

# *The girl and the horse*

---

Images from a reform school



Sven Forsling

First published in Sweden in 2001 by *Statens Institutionsstyrelse*  
*Flickan och hästen*  
*Bilder från ett hem för särskild tillsyn*  
Rapport 2/01 ISSN 1403-1558

First published in English in 2002 by  
BookArt Productions - Gauteng, South Africa  
ISBN 91-631-3189-7

Chapter "The spirit goes on" is, in this webb-edition, updated in  
November 2006

Copyright Sven Forsling

Cover Photograph by Martin Cejje - *Aftonbladet Bild*

For more information and to get the book:

[www.thegirlandthehorse.eu](http://www.thegirlandthehorse.eu)

[sven.forsling@telia.com](mailto:sven.forsling@telia.com)

*Translated from Swedish by Siv Tunncliffe*

---

Edited by Michelle Chambers and David Paton

*To Richard H. A. Blum*

---

Friend and inspirer

## Contents

<i>Forward</i> .....	6
An exhibition portraying humans and horses in compulsory care .....	9
The second thief.....	11
Can the worst become even worse? Are there girls like that too? .....	15
Thoughts about Frossarbo Stables.....	21
Suggestions from a research seminar .....	25
Compulsory care and personal choice .....	30
A wide band of parallel processes.....	36
To exist in different worlds and yet to be alike.....	39
Learning about a horse How to speak the language .....	45
Learning about a horse Inherited or acquired .....	58
The teaching .....	67
The girl and her horse.....	72
The researcher and the practitioner .....	82
To see the answers.....	89
The girls remember their horses.....	103
Remembering the time with their horse .....	109
The trips abroad .....	115
Leaving the horse .....	119
Remembering Frossarbo Stables in words .....	123
The girl and the horse Theory and magic.....	125
A bridge to the future.....	134
At the end of the road.....	139
The spirit lives on .....	142
References .....	147

## *Forward*

---

The National Board of Institutional Care, *SiS*, is responsible for the care and treatment of young people with serious social problems, young offenders sentenced to secure institutional treatment and for adult drug and alcohol abusers. The care is given, generally, without the co-operation of the individual involved and is regulated by the *Care of Young Persons Act*; a law with special provisions regarding the care of young people, integrating the *Care of Alcoholics, Drug Abusers and Abusers of Volatile Solvents Act*. At present, *SiS* has thirty-two special institutions for young people and fifteen institutions for the care of drug and alcohol abusers, situated in different parts of Sweden.

These thirty-two institutions for specialised supervision are often referred to as Special Approved Homes. The youngsters in these institutions display a broad range of deep psycho-social problems with criminality and drug abuse being dominant. Every year, about a thousand youths are sent to these specially approved institutions. Their ages range between twelve and twenty-one, but the majority are between fifteen and seventeen years of age. There is one girl to every four or five boys.

*SiS* is responsible for the planning, controlling and administration of these Special Approved Homes. One important task is to follow up and develop the direction of care, as well as to initiate and support research.

Follow-up studies carried out by Sven Forsling, among others, have shown that delinquent girls placed together with boys, have limited possibilities of tackling their own problems. The girls tend to listen more to the boys, giving them priority. They also run a high risk of being sexually abused by the boys.

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

Frossarbo Stables was an institution that accepted only girls. Sven Forsling was its initiator and its director for ten years. Frossarbo Stables was his achievement. There, the girls were not compared to boys; their anger was considered something specific to them, not something approaching the behaviour problems of the boys.

Frossarbo Stables centred its treatment on 'girls and horses', training delinquent girls to care for horses which were being trained for participation in racing. As you will learn in this book, there was much more to Frossarbo's programme than teaching the many stages in the care of racehorses. The concept was designed for the psychological treatment of the girls themselves: And it worked - strikingly well - not just for one year, or three, but for ten years. Frossarbo Stables became a concept within the treatment of juvenile delinquents in Sweden. Frossarbo Stables also became a constant reminder of the strength and capacity of those of our youngsters that we, too often, regard as hopeless cases. Some years ago, SiS ran a three-day seminar under the banner: *There are no hopeless cases*: This book will give you scientific support for this bold statement.

In a criminal/penal world, partly hardened by cynicism and a plethora of failures, made worse by the adverse impact of many penal programmes themselves, we now have proof of something that actually worked. It did so by innovation, the dedication of staff, the personalised, professional application of *wise kindness* and sensitive feedback, all intensely monitored. A powerfully attractive reward system and caring environment provided opportunities for the girls, teaching us a lesson that is both very simple and instructively complex. The latter is sadly demonstrated by the failure of Frossarbo, once its leader - as well as some of his well-trained staff - retired after ten years.

This book can therefore be seen as Sven Forsling's testament. It emphasises that which happens between the girl and her horse. Sven Forsling opens up a new area within the field of therapy with emotionally disturbed juveniles, demonstrating the power that the horse brings into the therapeutic arena, as well as the support and hope that come with it.

Sven Forsling has the ability to create pictures with words, but as he, himself, says, there are many instances of one picture having to overlay another before the final picture emerges. At SiS we have awaited the result with excitement. The pictures shine with their own light, a light which can hardly leave anyone

unaffected. They reflect the author's deep and genuine involvement and his critical thinking, in a way that is alive and vibrant. We can all learn from this report; the fruit of accumulated knowledge and experience during a long working-life as practitioner and researcher.

Sture Korpi

*Director General - SiS*

## *An exhibition portraying humans and horses in compulsory care*

---

In the summer of 1999, a well-known Swedish artist, Peter Dahl, held an exhibition at Waldermarsudde in Stockholm. In one of the rooms, a video was shown, where visitors could follow the creation of one of his paintings. At the end of every day's work, photos were taken and, thus, we could see how the final painting hid many other paintings. Suddenly, the other paintings on the exhibition acquired a new meaning. Every painting carried a secret. Each was made up of many versions, but showed only one - the one Peter Dahl wanted us to see. But what about all the others that we could not see? What were they like? Why had they not been shown? Could we be certain that Peter Dahl had made the right choice?

I am not going to make paintings, but I want to create word-pictures that speak of life at an institution for young people in compulsory care. This institution is a Special Approved Home named Frossarbo Stables. The name originates from a farm situated in wooded countryside north of Uppsala - a name that can be traced back to the sixteenth century. These pictures are about Frossarbo Stables between 1987 and 1999 and, above all, about the youngsters and the horses in the farm stable. The youngsters are between fifteen and twenty-two years old and they are all girls.

My pictures will also show only what I want them to show: The overlays are many. There are many reflections and drafts that never got further than my sketchpad. Like Peter Dahl, I shall communicate something special. The final pictures are not necessarily the most beautiful and I do not want to demonstrate a particular technique. Instead, I want to let the essence shine through. Peter Dahl's video-painting was, at certain points, strikingly beautiful, but it wasn't the striking beauty he wanted to present, it was something else. And so the beautiful

was painted over. I want my pictures to show something that I have seen and that I want to tell, but not beautify.

This is a story that may be difficult to grasp, as I have only my words and my sketches: They are all simplifications. It is easy to be attracted by simplifications and to look upon them as the real thing, but reality is always much more. Reality is also all that we do not see, do not want to see or do not dare to see. But to catch a glimpse of reality demands a simple picture. Failing this, it disappears into background noise. Herein lies a paradox: A captured picture will always hide another.

My exhibition has a theme. It tries to portray what happens between a girl who has gone astray and a horse that is a trotter (harnesshorse). What transpires between the two seems, at times, magical. Magic is not easy to catch, it is like chasing sunbeams.

Before completing the last picture, I participated in a research convention regarding my work and my dual role as practitioner and researcher at Umeå University, in the north of Sweden. I had given the seminar the title: *With the researcher behind and the practitioner pulling*. The graduates were young and keen and they gave some advice: Let the researcher remain sitting on the sledge, but let the practitioner pull and lead the way. They wondered to whom the practitioner was going to show his pictures. My intention was for them to exist for staff and researchers within the youth care system; for youngsters becoming adults and for horses in danger of becoming hamburgers. They asked if this might not be somewhat unfocused: I had to agree. I had to give an explanation.

I am addressing the researchers in the youth care system and the young people who are growing up to become adults. But above all, I am speaking to you who work with or want to work with youth in compulsory care. You will be my focal point. I am going to ask you for something specific: Do not put on dark glasses. You need the opportunity to see the sunbeams and the light they radiate. My aim is to recreate that light and to beguile you with it. Perhaps you will then begin to catch sunbeams yourself. I can't be certain that I will succeed, but I am going to try. Moa Matthis, co-author of the book *Over all Obstacles*, once said to me: "The light is already there, already you have it. All you have to do is let the girls portray it."

As with so many tales, this one begins a long time ago.

## *The second thief*

---

This is the first picture from the exhibition. It is difficult to say if it is, indeed, the real beginning of the story. There is always something that precedes any beginning. In any case it is a start and it is a start that begins with an ending.

I was attending my last meeting with my colleagues on the board of directors for institutional care shortly before my retirement. They had asked me to give a personal account of how I had perceived the young people I had met and got to know during my years within the custodial system of our society. My experiences spanned almost forty years. Did I not think that the young people today were worse and more disturbed than those in the past? Could I, in some way, describe this change?

A few days before the conference, while I was sorting out what I wanted to say, I suddenly remembered something from a long way back. It was clear and precise as old memories sometimes are. I doubt I had ever remembered this particular incident ever since it had first been stored away in the archives of my mind.

I was six years old, going on seven and I was to start school. My mother was there with me on my first day and we were meeting my teacher. My teacher was an elderly lady with grey hair, kind eyes and arms that reminded me of soft, white buns. Her name was Mrs. Vigard. I bowed and my mother said "This is Sven. He can't always sit still and he is a bit forgetful. If he does not behave, you have my permission to give him a smack."

"I am sure that won't be necessary" said Mrs. Vigard.

I can't remember if Mrs. Vigard ever felt that she needed to chastise me, but I don't think so.

What I do remember were her morning prayers. Everyday school started with a prayer and a story. They were wonderful stories about Jesus. He was a man you could really trust.

Spring came and with spring came Easter. Jesus and the two thieves were each nailed to a cross.

Jesus said to one of the thieves: "Today you will be with me in paradise"

But he forgot the other thief! I was aghast. My cheeks became quite hot. There must be a mistake. I wanted to put up my hand and say so but I didn't have the courage. I had put up my hand the previous day and what I had said then was so silly that the whole class had burst out laughing. I didn't want to be laughed at again. I did not have the courage for that. I looked around me in the classroom.

Didn't anybody else understand how wrong this was? Still, no one else showed any sign of being perturbed. I was becoming agitated about the fate of the second thief. Hadn't he already had his punishment - a horrible punishment at that? He had nails hammered into his body. Surely he should be allowed to get to paradise too? Otherwise, what was the point of his punishment?

In the evening, when my father came home from work, I decided I had to ask him about it.

"We were talking about Jesus at school today," I said. "We were talking about his crucifixion. There was something odd about what he said to the thieves wasn't there?"

My father replied that he thought so too. I remember how pleased and relieved I felt. I had not been that stupid after all. "Yes, it certainly was odd, that Jesus was going to be with the good thief in heaven that very night," my father replied. "We know that he did not rise until the third day and his ascension was not until forty days after that. There must be a mistake in the Bible."

I felt myself shrinking as if I had been hit. I asked no more questions. I was disappointed in Jesus. Lying in bed that night I suddenly understood how it all came together. My father had said it himself: 'the Bible could be wrong'. If the Bible could be wrong once, might it not be likely that it could be wrong a second time too?

Surely Jesus would have said to the second thief "You come along as well. We will all meet up in heaven tonight", or perhaps "in forty days" - the time span is not important. The most important thing is that we will all see each other in *heaven*. Of course that is what Jesus had said. But the crosses were so very *tall*. It could not have been that easy to hear everything that was said up there.

This was not a bad interpretation of something that, in itself, was incomprehensible. Was it because I had my doubts that this memory had been hidden for so long, or was it because I did not want to remember my own cowardice?

I told my colleagues this story. It became an illustration of the constancy of the problematic behaviour we feel we see, rather than of any changes that have taken place in the young people with whom we work. Right from the year 0 we had these sad losers. How often have we not heard new boys and girls at our institutions boast about their self-importance, about all their mates, about all those who are going to keep in touch and how well liked they are by everybody.

Yet no one phones or writes, no one cares. Even so they continue to hope. They still want to believe that what they hope is true. They want to constantly show how popular they are. They constantly want to be in the 'in group'.

They hang there on their crosses, crucified by their own drug addict friends and yet it is to those pals they turn, it is to those friends they call up there on their crosses.

"Look at us, show us that you know we are here. No others see us. Keep our illusions alive. They are the only things we have when we die," they seem to say.

The second thief could have been one of our youngsters. Right to the end he missed his opportunities. He made a mess of his life. He was knocked down but could not understand why. He managed to miss out on heaven even though there were no other real choices. He is like our youngsters, seen and yet invisible. Not many people see the losers.

One of the directors of the institutions is also a pastor.

During the morning coffee break the following day he said: "I hardly slept a wink last night. I was thinking about the second thief. Here I am, having completed the whole ordination course and never once did we think about the second thief. You are right, our youngsters are invisible."

*THE GIRL AND THE HORSE*

---

But our young people are so much more than that. Many times they are simply like any other youngster. We do not see this. It is so much easier to see only their aimlessness, their superficiality and their manipulative ways.

## *Can the worst become even worse? Are there girls like that too?*

---

The first '*värsting*', the *worst one*, made his entry onto the social scene sometime in 1987. He was described as a show-off, a smart criminal type, who made a laughing stock of the social services. This *värsting* was no mayfly.

The word '*värsting*' was soon incorporated into the dictionary of the Swedish Academy. Words, and how they are understood, will undoubtedly influence the way we think about and perceive something. Of the more-or-less successful perceptions within the institutional care system, *värsting* was probably one of the least successful.

From a purely linguistic point of view it is always problematic to imply connotations that, in themselves, are extreme, especially when we want to illustrate occurrences and changes. Can a *värsting*, a worst one, become worse? Can worse be worse than the worst?

Do we have to imitate the American model of a vocabulary designed for effect by over-used words such as *super*, *extra* and *maxi*? When will we have the first *megavärsting*?

These etymological reflections may, on the whole, be seen as something of a curiosity. But just to be called *värsting* can, for some youngsters, become a self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, the lad in a *Section 12* home who does not want to be seen just as smart and tough, but rather as the smartest and the toughest.

What started as a description for only a few youngsters was soon to extend to all youngsters in the group.

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

The most unfortunate effect of the notion of a *vårsting* was perhaps that it gave a picture of a small homogenous group which, in turn, could easily result in demands for identical treatment and actions. But how homogenous was, or is, this group in reality?

Responsibility for the reform school system (previously run by the State) was taken over by the County and District councils in January 1983 in Stockholm. We then introduced a continued and systematic account of youths who had been referred to and taken into care by the council's social services emergency department and other agencies for young people. This particular analysis came about as a direct result of the need for resource planning, which preceded the general audit of plans for all institutions for the years 1983-84.

A continued analysis was necessary in order to plan and design the type of care needed. Many questions had to be asked. For example, what care and treatment was available? Were the resources adequate? What were the effects of the methods we used?

I published the results of those first years in the paper *444 Young People from Stockholm in Crisis*. (Forsling, S. 1987, Stockholms Läns Landsting)

In the analysis, the young people were judged using different standards. Some simply described gender and age, while others were used for a more complex assessment of the youngsters. The variables in any one assessment could refer to any particular aspect to a greater or lesser extent. However, the variables could also relate in different ways to that one aspect, for example, the variable of contact (how to communicate or be in touch with). There are different ways of doing this.

The advantage of research that builds on factual data and where judgements are built on true and concrete, real life, descriptions, and not only on general impressions, is that you have a better and more precise picture of what you want to describe. Perhaps the young people do not always become worse.

So how did we describe the 444 youngsters who came through the emergency and ordinary channels of the care system?

Our descriptions differed a great deal. The psychological assessments covered the whole spectrum. Much is dark, but much is commensurate with the norm and chronological age. Over a long period we can describe young people in crisis

in the same way we would describe any young person. It is easy to forget this, especially within the compulsory care system.

We do, however, see a clear difference between those young people who are compulsorily detained and those who are not.

The former are much more alone and lonely - few people care about them. They do not have many others they can turn to and those they have often have difficulties themselves.

There is another big difference. This difference refers to the girls. There are fewer of them and they are devalued and belittled. They are virtually invisible. The very young girls, however, are better at making themselves heard. Several of them will shout, fight and protest, while the older girls seem to have given up. It seems as if there is little hope for them. They have nowhere to go and nothing belongs to them. They have nothing that is theirs.

There is another group of youngsters who have nowhere to go. They seem to fall into a large black hole. They carry the labels *psychotic, odd, brittle young people, seriously maladjusted, loud-mouthed* and *aggressive boys*. Some boys give a friendly smile when they go down. Their labels read *criminal* and *smart*.

Approximately ten percent of all youngsters plummet into the black hole. They receive no help whatsoever. The research we undertook in 1986 has been called the *Ten Percent Group* by some people.

So why have I included such an old piece of research?

I have done this because I want to show the perspective of time and history. Without such perspective, it is easy to think that all our ideas are new ones and that all dismal results are the most dismal ever. Therefore, past history, in whatever form it takes, is important.

Group assessments soon go out of fashion, just like daily newspapers. Yesterday's paper feels old and out-of-date, yet it was only printed twenty-four hours ago.

I have a good example of this. In the mid-seventies, the use of illegal narcotics in Sweden was mapped using well-documented evidence. This research was named *UNO*. We had hoped that, at last, we would have a clear picture of the spread of the use of narcotics among young people. A few months after the

results of this research had been published, I was participating in a discussion about youth-related problems. I referred to the *UNO* paper. This was not accepted.

"That was then," my opponent said. "Now the situation is quite different and much worse."

It was hard to refute this argument. It might well have been correct, though it needn't have been. This incident, however, is a strong point in favour of my opinion of this type of research. Group research is best when it continues to collect data much like an old workhorse, steadily and slowly working without stopping. The results should continually produce new and fresh data that can be compared with previous data. Older data is not unimportant. This data makes it possible for us to have a perspective of the past and through it we can start to improve the present.

*444* was like a Shire horse, providing constant and continued research. It became a faithful friend right up to 1996, even though, during the last four years, it pulled fewer loads.

Now other horses with different tack are carrying on. Still, it is important to compare the results of today and to add new knowledge to previous results. It is only when we have a picture with some depth that we might assert that the young are becoming steadily worse.

The *Ten Percent Group* was baptised *värstingar* and soon all young people in compulsory care were *värstingar*. Our society reacted by reorganising itself, a phenomenon not too rare in any society. Compulsory institutional treatment, the reform schools called *Section 12* homes, were to go back to the State and become Special Approved Homes.

I wrote two papers, *Is the 'worst one' getting worse?* and *Do 'the worst' girls exist too?* In the first paper, I tried to make fun of the word *värsting* and the decision made by our politicians to again put compulsory care under State control. Through constant reorganisation, when difficulties arise, we are in danger of throwing the baby out with the bath water. This report was published in 1990.

Today, I do not react as negatively to the word *värsting* as I used to. As with all harsh words, time has blunted it and, nowadays, it seems rounded and befitting.

It is not easy for it to retain its sharp edge when today we have the *värsting car of the year* and *Granny's värsting biscuits*.

The images words can produce change over the years. Still, one objection stands. An umbrella word such as *värsting* can devalue our thoughts and lead them in the wrong direction. It can demand easy solutions to problems that are far from simple.

Moving from the year 1983 to the year 1991, we find that the youngsters haven't changed. They are described in the same way. *Värstingen* has not become worse and the girls are still left out in the cold. Sadness still finds many forms of expressing itself. The group is not homogenous.

For a time the notion of a *värsting* was transferred onto girls in compulsory care as well. They were then expected to be hard, assertive *gangster queens* who could stand up to anyone and anything. Yet, there were few such *queens*. The girls were still different to the boys. They continued to internalise their misery. They continued to acquiesce to the demands of the boys and they continued to be the last to be noticed. The alternatives for their care did not relate to their needs. There were no *värsting* girls, only girls that had been dealt the worst cards.

We proceed to the years between 1992 and 1996. Again, not much has changed, except for new names. This does not mean that the picture is of a lighter hue. It means only that the dark is still dark enough. There is no need for yet more shadows. They are sufficient as they are.

As we approached a new millennium everything was still the same. The figures and data presented to us by the daily papers were alarming. Where were we going? Where was it all going to end?

The same alarm bells ring, the same bells that existed seventeen years ago. Looking back over the years raises not so much the question of 'where are we going' as it does the question 'are we actually going anywhere at all?'

There is one more advantage to having a continued group description. It can reflect the work you are involved in. This reflection can make it easier for you to discover those things you thought were wise and good, even though they did not work out. I had been part of the planning meeting for care resources that preceded the takeover of compulsory care from central government to the

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

Metropolitan County of Stockholm. I had warmly advocated that we ought to have coeducational institutions within this new organisation. After having spent many years in institutions for boys, I felt that bringing in the other half of humanity to within our locked-up world would be like a fresh summer breeze. But it was soon apparent that the summer breeze only touched the boys. The girls were still experiencing the chilly, winter winds. The 'reality' did not operate as it was supposed to. The girls had a tough time and they were being hurt. They could be physically and sexually assaulted and used. They were far more tuned in to the needs of the boys than to their own needs, and this in a place where they should have been protected and listened to! The evidence I had was irrefutable. We had to start a *Section 12* home where the girls were, at least psychologically, in the majority so that they would have the chance to look after themselves.

It was not easy for some politicians to take the decision to open a new institution for girls. Was this really a step forward, or was it a step backwards? But the evidence was absolutely clear and on the sixteenth of June 1987 the final decision was taken to start Frossarbo Stables, a new undertaking to be tried out for three years.

In the clubroom at Frossarbo Stables there is a photograph of a woman showing a V-sign. She was the chairperson of the North West Care District of Stockholm County in 1987. She had, together with her vice chairman, managed to turn around the negative attitude of the ruling political majority. Frossarbo Stables was no longer an idea. Frossarbo Stables had become reality. On the fourth of October our first student arrived.

Give yourself some time to contemplate this background before you come to the pictures of Frossarbo Stables. Hopefully you will then have a better understanding of the horse-girl relationship.

## *Thoughts about Frossarbo Stables*

---

Frossarbo Stables became the fulfilment of an old dream, a dream that had been with me for many years.

