lesson. I was riding horses at the riding school every day, and on the weekends competed in dressage and jumping."

During her stay at Falling Star Ranch, van den Berg works alongside Chris Irwin gold certified trainer and coach Birgit Stutz on a daily basis, round penning, lungeing, long-lining and riding both Falling Star Ranch owned horses as well as horses belonging to clients. "I work with a variety of horses, from foals to mature horses, from unstarted, green horses to 'problem' horses who

need retraining to horses who need more schooling," van den Berg said. "I also assist with the coaching of the students. I really like that here at Falling Star Ranch; it is really about the horse, and not just about making money with the horse. I am learning a lot, both on the ground and in the saddle. I have improved my body language a lot and my awareness for the horses' body language. I have learnt to understand how a horse behaves and communicates, and I have learnt to understand the training concepts and how to implement them."

Stutz said she is very grateful for the competent help with the horses. "Marjolein is a very skilled, talented, dedicated horsewoman and an accomplished rider." "In order to achieve her silver status, she had to prove her skills both in groundwork and equitation. A silver trainer must be fluent in equine body language, know how to 'read' a horse, determine the cause of a problem instead of just seeing the symptom, and then be able to resolve any issues by giving the horse what it really needs, rather than applying a quick fix."

Irwin recently presented van den Berg with the silver certification at Ir-

win's Riversong Ranch in Whitecourt. Irwin's certification program consists of five different levels, bronze, silver, gold, platinum and diamond, with gold currently being the highest achieved level by any of Irwin's trainers. Van den Berg is one of only a handful of students of the Irwin method who directly achieved silver status. Two other of Stutz's students received bronze certification in both groundwork and riding from Irwin as well.

"Achieving double silver in her first try is indeed an exceptional accomplishment," said Irwin. "Marjolein is naturally talented and a natural student to begin with. She had an excellent foundation of ability and understanding from her previous training in Europe and an exceptional headstart in her training with Birgit before meeting me. As well, she genuinely from her 'heart of hearts' wants to learn how to be the best that she can be with the horses."

Van den Berg came upon Irwin and his philosophy while searching for a DVD online. "I was looking for something new as I was stuck with my own horse," she said. "I started working with his methods and it worked really well. I like that all the horses, no matter what

their temperament, respond in a positive way. Everything Chris says or does really works. I've never experienced that with any other method. I really liked the philosophy so I started attending some of Chris' clinics as a spectator. I talked to Chris at one of his clinics and asked him about a work experience program, but due to his heavy travelling schedule, he recommended a work experience stay at Falling Star Ranch."

Van den Berg just finished a four-year-long equine business management program at Clusius College in Alkmaar. Participants of the course have to partake in at least two work experience stays per year. While van den Berg did most of her stays in Holland, she also did a short stint on a quarter horse farm in Belgium.

Van den Berg also did work experience stays on breeding farms, at boarding stables, as well as on various training farms, including a training farm for harness racing horses. "The smallest farm had 10 horses, the biggest one 400 plus horses," she said.

Upon her return to Holland, van den Berg will work as a riding instructor at a riding school as well as working as a freelance coach and trainer.

SOLAR HOT WATER SYSTEMS

(registered with Solar BC for rebate)

GARN SMOKELESS HYDRONIC WOOD HEATERS

SOLAR, WIND & MICRO HYDRO ELECTRIC SYSTEMS
SUN-MAR COMPOSTING TOILETS & GARDEN COMPOSTERS

www.rockymountainsolar.ca
royhoward@telus.net

250-968-4490



ARE YOU HAVING TROUBLE WITH ELK, DEER OR COUGAR ON YOUR PRIVATE PROPERTY IN MCBRIDE?

Guide Outfitter pays a good trophy fee if you permit hunting.

email:

mmramosch@hotmail.com

or call (250) 694 - 3719

Conway Carriage Septic Services

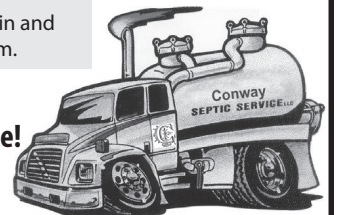
Member of the British Columbia Onsite Sewage Association

We're here to help you maintain and manage your septic system.

✓ Low Rates, great service!

✓ NO Charges for travel time!

✓ There when you need us!



Call us at: 250-569-8880 or 250-569-7371