



The Road to the
SAVVY CONFERENCE

by Kalley Krickeberg

Brilliance in Breeding Joins
Prior and Proper Preparation...

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We fast forward for the continuation of the Atwood Ranch Naturally journey. During the months of April through September, Atwood Ranch Naturally, consisting of myself, Mike, and Catherine Sapienza, has been working on implementing a special program within the Atwood Ranch Naturally Young Horse Division called the Parelli Preschool Program™. We wish to share the milestones of this journey as we go.

The Trailer Loading... it's not about the trailer

Our journey begins at the beginning... April 7th; the first task we were challenged with, following the branding process, was to move the yearlings from their home in Orland, California, to the Atwood Naturally headquarters in Elk Grove, California, a 2 ½ hour trip south. This meant we had to prepare the 15 yearlings to load onto the trailer, bearing in mind none of these yearlings had much, if any understanding of the human or of the thing we humans call a halter. I decided, from a practicality standpoint, that we would load them as groups in each trailer. This would be my first opportunity to start building a language and to make a good impression on the yearlings. I was looking forward to this occasion and challenge.

Over the course of two weekends (four days), the yearlings gained their confidence moving from pen, to pen, to pen in groups. As their confidence grew, we gave them increasingly challenging puzzles to figure out. By day 3 ½ the yearlings were loading themselves in the trailer with confidence. All we needed to do was open the trailer door and they all would load and stand quietly as though they had been doing it their whole life. They were given a brief ride and then returned to their pasture. We would pick them up in a week's time to head to their new home in Elk Grove. In my opinion there is not much that is sweeter than teaching someone to fish, and then watching them own their newly acquired skill, a skill that will feed them for the rest of their life. These sessions were definitely not about the trailer.

Revealing in Reno and then Up to Utah

Fast forward 2 ½ months to June. The Atwood yearlings have completed their 30 hour study in Parelli Preschool. It was time for the unveiling. I visited with Pat about some of our fine prospects, and he and Linda invited us to participate in the Reno, Nevada Parelli Tour event. This would be the first event Atwood Ranch Naturally would participate in. It was what we had been preparing for and things could not have gone more perfectly.

We brought six Atwood horses and what a success it was. After introducing owner Tom Atwood, along with the Atwood Naturally crew, Pat invited me, and an Atwood yearling into the arena on Saturday at the end of his Demo Horse session. While we played, he visited with the crowd about the vision of the future. Pat talked about the advantages of playing with our horses at a young age to help set them up for success for the rest of their lives. He talked of how Atwood Ranch is positioning itself to be the industry leader by implementing and showing value for this kind of program. Pat communicated how Atwood Ranch will be an influential model for other large farms and ranches to follow. I am not sure how many people realized what they were watching as Pat spoke. I was playing with a yearling, which had 30 hours of Parelli Preschool education, in front of a crowd of 2500 people. She did everything as well as, and sometimes even more confidently, than the Demo horse Pat had been playing with that was seven times her age... this was the parallel Pat was intent on drawing. The yearling's ownership of her skills was impressive.



Kalley, JJ, and the Atwood youngsters at the 2007 Savvy Conference in Pagosa Springs, Colorado



"Sunshine"
lit up the arena

Mike, Catherine, and I visited with hundreds of people that weekend and the reception was everything we had hoped it would be. People were very excited about the idea of purchasing a young horse with decades of strategic and thoughtful breeding that the Atwood Ranch is renowned for, and now combined with the invaluable and empowering Parelli education inside. It was a successful start on our road to Colorado for the 2007 Savvy Conference.

We returned home for the month of July to prepare for our next event, which would be in August at the Parelli Tour event in Utah. We achieved similar success with the reception from the crowds there. People came in droves following our demo in which Pat spotlighted the yearlings, highlighted the program, and spoke of the future of the horse industry. Once again, people expressed their enthusiasm over the combination of the brilliance of the Atwood breeding program, and the preparation of the Parelli Preschool Program. There were many good questions asked and a wave of appreciation surrounded the concept of not only purchasing a horse that was free of "baggage," but also, and most importantly, a horse that had a large step up in life... a chance to have a future instead of a past, as Pat says.

Crossing to Colorado

The finale of the Utah seminar marked the prelude of our third trip and final destination; the Parelli Savvy Conference 2007. We arrived two weeks preceding the Conference to allow the young horses to settle in to their new environment and be as comfortable as possible for the big days ahead. There were seven Atwood horses accompanying me on the trip to Pagosa Springs, Colorado. Two were two-year-olds, and five were yearlings. One of the two-year-olds was to be started during the Conference, and the yearlings would be on display and then highlighted during the event. The success of the sessions involving the Atwood horses was, to say the least, amazing.

The colt start was a special time for me. As I played with the Atwood colt and got him ready for his first ride, Pat shared with people the philosophies and concepts that were shared with him by his teachers and mentors, about starting a relationship and developing a partnership with a young horse. He guided my steps as we went along. He talked the crowd through how a colt would be started under the ideal set of circumstances by following specific skeletons for development for certain stages in a horse's life. First, would be the imprinting, then early learning, then preschool, then the foundation begins, and so on. Pat said we should gauge how we are doing by asking the questions "would my mom be proud of this?," and "would this young horse's mom be proud of her son/daughter?" ... with Pat's guidance I believe there were some proud moms out there.

The highlight of the 2007 Savvy Conference for me was the final session on Saturday. During the preceding two weeks I had been playing with the Atwood young horses as I do at home along with other tasks Pat had assigned me. When it came to the day of the Conference where the Atwood yearlings that had graduated Parelli Preschool would be highlighted, I asked Pat what he would like us to do or show. He simply said "do what you do.... and don't forget to blow their socks off" (the people not the horses, or maybe he meant the horses...hmm?) Well, I thought to myself "that's no pressure"...yeah, right! So I decided I would keep it simple and give everyone a glimpse of my day at work. I wanted to show some of the simple to complex puzzles these wonderful creatures we call horses can figure out when they are confident learners, and the relationship we can maintain while doing so. Judging by the response of the people, the standing ovation, the hugs and the tears I shared with many, I believe we, as a community and team, achieved our goal, thus far. It was a day I will always cherish.

Not long after the Conference had reached its finale, Mike, Catherine, and I packed up and headed back to California. Little did we know where this incredible success was about to take us... and so the journey continues. 🐾