From 1967 to 1970 I had a stable at a youth institution. The name of the institution was Lövsättra. It was a newly opened home and school for girls in the care of Stockholm's social services. Lövsättra was situated in the parish of Vallentuna, just outside Stockholm.

The idea for this type of school was far ahead of its time. Bengt Petersson was one of the trailblazers and the reasoning behind the scheme was roughly this: Why should the city of Stockholm send some of its young people to state-run reform schools in different places all over the country? Surely Stockholm, with all its resources, should be able to give its youngsters a decent local institution? Lövsättra was going to be just such a decent institution. Sixteen years later, this idea was to be generally accepted, at least for a time.

In 1983 the new act governing the social services became law.

During the next eleven years, the County and District councils were responsible for young offenders' institutions - the *Section 12* homes.

I was employed as a psychologist at Lövsättra. I ran the stable at Lövsättra on my own initiative as a complement to the twenty-four hour therapeutic work done at the home. The account of this can be found in the October issue of the American Trotting Society's magazine *Hoof Beats* of 1968.

The first time I explained my thoughts about what was later to become Frossarbo Stables, was in 1962 in the USA.

## *THE GIRL AND THE HORSE*

---

At that time I had gained my BA and was working as an assistant psychologist. For one year I studied criminology at the University of California in Berkeley, near San Francisco.

I was a Fulbright Scholar and wanted to extend my stay in the USA. I also wished to increase my knowledge of horses.

I had been offered work as an apprentice to Delvin Miller, one of the leading American horse trainers. As a Fulbright Scholar, it was necessary for me to have special permission in order to prolong my stay.

I spoke about my dream during a research seminar. The underlying thought was to blast through the walls of traditional therapy. I asserted that therapy was locked into a room of its own making, confined by its own methods, constrained by a specific time and a restrictive place and with a client who was locked into some specific ways of reacting. The number of possible clients was also very clearly restricted. The idea was to find a format where even the destructive and seriously disconnected would have a chance. Those who rejected everything, those who made a mess of everything, still needed hope and help.

The idea was for the therapist to put on his overalls and get to work and in my case that would be with youngsters and horses. The therapy was to be the whole life in the stable where work, learning and relationships were being built between the therapist, the youngsters and the horses and where assessments and evaluations developed naturally through genuine trust.

I wanted to start a treatment and care home that was both a school and a racing stable. To do this, I needed to increase my knowledge of horses. This was the reason for wanting to work in a professional stable for trotters. I also thought it would be fun to work in an American stable, although I don't think that I actually put this point forward in support of my wish to have my visa extended.

I did get an extension for my stay in the USA. I worked as a groom and apprentice to Delvin Miller. We went to races along the whole of the East Coast and during the winter months we trained the horses in Florida. Delvin Miller became one of Frossarbo Stables' godfathers.

The tutor at my research seminar in 1962 was Richard Blum. He later became the American representative to the UN Commission on Narcotics and the author of many books, both fiction and non-fiction.

It was at another research seminar at Stanford University, where Richard Blum held a professorship, that I once again described my old stable dreams. This was in 1986. Much was the same as before, but much had also changed. Again I spoke about blasting the therapeutic walls, but this time I was pointing to the *Section 12* homes. I felt they had ossified in a straitjacket of rules and regulations. At conferences one could spend hours talking about how wretched our youngsters had become and how this wretchedness should be dealt with. In spite of the care staff increasing in numbers over the years, the time available to spend with the youngsters was decreasing and the building of good relationships worsened rather than improved.

It was not easy to paint a picture of an old dream. The colours of a dream change according to the light. The seasons create different shades. In spring the light may shimmer and be strong, in autumn it may be melancholy and hazy. A dream has roots too. Deep roots enhance the colours of the dream more than those near the surface. But what are the colours?

Why horses? Surely everyone knows that girls and horses belong together? How do we know this? I did not choose horses because they were a good alternative therapy for girls. I chose horses because, through them, I could share with the girls something of myself, something that I loved. Frossarbo Stables could just as well have been an alternative for boys.

I remember the boys from the closed institution at Bärby who came and helped to build the stable at Frossarbo. I remember how proud they were of having built such a fine stable and I remember, too, the excitement when the first horses arrived: "How do I fill this one up? Where is the gas?"

I remember their eyes at the end of their first drive and the shy way they stroked the horse afterwards. Yes, Frossarbo Stables could easily have been an alternative for boys too.

At the research seminar I explained that, in Sweden, horseracing was a prominent sport, and that harness racing was one of the largest public attractions. It provided many employment opportunities for qualified grooms, although opportunities to acquire those qualifications were few and the competition for a training venue was stiff. In Sweden the horse was regarded as a high-status animal. For many youngsters it would be an elusive ambition to be able to learn

## *THE GIRL AND THE HORSE*

---

about and work with horses. This was something for the privileged only. We must remember that this was in 1986. Much has happened since then.

Many of the first students who arrived at Frossarbo Stables had not had previous contact with horses. They had read about horses, they had pictures of horses above their beds, but they had never handled one. In contrast, pupils arriving in later years had, at some time, ridden a horse.

I had written down some signposts for the seminar, signposts to point to all that I hoped Frossarbo Stable would be and become. I wanted to try out new ways and do research. Most importantly, I wanted to ask questions, questions that were pre-eminent and not the methods of finding the answers. Far too often I had been aware that, in psychological research, the methods used determine the questions asked and not the other way around. Now, the important questions were to be asked even if the research became shaky.

I believed these questions were of the essence. Therefore I converted them into statements.

The first signpost read: *We are losing the strength of our youngsters.*

The second signpost read: *It is possible to initiate and then continue compulsory care founded on the personal choices that students make and continue to make.*

The third signpost read: *It is possible to run a compulsory care institution using a small number of staff where you decide the rules and where different processes run parallel as the lanes of a motorway.*

The fourth and fifth signposts had questions because I was uncertain of the answers.

The fourth signpost read: *Can knowledge of horses lead to knowledge of oneself?*

The fifth signpost read: *Can the relationship with a horse be of help to a young girl who is lost?*

### *Suggestions from a research seminar*

---

At the seminar I tried to develop my thinking about the first signpost, that of losing, or not seeing, the strengths of the children we work with. It is so easy to concentrate blindly on the diagnosis of their deprivation, then when they do not co-operate with us or ignore what we have to offer, it is easy to add something else to that diagnosis. The scope for treatment shrinks. There is a greater need for control. Even so, it is the strength we find in our young people that is so amazing.

Many a time I have studied the case notes on a pupil and then thought, 'if that were me I'd be damned if I would get up in the morning. I'd pull the covers over my head and stay in bed.' How many times did I not see that student on the go and with the strength to fight back?

I tried to give an example. I told of a meeting I'd had with an American boy during the time I was studying at Berkeley in 1962. He was nineteen years of age and held at San Quentin State Prison. As a graduate student of criminology, I was allowed to sit in on a correctional meeting.

The boy had been in solitary confinement for twenty days. The reason for this was that he had been rude and had verbally threatened a prison officer. By law, segregation could not continue after twenty days. He had therefore been let out and had now come to the review. Had his punishment worked? Would he apologise?

The prison officer who chaired the meeting explained in a friendly manner, and in some detail, how wrong it was to threaten a prison officer and he asked for an explanation and an apology.

The boy answered that it was the prison officer who had been a real swine. It was he who ought to apologise. The prison officer then continued to explain, still in a

very friendly manner, that if the boy did not apologise he would serve another twenty days in solitary confinement. Did he realise that this was going to carry on until an apology was forthcoming?

The nineteen-year-old understood and back he went into solitary. When he stood up to be taken away, the prison officer turned to me and said: "Watch this, I bet you don't have such thoroughly rotten bastards in Sweden, but here we have masses of them. Now you will understand what a hell of a job we have."

The nineteen-year-old looked at me. It was an intense look with much hatred and full of disdain. There was strength, great strength.

I said that I wanted to run an institution where individual choice, and not diagnosis, determined the placement of a student. I wanted to emphasise strengths and not weaknesses. Too often, it seemed to me that it was our own inability to give proper support that magnified the weaknesses, and it became more of an alibi for our own failure, rather than the reality of the situation.

My statement could be turned into a question. How strong is the willpower of the most deprived of our young people? My contention was that their spirit is much stronger than we imagine.

I had the following advice from my American research colleagues:

"If you want to take the risk of separating willpower from diagnosis in order to prove that willpower plays an important part in making the diagnosis, you will have to show that strong willpower exists in the early stages of the treatment. It is only at that point that you can hope to prove your theory because, according to the diagnosis of deprivation, only a small amount ought to be present."

Perhaps what one is really doing is trying to chase a sunbeam. Perhaps the whole thing is nothing more than a semantic illusion. I liked the picture of trying to catch a sunbeam. A sunbeam is bright and you try to capture it with a smile.

My American colleagues also suggested that there should be some form of repeated testing to substantiate the continuous stability of the Frossarbo Stables model - a form of testing where horses, girls and staff were included.

The idea was to place the young people in a situation where a lot was demanded from them. They were to encounter a tough work load, but at the same time they were to experience relationships that tested their loyalty and willingness to

co-operate. I told my colleagues that I was thinking of introducing annual travel -  
ling abroad to study and to race the horses.

The travelling would include at least two trips on ferries where it would be possible to get cheap alcohol. I had planned an intensive programme for these tours. The programme could, of course, become even more intensive. If most of the students managed to cope with this kind of travelling, this would be yet another indication of a greater willpower than their deprivation diagnosis had led us to believe they had. It also meant that the Frossarbo Stables model would give them the chance to use that strength. We agreed on one test trip per year and that I should report to Richard Blum on a continual basis.

I put forward a very explicit exception regarding the trips. I had been a researcher but now I was to become a practitioner again.

I was to be a practitioner doing research; a combination of professional roles that would have complications. I have already touched on that. I spoke about a practitioner pulling the load and a researcher sitting on it. It is a recurring theme. At the seminar I made it clear that if I thought that any of the trips abroad were unsustainable they would not take place.

I did not consciously intend to risk students disappearing into the drug districts of Paris or Amsterdam for the sake of research. The practitioner came before the researcher. Neither did I want to look upon the travelling simply as tests for my own research. My desire for research was not the driving force. The trips were to be opportunities for studying in the most comprehensive sense of the word. There would be adventures together where we would push boundaries and where the experiences belonged to us and to no one else. There was initially some anxiety about and resistance to this idea, but eventually it was accepted. It would be interesting, in itself, to find out if these trips really would happen.

The statement on the second signpost may seem paradoxical. Young people are put into compulsory care because they neither can or want to cope within the voluntary system. So why would they now suddenly want to co-operate, and even more unlikely, manage to cope? Was I going to be given opportunities to chase sunbeams?

I believed in the willpower of our youngsters to manage choices, if the choices they were given were realistic. I argued that all compulsory care should build on

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

giving the young offenders the courage to say *yes*, to dare to take the risk of another failure. Not that this was a particularly good argument. Even I could see that. I also perceived a second chance as being very brittle. If there is pain, it is so much easier to say *no* again and again. 'I don't give a shit about you, bloody sod. You can kick your own bloody horses, but don't touch me.' And then where would my sunbeams be?

My argument would do for a research seminar, but would it stand up to a political decision? That was a problem still to come.

The statement on the second signpost was, of course, easy to answer. The answer was there in the statement. Either young people came, or they didn't. It was only a matter of counting heads. It also ought to be important to establish, in advance, a norm against which Frossarbo Stables could be compared. Such a norm would make it necessary to find answers to all five signposts.

Would Frossarbo Stables operate in the way you would expect a *Section 12* home to operate? Would it function at a lower level or would it even, in some ways, function at a higher and better level?

Might it not be worth comparing Frossarbo Stables with the best? If Frossarbo Stables measured up to the best, the weight of evidence would increase dramatically.

The first three signposts were statements, not questions. My colleagues considered that these sentences ought to give me the right to use guided hypotheses when I was conducting my tests for significance. It is important to decide on the type of testing, as well as a safety interval, before analysing material. If this is not done, the results can be contradictory.

It was also important that the norm was as factual as possible, with little room for subjective judgments. It was self-evident that I could not be involved in defining and deciding the norm for a *Section 12* home. This was to be done by someone, or some persons, who had overall responsibility for institutions for young offenders in Stockholm.

I was advised to write down my subjective observations as soon as I could and, as much as possible, use tape or video recordings to accompany my notes. It would very likely be to my advantage if I decided right from the beginning how personal and how private my written observations were to be. If I chose a

personal way of writing, I had to make sure that what I had written remained private. By doing this, self-criticism decreased and the joy of creativity increased. I chose to write in an unhampered and personal style. It was from these private notes that I later published all I thought was relevant.

I was also advised to try to adopt a particular attitude. I should not speak all the time of *strength, parallel processes, of equal rights, of few rules, of girls and staff all being managers* or at least people with their own *responsibilities*. There was no need to talk about these things and they should not be expressed in written words. Positive things would grow by themselves, as a result of every - body being taken seriously. Rules were there to facilitate the work, not to control it. You cannot chase a sunbeam with words. It can only be caught in a moment of time.

## *Compulsory care and personal choice*

---

My argument for starting a new institution for girls, was that girls in compulsory care experienced a precarious situation, as there were no alternative methods of treatment for them. This alone was not a satisfactory argument for why I wanted to run an institution for specialised supervision, a *Section 12* home, where the girls themselves chose to be there, and to be part of it.

I could have chosen to discuss the questions that always ought to be in the fore - front in any institution for compulsory treatment: 'How much enforcement can we exert on another human being? Is it possible to put oneself in another's shoes?'

These questions have been discussed from an ethical angle in Sweden for many years by Bengt Börjesson, professor in Social Work at Umeå University, but sadly, with too little response.

I do remember the constant explanations I used to give to the young offenders who were detained in the closed units at Bärby at the end of the seventies. I also presented this as a scheme of work for the planning of care resources that preceded the new Social Services Act of 1983. In it I stated:

"Remember that, in the end, it is you who will make the choice. We work here because we believe that we can help you. At least, that is our hope. The law that gives us the right to bring you here, with the help of the police, and keep you here for eight weeks, is motivated, in part, by wanting to help you. Our belief is something like this: You have put yourself in an impossible situation. You are committing more and more crimes, you are involved in more and more violence. Now we are going to change that situation by enforcing custody. During these eight weeks we are going to give you the chance to think through the options you have. Are you content with your life as it is? Are there any other possibilities? What we can

do for you during your stay at Bärby, is give you an opportunity to talk things through with us and perhaps get some advice. But we can only do these things if you are willing to let that happen.

We can help you to remain here for the eight weeks. Again, we can only do this if you want to. To be in custody here is not the same as being in prison. We have few staff, we have locked doors, but no walls. Everyday you have the right to be out in the open for about one hour. We have no exercise yard. If you choose to take a walk with me on a day when my back is hurting, you won't have to be a very good runner to sprint away from me. Of course, I will do everything in my power to stop you. Perhaps it's because I'm a sadistic sod. Or perhaps it's because I believe that to run away is a waste of time. The reason may also be because I know how bad it can get for lads on the run. Still, in the end, the choice will be yours. If you want to get away, you can. It won't take much planning, and very little skill and physical strength.

But we have vast powers too. You are perfectly within your rights to think of us as devils who make your life hell. We keep you locked up. We read your letters. We demand urine samples. We can put you into solitary confinement and, if you escape, we can put you on a police wanted list. But you do have rights too; the right to have food, health care and to be treated fairly.

The most important thing is that, in the end, it is you who makes the decision. It is you who will decide if you want to see our cards and to explore if they are of any value to you.

Sometimes I have fervently wished that, in some odd way, I was given supernatural powers to, simply by the laying-on of hands, get a guy like you to understand what a hell of a mess you have gotten yourself into. Such power was never given to me and perhaps that is just as well. No one can live someone else's life.

Just look at some political prisoners. No amount of enforcement does any good at all. They can even choose to stop eating rather than give in. The most important thing is to always understand what choices there are and that, in the end, not to make a choice is always a choice too."

When I met with politicians and colleagues to argue for a new institution, I did not choose to discuss the idea of free choice, instead, I chose to argue from a practical point of view. I heard myself say:

"It does not really matter if it does not work out. Nothing has been lost. Many times before, things have gone wrong within the compulsory care system. But I can promise you this: I will provide you with an exhaustive study and analysis. This means we can learn from what succeeds and what does not and that, in itself, is a step forward. If my *Section 12* home is not used, I will withdraw. If Frossarbo Stables is going to be part of the official Swedish compulsory treatment system, then Frossarbo Stables must pull its weight too. If our institution is found to be successful, then we have pulled our weight and, as a result, no other compulsory institution would need to take over our work."

My argument was practical. Based on the value of knowledge gained, and being of no monetary burden, it was my strongest contention. Even though I always had the support of the management for the North West Care District, I met much opposition when I developed my thoughts around Frossarbo Stables. In the end, this became the deciding factor. At times it was heavy-going, until I stopped arguing against it and instead, took a more positive stand. I called it the 'won't work test'. I said: yes, perhaps it will not work, yes, perhaps you are absolutely right, yes, let's have an 'it won't work trial', but let us try! Whatever happens, we will at least have learnt something.

So what were the choices that the girls had? The basic choice was to start a Horse Management course that would qualify for a diploma at college level.

These are some examples of how I would present the alternatives and the decisions our students would have to make.

"Teaching you Horse Management at Frossarbo Stables is divided into several stages. The first one lasts two months. You will have to agree to take this on. You will learn about the anatomy of a horse, i.e. the names of the different parts of its skeleton and where the different bones are located. You will also learn how to harness a horse. At the end of these two months you will have a written and a practical examination. Passing these examinations will qualify you for a certificate that confirms that you have undertaken two hundred hours of tuition in Horse Management. This is the first step of the sixth form course run by Frossarbo Stables. If you then choose to stop, you will still keep the certificate. In our society, it is to your advantage to have any kind of paper qualifications. A qualification in Horse Management can be useful when you look for a job. It also

means that the two months you have spent learning about horses have not been a waste of time.

You will also be responsible for a horse. You can choose your horse from those that are available at the time. The horse you choose will be yours. As the trainer at the Stables, I will discuss with you how to care for the horse. You will always have first call on your horse. You are the person who will feed and look after the horse. If you think there is something wrong with your horse, or if there is something that isn't adding up, you will be the person who must tell me. If you go away for a weekend, then you and I will decide who will take care of your horse and how it should be done.

You will have to decide if you wish to start this training. You will have to agree to the two months. If you do, this means that you must be prepared to do your utmost to keep going. We are prepared to give everything we can to make you feel welcome and happy for your two months.

If, at the end, you want to continue then, again, that will be your choice.

The next phase in your education is also two months long. Again, you can say yes, or you can say no. After that, each stage lasts four months. Each time you can choose whether you want to continue or stop. If you stop, but later regret that choice, you will always be welcomed back. No one is going to be peeved because you wanted to stop your training.

'I'll want to take on the whole thing, I agree to the complete course.'

You can only say yes to the first two months. It is not easy to fit in at a new place; new people to get to know, new routines. It may seem like being completely at sea at first. It is easier to get through if you know you are only here for two months. Even so, the first two months are long enough. What is important, is that you will have the chance to see if Frossarbo Stables is what you need. It is also about your own rights. How do you know that I have not spun you a yarn? Perhaps Frossarbo Stables is not at all as good as I have made out.

'This is shit! The choice stinks. You are saying that I have to choose between being locked up in a secure unit at Hammargården's care home, or having to stay out here in the sticks with some bloody horses. That's shit! You call that a choice?'

It is a choice and you must make it. The choice may seem like shit to you, but perhaps that is because of the way you live right now. You only have two choices. That may seem unfortunate, but that's how it is. If you can't be bothered to choose, then you go to a closed unit at Bärby or Hammargården. You do not need to choose that. If you want to come to Frossarbo Stables, you must choose to agree to the two month trial.

'Can I choose my own horse?'

At the stable we have six training horses for the students and five horses that we all look after. Those five horses are; a brood mare, a yearling, a convalescing horse and two ponies. We all take care of them. The training horses are the ones we work with everyday and the ones we prepare for racing. The horse you will choose will be one of the training horses. You can choose any that are available. When a student leaves Frossarbo Stables, her horse becomes available to someone else. The present senior student then has the choice to exchange her horse for the one that has become available, then the next student in seniority and so on, down the line. You can decide if you want to exchange your horse for another one.

We would prefer it if you did not make up your mind about coming to Frossarbo Stables immediately. We think it is important for you to think it over. You have the next few days to decide.

'I am a user. I score everyday. Will that stop me from coming to Frossarbo?'

If you really want to be clean we will agree to you coming. You must understand however, that this could, in fact, be the worst possible thing for you. We have few staff but many horses. We all need to pull together to make Frossarbo Stables work. Perhaps what you need now are adults who can be with you full-time and who can see you through your craving for a fix. You may need walls around you that will prevent you from running away. We have no adults who can spend that much time with you alone. We have no walls to keep you in. Of course we will try, but we are afraid that however much we try, it may not be enough. If you bring your drugs with you to Frossarbo Stables then you cannot stay, but you would be welcomed back at a later stage. It is advised that you get yourself in an intensive drug rehabilitation programme and after that you can decide if you want to come to Frossarbo Stables and start your education.

'What about time off and can my boyfriend come and see me?'

Every sixth week you are on duty in the stable. This means that you have to get up half an hour before everybody else and feed the horses before we all have breakfast. During that weekend, you look after the horses together with one of the adults. You are free all other weekends. You can stay and look after your own horse if you want to and you can have visitors if you want to. If you'd rather go away, you can do that as long as you have a decent place to go. Your boyfriend is welcome to visit at weekends, but remember that he sleeps in the big house with the other guests and the staff. The girls' house is their private space.

'What are the rules I have to obey if I want to stay?'

We went for a study visit to a large breeding farm. The owner told us that, in principle, all the horses were for sale. One of the horses was so valuable that no money in the world could buy him. Yet he was for sale. The rules at Frossarbo Stables are like that. They can all be discussed, as one rule may work for one occasion and not for another.

There are rules, however, that will not and cannot be changed unless the sun decides to rise in the west! Such rules govern the stable. You will have them written down on a special sheet of paper that you must put in your training folder. Although there are not many rules, they concern your and your horse's safety. For example, when you ride, you must always wear a riding helmet. You must use the safety strap when you harness your horse and you must place the loose end of one of your reins across one of your wrists when you are driving.

