

# My Five Day Gaited Riding Clinic

## with Larry Whitesell

By Letha Simmons

I was so excited to get one of the slots in the Larry Whitesell riding clinic last week in Cave Creek, Arizona. Let me say, if you ever get a chance, this is a clinician worth seeing.

A little history on Larry....he was a high school teacher and coach for many years. His coaching skills were excellent and he took his team to the state title 10 straight years! At some point his wife got a horse and he decided he'd better figure out how to train the horse to be safe before his wife got hurt....that started him on this path of training horses and riders. Larry was at one point a very successful trainer/breeder of Paso Finos. He was named trainer of the year in 2002. They are still his breed of choice. He produced many National Champions in his show days.

At some point in his equine career, Larry decided to study under Nuno Oliveira. What a humbling experience it was for him and he's never looked back since. He studied with Nuno for one month stents several years in a row. Nuno is widely acknowledged as a master of the art of dressage. He taught the classical style of working with horses; taught both the horse and rider how to move in balance as a unit.

What Larry felt was if you break down the cues to the horse, you can start the dialog. He used the same philosophy as he used with his students at school. First you teach them words (cues),,,then sentences (two cues performed one over another) with your ultimate goal of speaking to your horse in a paragraph (dancing with your horse, controlling all his movements in balance). He used his teaching skills to teach both the horses and now the humans.

Larry's clinics are labeled "Gaited Horsemanship" but I've now attended several of his clinics and have yet to have the opportunity to be on a gaited horse. One might ask, was I wasting my time then? Nope, not at all. His methods work with all horses, all breeds, gaited or trotting. He teaches a way to balance your horse, to balance yourself, to school your horse, to give your horse confidence so you are safer on the trail. He has found that if your horse is in balance and you are not putting him on his front end, your horse will be able to perform whatever gait he is bred to do in a fluid manner and often the gait becomes more fluid/much smoother. I've seen many people who have come to his clinic saying they purchased a gaited horse but it wouldn't gait. It isn't long before those horses are gaiting because he puts them in balance. It's a real eye opener. He also explains that riding your horses in balance will add longevity to their useful riding careers. You are using their joints as they were designed. This is a win-win situation.

Another concept he teaches is using more of your seat/body aids/cues. Never pulling back on the reins, teaching the horse to lift his shoulders and be light in the front. You learn to move each of your horse's

legs individually with your aids. All of this is done with a snaffle bit. Never any gadgets/shanked bits/tie downs/pulley systems, etc....just lightness, timing and proper presentation of the cues.

You might wish to visit Larry's website for further information: [www.whitesellgaitedhorsemanship.com](http://www.whitesellgaitedhorsemanship.com)

I look forward to teaching these methods to my horse (and myself for that matter!).....we have a start...now I just need the time.

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[www.ledanmorgans.com](http://www.ledanmorgans.com)