

Sophie Joseph

Journal for scholarship

Received \$500 from the Lendon Gray Scholarship

Using this money I was able to take lessons with Angie Morin on her schoolmaster horse Kongo. This horse is a Rheinlander Gelding from Germany. Angie took him to many FEI shows and his first Prix St Georges. I have been taught by Angie for 13 years.

Lesson 1: The majority of this lesson I was just trying to connect with Kongo. We were both getting an understanding of each other's aids. We worked on getting our leg yields straight. My left leg and elbow wouldn't be aligned some of the time, so after work on this, I was straight which in turn helped Kongo know exactly what I was asking. I have been on the same horse for the past eight years of my horseback riding career, so getting a feel for another, much more experiences horse has already had many benefits to my riding.

Lesson 2: Kongo and I were still learning about each other in this lesson, but with my improving balance and straightness, we were able to have very good leg yields in both directions. My personal horse has a jaw issue which leads to her right rein being heavy as bricks. This had led to a personal habit to have a heavy right rein and not enough on the left. I had been practicing on breaking this habit. My instructor complimented me on the evenness of my hand. This was reassuring that my practice was making a difference in my riding. Kongo and I also did a lot of shoulder-in's in this lesson. With my personal horse, I am not able to do very correct shoulder-in's due to her inability to bend. Being on Kongo it seems like a breeze because I just use the correct aid and he understands right away.

Lesson 3: In this lesson, we focused on our haunches in. Kongo was a little hesitant to move his haunches to the left when there was pressure with my right leg. After a few tries, we were able to do it successfully. We also worked on being balanced during the extended trot. After each lesson, I feel much better about my position. My hands have really improved in staying balanced and equal. On my other horse, I tended to lean more to the left even with a tilt with my head. After these lessons on Kongo, I sit more even and balanced.

Lesson 4: This lesson we started to do half pass. We turned down the center line and once his shoulders were lined up I pulled my outside leg back. In order to keep his shoulders leading, And had me do a leg yield to straighten him out because he loves laterals. He also loves to have his fancy trot and also use it as a distraction because his hind legs aren't tracking up. I also was able to do counter canter on an actual dressage horse. I never had much experience with it because my horse was trained as a hunter jumper and refuses to hold the wrong lead. After this lesson, we were both very sweaty and tired. This lesson was such a great addition to my dressage knowledge.

Lesson 5: This was my final lesson paid for with scholarship. While I am still in the process of selling my mare, I will be able to take a lesson every other week on Kongo as long as he is still on the farm. In this lesson, Kongo was a little hesitant to be as thorough as he is capable of. After doing a lot of bending exercises, I was able to get him out in front of me and through. We continued working on our shoulder-in and haunches-in. We also did leg yields across the diagonals. All the exercises felt slightly new to me at first with Kongo because he is so strong laterally and my horse just does the bare minimum with the laterals. After these lessons, Kongo and I were able to sore when we did the movements and with the correct position. Another movement that Angie had me do was turn on the haunch. This movement I am able to do with my horse but she only shuffles

instead of Kongo's movement where he actually crosses his front legs. At the end of this lesson, I felt a bittersweet feeling. I am so grateful to have had this opportunity and fuel my inner dressage fire.

I am thrilled to have had this opportunity to continue to grow my dressage skills on these wonderful horses. My appendix mare has given me so many good years, but she just isn't able to keep growing to the second level with me and beyond. I have been able to learn so much more about various dressage movements. I have also improved my position and evenness ten times with this opportunity. Being a college student, I did not see this opportunity coming. I cannot thank you enough for your help. It is so amazing how much this foundation helps young riders.