Another rule is that you must always let us know if you have been delayed. You may, for instance, miss your bus on your way back. There may be all kinds of reasons - good ones or sad ones, but whatever the reasons, whatever you are doing, wherever you are, *keep in touch!*"

The most important thing is that we can help each other. Everybody has times when things are bad. We cannot escape that. It does not matter how many rules we have, or how many grand words we use. Now and then, life is hard and some - times it is very, very hard indeed. At times like these, it is really important that we try to help each other. This may not always be easy, but it is important that we try.

### *A wide band of parallel processes*

---

Reform schools or Special Approved Homes can easily become a 'last resort' institution. For many young people they become, either their last chance - when many other attempts have failed - or their final choice instead of prison. The situations these young people find themselves in and the possibilities they have, can vary greatly. Their misery can have many expressions, but they have all come into a compulsory care institution. Since 1994, SiS has been the governing body which allocates available places. One reason for the State taking control of compulsory care once again was the economic advantage of a state-run care system, which would make diverse treatment possible.

A system that offers alternatives needs space and freedom. To always find placements, and at the same time demand that resources are used to the maximum, will inevitably lead to restrictions on space and freedom. This, in turn, will result in the loss of diversity. This is a problem with which SiS now has to struggle, just as the County and District councils did in the past.

A 'last resort' situation creates problems. Through the years the standard way to deal with these problems has been to increase the care staff. When a unit was in serious difficulty, or about to collapse, the cry went out: 'We have too few personnel, there is not enough time, we cannot be everywhere at the same time. If we had more people we could manage. Let us build walls of people who can deal with the problems, not walls of iron bars.'

When I first worked in Hornö reform school in 1959, the student to staff ratio was less than one to one, now it is one to three, but we are still building walls of iron bars.

A large staff needs to meet often. Everybody has to meet everybody else. People must have the opportunity to get to know each other. Everyone has the right to

guidance. All must have the opportunity to discuss and agree on the rules that will govern the institution. Difficult students require more rules and more difficult students require even more rules. Many rules create interpretation problems, which, in turn, create staff problems. Staff problems create the necessity for special staff groups and even more guidance. Special meetings must then take place, but not at the institution, it is difficult there, rather have a few days away at a centre, and so on. In the end, the result is that we spend more time talking about our youngsters than we do being with them. When we, at last, meet the *difficult* Charlie or the *problematic* Charlotte we find out that they do not always behave the way our conference decided they would.

I may well be in a situation where I'd rather say 'yes' than 'no' or 'no' instead of 'yes'. But can I do it? Dare I? Do I have the courage to go against my colleagues? What can I say at the next conference? How can I defend myself? Am I in a strong enough position to shake off an attack from others or should I, perhaps, keep my head down and do that upon which we had agreed? How will this affect my work with Charlie or Charlotte? Will they think that I am a coward, too afraid to do what I believe is right? What am I to do?

The walls are closing in on me. I cannot move, there is no way out! I pull a face of despair and in that despair, another point of contact is lost. The insecurity and anxiety that are always present in any new group of students, now permeate the staff. Whatever happens within the group of students will also happen within the staff body.

Everyone who works in an institution will know the golden rule: First and foremost, loyalty to your colleagues. It is a beautiful-sounding rule; almost like one of the ten commandments - apart from the missing 'not'. It could be written in golden letters. But it needs to be expanded to apply to the students and in the case of Frossarbo Stables, to the horses as well. The golden rule would thus read: You must always be as loyal to your colleagues as you are to your students and to your horses. For the students the golden rule would read: You must always be as loyal to your peers as you are to your teachers (the staff) and your horses.

'That won't work. The rule is okay for the staff. It is their duty. For the girls it seems odd, doesn't it? It can never be the first rule. Perhaps the last rule once we have been here for a long time.'

'Even so. Why can't you treat others as fairly as you treat your horse?'

'Because no one else is fair.'

'Are you fair?'

'I can be, but not all the time, the staff neither. The horses can be trusted, they never repeat what we have said.'

'But it's odd isn't it? We trust the horses and the horses trust us. But we don't trust ourselves.'

Is the third statement I flagged possible? Is it possible to widen the awareness of loyalty and is it possible to be the same towards staff as it is towards pupils and horses?

Such a relationship would give you the right to be yourself. You would be forced to be yourself. You would not be able to hide behind others and their rules. You would be able to take the chance when it came and work with it and develop it. Is this a real possibility?

Thus far, the girls have featured briefly. From now on you will meet them more frequently. You will meet them through extracts from my diary, from notes in conjunction with my lectures, from reconstructed conversations and from newspaper articles and television documentaries. When you scan the text, don't skim through the girls' words. The girls have seen the sunbeams. The girls are the witnesses. In their words you can find poetry too.

'We trust the horses and the horses trust us, but we do not trust ourselves.'

In the next picture, you will encounter the girls' thoughts on parallel processes and how they can be developed. The girls never use the words 'parallel processes'. We never talked about parallel processes at Frossarbo Stables. The girls talk about their own positions in relation to the staff and to the horses, and how they could be changed. In the seventh picture I have gathered their stories and put them together.

## *To exist in different worlds and yet to be alike*

---

A girl who had been in a secure unit for quite a long time before she came to Frossarbo Stables, started to think about her old riding school in comparison to the closed unit. These are her thoughts:

'Compulsory care and riding school are alike. In compulsory care they have to force you to be good. They cannot wait, as there is no time to wait. They punish you, instead of simply waiting. It is similar with the horses at a riding school, as they are forced to be good everyday. That is why you are allowed to whip them. They are the only animals you are allowed to hit, as you have to show who's boss. There is no question about this. You are the rider and you are the one who makes the decisions. It won't work if you allow the horse to decide. Warders are like that too, as they hit us with rules. We are not allowed to do this or that. If we still do this or that they will hit us with solitary confinement, stop our leave, take away our pocket money, or shout at us in our therapy sessions. They, too, must show us that they are in charge, or they cannot be considered adult. If you let young people make decisions, then everything will simply fall to pieces. The youngsters must not be allowed to take charge.

What's painful is that it's true. If the horses were in charge of the riding school, they wouldn't care less about us. Similarly, if we were in charge of a closed section, we wouldn't give a toss about the warders - we'd just do our own thing. This is because we have never had time to get to know them properly. They want us to look up to them, as you would an idol, trust them and do whatever they want. They want to make us do this by using rules. It will never work.

There are some staff members who we obey. They have the same status in the care group as the girls who can make the horses obey. The girls look up to them. It all depends on how they treat us. Do they frighten us or do they treat us fairly?

Both can make someone obey. There is always something special about those who can get awkward horses or awkward children to obey. At least this is what I believe they think.

Nobody gives a damn whether we or the horses are given a chance to be good. The only opportunities we are given, are to be nasty or indifferent and so we never become good. Some may be good occasionally. It may be helpful to keep your head down - no need to worry, keep things on an even keel. A closed unit is similar to a riding school, as it is easier to go with the flow. Trouble-makers are sent to solitary confinement or transferred, just as difficult horses are sold or sent to the abattoir.

Many of the warders probably want to do well, just as we girls do in the stables, but it never happens. They go home, just as we do, and new staff keep on arriving. No one new can be the same as anyone who has left. It becomes hard to trust anybody. If you want to be friends with a warder, you must be able to rely on his backing when you are right and for him to be there when you need him, but you can never be sure. Perhaps he wants to, but hasn't got the courage to risk it in front of the other warders. He can never be a real friend you can look up to, someone you can follow. In my boyfriend's gang, they stand by each other to the death. This is how strong the bond between real mates can be. I want my horse to have that same strong feeling for me, to follow me to death itself. You can never talk about these kinds of feelings in an institution. There, all you have are rules. Everyone has to obey these rules. At a riding school there are rules too. They are displayed everywhere - rules instead of friendship. You cannot ignore a friend but you can ignore rules.

Neither the warders, or us girls at the riding school, genuinely belong to the place as we are governed by rules instead of feelings. So why should my horse care for me? I am only there for a few hours, then I pass him on to somebody else. Why should he especially like me? The horses at Frossarbo Stables, however, are different. They are more like humans. They are individuals.'

Another girl continues:

'The horses at Frossarbo Stables did not realise that they were horses, but the horses in the racing stable, where I worked, knew that they were. They ganged-up, making it hard to have any kind of contact with them. Stumpan was very unsure. She did not trust anybody. I showed her that I liked her and cared for

her. Then I went for work experience at a trotting stable during the summer and when I saw her again in the autumn, she turned her back on me. I started to shout and yell at her, just as the trainer at the trotting stable did, but then I thought: *For heaven's sake stop! This is no way to carry on.*'

And another girl:

'Pysen and I could be alone together and there was no need to talk. It was good just being with each other. You never know how people want you to behave; what is the right way, what are the right words to say. You have to guard your tongue. Not with Pysen. I had a real friend in the stable. I did not need to hang out with the other girls if I did not want to. There was no need to fall in with them and do what they wanted and to talk their way. Pysen made it possible for me to be myself, and to be by myself, if I wanted to. If you are responsible for someone, you don't get stuck thinking about yourself all the time and you begin to think new thoughts.'

Yet another pupil:

'Everyone was so nice when I started at Frossarbo, I wondered if they were pretending. I did not take the first two months seriously. I chose Grabben because he was the only horse I could ride. I did not like him and he did not like me. I think he missed his previous mistress. But when I returned after the first two months, things got more serious. Slowly Grabben became more and more relaxed. He would nuzzle me and he started to work with me. I changed too. Something does happen to you at Frossarbo. It seeps into you slowly. It is difficult to say when and how, it just happens. It was dreadfully hard to take Grabben home and then betray him by getting back on drugs. He became different, hard to look after, or was it perhaps me who became a difficult handler?

There was no way I could put the blame on anybody else and I felt ashamed. It was good that you fetched him. After that, I gave in and cut out drugs completely. I could not carry on like that forever, so I returned. On my first visit, Grabben belonged to another girl. I was terribly jealous. I ached all over. Thankfully, when I returned to stay, the girl had gone. Soon Grabben and I were back together, the way it had been before, but it became even better.

I was proud to have everyone see how successfully I had trained him. Since leaving Frossarbo Stables, I have been off drugs for a year. Grabben means a lot

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

to me. When he looks at me in a certain way, he tells me that he enjoys life, that he feels great and that he is happy that I am here for him. I then feel a warm glow throughout my body. When the social workers in my home town say that I cannot build my whole life on a horse, I answer: *I am not building my whole life on a horse, the horse is my whole life.*'

And yet another girl:

'Silver was really hard work at the start. He was no fun. He was a good-looking stallion, though, and we built a relationship. It took time, but he slowly became more lively and more playful. When we got him as a gift from a big racing stable, he was completely indifferent. He didn't bother about anybody or anything, but he started to take notice of the other horses and to neigh and play up to the mares. He would show his fondness for me by pushing his head against mine. It was difficult to teach him to jump. He would stop and not budge and I would get mad, shout and urge him on with my whip. That was hard. Once, another pupil asked if she could ride him during the jumping session. She was given permission, but Silver still wouldn't budge. Then I took him over, and everything suddenly fell into place. He jumped as if he had done it all his life. I was really proud and happy then. Later, I learnt that if I relaxed and trusted Silver, things would improve. He progressed and he would work with me. I was able to show the other students how to do it. You build your own confidence by accepting someone else the way they are.'

And then, the last girl:

'Trulsan was a really nasty mare. She would kick and once she bit me on the cheek. It did not do to disturb her. If you did, she would show you straight away that you'd had it. You had to really listen to her and respect her, but I liked her a lot and we became good friends. Later, I came to the conclusion that Trulsan and I were actually quite alike. If you intend to write this down for somebody new on the staff, tell them that they ought to learn from the way we girls treat the horses at Frossarbo. They should treat us the way we treat our horses, or else things will backfire.'

When I see the girls' contributions in this picture, most of them from follow-up interviews, I am impressed.

Not that I need to be impressed, I ought to know better. After all, I have followed them and their work in the stable for twelve years. None the less, I am impressed. The girls continually surprise me.

On my sketchpad, I find a draft of a picture I have written:

Today I betrayed someone. A member of staff scolded a couple of girls for not towing the line. They had towed the line, though. Instead of speaking up for the girls, I tried to mediate by smoothing over the incident. 'That was feeble' one of the girls said. All I could do was agree. It is difficult to slay the sacred cow which states: *First of all, you must show solidarity with a member of staff, even when he or she is wrong.*

It is also difficult for the girls to slay their sacred cow which states: *First of all, always show solidarity with another pupil, even if she is wrong.* The slaying of sacred cows could be dramatic, especially when it concerned new pupils. An example being a new pupil who had made a phone call to get hold of drugs. A senior girl put this on the agenda at a student-staff council. The new pupil was shocked and became livid. 'You bloody snitch, I'll kill you.'

Sacred cows evoke fiery feelings. Who can eliminate the possibility, occasionally, of a power struggle between staff and pupils? Do we show the same solidarity with all, without fear or favour? Do we give each other the right to sometimes fail? Talking is always simpler. The sad reality is that most of us spend far too much time doing that - just talking.

In the stories the girls related, there is nearly always a parallel development between the girl and her horse. In the beginning, the horse is often hard to handle, or a lonely outsider. It is easy for the girls to see the horses as a reflection of themselves.

'He was bitter and nasty. Nobody dared to ride him.'

'He was awfully hard work at first.'

'He was completely indifferent.'

'She was a really obnoxious mare.'

'He started out cocky and troublesome.'

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

'He had his own personality and was self-willed. You could not bring him back from the field.'

'I felt sorry for him. He had no tail and no one wanted him.'

'He was very dangerous, they said. But actually he looked rather frightened.'

'He looked small and lonely.'

'She never trusted anyone.'

All the girls felt that their relationships with the horses had deepened. As the horses grew, the girls grew.

The researcher Ulrika Bergström, together with Jerzy Sarnecki, head a follow-up study of those who had been placed in *Section 12* institutions between 1990 and 1995, (*SiS* project number U-27-3001). Part of the study deals with the youngsters' experiences over the time they had spent at the institutions. The research focusses on, among other things, questions relating to staff, the feeling of safety and certain enforceable measures. In making a personal comment about the research, Bergström notes that the girls at Frossarbo Stables differ. During their time at Frossarbo Stables they had experienced total safety and there had been no feelings of compulsion whatsoever.

In the past, a horse could be disqualified if his trotting did not adhere to the rules. Nowadays, there is a first warning. It may be contentious to talk about parallel processes among animals and to risk a first warning, but the girls were absolutely certain that they and their horses grew and developed together, as did the relationships between the girls themselves and their relationship with the staff. It all became more genuine.

What did the horses think? There is no answer to this, but I will not hold back one of the girl's thoughts about animals and their intelligence:

'Animals are more clever than people think - they are tremendously smart. Take this as an example - *they can always make you happy.*'

## *Learning about a horse How to speak the language*

---

The fourth signpost: *Can knowledge of horses lead to knowledge of oneself?*

A reasonable demand on any vocational education, is that it should provide the kind of knowledge that will lead to a job. This was the demand put on the course in Horse Management at Frossarbo Stables and it was a demand that had to be met.

Was it also possible for this learning programme to teach the pupils something about themselves? Perhaps teaching about horses could become an 'Open Sesame' door for the girls to explore their own feelings and thoughts.

The girls who came to Frossarbo Stables all carried a dream about a horse. The dream might have taken different forms, but it was always present. A dream does not always need to be part of our reality, this is the advantage of dreams. But at Frossarbo Stables, dreams and reality met and it was an important encounter. To be able to exist in the real world and still be able to dream is the goal of all therapy.

Horses are individuals. First and foremost, they are horses. They speak their own language. Good handlers try to learn the language of their horses, enabling their respect of horses as unique creatures. Learning a foreign language demands a good grounding in one's mother tongue. Could both these aspects of learning occur alongside each other?

The teaching included a series of lectures. I tried to give one lecture per week. Whatever the course the girls were already following, all attended this lecture. There were set questions from the lectures in the final examination and every body made notes. I made notes too. After each lecture, I wrote down, as best I

## *THE GIRL AND THE HORSE*

---

could, the questions the girls had asked, their reflections during the lectures and even fragments of tentative discussions. These were voiced later as thoughts, for instance, when we were shoeing a horse, or out on a drive in a training sulky.

Some lectures were video-taped, some audio-taped and some parts were screened on television.

I will provide some snapshots for you from these lectures and will collate the girls' thoughts and remarks from over a period of ten years. Drawn from different lectures, the responses of the group varied.

Snapshot one:

*The language of the horse: How to speak it.*

"During your training I will remind you, time and again, that you are aiming at becoming the best horse-handlers in the world. It will be difficult, demanding a great deal. Still, you will definitely become the world's best trainers. Why shouldn't your horse have the best?

Your ability to understand your horse, will make you the world's best horse-handler. You also have to realise that learning to understand another living creature is something that has to be worked at for life. It is a lifetime commitment. To be the world's best horse-handler means that there will always be more to learn - you will never have learnt enough. Whoever thinks they know it all, will never be the best. If you think that you know everything there is to know, you will cease to listen and you will not bother to look for new things or ponder over them. Why should you; since you are the best, you know everything?

The world's best trainers are always willing to listen, willing to ask questions and will always be alert to what is going on. New things always happen, creating situations that must not escape you, situations from which you can learn. This means that the world's best horse-handlers must ask questions all the time.

Now, you must understand that this may not be easy. It sounds so simple when a lecturer says: 'It is okay to interrupt me. Ask as many questions as you like. Has somebody got a question?' Usually there is dead silence - not a single question. Everyone is looking down. The hard part about questions is that a question might reveal something not understood. 'Perhaps I am the only one who has not

understood. It gets even harder if the lecturer directs his question to me personally. Then it's really embarrassing.' You remember that from your school days. The teachers were experts at asking questions of which the pupils were unsure. So mostly it seemed best not to answer at all.

'It was bloody rotten when you realised that you had known the answer but had said nothing.'

'The worst was when you bloody-well knew the answer but didn't dare answer.'

'The times you got mad because you understood afterwards that you had known the answer all along.'

'It was so easy to get nervous at school. That didn't help, as your mind went blank and you felt more stupid.'

I intend to give you one lecture every week. There are many things you will have to learn and there is much you will have to teach your horses. A calm horse will learn but a nervous horse becomes confused. The same is true for you. In this respect, people and horses are the same. This means that, during my lectures, I am not going to ask you questions. No one need say anything unless she wants to. Everyone has the right to remain silent.

The only thing I want you to do is to take notes about what I say and then to keep those notes in your folder. Later, there will be a test on what you have learnt from the lectures so you will need your notes. I will go through the notes with each one of you, so it doesn't matter if you haven't got everything down, or if the notes are confused or difficult to read. The important thing is that you practise taking notes. Later on, you will, very likely, go to lectures given by a vet or trainer and then your notes will be valuable. Your folder is your friend and assistant in education. You will put all teaching materials into it and you should put them into plastic pockets that can withstand the stable's environment. You should always take your folder with you. Some knowledge is, unfortunately, like consumables, and does not last forever, but in your folder, knowledge is always new and fresh.

One of the students remembered an advertisement jingle and replied spontaneously: '*It never dries - it beautifies - Lustre shampoo.*' This is the only advert with singing I can remember. It's from the fifties. I have forgotten to what the student was referring, but I wanted to remember something that got a laugh and so I wrote it down.

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

The horse has its own language. It's a special kind of language. It's a language you are going to learn. When you are learning a foreign language, it's a good thing to start by trying to understand the people who speak that language and how they live. A language is influenced by the way people live. An Eskimo has one hundred words that can mean 'snow'. Snow and its different forms are important for his survival. If you are going to translate a story about an Eskimo and if you do not understand the different meanings and nuances relating to the word 'snow', always translating it with the same word, you will end up with an uninteresting and skimpy narrative. Your reader may think: 'That wasn't much of a story, what an impoverished culture, how primitive.' But what is really primitive, is your translation.

You have, very likely, heard people say that horses are stupid and primitive animals - not at all like cats and dogs. Those who say this have never tried to understand how horses live and act in their own environment. They can only see horses from their own viewpoints. You are going to learn to see the horses from their points of view; with their eyes, not yours. When you have learned this, only then can you begin to understand their language.

We start our language lesson by asking the question: 'How does the horse live in his own country and how does he survive there?' The first thing we must realise is that the horse does not have a country of his own anymore. There are remnants in some western states of America, in Mongolia and The Camargue, a swampy area in the South of France. Yet the horse, just like the Eskimo, has no country of his own where he can live the life he used to live. Horses are forced to exist within our culture. So we change the question: 'How *did* the horse live in his own country and how *did* he survive?' We have to look for the answer in history. A title that fits the first lecture could be: *The History of the Horse*.

'Bloody hell, we are not having a history lesson are we? I have agreed to a Horse Management course, but not to some bloody history lessons. I hated history at school. I won't stand for it!'

Another appropriate title for the first lecture is: *The Language of the Horse*. It isn't just the word 'snow' that can have many meanings.

Had the horse not survived, there would be no story to tell. Had the horse not managed the fantastic feat of surviving for millions of years, we would not have had Horse Management education today. The same thing is true for us. Had we

not managed the same fantastic feat of survival we would not have been here either. Some ways of survival are similar, others differ. A big difference is that we chose survival by becoming carnivores while the horse became a herbivore. We were hunters and the horse was prey. Both species needed to work together in order to survive. Just as horses helped each other when under attack or while fleeing, we helped each other while hunting or during invasions.

'It is hard to think that my Pysen is prey and is used for trading. Who has power over him? But it's true we do make beef burgers. It's terrible.'

'But aren't people also prey?'

'No, it's the other way around. We are the gangsters. Everything is for our benefit. We are the worst of the lot. We are the most cruel.'

'But what about children? They have no say either. When does a child stop being prey?'

We will start with the difference between being a hunter and being the hunted. The hunter perceives the world in one way and the hunted in another.

Hold a finger in front of you. Look at me. You can see me clearly, but how do you see the finger? Look at the finger. Now you can see the finger clearly, but how do you see me?

We are hunters. During the history of our development, it has been important for us to be able to focus so that we can see our prey clearly, both when near and far away.

The animal is not interested in seeing the hunter close by - it is better to see the hunter at a distance. Of course, he wants to see the grass he is grazing, but in the history of his development, it has been most important to spot the hunter in time.

If we had our horses here at this lecture and I had asked them to hold up a hoof, they would see both the hoof and me in the same way simultaneously, perhaps not as clearly as when you focussed, but clearer than when you did not. This way of perceiving objects has been a great advantage to the horse as he has been able to see, simultaneously, the grass nearby and an enemy at a distance. If he sees something that may suggest danger, he will focus on that. He does this using his whole body. He flares his nostrils; he pricks his ears to the danger and prepares to flee. The time he takes to focus is short. It can be dangerous to use too much

time, because another danger may loom from a different direction. We all know how difficult it is to take a photograph of a horse with his ears pricked. You need to be quick before his ears move yet again.

Imagine you are a horse and you are focussing on something far away, but you are not sure what it is. It could be a tiger. It could also be a woman, in a large fur coat, pushing a pram. It is necessary to have a distance of two hundred metres between you and the tiger, or he could catch up with you. But only when you are one hundred and fifty metres away from the object, can you see clearly if it is a woman with a pram, or a tiger. Ponder this dilemma: You can run away unnecessarily and be embarrassed - fancy having been afraid of a woman with a pram - or you can stand your ground and get eaten alive, knowing that you were not afraid of someone with a pram.

'I would run away, of course. My boyfriend wouldn't though. He's always fighting'

'The way he looked when he was last here, suggests that he's the one who gets beaten up. If he'd been a horse, you wouldn't have had a boyfriend anymore. He would have been eaten.'

'But you can't bloody-well run away all the time. You haven't got the energy. You'll die in the end, anyway, from fatigue.'

A lone horse must never make a mistake. Similarly, the first time I remain and it is not a woman with a pram, will also be my last. I believe that, through experience, I am beginning to learn how to see the difference between the dangerous tiger and the lady with the pram. If I have not learnt enough, I will only have one chance, but if there are several of us, we will all have more chances. In the end, one of us will learn that a tiger moves in one way and a pram trundles in a different way. This someone can become the *wise old mare* of our herd and to whom we will listen, because it makes good sense. If she carries on grazing quietly, then we can do the same - it is the pram. If she flees, then we should run too - it is the tiger. This means that younger horses can take advantage of the wisdom of the older horses. The younger horses who say: 'I don't give a damn about the adults, I'll do what I want,' don't know anything at all. Tigers will enjoy them more often than they will enjoy their own foals.

'What adult bullshit! He who obeys, is best! Adults are always right. If that isn't bloody nonsense, then what is?'

'Hang on, I thought we were talking about horses and who says that all horses know what's right? It was an old mare we were talking about.'

'Well then, it can't be your fucking mare, can it?'

'You only have a gelding. You're a fucking mare yourself!'

'It's a bloody good thing we don't have to follow you.'

Herds that had the wisest leaders, in whom the young horses could trust, were the herds that survived. But it was not enough to be born into a good herd, even in those days, it was easier to be a young horse if you had some luck. You also had to be fast. The faster horses were in the front. The tigers caught the slower horses first. The fastest horses survived and they, in turn, bred fast offspring.

Perhaps the importance of being at the front of the escaping herd, was to become the foundation for the desire to race and to be first. Over millions of years, the horse cultivated his speed and developed his wisdom, to become one of the fastest animals in the world. If a wild animal had not caught up with a healthy horse in the first four hundred metres, then it never would. When we try to understand how the horse perceives the world around him, it may be useful to know that the horse is probably colour-blind.

'Good! So am I.'

'What's good about that? Do you think you're more of a horse because you are colour-blind?'

'Perhaps I can understand something that you can't, you idiot.'

It is to the horse's advantage to be colour-blind. He cannot be tricked by camouflage. It is said that some pilots from the Second World War succeeded in becoming pilots in spite of being colour-blind. They had bluffed their way through the tests. Among all the tests the pilots had to take, this was one they weren't allowed to fail. Yet, it was shown that the colour-blind pilots had a great advantage. They were never deceived by the enemy's ground camouflage. They were never confused by the mottled effect of one colour blending into another. They saw the contours and thus they could discover the enemy. It could be the same

for the horse. He is not confused by the camouflage of the stripes of the tiger. He sees the contours more easily and so he spots the movements.

'Not only do I understand, I can also see something that you can't. I can see a *bluffer*.'

'Sorry to upset you, but I can see the colours of the clothes that a certain *bluffer* is wearing, and you can't.'

'I am glad that I don't have to see the colours on the *bluffer* I can see. It will save me and my horse more pain.'

The horse can hear better than we can. His ears are like moving radars. He can direct them towards the sounds he wants to hear in order to understand them better. I read a research paper recently that showed that the horse can generally recognise the same range of sounds that we can. A dog, for example, can detect a higher pitch on the frequency scale. You can call your dog using a special dog whistle and no one but your dog will be able to hear it. The horse can't. The research concluded that the hearing of a horse and that of a human being, are almost equal. I will have to read further research papers before I am convinced that our hearing is as good as that of a horse. On the other hand, I can say with confidence that a horse can listen to something far better than we can. He directs his ears towards those sounds he wants to hear and understands them better. This gives him a greater chance at discovering approaching danger in time. The intensity of the sound can also tell him something about the danger. If the sound is strong, the danger is near. A jumpy horse reacts more forcefully to strong and unexpected sounds. He will be afraid more often. He will find it more difficult to listen to you as his handler and he will find it harder to learn. It is not because he is stupid or bad, but because he is frightened. A good handler can distinguish between a horse being stupid, or being afraid.

A simple way to help a nervous horse is to make him temporarily deaf. You can do this by pushing a big wad of cotton wool in each ear, or by fitting ear-caps. The results are usually very good. Details and subtle nuances can be more important than we may believe. It can mean the difference between being your horse's friend or not.

'But many times they are so obstinate. My riding school was full of surly horses. They weren't afraid. Well, perhaps they were frightened of some of the teachers -

they obeyed them. That was because they were afraid. Otherwise they couldn't care less. One of the horses was almost impossible to tack up. He kept clowning about and acting up. He was definitely not afraid, only stupid.'

'You do become stupid if you don't understand. I admire Kvicken for putting up with you the way you pull and push him about. He can't possibly know whether he's to go forward or backwards, to the right or to the left. And still he tries.'

'You become stupid when you can see that you have to do something stupid, such as drag some idiotic kids about. The most stupid horses are perhaps the most intelligent ones.'

'I was dumb at school, but I wasn't afraid and I didn't suck up to the teachers. Then it would have been me who would have been stupid. Most of the teachers were bloody cowards. They were afraid, not I.'

'But I'm still a little bit frightened of my horse. Will he ever like me?'

'It's awful to like someone who is afraid. It makes you shudder. You want to be nice, but you feel like being nasty.'

'Scotten was afraid of a branch that had fallen down, but I got him to walk past it. I spoke to him quietly. I was really proud of him as he had the courage to walk past even though he was afraid.'

The horse can sense danger before we do. Even if we are not that different with regard to sight and hearing, we certainly are regarding smell. We know that dogs can track prey by smell, something that is impossible for us. A horse's sense of smell is very developed. This is the reason why your horse may suddenly flare his nostrils and show signs of disquiet while you are riding through the woods, while you cannot see or hear anything that could be worrying. You shout at the horse to stop playing up. Still, the horse continues and you become more and more irritated. 'What a stupid horse I have!' Think further - perhaps he can smell something that makes him anxious, maybe the scent of an elk or a lynx. Your horse is worried, but he is not stupid. He needs to be calmed down, not worked up. It is important to understand that the difference is not due to stupidity, instead, it is something we need to respect. If we do, we are on the way to becoming the best horse-handlers in the world.

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

The horse can also detect danger through vibrations in the ground. This is its kinetic sense. We also have a kinetic sense - it has to do with balance. We notice it most when we become seasick, or after whirling around on some fairground ride. The horse can often use the particular form of information he receives from his kinetic sense. This is the reason why your horse can recognise your steps when you go out into the field to bring him home.

The horse is faster than we are. The horse is stronger than we are. In spite of this, he is prepared to work with us. He is not only prepared to work with us, he is also prepared to follow us and trust us. Perhaps some young Stone Age girls discovered this amazing thing - that these fast and strong animals were prepared to learn our language. One such breed was the Western European wild horse. He was a favourite prey for our Stone Age ancestors. The horses were hunted by being driven towards steep ravines, or into holes used as traps. Humans are greedy. Soon the wild horse was becoming extinct. I believe it was then that our Stone Age girls came into the picture. A foal survived the hunt and the girls pleaded for its life and that they might be allowed to look after it. Perhaps they had to promise that when the foal grew up he would have to be killed. Then the miracle happened.

The horse became the girls' friend. He learned their language and was prepared to help the girls with their chores. Now the girls could tow the heaviest timber loads home from the forest and nobody could move as fast and as far, all thanks to the horse.

'I think it was a Stone Age boy and a Stone Age girl, Sten and Vidja, who...'

'No, I think they were two girls, Vidja or whatever her name was, and Ylva.'

'No, it couldn't have been Ylva. I know an Ylva. No, damn it, it couldn't have been someone like her.'

'Why couldn't she have been called Ylva? What is wrong with being called Ylva? But I think you are wrong about the two girls; I am sure there was only one, that Vidja.'

'Can't you write down her name? That's right - Vidja. Of course, it was only one girl. It was Vidja. Everybody can see that. She probably wanted to be *the great - est*, to show off in front of the others and say: *Look what I have.*'

'I don't think she wanted to show off at all. I think she wanted to get the others to understand that she could still be their mate.'

'If she got the horse to be her friend, she must have been a real friend and she could not have been a show-off then.'

'Vidja was not a show-off. She was lonely and frightened.'

'She could not have been that frightened if she was going to look after a horse.'

'You can be frightened in different ways. Perhaps she was big and ugly.'

'Vidja wasn't big and ugly. She was petite and pretty. The others were big and ugly.'

'Poor horse. A right lot of people he came to.'

'Couldn't we baptise the horse? He should have a name, shouldn't he?'

'He, he. Why is it always a he - the horse-he and the horse-he? It could just as well have been a she - the horse-she. No doubt, it was a mare.'

'I think it is nicer to think of the horse as a stallion. He would have been strong and wild and Vidja would have been the only one who could tame him. Every - body else was scared of him. Then the others saw how clever Vidja was and they were ashamed.'

'I want it to be a mare - an angry mare who does what she wants.'

'Poor Vidja. To have to start with a delinquent mare!'

'Anyway, mares are more clever than stallions. A mare would understand Vidja. A stallion would never be able to.'

'Vidja could have more power with a wild stallion.'

'But it isn't power she wants, it's friendship.'

'That's what I think too, someone who would always be a mate, someone who is, first of all, her friend. They will have something between them that no one else can understand.'

'I still think the others would envy her more if the horse was a stallion. The stallion would be better able to defend her as well.'

'Bullshit! Mares are much better at defending, they're used to it.'

'I've only seen frightened mares who are surly and back off.'

'Vidja won't give a damn if the horse is a stallion or a mare. She sees a lonely horse that they want to kill. That is all. Carry on!'

The adults soon realised the excellent potential of this new project they could invest in. The Western European wild horse disappeared. What remained was the Western European domesticated horse, who, among other things, was to become the ancestor to our own Northern Swedish horse.

The horse became our most important co-worker throughout history. It has toiled on our land, fought on our battlefields, and carried us on our journeys. We are the ones who have set the conditions and the horse has loyally accepted them. The battlehorse made his *courbette* leaps, and delivered his *capriole* kicks to help his fighting master. Today's horses throw themselves with deadly courage over impossible hurdles at horse trial events, simply because their riders want them to. It is we who have the power. It is we who use that power. Power and violence often go together. Horses have been at the receiving end of much brutality. Powerful humans think that it is force that makes horses co-operate. 'A horse must be broken first, then it will obey'. Moguls cannot see miracles; they can only see themselves and their own view of life. They cannot see that which the Stone Age girls saw - a horse co-operating because he wanted to!

The horse is prepared to make us his friend and to trust us as his leader. A friend will co-operate and a leader does not betray a trust. The young horse believes and hopes, over and over again, that the *man horse* will be loyal to him.

He tries and tries, but in the end he gives up. He becomes indifferent, or he becomes impossible. If he becomes indifferent, the *man horse* thinks that he has won. At last that idiot of a horse has understood.

You are going to become the world's best horse-handlers. You are already beginning to see the miracle the Stone Age girls saw. You know how the horse lives in his own horse-country. You know that the horse will only fight if he has to. He'd much rather be your friend. If it doesn't work out and he fears for his life, he runs away. It is only when he can't flee that he fights. The best way for him to solve a frightening crisis, is to flee and he's good at that. In this, he's in a class of his own. Now the miracle happens.

Even though the horse might be scared, he allows you to lift his hoof. Even though the horse might be scared, he will still let you lead him into a dark stall.

This has nothing to do with fear or power, it has to do with trust. The horse is literally prepared to put his life in your hands. With his hoof lifted up, or when inside a dark stall, he can no longer flee. He cannot make his own decisions. He cannot understand why you would want him to lift his hoof or why you would want him to walk into the dark stall. He does understand, though, that his life may be in danger. Still, he does it because you want him to and because he trusts you. This is the miracle and the amazing gift the wild horse gave to the Stone Age girls. The world's best horse-handlers realise that with this gift, come great responsibilities."

This snapshot gives you the approach and tone of my teaching, but, above all, it gives you the girls' reflections. These are selected reflections and open-ended thoughts that, as I have said before, sometimes sound like poetry.

When does a child stop being prey?

You decide on how you want to explore your own thoughts further. There are no set answers. The answers that exist, however, belong to the girls.

We carried on talking around the coffee table, during exercise drives in the double sulky, while driving the horsebox and during racecourse training at Gävle. We could have talked much more. All staff had been welcome to sit in on the lectures and, if I had my time at Frossarbo Stables again, I would have made the lectures obligatory. There were far too many avenues that opened up which we never explored.

## *Learning about a horse Inherited or acquired*

---

Snapshot two: *Inherited or acquired.*

"You may hear a trainer remark that a horse has a lot of hot blood in his ancestry. This does not mean that his blood is hotter than that of the other horses. His body temperature would certainly be within the normal temperature range of 37° to 38° C - a little higher for young horses. The trainer means that the horse is more easily stressed and finds it difficult to listen to his rider or driver while racing. You may hear expressions such as 'he became as hot as an oven. It was impossible to make him stop. He kept on pulling.' A horse that pulls, is a horse that strains at the bit and will run faster than his rider wants him to.

The trainer implies that there is a hereditary factor that makes it more difficult for him to deal with stress than for other horses.

Now we are approaching a very difficult area: What is inherited and what is acquired? When a horse is stressed while racing, is it because we have made him tense or was he born tense?

'It's our fault of course; it's we who must win. We drive them too hard. They are dead-scared. You can see it in their eyes and we can see it on television.'

'Milton never looked scared. He was cool and happy. You could see in his eyes: *I am the best and I know it.*'

Well, it is our fault if we forget the horse and only think of ourselves. We want to win and so we sacrifice the horse. But if we do not forget the horse and still want to win, we notice that it is easier for some horses than for others. I believe that

what all textbooks on horses want to emphasise, is that there is an interdependence between that which is inherited and that which is acquired.

Both influences are important, but what is really difficult and demanding, is to be able to understand both influences at the same time. If there is something we cannot manage, or do not understand, it is easy to blame one or the other.

'With those parents, it's no wonder he's bloody awful himself.'

'With those trainers, I would've become bloody hopeless too.'

It's easy to emphasise one factor and forget another. The horse has his genes as he has been given life - the most wonderful and amazing gift of all. Of all the special eggs, his was the one that was there, waiting; of all the billions of sperm, his reached the egg first. This was the race that really counted, the race that mattered. Not a race with false starts, or a qualifying race, but the one race that could never be run again. And he won! Some years ago, one of my students showed me a poem in which the little foal says 'thank you' for being given life. 'It must have been a love gift,' he says.

'Many horses live horrible lives. How can it be a love gift for them?'

'Who gave the gift?'

'Can you give a gift, and then take it back and still call it a love gift? If you give something out of love, why also give painful expectations? Can that really be called love?'

'It sounds like religion. You have a bloody awful life here, but get a bloody good life after death.'

'That's not what I've learnt about religion. Have you never heard of hell? For people like us, there is a bloody awful life here and an even more awful life later ' on.

'Can horses go to Heaven too? In any case, they can't go to hell. That's cool, I'll see Pysen again then.'

'You'll never go to Heaven, that's for sure.'

'If Pysen is going to Heaven, then I'll try to get there too.'

'I believe there's something after death. I have read about near-death experiences.'

'There are people who can remember earlier lives. I believe that you can live again.'

'There are some who have met dead people, never anyone who has met a dead animal.'

'There are. I read about a girl who met her dead horse.'

'Books about girls and horses are fiction, not real life.'

'I'm sure there is something good after death, otherwise why do we have all these churches? I think it's cool to imagine how it will be. When I fantasise, I wish I could go there immediately.'

'If you do that, then I'll take Pysen as my second horse. He's much more fun to ride than my old Silver.'

'No you won't, I'll come back straight away.'

'If you're dead, then you're dead. There's no point in thinking there are two or three chances. You have one chance and that's it. If you miss it, I'll take Pysen. You can be bloody sure of that.'

It is a gift with limitations and demands. One limitation is the hereditary factor. The horse is given life, but he has to live it according to the specific characteristics with which he was born. They are his for life - they have not been lent to him. The horse will die in the end. The horse is born male or female; white or black, grows big or small, has knock-knees or bandy legs, large ears or small ones. He has a *Ramskopf* or an *Arabian* head with a dip, his eyesight is acute or poor. The list can be infinite, but there are many things on that list we do not see at the time and, very likely, will never see.

These are the biological attributes with which the horse starts his life. What, then, happens later on in his life? What are the conditions that will shape his life? Had our horse been born in the Stone Age, perhaps hereditary factors would not have been so important. He would soon have become food for our ancestors. Had our horse been born in the Middle Ages, during the French Revolution, or on the American prairies in the nineteenth century, the conditions for survival would

have been different. Even though, as a species, the horse would have been the same, his life would have been determined historically - by the time and place of his birth. It would then depend on which herd he belonged to and with which other horses he came into contact. If he then met people, it would depend on what they wanted and what kind of people they were. This list, too, is endless. The possibilities are never-ending and boundless. Even on this list, there are many things we do not understand.

'How fortunate the horses at Frossarbo Stables must be. I doubt there are any other horses that are so well cared for and as spoilt as ours. Luck is not a bad thing.'

'Don't say that. There are probably many horses that think they are unlucky to have been born. They have such a horrible life.'

'Are you saying they'd rather be dead? I don't think so. Everybody wants to live, don't they?'

'You don't want to die to start with, but when you see all the shit, then you do.'

'But you don't know what will happen. You could get lucky, win the lottery or something.'

The best thing you can do is spoil your horse. Horses have a right to be spoilt. It is hard to spoil. In our topsy-turvy world, spoiling someone is thought of as being manipulative - trying to curry favour, showing cowardice or an attempt to gain an advantage. To spoil someone is, actually, to really like them. If you genuinely like somebody, you will want to show it by spoiling them. It can be hard to show it in the right way. When you open the horsebox door for your horse and your heart is overflowing, you may want to show how you feel by giving your horse some sweets. You continue doing this. In the end, the horse will only see the sweets when the door is opened, he won't see you. One day, you will not have brought any sweets and a cross horse will meet you: 'What the hell is this, doesn't she like me anymore? Why hasn't she got any sweets? I'll give her a nip so that she will remember next time!'

There you stand, disillusioned, with your heart full of love. If your heart tells you to give sweets, then put the sweets in your horse's nosebag, although you are all the sweets he needs. It's enough that you come to him. Your hugs and strokes are what count, as does your respect for him. This means, to spoil him could also

be to leave him alone. We all need time to ourselves. That can be the most difficult way to spoil someone - to leave him or her in peace, without becoming worried or sullen.

We will talk a lot about cossetting. To become the world's best horse-handler is also to become the best at cossetting your horse. We have been talking about what is hereditary and what is learnt. To be the world's best horse-handler is to also see and understand your horse's circumstances and his management of the demands that his environment places on him.

If we know that the horse is sensitive to harsh and sudden sounds that will make him panic, we can help him by cutting out those sounds using wads of cotton wool and ear-caps while he is racing, or being driven or ridden in unfamiliar surroundings. In this way, you help the horse with his own circumstances. If this doesn't work, difficulties arise and your horse will be stressed and tense while racing. If the stress and strain become too much, he may defend himself by galloping - your horse is trying to tell you something. He says that he is not feeling well. Your knowledge of your horse is now being tested. How good are you at understanding his language? A very important and fundamental rule is to always ask your horse if he is in physical pain or if he is simply tired and drawn. Taking his temperature can give you an answer. You should ask this question every time you take him out for a long ride, when you ride fast, or when you are about to start a race. A horse with a cold is not only a tired horse, he also moves badly and inconsistently.

The horse normally breathes in rhythm with his body movements. When galloping, he breathes in when he lifts his forelegs and exhales when his legs touch the ground. The horse always breathes through his nostrils. If a horse has a cold, his breathing becomes uneven and this affects the rhythm of his movements. His language may now become difficult to understand.

You can see that your horse is not moving as rhythmically as usual. Does this mean that he has been over-exercised and now has muscle pain; is it a hoof that is troubling him, or a tender joint? What is he actually saying? 'Stop mumbling, man!' A linguistic misunderstanding can lead to continued misunderstandings. You mistakenly think that your horse is telling you that the reason for his uneven movements is that he has been badly shod. You shoe him again and alter the balance. From having the correct balance, he now has a faulty balance. The

horse looks at you, wondering what you are doing. The uneven movement becomes worse. You shoe him again and try another balance. Wrong again. Now the horse isn't just looking at you, he is beginning to wonder what is going on, and may become unsure of both you and himself. If this continues, eventually nobody will understand anything. Always start by checking the general health of your horse.

A good next step is to ask the horse to open his mouth. Check the teeth and see if he has mouth ulcers. We find nothing odd about a horse having a headstall or snaffle with reins or bridle that are held in the mouth with a large bit. Give some thought to what this actually means. Imagine yourself having to walk about with a large bit in your mouth on which someone is pulling and yanking. This is bad enough. Now, imagine that you also have toothache or a mouth ulcer. Wouldn't you be glad if there was someone who could speak your language and brought you help? It is important to check your horse's mouth, yet, too often, it is forgotten.

You should carry on examining your whole horse; his head, his eyes, neck, back and muscles. Are the shoulder muscles equally well-developed? You should test his joints and also check the heat in his hoofs. If you have known your horse for a long time, you will immediately notice something is wrong when you get to his stall in the morning. It is as if the horse is telling you: 'I'm not well'.

If you cannot find any physical problems with your horse, but he is still stressed and gallops when racing, you will have to become a horse psychologist. In reality, you will have noticed that, simultaneously, you are always a vet, a farrier and a psychologist. As a psychologist, you will meet many other psychologists and you will realise the accuracy of the saying 'there are many sides to the truth'. It is up to you to choose the *truth* that seems best for you. You know, of course, that the *truth* you choose may not be the right one. Because of this, it is important that you are clear about what your choice is going to be and that you choose one thing at a time. If you go wrong, you will then know what you have done and it will be easier to change to something else.

Let me give you an example. The problem is the same: Your horse is stressed, he pulls and could easily break into a gallop. You think, 1: 'Poor thing, he is becoming stressed by the loud noise', and you put ear-caps on him. 2: 'Poor thing, he is hardly getting enough air when he is working so hard, of course he is getting stressed' and you place a pullcan under his chin. 3: 'Poor thing. He is galloping,

not that I know why, his trotting is normally fine. I'll take a chance and drive him unshod' and so you pull off his shoes.

It is time for the race to start. You drive him to the starting line. The race is on and you win! Hurrah! But which change won the race for you - all three changes? Or was it 1 and 2, or 2 and 3, or 1 and 3, or was it only one of them - in that case, which one? It would be best to make one change at a time, then you can better see the effect. This time it wasn't so bad because you won anyway. Of course, it's worse when it doesn't work out.

I'll suggest two more examples of psychological solutions and you can consider which solution you would choose if you had to. The problem is the same - it's about a stressed horse.

1. It is not the loud sounds that provoke the feeling of panic. It comes from unrealistic demands. The horse believes that he cannot measure up to the challenges of the race. 'Can I really manage this? Will too much be demanded of me?' These are imaginary demands, the horse will be fine. As his handler, I know this. The solution I choose is this: I believe it is better for the horse to face reality. That will help his confidence grow. Away with the wads of cotton wool and ear-caps, the horse needs to learn to face real life.

2. It is not the loud sounds that provoke the feeling of panic. It comes from unrealistic demands. The horse believes that he cannot measure up to the challenges of the race. 'Can I really manage this? Will too much be demanded of me?' These are imaginary demands, the horse will be fine. As his handler, I know this. The solution I choose is this: I will keep the ear-caps. Even if the loud noise is not the reason for the panic, it doesn't improve the situation. The noise could have a side-effect. So the ear-caps stay on. Instead, I choose to let the horse trot in a few easy races. That means I can decide to drive on the inside track and ask less of my horse, rather than too much. I believe that this will restore his confidence.

It is always a great responsibility to choose one particular interpretation. Try to be as open-minded as you can in your interpretations and in the way you try to solve the problem. It isn't so long ago that literacy problems were thought to be due to a low intellect, laziness or indifference towards schoolwork. You can imagine how those pupils were treated and it wasn't strange that they lost all interest in education. The terrible thing was that they also lost faith in themselves. They

might have become quiet and withdrawn, or loud-mouthed and rowdy, while the rest of us became even more convinced that they were stupid and troublesome.

The same can be true for horses. You have probably read, in one of your books about horses, that those with *Ramskopf* are less intelligent than those without. A horse with *Ramskopf* is one that has a high and bent nose bone. According to the general perception of beauty, this is not an attractive head. Always be on your guard if something is looked upon as not being handsome or noble in a horse. As certain as *amen* is in church, this will always be associated with bad behaviour.

It is also true that this is a human invention, being something we have read into the horse. It need not have anything to do with horses. Some people consider large ears to be a sign of stupidity and a lack of beauty. We all tend to have the preconception that donkeys are stupid and donkeys have large ears. But these days a re-evaluation has begun. Now, buyers of horses are beginning to look for horses with large ears. Why? Because *Ina Scott*, one of the best ever racehorses in Sweden, has large ears! It is probably wise to look for a racehorse with large ears if you believe that the horse runs on its ears.

If we take *Ramskopf* as an example, we can observe a detail in appearance that may indicate how a behaviour pattern can develop. A horse with *Ramskopf* will have a somewhat limited field of vision, as his nose bone gets in the way. The horse is forced to move his head more often to compensate for this. The horse also moves his eyes more frequently and this results in the whites of his eyes being accentuated. Books about horses often remark that a horse with prominent whites in his eyes, is a sly horse. Actually, he is simply a horse that has slightly impaired vision and is trying to compensate for it. Poor vision will also make the horse more uncertain and he will feel unprotected. We look upon the frightened horse as devious and not to be trusted.

The really sad thing about this misconception is that, eventually, the horse may become devious. He will notice that humans do not trust him. The horse may be hit or scolded, without him understanding why. In the end, he will lose faith in people. Then, as it did with dyslexic children, an unfortunate situation may arise. The horse begins to lose self-confidence. He no longer trusts anybody, not even himself. He becomes sly and we say: 'I told you so. I know about horses. A horse that shows the white of his eyes cannot be trusted. He's a sly horse.'

It can be as bad as this if we misinterpret a situation and as horse-handlers, it is our responsibility to be open to new explanations and to be prepared to constantly ask questions. We must realise that we always have more to learn. Do not trust a person who claims to know everything.

Jerzy Sarnecki, who visited us a few days ago, is dyslexic. Years ago in Sweden, he would have been thought of as dull and illiterate. That is how it was in his native country, Poland. Today he is a professor.

'I know something else: *MLD* (mild learning disability). My brother has *MLD*. He gets help for it. They are always explaining and bloody excusing him. But why didn't they talk to me or bother about me? Can't girls have *MLD* too?'

'It's only for boys. That's why they fight and mess up. That's what I've heard.'

'But I was the worst of all of them - even worse than the boys. I was just furious. There's nothing wrong with my brain.'

'If you haven't got one, nothing can be wrong with it!'

'Ha, ha, smartass! But seriously, I mean, I didn't feel odd. I thought I *could* bloody-well concentrate. It was just that I concentrated on the wrong things.'

'I thought it was mega-hard to concentrate at school. Sometimes I still think it is. I was no trouble. I played truant instead.'

'That's typical of us. We play truant instead of fighting. Who cares? Nobody checks if we have *MLD* too.'

I do not know if there has been any comparable brain research focussing on girls - we'll have to find out."

'First the boys, then the girls and last of all the horses. Wouldn't it be great, if just sometimes, it could be the other way around?'

## *The teaching*

---

The Horse Management course was divided into four stages. The first two stages, lasting two months each, formed the groundwork for the course. The next two stages, each spanning four months, covered the more advanced work. After that, there were in-depth specialised courses such as horse-shoeing and horse psychology. Each in-depth course lasted four months.

The student received a gold-edged certificate at the end of every successful examination. During the first six years, the certificate was signed by the Director of the Northwest Care District, Gudrun Awiti and by the Director General, Sture Korpi, for the last six years.

The examination and the announcement of the results followed a certain pattern. The day before the examination, the student chose the colour of the icing and the wording on the *gateau*, which was to be shared with guests such as a parent, a sibling or a social worker, after the examination was completed.

The Swedish flag was hoisted on the morning of the examination. The examination paper came in a sealed envelope with questions that had been selected randomly from a bank of questions. Most theory questions were answered in the clubroom into which the pupil had been welcomed. The envelope was opened, and the questions read through to eliminate any possible misunderstandings. After that, the student began answering the questions in writing. She was allowed as much time as she needed and spelling mistakes did not count.

After she had finished, I marked the paper, but I did not announce the result until lunchtime or, if the test was taken in the afternoon, until coffee time. I clinked my glass, stood up and made a short speech to the candidate and handed her the corrected paper, accompanied by applause. Then we drank coffee and ate the *gateau*. The candidate always cut the first piece and the marzipan rose that

decorated the cake was hers. A young couple had started a bakery on the outskirts of Östervåla and they had taken up the challenge of producing all the colours and wording that the students chose for their examination cakes. According to past pupils' comments, they had succeeded excellently. Nearly all past pupils kept their certificates. Many had also had theirs framed. One student had them laminated. Two students had lost them when they moved house. One student has them packed away.

Over the years, I persisted in this examination ritual; I always hoisted the flag, I always ordered the *gâteau* and always made the speech. I did these things because I thought it was important to accentuate the occasion - to take it in, not just rush through it - and to keep a tradition that acknowledged oneself and others. We liked traditions at Frossarbo Stables, from Christmas parties and end-of-year celebrations, to stopping at a particular petrol-station on the way back from the Gävle trotting course to buy special sweets and drinks.

Initially, the girls might have been slightly embarrassed by my speeches, which were not only part of the examination ritual, but for other important occasions as well. For every special occasion, I made a speech. During one of our first trips abroad, we stopped at *Eurostop* in Jönköping. We were on our way home and having a last meal together before the group was to split up. I made a speech and thanked everybody, especially the staff who had driven our bus. There were some other people at a table nearby. I wrote in my diary: 'Several of the girls felt quite embarrassed, but they tried not to show it.'

It became a tradition to end our trips abroad with a meal at *Eurostop* in Jönköping next to lake Vättern. I made many speeches at the *Taverna* there. After the last trip, I wrote: 'The girls are no longer embarrassed. They find it absolutely normal and right that I should make a speech. This time they even asked some guests at the next table to lower their voices.'

Another entry in my diary about speech-making was made just before my retirement. While we were having breakfast, one of the pupils who was feeling sad and depressed asked: "Sven, please make a speech for me. I feel really down today."

There is one more example I would like to mention, which happened a couple of years ago. I had jokingly said to one of the girls, who was about to take her examination, that I would have a word with her horse and ask him how he rated her and her studying. In my speech, I recounted what the horse had said. The girl

appreciated her horse's remarks and I didn't think any more about it. When the next girl took her examination, I made a speech as usual. After the speech, I noticed that something was wrong, but I couldn't put my finger on what it was. When we were having coffee, I asked the girl what the matter was: "You forgot to talk to my horse," she said. After this, I always had a conversation with the horse, and my speeches improved. No one could give praise and criticism with as much warmth as the horse could. If someone else is going to continue with the speeches, don't forget the horse!

Teaching can change and develop moment by moment. When I began in 1987, it was not easy to find useful and useable teaching material. I had help from Bengt Berg at the STC (Swedish Trotting Association). He let me have a newly published *Compendium of Anatomy* that he had had compiled and used for teaching aspiring trotting trainers. I was also given another compendium from the STC. Bengt had also collected many technical articles that I could photocopy, and he recommended a pamphlet on horse-shoeing, by Lars-Erik Magnusson, that he considered one of the best available in Swedish. Throughout the years we had a close working relationship at Frossarbo Stables. Whenever the STC published some new material, Bengt sent me a copy. The last publication I received reflected his own conversations with Stig H. Johanson who is, at present, the number one trainer in Sweden.

Bengt Berg was a horse trainer and, as a human being, a seeker - not a bad combination. I know this myself. On a wall in the large family room at Frossarbo Stables, hang two showcases remembering two of the all-time greats in the sport of harness racing: Sören Nordin and Delvin Miller. They still train trotters and are also seekers. I worked as an apprentice with Delvin in 1963. He was the man who instigated the American trotting 'bible': *Care and Training of Trotter and Pacer*. It was later translated into Swedish and published in two volumes, *Cham - pion 1* and *Champion 2*. Sören Nordin wrote the first book on trotting that I ever read: *Tighten the Straps*.

Then came his book, *Life in the Sulky*, which contained information about his own trotting school. Together, with Red Tomlinson's book on being a farrier, these books were the foundation for my lectures. It was at Red Tomlinson's Michigan school of horse-shoeing and through Delvin Miller's sponsorship, that I had my training in horse-shoeing.

For the inauguration of Frossarbo Stables, Sören Nordin and Delvin Miller each donated one of their racing outfits with driving helmet, goggles, driving gloves and a signed photograph, complete with good wishes. Sören's outfit was the one he wore when he won a race in a new world record time. Delvin had worn his outfit in many important races. These rare items were exhibited in the showcases. Today, one could say that these exhibits were an expression of the quality of education guaranteed at Frossarbo Stables.

Håkan Jansson was the trainer at Gävle racecourse, with whom we closely worked throughout the years. Håkan had also been an apprentice to Sören Nordin. The year before Sören moved to Italy, I visited him in the USA and he told me that he had been very close to inviting Håkan to work with him there. "Håkan was clever and he had many good qualities, but the one I valued most, was his forthrightness. He neither made excuses for, nor embellished a situation." This, in itself, must surely be a good indication of guaranteed quality.

Margareta Wallenius-Kleberg runs one of Sweden's largest and oldest trotting studs, Menhammar Stud at Ekerö, outside Stockholm. In spite of having several hundred horses, Margareta cares for each one, even those who are not successful on the racecourse. This makes her unique. Over the years, she has donated three horses to Frossarbo Stables, giving this reason: "I know the horses will have a good life with you." This could be looked upon as a guarantee of quality for the stable, just as prison ward AnnBritt Grünwald's radio greeting: "If I come back as a horse in my next life, I want to be Frossarbo Stables' horse," was for us.

In 1987, we had few Horse Management courses in Sweden. We had a horse college in Skara in the south, but now, the demand has grown and is still growing. Today, there are specialised courses such as those for horse massage, acupuncture, laser and herbal medicine and even on how to talk to horses. There are also many new textbooks on horses.

I worked as a part-time teacher in my last year at Frossarbo Stables. I promised a few of the girls, who were forced to leave Frossarbo Stables, that I would help them in distance learning. It wasn't a satisfactory deal. It became a watered-down education. All the daily reflections and evaluations disappeared and the minimum requirements for passing the examination were stretched to the limit. The way the course was organised at Frossarbo Stables, demanded the girls be resident and that the tuition be given in the form of lectures and individual dialogue between

teacher and pupil. By being together and through conversations, there were many opportunities to learn a great deal.

## *The girl and her horse*

---

The fifth signpost read: *Can the relationship with the horse be of help to a young girl who is lost?*

"Every girl cares for and has responsibility for her own horse, which is a training horse being prepared for racing. The trainer is her line manager and instructor. Everything to do with the horse is decided by the girl and her trainer, together. The trainer has the final and overall responsibility, but the practical day-to-day responsibility belongs to the girl. A girl cannot take on the care of another girl's horse. This can only happen after consultation between the girl and her trainer. A girl on the run forfeits the responsibility for her horse, but can resume the responsibility when she returns. Before a girl goes on leave, she and her trainer will decide how her horse will be looked after and by whom. The horse remains with the girl throughout her course. A girl can exchange her horse, but only if another one becomes available and if it is her turn to do so."

All of us who worked at Frossarbo Stables saw something good happen between a girl and her horse. What was it and how can it be described?

I thought of the horse firstly as a transitory object - something big and warm and reliable, that the girl could handle as she moved from her dream life into real life, something that made the transition easier, something that made it possible to dare take that step.

But the horse was also a genuine reality. The horse was a teaching aid in a genuine teaching situation. The horse was no doll or teddy bear that lived in an imaginary world. The horse had a life of his own in which he was in charge. The horse became more than a transitory object, so I decided to dispose of my glasses that had 'transitory object' written on them and replace them with glasses that had ordinary, transparent glass. My choice of these new glasses

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

resulted in me being able to sketch out the relationship between the girl and her horse without interpretations and informative captions. I made most of my sketches in the evening when I got home. I kept the decision to change my glasses to myself. Already, in an information pamphlet, I had declared that the treatment at Frossarbo Stables was founded on the British school of Object-related Theory. I still felt that my choice of 'glasses' could remain mine.

After a couple of months I wrote: 'This is dynamite. A power to blow up convictions and doctrines set in stone. At last, we are on the way to clear new ground. At last, we will see the sun and the sky. It is now a fortnight of going home feeling happy. It used to be once every two months!'

Yet, I also felt afraid. What if there was an accident? Here, I had at last found something that seemed to function. Perhaps I might lose it now? I could see the headlines: *Girl injured in accident with horse*. How can the County council allow this kind of work? How can emotionally disturbed girls be put in charge of nervous racehorses? Is a psychologist really the best person to lead a Horse Management course? Is this the way we should spend our taxes?

*Girl badly hurt*. If she died, could I still keep the Frossarbo Stables idea alive, even if I had backing? Even if I knew that we had followed every safety rule there was without fail? Even if I knew, this is how life is - to live, is to take risks - life has no guarantees. Accidents can happen to anyone at anytime. Is it not better to live with risks than to shrink into indifference? But I doubt if I would have had the strength to carry on. I would have seen the face of the girl in front of me, continually, and I would have known that if I hadn't started Frossarbo Stables, she would have lived. This feeling of fear stayed with me during all my years at Frossarbo. I could never become fully objective.

Frossarbo Stables became like a child to me, a child I was always prepared to defend, but who made me vulnerable. Professional behaviour and professional distance never gave me true protection. I was too close and too exposed. I saw opposition where there was none.

In 1996, ABC television ran a story about Frossarbo Stables. I was interviewed in the programme. The reporter asked me if everything was always as nice and cosy as it seemed to be. I heard the irony and sarcasm in her voice. I felt angry and sad. There was this smart young woman demanding we show her the magic of our stable. She wanted to check the truth of that magic. She had been with the

girls and the horses for a whole day and had sat in on the teaching, but she had not been able to see the sunbeam. Now she was pouring scorn on the whole thing. When the programme was screened, however, it had showed a tenderness and warmth that made it clear she had caught the magic and seen the sunbeam. She also commented: "I would like to be here too." After this, I found it difficult to understand how I could have gotten it so wrong.

Another good example was an interview in the *Svenska Dagbladet*. I was convinced that the article would be biased and contain innuendos. I thought the questions were negative. I even made contact with Eivor Kjellgren who, at that time, was the chairperson for the North West Care District and the political spokeswoman for Frossarbo Stables. 'Now you will have the chance to support us. Your own newspaper is on the warpath.' The next day's headline in *Svenska Dagbladet* read: *The Miracles at Frossarbo Stables*.

I was over-sensitive, that was all. During my last eighteen months at Frossarbo Stables, I was no longer the principal, but worked as a teacher. This was a deliberate decision to distance myself from the work. When my time came, I would literally disappear into the woodwork, a soft and quiet exit. I forced myself to be passive. I did not muck out any more stalls, only sometimes did I shoe a horse and I did not go to conferences. There were no more trips abroad. When the last day came, on the fourth of June 1999, I was far from ready. The pain was still raw, but it had to be.

I am telling you this because it is important that you understand that the pictures I paint are my own. They are subjective. I am their painter. They are not photographs. They are my attempt to catch and recollect what might happen between a girl and her horse. It is a meeting that has touched me. In telling you about it, I would like it to touch you too.

After one year, I wrote: 'A wild rose bush grows in the stables. It is unbending and full of life, and here, there are thistles that grow sky high. Here, there are no small, delicate potplants that we water and protect in our therapy rooms. Here is life itself. How can we make a wild rose thicket become a brilliant garden rose? Do we really want to? How do we control life?'

During my second year at Frossarbo Stables, I was invited to speak at a large youth conference. I reached the part that concerned the girl and the horse. I tried to tell the delegates about the wild rose bush, about the proud thistles, about the

strength and magic between the girl and the horse, and about all the possibilities. It was difficult. I became confused. I became more and more caught up in the wild rose bush and I became even more fervent. Whenever I become intense, my face goes red. I became more and more red. I talk fast when I am stressed. I spoke faster and faster. Eventually, I noticed how everybody in the large lecture hall had sat back in their seats - smiling kindly, but not listening. I understood that what I had wanted to say had been said. It was time to stop. Actually, that which had been said was not really that which should have been said.

That which had been said was too much like the cliché that everybody already knew: There is something special and lovely between girls and horses. Girls and horses belong together - everybody knows that. Everybody also knows that this only lasts for a short time. Then it goes away and boys take over.

That was not what I wanted to say. I wanted to say that it was much more. That it is about the whole of life. How do you tell somebody about the whole of life without getting confused? Can one talk about all of life and still appear sane? Is it possible to say something new about life and do we need to?

I intensified my sketches of the stable scenes. I felt that, slowly, the contours of a landscape came into being. I started to recognise the scenery. I found my way. 'Over there is a path. A mountain should be there. Isn't there a lake behind it?'

After five years, I presented my stable sketches for the first time. It became a picture book in five small chapters, five steps forward.

Step one: *Dare to*

Without the *dare to* step, there were no steps at all. The whole of Frossarbo Stables was founded on the *dare to* step. The *dare to* step said *yes*. It was a *yes* that meant that I was prepared to try something new. It was also a *yes* that meant I would take the risk of failing. With so many earlier failures, this *yes* might be hesitant and brittle. For many of the students, the *dare to* step was the first step on thin ice.

The *dare to* step not only said *yes* to the horse, but also said *yes* to the whole life at Frossarbo Stables. Because of the horse, the step was taken. It was the horse that made it possible for the girl to dare to walk on thin ice. On the horse she

would be okay. If the ice broke, the horse, with its hoofs beneath, would be her security.

For some girls, just getting near the horse was a step of courage. Until then, the horse had often been a picture on the wall above the bed. Then it is suddenly there - a live horse, big, powerful and moving. It becomes: *Dare to go near*.

The circumstances around this step dictated that whatever time was needed, was given - there was no forcing the issue. One of the girls needed more than two months before she dared to lead the horse herself. With one hand, we simply held the girl's hand and with the other, we led the horse. We were with her as she got to know her horse. We helped her to lift the hoofs. We drove together. At last, one day, she had the courage to go to the horse by herself. It was a great moment for her and for us, when she took her *dare to step*.

I believe I am right in saying that there was no sense of compulsion in the stable. Or, as one of the girls remarked: 'It's great not to have Allan here, not to have to show off.'

Horses are large animals that invite respect. In certain situations, anyone can feel frightened. Everyone had the right to ask for help. Everyone helped each other. A common question was: "I feel a bit uncertain today. Can you help me please?" My sketches indicate that this often seemed to happen on Mondays. The girls who had been away over the weekend frequently asked this question, especially if they were not yet used to the horses. Perhaps, having been away for a while, they felt unsure when they approached the horse again. During the interviews I conducted later, some of the girls did marvel at their own courage. 'When I see horses on television, I sometimes think: *Fancy, I have ridden and looked after a big animal like that*. I can't help feeling quite impressed with myself, that I actually dared to.'

Every seventh girl, that is, one every eighteen months, did not manage the first two months at Frossarbo Stables. This was not because they didn't take the *dare to step* with the horses, the reasons were often drugs or family problems. The girl whose hand we had held, stayed with us for three years. During that time, she acquired a bad habit while grooming her horse. She used to crawl under him when he was standing in the stable gangway. She had to work on this bad habit and succeeded, at least, when adults were present.

Step two: *Power*

The *dare to step* leads to being able to look after the horse everyday. The girl becomes more and more relaxed. Suddenly, one day, she discovers that she has got *power*. Her horse obeys her. It seems incredible, but it is true. 'Damn, I can get this big hulk to walk where I want him to. He stops when I want him to. Look, now he turns, now he stops.'

My sketches show the girls' happiness and also how they marvel. 'Is this really true?' And the delight in showing others: 'Come! See!' It is the happiness of having *power* - not the omnipotent child's desire for complete power. This power is painted in different hues. Again, the horse is no doll or teddy bear. You cannot do anything you want to with a horse, a big training horse. You can sit on him, but you cannot set yourself above him. The horse sets his own boundaries.

I sketched: 'If I'm going to cope with the real world, at least more often, and not be beaten all the time, it will be an advantage to have a superwoman alongside me in my fantasy world - except my superwoman has a thousand and one excuses not to venture out into the real world. Together with my horse, I become strong, just like a superwoman. The horse gives me power, in spite of knowing that I'm no superwoman. Together with my horse, I can do whatever I want to. I can feel fear and awe. But it is a new kind of fear - in it there is a reflection of a sunbeam.'

The attitude towards *power* in the stable was not just enjoyment of the feeling of *power*, but also showed that with *power*, comes responsibility and co-operation. The horse gives you *power* and trusts you to use it well to do what you consider best. Conflicts must never become a battle for *power*.

Step three: *Friendship*

'You and I. Us two against the world, but also in the world. I'm no longer on my own with my hurt and pain. I'm no longer alone with my thoughts. I dare to think thoughts and to express them completely without stopping halfway. You are my friend who listens and who understands even though you cannot reply. Others may think that you don't understand but I know that you do. You understand in your own way, but you do understand. When Johan ended our relationship, I read his letter to you. You came to me and pulled the letter away with your

mouth. You were right. Why should I cry over Johan? He was not worth my tears. Johan was not much of a boyfriend.

I've spent many nights with you in the stall. I crept in and nobody knew. I couldn't sleep and I was anxious and sad. It was dark and I felt alone. With you, I never feel alone. Us two, you and I. There is no need to bother about Johan or all the others. I have you. You make me feel free.

We can play games together. I am really too old for games, yet, with you I can. I'll pretend that you are the unhappiest and most hurt horse in the world. But then we meet and you become the fittest and most handsome horse in the world. No one is as well groomed as you are. No one has as many beautiful rosettes in the mane as you do. No one has such a well-oiled bridle and saddle as you have. And we win victories, you and I. We win at the trotting course. We win steeplechases. This is a favourite game. It is our favourite game.

Before, I was afraid I might lose you. I was afraid you would like someone else more than me. That is why I always came back after every weekend. Many times, I didn't really want to come back, but I had to come. I did not want any one else to stroke you. Now there is no question about it. I belong here because you are here. Many weekends I do not even bother to go off. I'd rather be here with you. I am not afraid of losing you to someone else anymore, but sometimes I can't understand you. Do you remember last week? I came up to the stable in the morning and you were ever so grumpy. You turned your back on me when I came in. I was cross. The way I have spoilt you and made up to you and you turned your back on me. That was bloody ungrateful. I expected a bit of friendliness. I shouted at you then. Lina, who was mucking out the next stall, turned to me and said: *You should see yourself! You looked like thunder when you came in this morning. If I had been Silver, I'd have turned away too. Who wants to meet a thundercloud?*

I thought a lot about that. I had already been cross at breakfast. It was about something silly. I was still angry when I got to the stable. Did it still show? I have a hard time understanding that. It's perhaps me I ought to shout at.'

When one of the pupils was interviewed after she had left Frossarbo Stables, she sketched the following:

'Scotten was my mate. That's how I felt. I could be with him all the time. I had never failed him. I always had someone to talk to. There was always someone there. Scotten was big but I was never afraid. I had to stand on a chair when I put his snaffle on. Scotten never gave me nasty looks and he never made me unhappy. I worked with him in the way I liked to. We went for walks in the woods. I could let him walk alone, without a lead. He followed me like a dog. Sometimes he would nudge me. That made me feel wonderful. He really was my best friend. He trusted me. That's why he risked following me.'

The attitude of the stable towards this third step, was to respect and affirm the girl's *friendship* with the horse. The teaching emphasised that, while the horse was a friend, he was not a human friend, but a horse friend.

Step four: *Responsibility*

The step of *responsibility* is a step that describes a beginning - a beginning which opens up to life. It is to take a closed door and open it halfway, and then have the courage to open it wide. It is to understand that the horse is completely dependent on humans and that we take complete *responsibility* for him. It is also to realise that we can comprehend and solve problems in various ways, that the truth is seldom one-sided and that life is not simply coloured black or white.

'I begin to understand that I literally have responsibility for someone else's life. It really is up to me. I also begin to understand that Pysen is not the world's best horse in everything. He has his bad side, just like any human being. He is, after all, just a horse.'

The *responsibility* step glides into:

Step five: *The I-step*

With this step, the girl arrives. She has become the world's best horse-handler. She can look after and care about another being's life. She can look after a horse.

'We understand each other, Pysen and I. I look after Pysen.'

During 1992, we began planning for another Frossarbo Stables in the County council of Stockholm. This time, however, for girls of school-going age who had been taken into compulsory care. There were many inquiries for such place - ments. At a meeting with prospective staff for this 'new' Frossarbo Stables, I showed my sketches for the first time. By then I had divided them into six steps.

But the following year, when I addressed the National Association of Social Pedagogues in Denmark, the six steps had become five. I combined the *responsibility* step with something I called the *relationship* step. After that, there was a time when I felt that the *responsibility* step could better be named the *parental* step. I changed my mind again and showed different sketches on different occasions. I now have five steps and I am calling the fourth, the step of *responsibility* and the fifth, *the I step*.

These steps try to show a picture with several layers and several parallel processes. This picture tries to catch both the girl's road to becoming a horsehandler and her own road to building her own life.

'I also have the right to exist. I know that I'm okay. I can say *yes* and *no* better than before. I feel I can take more responsibility for my own life. I know it can be difficult, but I also know that it's hard for everybody.'

The fifth step can be described in four words: *I look after myself*.

This is the obvious and logical last step, but it is debatable whether, that which seems obvious and logical, also exists. It is a temptation to allow reality to be, just for once, both logical and good. Although it's a logical conclusion, I don't know if it's possible to take this last step. The girl learns to look after the horse. She learns to understand the horse and to like him for himself. During this process, she also learns to understand herself and to like herself for the person she is. She does not only look after the horse, she starts to care for herself too. This is the expected outcome - the therapeutic idea of Frossarbo Stables.

The step model leads to the concept of a goal. We walk towards a goal and we arrive. When we arrive, everything is ready and done - a happy ending - we pick up our mats and walk. What is successful treatment? Using the step model, we almost have an operational definition. A successful treatment at Frossarbo Stables is to reach step five. But this step is not an absolute. It is still something individual and personal. Each girl takes step five in her own particular way. *The I step* probably needs to be explained in more than four words. As usual, I will use the girls' own words - from my sketchpad and from television.

'I feel I have become stronger in myself. I am not going to be a junkie who doesn't give a damn about anything but dope. I want to have a family and manage myself.'

*THE GIRL AND THE HORSE*

---

'I know that I can achieve some things. I'm not as stupid as everybody else makes out. I know that if I give myself time and take it easy, then I'll manage.'

'I'm afraid I might mess up, but I think I'll have a chance. This is something I never believed before.'

## *The researcher and the practitioner*

---

The researcher is a habitual collector. The practitioner is a habitual spender. Therefore the role of researcher/practitioner is two-pronged. Dualism causes tension, but which part is dominant? As situations vary, so does the dominance. But the tension is always there. I will provide a couple of examples.

One theory contains several concepts. These concepts are like great seas around which the theory moves, producing insights, explanations and predictions.

When young people are diagnosed using *borderline terminology*, the idea of *projected identification* arises. This is a belief developed within Klein's concept of *Psychoanalytical Theory* and indicates an unconscious fantasy to transfer one's own psychological state onto another person, in order to control that person. In this context, I will approach *projected identification*, not from a strictly theoretical perspective, but from the clinical, everyday context.

A quick sketch of *projected identification* could look like this: A person cannot cope with never-ending misery. Her own misery, her hatred and her black bile are destroying her. One way to escape this destruction is to project her blackness onto something outside of herself. 'There is nothing wrong with me. It is someone else.'

This is a mechanism that may become horrendously destructive: 'Anyone who is hit by my darkness will be cursed, sad and frightened, and that fits in with what I know. The darkness is not mine, it's yours. It's you who is cursed. The whole world can be full of evil and spiteful people. One of these spiteful people may act in a way that will make something more out of the darkness, having the strength to absorb it. If they still want to build a relationship, not as an enemy, but as a friend, then perhaps it becomes possible for me to own some of the darkness. Perhaps it will not be too dangerous. Perhaps it will be possible to manage.'

Young people with borderline problems often use *projected identification* to try to manage intense feelings and experiences by perceiving them as dark or light. 'The enemies I have now are all dark. At this moment my friends and I are all light.' The concept of *projected identification* shows, in principle, how painful it is to experience these moods of total dark and total light. In favourable circumstances, we humans develop an understanding of ourselves and we become less dogmatic and more sensitive. The perception of total dark or total light, however, still exists, therefore it can be very painful to be subjected to *projected identification*. A therapeutic goal can be to see and understand how *projected identification* works and how to find the strength to accept some of the darkness and make it less dark.

This is very hard to do. It is not easy to internalise an interpretation when you are enraged and it is important to safeguard those occasions when it could be possible. I like to talk about occasions when it was possible to understand that an enemy was, in fact, not an enemy and that an enemy and a friend could sit in the same sulky and drive a horse together.

Among my notes, I have a slip of paper clipped to a page and at the top of the paper is the word *Experiment*. I had tried an experiment. I wanted to explore, and demonstrate, the black or white effect of *projected identification*. If I was successful, would it be possible to use the results to formulate an explanation, one that would resonate among the girls?

The girl and her horse had become a single concept. If Pysen was mentioned, then Pia was included. If someone talked of Karin, Silver was included. Once I wrote that, if two girls have a conflict, their horses seem to be part of that conflict as well. 'You are shit and so is your horse.' The way I perceived someone's horse, was coloured by whom this someone was. A girl, who believed all the horses in the stable to be worthless, except her own, maybe indicated something more than just her opinion of the other horses.

For the experiment, a group, consisting of seven pupils, was established. We had been oversubscribed. There was annoyance and irritation among the girls. A few students had left and whenever the pupil group changed, the conflicts between them increased along with the risk of being *got at*. New *best friend* relationships were formed and there was always the risk of someone being left out. There was

no need to love everyone at Frossarbo Stables, but you did need to respect everyone. An odd number was not usually a good factor either.

During the day, I let the girls rate the horses on a scale of one to ten, where ten was liked the best. The rating was done fairly unobtrusively; during conversations in the exercise sulky, while shoeing or at coffee time in the clubroom.

In the afternoon, we held a full council meeting. Here we spoke about the conflict within the group, what the reasons might be and what we could do to restore a good atmosphere. During the meeting, it became very clear which pupils loved each other and which pupils hated each other. I wrote sideways in the margin of the experiment record: 'Thank heavens they are in groups'. I don't think that it was an exclamation of joy from the researcher in me who saw the possibility of group data and statistical analysis. Rather, it was an expression of relief, as I thought it would be much worse for a girl if she became an outsider. If there are groups, there is a battle for power and the girls become engaged in this. They fight and all hell is let loose. Still, they are communicating and some good can come of it. To be attacked by the whole group and to be alone and an outsider, is destructive. No good comes from being *got at*. The only good comes when it stops.

The grouping was strong; two against two, but with some weaker hangers-on it became three against three. The seventh girl refused to have anything to do with either group. 'You're real babies! The way you're carrying on. You just go ahead. I have my horse. I don't give a damn about your silliness.'

On this basis, I divided the girls into two groups: Group A and group B. In group A, I awarded one point for every horse in each girl's top ten list that corresponded to her choice of friend. In group B, the preferred friendships were the opposite and the choice of the girl's horse was also counted. The horse had the same value as its handler.

Clipped to the record of the experiment, is another piece of paper with a new top ten list of *I like*. This one is from the lecture the day after. I let the girls make an open top ten list of *I like* for the horses.

I had thought about doing a *Chi Square* test, where the figures are put into a grid system. *Chi Square* is a way of calculating the probability between expected and factual values and it is a method that works well for assessing groups, but this

*THE GIRL AND THE HORSE*

---

group of girls was too small. Because of this, I did not make any statistical calculations. It was not necessary, as the correlation was obvious. The anger against another girl also included that girl's horse. It can also be seen that, in the *open* list, the grouping of the horses was even more obvious. This was how it looked:

*Private rating in jogcart:*

*(Girl and horse have the same number)*

	+	-
<i>Girl 1</i>	123456	
<i>Girl 2</i>	214356	<i>Group A</i>
<i>Girl 3</i>	354216	
<i>Girl 4</i>	462531	
<i>Girl 5</i>	543621	<i>Group B</i>
<i>Girl 6</i>	645231	

*Open rating in group:*

<i>Girl 1</i>	123456	
<i>Girl 2</i>	213546	<i>Group A</i>
<i>Girl 3</i>	312546	
<i>Girl 4</i>	462531	
<i>Girl 5</i>	546321	<i>Group B</i>
<i>Girl 6</i>	645231	

These results demonstrate group pressure, do they not?

It was important to show the girls what I had discovered. Could they not see that they were hitting out at those who were innocent; that their anger said more about their own unhappiness than about nasty horses and that, in reality, they all carried the same burden of misery and fear?

I would like to believe that some of the girls took this experiment to heart. It took time. It didn't happen overnight. When I got home after the lecture that evening, I wrote in the margin of the experiment record: 'It was not water I poured over that fire, it was petrol.'

The experiment stopped there. The practitioner in me was content. I felt that I had found something that could be useful, but the researcher in me wanted more. I could investigate this further, expand it and not let it stop after one

attempt, but the practitioner in me did not have the time. The practical work was always there, demanding time and effort. It was difficult to give the researcher space.

There were no more experiments on *projected identification*, although there was one on *influence*. At a lecture, we had discussed the possibility of discerning the identity of the handler by the way her horse behaved. The discussion inspired the researcher in me and I formulated a research hypothesis: 'Tell me about your friends and I will tell you who you are.' My intention was to present the experiment as a research report.

One of the most constant correlations we have when we research criminal youth behaviour, is between their own behaviour and that of their criminal friends. The more friends they have who are criminals, the likelier it is that they will become one. The list of research papers that confirm this is long: (Akers et al, 1979; Elliott et al, 1985; Erickson & Empey, 1965; Hepburn, 1977; Jensen, 1972; Johnson, 1979; Matsueda & Heimer, 1987; Reiss & Rhodes, 1964; Short, 1957; Tittle et al, 1986 and Voss, 1964 among others.)

In spite of good documentation on the correlation between criminal behaviour and criminal friends, the mechanism behind the transference of criminality is surprisingly poorly mapped. A theory that is often referred to when trying to explain this phenomenon, is Sutherland's theory of *differential association* (Sutherland, 1947). The theory points out the importance of friends and close social bonds. Sutherland worked with the concept of attitude and his theory was that a positive attitude towards a certain behaviour pattern is necessary for this behaviour to ensue. However, there are objections to this hypothesis. Is not the correlation between attitude and behaviour more complex? It is not very difficult to assume that young people may participate in criminal activities in circumstances that are bound up with the situation in which they find themselves, without actually believing their behaviour to be right. Even if a positive attitude towards criminal behaviour is a necessary condition for criminal behaviour, this does not mean that it is sufficient reason. Many criminologists concur that criminal behaviour depends both on motivation and opportunity, for example, Cloward & Ohlin, 1960 and Cohen & Felson, 1979.

Sutherland's theory underlines the importance of the *influence* of attitude in the transference of a behaviour pattern. In the *Social Acquisition Theory*, on the

other hand, the importance of imitated behaviour is stressed. Transference of attitudes is not a necessity here. The influence of peer behaviour is usually found in theories about collective behaviour and group processes, for example Briar & Piliavin, 1965; Gold, 1970 and Liska, 1981. The differences between Sutherland's theory and the others, can be stated in the following way:

Do I imitate a friend's or many friends' behaviour because of what they think or believe, or is it their behaviour *per se* that I imitate?

It is worth noticing that hardly any research has considered both attitude and actions. This has made it difficult to provide a simple answer to the question: What influences us the most, what our friends think or what they do? This question touches on one of the basic tenets of environmental therapeutic work. Is it possible for an environmental therapist to get away with 'do as I say, but not as I live'?

I also formulated the method and the quality level of the expected data.

In my experiment, I would try to collect material that would throw light on this question. The investigation would, of course, be very limited and I wouldn't expect definite answers. However, I hoped for some exciting material that could constitute an interesting basis for discussion and knowledge that could initiate new research. I was going to use the rich environment for therapy that Frossarbo Stables offered. I was going to home in on the point in the treatment where older pupils adapt a teaching role for the younger ones. Over time, I would be able to see the effect of a friend/teacher relationship, where attitude and behaviour did not concur. What would the outcome be for the friends? I would evaluate attitudes and through participatory observations, judge behaviour and actions.

It started well for the researcher. Older pupils liked to teach the young ones, especially when they had to prepare for an examination. When the researcher began his study, there were two teacher/pupil relationships, one where attitude and behaviour concurred and one where they did not. Both pupils passed their exams with flying colours and their attitude toward the horses and the teaching were in complete agreement. The pupil-teachers were proud and happy. I made a note of this and carried on the experiment. As a practitioner, however, I could not carry on. I burnt my bridge the next day at the coffee break, after the lecture, when I asked the pupils:

“Do you think you are likely to imitate or be influenced by a friend and, if so, is it because of what she says or because of what she does? This is what I mean. We all know what we say and do are not always the same things. What is more important, what I say or what I do?”

Then one of the girls looked at me and said:

“You have been thinking about this for some time haven't you? That's why you've been asking all these questions about our revision and our teaching. I think you ask the wrong questions. It has nothing to do with what we think and do. It has to do with *liking* someone or *not liking* him or her. If you like someone, you will try to do what she says because you know that is what she wants and because you like her. If you don't like her, it doesn't matter. You don't take any notice. You just get on and do your own thing. It all depends on whether you like someone. But sometimes you do things because you are afraid and you think you might be left behind. But that's not genuine. That's not the real you.”

I liked her answer. I thought it was a wise answer. But I was annoyed with myself as a researcher. How much better it would have been if I had been able to support my pupil's wise answer with my research. This wisdom would now have to stay in the woodlands of Uppland.

I sometimes regretted not separating the role of researcher and practitioner better at the start. I could, perhaps, have tried to secure funding for a research post alongside the work I was already doing. I don't think that I fully understood the schism inside me. Even more, I don't think I comprehended the intensity of daily life at the stables. So much had to be done. It was obvious that being so closely involved, my complete attention would be demanded at all times.

In Lars-Erik Lundmark's *friendship* book, Goran Odbratt talks about the problem a researcher has in truly describing what is happening. He uses an image from Jules Verne's book, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. The researcher is down there in the deep, sitting behind a window of thick glass in the library of Captain Nemos. Outside the window, he sees a panorama of strange water creatures. He is there and yet he is not there. He is in one reality, the water creatures are in another. When I see this image, I understand that I may have missed a unique opportunity. With me in the water and with a researcher behind a panoramic window, we would have been able to communicate between two realities.

### *To see the answers*

---

Frossarbo Stables started as a three-year project in the autumn of 1987. After three years, the project was to be evaluated and a decision taken as to whether the work at Frossarbo Stables would continue or not. The project was part of the so-called *Section 12* custodial care with the Stockholm Metropolitan Council in control.

The responsibility for institution-based custodial care of young persons had been transferred from the State to County and District councils. The Stockholm Metropolitan Council was the body that was in charge of the region around Stockholm. In the planning of resources for controlled care that preceded the take-over from the State, it was noted that between one hundred and one hundred and twenty young persons from Stockholm were placed in state-run young offenders' schools every year. As these schools were to be spread out over the country, Stockholm pressed for three in order to meet its needs. The schools were primarily placed according to the *neighbourhood principle*.

In the region of Stockholm, there was one school for young persons in care. It was Hammargården in Ekerö and was assigned to Stockholm. The district council of Uppsala had two schools; Bärby and Eknäs. It was believed that Uppsala would only need one school to meet its needs. Eknäs was chosen. The county of Sörmland also had two schools; Håkanstorp and Lövsta, but needed only one. Håkanstorp was chosen. Bärby and Lövsta both came under the control of Stockholm.

Within this new organisation, a compilation of continuing data was begun for all young persons who came to Hammargården, Bärby and Lövsta. This data system was called the *workhorse*. A couple of years after the take-over by County and District councils, a re-organisation in the Metropolitan Council of Stockholm

resulted in five independent Care Districts. The three schools were initially divided up; Bärby was assigned to the North West District, Hammargården to the Western District and Lövsta to the South West District. However, it became cumbersome to administer a compulsory care system (*Section 12* care schools) over such a wide area. Because of this, all the *Section 12* institutions were put in one Care District - the North West. Leif Birgander became the Head of the new *Section 12* secretariat, which he had set up, and was also Head of the Social Services for this district. The director for the North West District was Gudrun Awiti.

The seminar I attended in the USA had taken place in February 1986 and in March of that year, I presented my thoughts about an institution for girls to Gudrun Awiti. She immediately warmed to the idea, contributing largely to the fact that, by the following year, Frossarbo Stables was able to accept its first pupils. Another supporter was Leif Birgander. I asked him to formulate a possible standard against which Frossarbo Stables could be judged, the criteria for which should consist of realistic and objective data, not subjective evaluations that might give rise to difficulties in interpretation. The standard should reflect the demands and expectations that he, being in a position of responsibility, would have of the work of a *Section 12* care institution. I also asked Leif Birgander to set the best possible outcomes against every variable. My hypotheses were to be measured against these best possible outcomes.

They were to be rough and ready assessments, but, even so, they were to identify something very important. Above all, as the managing director and the person responsible, they had to be Leif Birgander's own - after three years, he would have to propose whether Frossarbo Stables would have a place in the *Section 12* care system or not.

The criteria became the following:

*1. Placement inquiries*

Frossarbo Stables was to be an open-treatment alternative to compulsory care, with places for six pupils. If the average yearly intake was more than four-point-two placements during the three-year trial period, Frossarbo Stables would fall within the range of what was considered *best*.

## 2. Number of staff

Staff considered essential for an open institution was set at a ratio of ten to twelve. Below this, the figure was deemed *special*, but could not be called *best*. Best in a financial sense perhaps, but not otherwise.

## 3. Attendance

If there were fewer than ten students who absconded every year for three years, Frossarbo Stables would remain within the margins of *best*.

## 4. Leave of absence

At most *Section 12* homes, leave of absence was allowed for one to seven days every second month, depending on how the inmate had responded to life in an institution. The leave could be seen as a test of how the young person coped. The range for *best*, was from zero to ten failed leaves per year.

## 5. Assistance from a closed unit

In certain crisis situations, an open institution may make use of a closed unit to keep the young person in situ for a short time. Less than three such placements would put Frossarbo Stables in the *best* category.

## 6. Period of treatment

Here it was impossible to talk about a *best* range, unless the evaluation of the final outcome was seen in relation to the aim of the treatment. The length of treatment had to be measured against the young person's co-operation. At Frossarbo Stables, the youngsters always had the choice of continuing or not. An average of a one-year treatment period was judged to be evidence that the pupil had co-operated and that the choice of treatment had worked.

## 7. Time for re-grouping and re-starting

In the *Section 12* care system, it often happened that a unit had to re-evaluate, re-organise and re-think. If Frossarbo Stables needed less than sixty-five working days during the three years for re-grouping and re-starting, it would fall within the *best* range.

8. Media interest

*Section 12* care continually attracted the attention of the press. If there were more than three favourable reports or less than three negative ones during three years, Frossarbo Stables would come within the *best* range.

The trial period was complete at the end of 1990. Frossarbo Stables was to be evaluated and its future decided. Was Frossarbo Stables going to be given a place within the *Section 12* care system? Then, something extraordinary happened. There was no need for an evaluation procedure, as Frossarbo Stables had already become an integral part of the *Section 12* care system. During the trial period, we had attracted attention through many positive articles in the press. The Conservative and Liberal County council, who had once been negative towards the idea of Frossarbo Stables, now presented Frossarbo Stables on regional television as an example of their ability to bring about new ideas for the *Section 12* care system. We had praise not vilification!

This remarkable thing also happened to me, a researcher who waived an evaluation. I had made hypotheses and put forward questions. I had statistics and examples to elucidate and answer to. I had been to America, both in 1988 and 1989, and had discussed my ideas with Richard Blum.

I was booked for a seminar in 1990. Even so, I agreed not to produce a proper evaluation and moreover, I was content with this. My official reason was that the material from the trial period was still scant and ought to be more comprehensive. This was partly true, but the decisive motive was that I felt I had too little time and thus, no real desire.

When searching for words to explain why I had little time and not much desire, I find it hard to find the right ones. The only words that spring to mind are *spirited away*. I believe I had been *spirited away*: It is an old saying. Humans and animals sometimes disappear mysteriously - *spirited away* into the mountains, captured by a mountain king. But there was no mountain king who had captured me. The sunbeams in the stable had done that. I wanted to try to describe the power that comes from the interaction between a horse and a girl. This was the great and important thing. It wasn't only the researcher in me who had found something new and interesting he wanted to try out, it was something much more. I think it was that, all my working life, I had worked within the compulsory care system for young people, and now, I had been part of something that worked and gave hope

for the future. We had found something that made it possible for us to talk about how clever our young people were and the steps forward they were taking. We no longer needed to be part of the misery that always seemed to hit the dark headlines: *Our teenagers get worse and worse* - headlines that seemed to have the effect of making us create more secure units, rather than make more trustworthy methods of treatment.

After five years, I was able to make a preliminary presentation of the *five-step model*. In Denmark, I presented a more official presentation at the annual conference of the National Institute of Social Pedagogues. Sture Korpi, recently appointed Director-General for a new public body, SiS (The National Board of Institutional Care), was among the delegates. On the first of April 1994, the compulsory care institutions for young people were transferred back to the State from the County and District councils. SiS now controlled these institutions. Before my transference as its principal, my intention had been to write about wild roses, proud thistles and horses.

After I left Frossarbo Stables in 1999, there was a break in the continuity of staff. The new management had its own ideas on how to run Frossarbo Stables, and they were quite different to those I had called the *Frossarbo Model*. In one sense, I believe the new management did the right thing. You cannot work in a system you have no faith in; you cannot be forced to imitate someone else, and the *Frossarbo Model* had gone.

It then became important for me not to just write about wild roses, proud thistles and horses, but to put the *Frossarbo Model* in its original context, so I have brought back the old signposts and given the *Section 12* standard a dusting. Objections can be made against the *Section 12* standard - it was designed more than twelve years ago and it was meant to last for only three years. The boundaries for what was considered *best*, were rudimentary and personal. The objective was to find out if Frossarbo Stables, in spite of its uniqueness, could fit into the official compulsory care system. The point was not to create an absolute standard against which all other *Section 12* institutions could be compared and discussed. It was also not done from a co-educational point of view. In 1987, all institutions catered for both sexes. Today, a fully worked-out standard may well have a different view. Only the future will tell.

Today, the evaluations use material from over ten years instead of three and talk about forty-seven girls, not fourteen. But what answers showed the strength of our students? What would an answer that pointed to a captured sunbeam look like? One answer could be the very decision to choose Frossarbo Stables and then cope with the first two months. Frossarbo was a difficult and a tough choice - full of demands. As a new pupil, you had to learn how to manage a large amount of freedom and extensive personal responsibility. You were expected to deal with both fulltime education and a proper job.

It is not easy to catch a sunbeam with one simple answer, but with several simple answers it might be easier. If it is not possible to tie the sunbeam to the place directly, perhaps it may be possible to do it indirectly via a chain of indicators. The variables in the *Section 12* standard will have to be a chain of indicators, together with some assessments from the *it does not work* test. These are *manage the education, succeed in living in a students' house without staff* and *cope with a tough work trip abroad*. I am building my report on a chain of indicators from which I am also using results from the *it isn't working* test.

### 1. Placement Inquiries

Did any of the girls, sentenced to compulsory treatment, come to Frossarbo Stables? Was it possible to start chasing sunbeams? Yes, they came and yes, it was possible to chase sunbeams. After the first six months and up to the end of the tenth year, Frossarbo Stables was fully occupied. We could treat six girls at a time. We had constant inquiries, even during the period 1990 to 1992, when the need for compulsory care places in Stockholm decreased. In the *number 5* research report from the *Section 12* secretariat, it was shown that Frossarbo Stables was the only institution where there had been a notable increase in inquiries for places. Our annual average always fluctuated above the set norm. It lay between five-point-two and six. We pulled our weight and we chased our sunbeams.

### 2. Number of staff

During the first year, we carried a staff of four-point-five. During the next two years, it was six-point-five. This meant that during the three-year trial period, the average number of staff was five-point-eight and during the ten-year period, seven-point-eight. This meant that Frossarbo Stables cost much less to run than any other *Section 12* home. The running cost of the stable was equivalent to the

salary of one staff member and the horses were mostly donations, saving the state several millions of Swedish kronor over ten years.

### 3. Attendance

Very few youngsters absconded from Frossarbo Stables. On the fifteenth of December 1987, however, two of the girls walked the six-mile-long road down to our nearest village and caught a bus from there to the town of Uppsala. One of the girls had a friend who had gone to America and was supposed to live a high life. It was there the girls intended to go. One result of this getaway was a lesson in geography! Other than this incident, the girls rarely ran away. Not once, during the ten years, did we get to ten girls absconding in a year. A survey by SiS, showed that, in three annual institutional reports, we had no girls absconding. Any absences were in connection with a specific pupil in a specific situation and then, nearly always during the first few weeks. Most of the pupils remained with us, this, in spite of their *distress diagnosis*.

### 4. Leave of Absence

We never spoke of *leave of absence* at Frossarbo Stables. Every sixth week, each pupil had stable duty. During that time, she had to be at Frossarbo. All other weekends, apart from the first couple of weekends after she had arrived, were free. We decided, together with the girl, if she had a good alternative place where she could go, or if she would rather stay at Frossarbo Stables.

Many weekends, the pupils could go home, visit a friend or relative, or go to one of our weekend homes that we sometimes had an opportunity to use. At the end of the weekend, the girls always came back. They sometimes forgot the time and the return journey could be delayed, but they contacted us and they did return. In spite of having more leave of absence per pupil than was usual in *Section 12* homes, we never reached ten failed leaves in any of the ten years. This, again, is in spite of their *distress diagnosis*.

"It was extraordinary that they always came back. After all, they had only been there for a relatively short time and they were girls who had been on the run most of the time and had hidden away. But they actually came back." Those were the thoughts of Bert Jansson, who had started at Bärby in 1964. He was a farmer who had re-trained. When I went there to take up my post as chief psychologist in 1970, Bert was one of the supervisors for the carpentry workshop. As I went

around greeting everybody, I remember having been warned about Bert. I was told to be cautious about the chaps in carpentry. They were a rum lot. The warning had been correct and the strangest of them all was Bert. After a few months, however, I discovered that he had a heart of gold. Bert was the only one who I personally asked to come and work with me when I was about to start Frossarbo Stables. This was in the late spring of 1986. I had introduced my thoughts about Frossarbo Stables to the whole staff at Bärby. Bert refused my invitation. He thought the idea mad. I was disappointed: In madness, it is good to have someone to rely on. Early in the autumn, Bert phoned: "Okay, I'll come along. After six months you'll be closing anyway. I might as well use that time to hang about with you as I would at Bärby." Bert was to remain as stable manager until he retired in October 1995.

Going back to his thoughts, my answer had always been the same: "Now you can see what power there is in the relationship with a horse. Of course the girls will come back - they have to look after their horses." During my interviews with the girls after they had left Frossarbo, I found another dimension to this. 'Of course we had to come back. Don't you understand? We were afraid that, if we weren't there, one of the other girls would worm her way into our horse's affections.'

##### *5. Assistance from a closed unit*

During the ten-year period, we used the closed unit at Hammargården three times; twice in connection with the same pupil. Her treatment at Frossarbo Stables had reached a crisis. The girl refused to co-operate and ran away. She was posted as wanted by the police and, when found, she was placed at Hammargården. On these occasions we were very careful to affirm that this had nothing to do with punishment or an attempt to make someone afraid. It was based solely on what treatment was the best for her under the circumstances. Was Frossarbo Stables the right place for this girl, or were there, at that stage, better alternatives? The staff at Frossarbo Stables did not make the decision. It was up to the staff at Hammargården to decide, together with the girl. If it was thought that Frossarbo Stables was the best place for the girl, then she would always be welcomed back. It was important that the staff at the closed unit were not cast in the role of 'punishing sods', where there would have been no winners, either for the adults or the girls. Our girl came back.

#### 6. *Period of treatment*

The average period of treatment at Frossarbo Stables lasted between eighteen months and two years.

#### 7. *Time for re-grouping and re-starting*

During the ten years, we never had to stop our work. We never needed to demand time to re-group or to re-start.

#### 8. *Media interest*

During the three-year trial period, attention was drawn to Frossarbo Stables through articles in the five largest daily newspapers, in weekly magazines and in professional journals covering both psycho-social work and horseracing. I did not completely avoid the request to provide an evaluation after three years. As I had received funding for the trial period from the National Department of Social Services, an outcome had to be shown. Leif Birgander understood my perceived lack of time and he suggested that we accumulate all the articles about Frossarbo Stables and present this compilation as a first evaluation. It became a colourful record with the title: *Frossarbo Stables and the Media: The creation of a compulsory care home reflected through journals and the weekly and daily press from 1986 to 1990.*

In the preface, Leif Birgander gives the reason for his suggestion: "Why not use the various newspaper articles about Frossarbo Stables to describe and document the first years? Trained observers have seen the work at Frossarbo independently of each other and on different occasions. These observers are also able to express themselves in writing."

During the following seven years, another ten articles appeared; three radio programmes and about ten on television, three of which were fifteen minute reports. All were positive.

#### *The education: A link in the chain of indicators.*

The first educational examination came between six and eight weeks. It consisted of a written theory test and a practical test. The written test was concerned with the horse's anatomy - with bones and joints. It was made up of six different pictures where the girls had to name the various bones and joints. About fifty names had to be remembered. The practical test was to harness the horse to a

sulky. There were seven girls who did not manage the first two months at Frossarbo Stables. The failures usually occurred during the first weeks. All failures ended in a meeting where, together, the decision to choose Frossarbo Stables was revoked, but where a promise was also given that, should the girl's interest be rekindled at a later date, it would be possible for her to return. The other forty girls all succeeded in their first examinations, both the theoretical and the practical. This, in spite of their *distress diagnosis*.

*To manage independent living: A link in the chain of indicators.*

We had three dwellings at Frossarbo Stables; one very large and two smaller ones. The two smaller houses were close together, the manor-like one stood proudly by itself. The pupils lived in one of the smaller houses and the other was a staff house. It was possible to call out from the one to the other. The large building housed the diningroom where we had our meals together, and the office with a huge safe. The door on this safe was the only door that the girls could not unlock. Everybody could open all other doors as they belonged to everybody. We also welcomed our guests in the big house. There were rooms where guests could stay overnight; we held our conferences there and our Christmas and summer parties. Sören Nordin's and Delvin Miller's glass showcases hung by the large open fireplace, both men being godfathers to Frossarbo Stables. During the first five years, the girls lived by themselves in the students' house and did not run away. They got up in the mornings and managed a fairly good level of housecleaning, even if they didn't always agree with what was considered an acceptable standard. In spite of their *distress diagnosis*, they handled the situation well.

After five years, we decided, together, that an adult should always sleep in the student house. One reason for this, was that some pupils were afraid of the dark. Another, that there might be tendencies to mope, especially when new girls arrived.

*To manage a working trip abroad: A link in the chain of indicators.*

The last link in the chain of indicators was the annual trip abroad. The suggestion to go overseas each year, had been developed during the seminar in the USA. These trips were to further test the youngsters' strength of character and the soundness of the *Frossarbo Model*. Were we able to manage a trip at all? We managed one trip every year, as planned. We visited France and Denmark twice and England, Holland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Italy once each.

We also visited the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, on our way back from Hungary. There were ten trips abroad in ten years. In the first four years, we also took horses along for racing. In England and Wales we raced on grass and then mostly against pacers. At Hilversum, outside Amsterdam, our horses succeeded in finishing second and fourth, with me as driver and during our trips to Denmark, we obtained second, third, fourth and fifth place. In England, we received a small china cup for the fastest trotter of the day. As there were only four trotters racing, that prize was more of a token. As the trips went further and further afield, we eventually decided to leave the horses at home. Nevertheless, the trips were real horse-tours. We visited trainers such as Sören Nordin in Italy and his son Ulf in France. We made study visits to numerous studs and race - courses. We were VIP guests at the racecourse in Gelsenkirchen. We had entry to the VIP enclosure at Vincennes outside Paris and, in Budapest, we were greeted by the entire management of the Hungarian trotting fraternity.

We travelled in an old rented bus called Betty. It was a bus that had been refurbished with sleeping accommodation, even though it was rather cramped. Because of this, Betty often had to stop at youth hostels where, sometimes, some of us, and at times, all of us, had to get a bed for the night. Betty was getting on in years, which we realised when her water pump broke down on the motorway outside Munich, forcing us to hunt for spare parts. These were trips with early mornings and late nights. Still, they were trips where everything went well. Everybody joined in the very full programme. Of course, there were tedious times and times when tempers ran short, though nobody ever went over the top. There was no crack and no alcohol on the ferries. In fact, it was one of the adults who could not cope with the surfeit of alcohol, while the pupils were often praised for their good behaviour.

On many of our trips to the continent, our first stop was the youth hostel at Rodby. Rodby is situated in Lolland, not far from the ferry that goes to Germany. We arrived late, between 11.00 and 12.00pm, and left at about 5.30am to catch the first ferry, with not many hours sleep in a proper bed. On our first visit, the manager at the youth hostel was a little apprehensive about letting us in so late and allowing us to leave so early - he thought we were bound to disturb the other guests. I promised him that we would sneak out as quietly as mice, Swedish mice, and so he allowed us to try. The result was a success and after that we were privileged to be given the use of a hidden key.

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

This is a quick sketch. I could draw many more. In picture 16 you will find a couple of stories from our trips abroad. They will have to suffice, as travel memories are always best remembered by those who travelled. The most important point is that it was possible to make these trips year after year and that they went well in spite of the girls' *distress diagnosis*.

For almost two years, there was a one hundred kronor note pinned to the notice-board in the unlocked office. When we received study visits, it sometimes happened that our guests wanted to pay, at least towards the food. But in the countryside we treat guests to food. Some guests insisted that they had to pay something. They were then allowed to make a donation to a fund that would be used on our next trip abroad. The one hundred kronor note was one such donation. However, it was forgotten and stayed on the notice-board. There it stayed until it was time for the next trip. Sometimes I winked at it. I felt as if I was winking at a sunbeam.

The researcher is interested in *things*. The practitioner is interested in *how to use things*. *The researcher chooses his questions with the purpose of trying to answer them. The practitioner has to face his questions and they have to be answered right away. The researcher needs to convince others. The practitioner needs to convince himself.*

A few months after setting up Frossarbo Stables, I thought I could already see answers. I have talked of my happiness at suddenly seeing a whole stable full of sunbeams. They give life to wild roses and thistles with unbending strength. It is this strength and capacity for life that I have seen time and time again during those ten years. I have seen them grow in a stable with old trotters. As a researcher, it is important to show and prove the existence of the sunbeams. This is the researcher's focus. It is only when they have been caught and analysed, that he can go further, but the practitioner has no time to wait. The practitioner is constantly on the move. As a practitioner, I know that sunbeams can be made to stay. I saw one that stayed on a notice-board for almost two years. Now I feel that, as a researcher, I can also prove that sunbeams live and that they can be caught.

As a researcher, I believe that the chain of indicators is strong. In relation to the *Section 12* standards, Frossarbo Stables has been shown to fall into the category of *best* for all eight variables. There is no need for a statistical probability test

between factual values and expected values. The correlation between Frossarbo Stables and the *best* values of the *Section 12* standards, is total and this for a period of not three years, but ten! The links in the chain of indicators such as the unlocked doors, the many examinations, and the yearly trips abroad, also prove the sustainability of the data.

This piece of research attempts to show the strength that exists in young people who have been taken into compulsory care and their determination to live and seize opportunities, in spite of carrying so much that is hard and hurtful. This is not, after all, diagnostic research where different methods and theories are tested. I have talked about *distress diagnoses*, which is only a collective label for all the reports that eventually led to the decision for a compulsory care order. It is a big and drastic decision, but I am not trying to stress the dark side of these reports. In going through the 'back door', I am trying to show how our perceptions and relationships regarding young people in compulsory care institutions have been fashioned by these reports - including that which we think possible and that which we think impossible. I have tried to show that some of what we think impossible is, in fact, possible.

An objection that was sometimes made, was that the girls at Frossarbo Stables were 'easier'. However, this objection cannot be answered unless it is better defined. What is meant by 'easier'? Who decides if my distress is less than yours? All the girls at Frossarbo Stables were in an institution for those who had been served a compulsory care order. All their local councils chose to pay the high cost of compulsory care. The girls, themselves, chose to come. Some chose voluntarily to come to Frossarbo Stables rather than to go into compulsory care. Others, who were already in compulsory care, also chose to come. Is it this that makes it easier? But this is not an objection. In fact, if young people in compulsory care have a choice, it is an advantage; it makes the work more possible, yet it is doubtful that it makes the work 'easier'.

In *Care of Young People with Social Problems*, the large report on group descriptions produced by Jerzy Sarnecki, he shows, among other things, that the pupils at Frossarbo Stables are no different to other youngsters in compulsory care. They do not, however, battle with the same problems. It is only to be expected that their main difficulties may vary. The girls chose to come to Frossarbo Stables, not because of a particular problem, but because they wanted to be with horses. If we make it possible for young people to experience meaningful and

realistic relationships, then they will show that they have a strength that we never would have thought possible. We place the youngsters in treatment groups according to their diagnoses. Perhaps we should also place them in a meaningful social setting where their own interests play a role.

My answers convince me without a doubt that, too often, we describe youngsters in compulsory care in colours that are too negative and dark. We constantly talk about the need for more secure places, but what will be offered at these secure places? Some of the darkness comes from the tint of our own glasses. When the youngsters do not want to co-operate, we make the dark darker and the space for light decreases. When a horse does not want to go into a dark horsebox, we believe that there is something wrong with the horse, rather than thinking that it may be our fault, or that the horsebox is too dark.

I have nothing against diagnoses. Of course, it is important that we try to understand and perceive our young people as clearly as we can. I am not in favour of anarchy. I don't think it is as simple as having unlocked doors, or fewer staff and a few old trotters, for the compulsory care system to work. Being with horses is good for some. Many are not interested in horses; many are afraid of horses and far too many are allergic to furry animals. The unlocked door can be a strength - ening factor, but it can also cause more sadness. Fewer staff do not make for a successful care system. It is, however, the time spent by every adult with the young person that is important and, above all, the quality of that time. Not least important, is the willingness, interest and ability of staff to encourage and instil hope.

Constantly trying to see the unique person within each child - their unique strength, sadness and anger. Constantly trying to understand this sadness and face this anger. (Sadness and anger may express themselves in many ways, as do the ways of comforting sadness and turning anger into a building force instead of one that destroys.) This constant trying - to see, to be there and to find new ways and new thoughts - this is what it's all about.

### *The girls remember their horses*

---

I left Frossarbo Stables in the early spring of 1999. All that was left to do was to collect and collate all my notes. There were comments, photographs, letters, poems and drawings from the pupils, video footage, newspaper articles and television programmes.

During the following autumn and spring, I looked up past pupils. I wanted to talk to them about their memories of their horses. I had observed them at Frossarbo Stables; we had worked together and I had taught them, we had talked and philosophised together, we had travelled together and we had driven horses together. I had given speeches for them and I had talked to their horses. I had seen them with their horses and made sketches of their lives with their horses.

I had interpreted the sketches and I had tried to tell their stories. Time had elapsed and their time at Frossarbo Stables had melted into everyday existence, becoming one of many pieces. Now was the time to ask the girls how they remembered Frossarbo and how they had experienced their time there. Would their memories match my sketches? What effect had the passage of time had? The girls had left Frossarbo Stables between one and ten years ago. Was some of the magic still there? I intended to ask them what the horses had meant to them; if they still remembered them and, if so, how. I wanted to ask them why they came back weekend after weekend; why they never ran away, even when times were hard and why they never took the opportunity of a booze-up on the trips abroad when the craving might still have been there. I also wanted to reflect on their memories and share the feelings that arose within those memories. I also wanted to see them again. It would be good to see them again.

I visited the pupils who had managed two examinations or more and who had stayed at Frossarbo Stables for more than four months. The average stay for a

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

pupil was between eighteen months and two years. I made one exception. There was one girl who had finished only the foundation course and then for several reasons had left us, but had still maintained close contact.

We had always welcomed pupils back and were visited nearly every weekend. We had also had three big jubilees; a five-year, a seven-year and a ten-year celebration. At these events, we awarded grants to past pupils: The prize money our horses had won was placed into a fund and, from that fund, a sum of one thousand kronor could be given to each pupil. We also had a club called *The Stable Sisters*. When a girl left Frossarbo Stables she became a *Stable Sister*. She had a membership card, a stable jacket and a stable lantern. Kjell Engdahl had designed the membership card and the potter Greta Lindstom made the stable lanterns, each unique with 'special powers'. A person who had a stable lantern was never alone. If a girl felt lonely and abandoned, she only needed to light her stable lantern and she was no longer alone. The light shone on all the other *Stable Sisters* too.

Because of our many reunions and visits, it was easy for me to keep track of most of the pupils. The pupils from the same year often kept in contact, making it possible for the jungle telegraph to spring into action. One pupil phoned of her own accord: 'I heard that you wanted to visit. I have a new address.' One girl had lived at the same address for a long time but, when I arrived there, she had moved and nobody had any idea where. One evening, when I was watching the news on television, there was an item about a strange animal that had been seen in one family's garden. I saw a door opening and looking out in surprise, were a mother and her daughter. What they had seen in their garden was a runaway llama. I was surprised too - the woman in the open door was my lost pupil!

All the pupils felt it was okay to meet me. But one pupil became anxious. She phoned a *Stable Sister* and told her that I was coming. She was worried, as she couldn't find her folder. 'Can I borrow yours, so that I can have time to swot up on the bones before Sven comes?' When the girls learnt about the horse's anatomy, I always told them that this knowledge was to be for life and not just for an exam. "If you are going to work with a horse you must know what his insides look like and not just his soul and his heart. When you are fifty, I will come and check up on you. Then you should still remember the names of all his bones," I had said to them.

I visited and talked to thirty-four girls who had spent time at Frossarbo Stables. Twenty-seven conversations took place in the girl's own home; one at the home of a relative where the girl was living at the time, one at a café (she was about to leave Sweden, to get married and to start working with horses abroad), two at an institution (LVM-home) and three in the family home (farms with horses). When gathering together and reporting on the conversations, three girls were missing. Later, I managed to contact two of them, but the third is still missing. I feel that it is also important to emphasise that the aim of my visits was to follow up their encounters with the horses, not just their own life situations.

Taking into account that two girls were later contacted, a conventional follow-up study would have reported the following:

*One to ten years after leaving, the situation of thirty-seven girls who had taken part in the treatment programme at Frossarbo Stables, managing two examinations or more and with an average stay of eighteen months, is as follows: One missing (two-point-seven percent); two relapses (five-point-four percent); three in support programmes (eight-point-one percent); thirty-one managing socially well and living in their own homes (eighty-three-point-seven percent).*

The conversations about the horses included some specific questions, in a specific order, which I had decided on beforehand. It is the answers to these questions that I now document. As it became a great mass of material, I am going to describe it in more than one picture. I will start with the feelings and memories that are bound up with Frossarbo Stables; the time spent with the horse, the trips they made and, lastly, how they felt when they had to leave their horse and Frossarbo Stables.

*"What are your feelings when you think of the stable and your horse?"*

The conversations started with the girls estimating, on a shaded scale, the feelings that their memories evoked.

*"You are back at Frossarbo Stables. You are walking up to the stable. You walk in. What are your feelings when you remember the time you spent there together with your horse? Here is a scale that indicates feelings - it goes from very dark to very light. Where do you think you are on that scale?"*

It can be difficult to estimate a feeling. Using numbers may add to the problem, as numbers may be connected with knowledge of figures and the control of

## *THE GIRL AND THE HORSE*

---

handling them. This means that it will be difficult to decide how much of the estimation is connected with feelings and how much is connected with knowledge of figures. C.G Edström and Bjorn Blom, at the University of Umeå, have tried to confront this problem by suggesting a shaded scale without figures; where the person being questioned gives their answer by putting a cross on a band that goes from being totally black to being completely white.

I felt that the light side and the dark side in the girls' estimations would be a good starting point for our conversation, but the girls put their crosses right at the end where the scale was completely white. It made no difference if the girls made their estimations anonymously with others as estimators: It was always white. Several girls criticised the scale for not having more white.

*"What were the names of your and the other horses in the stable?"*

In an extensive investigation regarding pupils in institutional compulsory care, it had been shown, in follow-up studies, that some of the youngsters could remember very little of their time at the institution. For the oldest pupils at Frossarbo Stables, there had been a gap of eleven years. Would the girls even remember their own horses?

All the girls remembered their horses. All the girls found the question somewhat strange. Thirty-one pupils remembered the names of all the horses in the stable. One pupil had forgotten the name of two horses and two pupils had forgotten the name of one horse. But all three remembered the horses when I mentioned their names and they were then able to describe them in some detail.

*"On what basis did you choose your horse?"*

Twenty-five of the pupils had chosen their horses because they 'looked nasty'; because they seemed to be 'difficult to handle', because they were 'on their own', looked 'afraid and ugly' or nobody else wanted them.

'He was sour and nasty. Nobody else wanted to drive him.'

'She was a horrible mare. She would kick and bite. She was self-willed.'

'She was unreliable and difficult to drive.'

'He laid his ears back when you approached him in the field.'

'He had no tail, so nobody wanted him. Then I took him.'

'He was scary,' they said.

One pupil said: 'He was a shit. He was cocky and unruly.'

'I thought he looked small and afraid, just as frightened and alone as I felt. He needed me and I needed him.'

'He looked small and lonely.'

I asked: "How could you choose a horse that laid back his ears and was unreliable?"

'I wanted to make a stupid and difficult horse mine, so that it was me he liked and obeyed. I wanted the others to admire me. *Just see how she can manage that horse.* Then I would feel special.'

Again, I asked: "How could you choose a really nasty mare?"

'I knew that nasty horses weren't really nasty. They were misunderstood horses. I could see myself in her. Actually, I thought we were rather alike. I knew that she would understand me.'

Eight of the girls chose their horses because they seemed to be kind and safe.

'I could choose between Stumpan and Lillen. I liked Lillen's eyes. They seemed so understanding. He was never afraid of me. He put up with me.'

'I felt safe with his eyes.'

'He looked very calm. I needed someone who was calm.'

One girl chose her horse because of his ability to race.

'I never was especially fond of horses. I chose Grabben because of his racing abilities. No one ran as fast as Grabben. No one was entered for a race as often as Grabben. The other girls felt they could talk to their horses. I never understood that. I thought that they couldn't separate dreams from reality. A horse is, after all, only an animal. I liked Grabben. But I couldn't talk to him.'

I asked the girl what she meant by *I chose Lillen because I felt he would be able to put up with me.* What was it that Lillen would have to put up with?

'You're afraid and sad. In the end, you can't cope with being afraid anymore. Sad perhaps, but not afraid. So you hit back. That makes others afraid and that makes you feel almost happy. That's how crappy it is. Many times it's enough just to say horrible things, then others can be frightened as well. I'm scared, too, but only about backchat. The silly thing, is that I know that the others talk shit about me, but I still want to hope that that's not how it is. It's best to hit first, to be bloody awful and talk loads of shit. That's how crappy it is. Horses don't talk shit. When you become friends with a horse, you don't need to be afraid. Those who are nasty to horses can never be their mates and so they become scared of them. They can't understand that horses are not like people and that you don't need to be horrible to a horse. I really liked Lillen's eyes. They didn't show any fear when he saw me. They looked as if he understood. They were kind. I felt safe with his eyes. I thought he could probably put up with me.'

"If I had asked you this question when you had just come to Frossarbo Stables, would your answer have been the same?"

'I don't know. Perhaps, but I'm not sure. Often, it's necessary to ask more than one question to be able to give a good answer. I need time to think and thoughts can change with time. Time can also create new thoughts. It's also important that I feel that the one I give my answers to really wants to understand.'

It is evident that, when a girl arrives at Frossarbo Stables, there is a strong relationship between her choice of horse and her own understanding of herself and the situation she is in. Whatever the horse is like, it often becomes a reflection of the girl herself. The horse is placed in the same vulnerable and hurtful situation as the girl. He may be both nasty and misunderstood, but he is nasty because nobody has understood him or cared for him up until then. He need not be nasty or a lonely outsider; he can also be calm and safe and, in that way, be a real help to the girl. He has the strength to both put up with her and support her.

## *Remembering the time with their horse*

---

*"How did the contact between you and your horse develop?"*

The answers become repetitive, but not monotonous. They are strong, personal answers, yet they are the same. The girl's own horse was important and the recollection of him was strong - it did not matter if it had been one year or eleven years since the girl had left her horse. All liked their horses. All the girls, but one, felt that the contact with their horse was personal and close and that it had been important for their own development.

'I was afraid of him to start with. He stepped on me roughly. I thought all the others were offhand with him, but I fussed over him and it felt as if he started to trust me. I think it was because I fussed over him everyday and cared for him all the time. That was when he started to trust me. He became calmer and then he would listen to me. That was when I, too, began to calm down. It took some time before I was not afraid of him any more. When the interplay between Scotten and me was good, I noticed that I became more relaxed with the other horses as well. I felt that having succeeded in making my own horse feel good, had made me feel better about myself as well. It was great for my self-esteem! He needed me and the feeling of being needed was tremendously important to me. It hurt to leave him over weekends. I knew he was ever so upset. The most important thing was to get back to Scotten. I didn't give a damn about anything else.'

'He was churlish and nasty. That's why I chose him. He was afraid of everything, but if you talked to him things got better. He was afraid of going to Gävle most of all and of having to trot really fast. When that happened he became wild. It took some time before you would listen to me and let him off going to Gävle. Pysen listened to me. It was as if he could sense when I was sad or happy. If I was crabby then he was crabby too. I could be so cross and tired with some of the

## *THE GIRL AND THE HORSE*

---

other girls. To start with, I took it out on Pysen. That wasn't any good. Then he became prickly and I got cross with him and he got even pricklier. But then I understood that it was my fault entirely. After that, everything was much better between us. He helped me to see myself. I had very good contact with Pysen. I could go up to him and sit there with him. I always had somebody for me and we had each other.'

'We grew to become friends. It was always nice to get away with him, away from the others and to be myself with him. I could be that. I was able to be myself with him.'

'Kvicken and I built a relationship. In the end, we could work together and he would show me that he loved me.'

'I found a real, honest friend, who helped me a lot. Our contact became better and better. He trusted me and I trusted him more and more.'

'It's amazing. It's been so many years ago but I still think of him.'

'You'll probably think it isn't true, or that I am going mad, but I think of him nearly everyday.'

'Always someone to talk to. Always someone there. Never afraid.'

*"Did your horse ever upset you or disappoint you?"*

'He never upset me. He became so sweet and kind. He became human in some strange way.'

'At the dressage he made mistakes with everything. I was nervous and I don't think he understood what I was telling him. I liked him anyway. I was never upset with him. I laughed most of the time.'

'You can't count this, but when I was visiting, quite a long time after I had left, I noticed that Scotten liked his new owner. I was so jealous I pinched him.'

'The only thing it might be was that he couldn't actually speak. But it wasn't really anything. I never needed to be afraid that he would deceive me with words.'

'I can't remember him disappointing me, although I think that he could have been disappointed with me or, at least, jealous. When I helped another girl to

brush her horse, Lillen bit that horse when it was taken back into its stall. He never did that before.'

'No, never disappointed. We always had fun together.'

'No, but he ought to have been unhappy with me. I had so much anger and frustration inside me when I came to Frossarbo Stables. It did happen that I vented my anger on Scotten; a couple of times, at least. I feel ashamed about that. Scotten was okay about it. He taught me how to put a stop to it. I used to call it *the magic second*. The magic second happened when he nudged me and said: *Come on, what are you doing?* I stopped and thought: What am I really doing? Then I was able to change and do something else.'

'He wasn't one of God's children all the time, but he was never disloyal to me and never made me unhappy. Perhaps he was troublesome once when I visited after I had moved away. It was as if he was saying: *If you are not here all the time, forget it*. And he was probably right.'

'Disappointed no, but he once kicked me in the head with his hindleg. It was an accident though; he was ticklish. He was sorry straight away. I know that. We could talk to each other.'

'I can't remember Grabben ever being disloyal to me. He could be a bit tiresome, just like I sometimes could, but I have no sense of him having been disloyal. On the other hand, I sometimes felt a bit disappointed that he didn't always quite understand. He was, after all, only an animal. He couldn't talk.'

'He didn't make me unhappy, he only made me glad. He could have bad days. Disappointed? No, I was never disappointed in him. He always did his best. You can't ask for more.'

These were the kind of answers I got throughout all our conversations. At no time did the girls feel that their horses had let them down. If someone had been two-faced, it was the girls, never the horses. One comment keeps recurring in the notes I kept over the years: The amazing thing is that whatever the horse does to the girls, it is right and best. If the horse nips the girl, it is so that she might learn to have respect. If the horse kicks the girl, it is to show her that he feels sensitive or it may be a mistake. If it's a mistake the horse apologises. Whatever the horse does is right or can be explained.

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

Has love made the girls blind, or is it love that has made them discern and understand more? One of the girls used the word *magic*. It startled me when she said it. I don't think I had ever used that word. She used the word to describe exactly what I had also tried to describe - when something new happens, when a completely new thought or idea is created, with it, comes the wonder of freedom.

*"Can you remember a specific occasion when your horse made you particularly happy?"*

'The best occasion I can remember was the first time my horse answered me. He neighed and came up to me in the field when I had called him. Wow, I had a mate! It was like the kick I used to get when I started using crack - before it all became shit - but this kick was different. This was between another living being and myself. One reason for living is to try to find new good kicks. To have an honest relationship with a horse gives you such a kick. It makes you happy. It is a friendship that is not built in the usual way. It is built on the unusual.'

'I was particularly happy when he went to the racecourse at Gävle to train on the track. We had to go and fetch him back. He had gone crazy and couldn't stand me not being there to fuss over him. He missed his *mummy*.'

'I was so proud that he did not bite at me the way he did with all the others. Everybody could see that he like me best.'

'I was proud of knowing that everybody could see how well I did with training my horse for riding. Those times were the very best. It was as if Grabben also wanted to show everybody how well we worked together and how much he trusted me.'

'We walked in the woods. I was able to let him walk free. He followed me just like a dog. Now and then he would nudge me in the back. That gave me a wonderful feeling of happiness. He was my very best friend.'

'Once, another pupil asked to borrow him when we were learning to jump - she was allowed to do that. Silver stood still. He never moved. So I went up to him and took over and everything fell into place. He jumped as if he had never done anything else. I was really happy and proud then.'

'There were many times when he made me especially happy. Once, in the paddock, while I was lunging him for dressage, he did everything correctly. I was mega-proud!'

'I have many good memories. The first time I was allowed to drive him myself, he began to get agitated and started to bolt. I called to him and he quietened down. I felt proud and happy - he trusted me! I remember another time when all the other girls were there and I called his name. He replied with neighing. It was an amazing feeling, especially since the other girls were there and saw it. It was great that it was my horse that neighed. The others were envious and I felt so proud.'

All the girls remember good times with their horses. Their memories are many and often hang together, forming a web of beautiful recollections. The most wonderful of all seem to be when the horse shows the girl that she has been chosen specifically - that it is only her that he wants - then it is as if heaven has come down to earth. Should there also be witnesses to this expression of trust, the girl's happiness is complete. *I have been given a gift and I can show others the gift I have.*

*"How do you remember the other horses and did you ever want to exchange horses?"*

'Of all the other horses, I suppose it would've been Stumpan. She was a very trusting horse, but I would never have wanted to exchange Scotten for another horse. Even if he had died while I was at Frossarbo Stables I would not have chosen a new horse. He meant everything to me.'

'There was no horse for me other than Pysen. You tried to make me have Silver as a second horse. He was really boring. He wasn't smart. He was dull.'

'I never wanted to change horses. I liked Grabben. He was only a colt then. He was attractive and strong-willed. You can, of course, like a horse a lot or a little but you can't dislike them because they're not nasty.'

'I thought the other horses were rather impersonal. Actually, I was a bit afraid of them. I was never a really horsey girl. Grabben was unique though - then perhaps it was only me who understood that. Probably all the girls believed that their horses were unique.'

'I liked all the horses. Still, I never wanted to exchange Lillen for another one.'

'I liked Pysen. I hated Silver. He couldn't care less about anything, or was it because he couldn't care less about me? I liked Lorden even though he was

stupid. You couldn't really be cross with him - he was young and clumsy. Exchange a horse, never!

'I remember that, initially, I did not like any of the other horses. I thought they were shit. Later, I learnt to like them. You can't dislike horses. They're not nasty or bad. Of course, there were some I liked better than others. I liked my horse best. He was tops.'

'I didn't really dislike any horse. They were all nice; each one in his or her own way, the same way it is with people. Some you like better than others, but you can never love everybody. It was Kvicken that I loved so much more.'

'The horses at Frossarbo Stables were more like humans. They did not understand that they were horses. Trullsan was very unsure of herself. She had no confidence at all. I showed her that I was fond of her. Scotten was also a bit special. He knew he was different - an outsider. He did things to draw attention to himself. Pysen was mine. You don't exchange best friends.'

No girl exchanged horses. A couple of girls managed to manoeuvre themselves into caring for two training horses towards the end of their course, but there was never any thought of letting their own horse go. Two girls lost their horses when they had to be put down because of illness. One of them managed to take on a new horse, but the other did not. Fortunately, she was about to leave Frossarbo Stables. It was easy for the girls to exchange horses. There was little formality, but there was one clear principle: The girl who had been a pupil at Frossarbo the longest could choose first if a training horse became available. After that, the next senior pupil could choose and so on. Even though it was easy, nobody exchanged horses. Their first choice remained their only choice.

## *The trips abroad*

---

'The trips were fantastic. We got on well together, even though we might have been dreadfully tired.'

'The travelling was hard work, but wasn't it wonderful?'

'The trips were great fun and we saw and learnt a lot. They were the only times I've been abroad.'

'The travelling was like being in the stable. Nobody ever thought of giving up or running away, even if the programme was tough.'

'The trips abroad were wonderful highlights. I remember a thought that came into my head: *Here I am having a super time with adults and they're not drunk. That's a first.* I think that was in Paris.'

'The trips were bloody good and we learnt a lot. I had never been abroad before. It was exciting to see what trotting was like in other places, and it was important and natural to always check that the horses were okay. You forgot about yourself. We never thought about drinking, using crack or running away. Nobody had those kind of thoughts.'

We put aside some money every year to use for the trips abroad. The money came from our education budget. The trips became a test of our strength as a group and thus, of the viability of Frossarbo Stables. They were also genuine study trips. The girls all appreciated the travelling. They may have expressed their appreciation in different ways but the feeling was the same. Drugs and breakouts never happened and the trips went well. Our one instance of adult drunkenness had led to a clarification of one of the rules governing our trips:

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

*On all journeys made by Frossarbo Stables, the strongest drink is Coca-Cola, both for girls and staff. The horses, on the other hand, are not allowed to drink Coca-Cola. They may only have water.*

Our conversations brought back many memories. One pupil showed me a copy of *Häst Sport* number 2, 1997, of which she was taking great care. *Häst Sport* is a quarterly magazine for harness racing and galloping. It is a magazine known for its comprehensive pictorial material and exciting layout, with Willy Nilsson as chief editor. For some years, his daughter My ran a pony club about ten miles south of Paris, giving inner city school children an experience of camping and riding ponies. Willy Nilsson went with us during the 1996 trip to France. As part of the programme, there was a visit to the pony club and the girls had a four-hour expedition into the French countryside on horseback. This riding expedition had been retold in pictures in the magazine that this pupil took such great care in looking after. It was, however, one specific picture she wanted to show me. The caption under the picture read:

*A somewhat different view of the French countryside, first four dogs and a donkey, then seven horses with riders and a psychologist running at the back of the queue as its finale.*

"Isn't it a fantastic picture?" My pupil asked in a kind voice: "A donkey both at the front and at the back." The psychologist was me. I had preferred jogging to riding!

Travel memories are always best when remembered with one's travelling companions, although I'll risk relating another two. The first one is from France.

We visited Sören Nordin's son Ulf, who, for many years has run a very successful trotting business outside Paris. We were in Paris, travelling by Metro on our way to the old Halls - now a modern shopping centre. At that point, girl met boy in Paris. The girl was a pupil at Frossarbo Stables. She had rings in her eyebrows, nose and lips. She was happy and had just had a thought: *Just think of it. Here I am having fun with adults and they are not drunk. I don't think that has ever happened to me before.* She saw a boy coming towards her and he, too, had rings in his eyebrows, nose and lips. In each was a reflection of the other. They recognised this reflection and smiled. The boy thought he had something extra to show: He opened his mouth and proudly pulled out his tongue, in which there was a stud. The girl's eyes sparkled. She opened her mouth and stuck out her

tongue - she also had a stud! The eyes of the young boy from Paris sparkled too - they smiled at each other and continued to walk in different directions.

My second memory is from Belgium. We were driving along the motorway in old Betty. She was puffing along, keeping up speed. It was almost evening and we were approaching Germany when it happened. Part of the tread on one of Betty's tyres fell off. The bus was unbalanced and we had to leave the motorway. We came to a standstill on a smaller road. After several hours of knocking on doors and in halting French, we managed to contact a tyre firm that would be able to supply a new tyre the following day. We got to the nearest town in a limping Betty. It was dark and it was late. At the foot of an old castle we found a hotel. One of the girls had a wound from an operation and she needed a proper bath - room. The proprietress was hesitant about taking us in, but she had one vacant double room. We intended to have six people sleep in it, but the proprietress did not know this. She thought the rest would sleep in the bus. In the end, with a few strict instructions, she gave us the key to the room, which was situated in a nearby house. If we made the slightest noise or disturbed any of the other guests, we would be thrown out: "I have bad experiences of sloppy young people in sloppy old buses", she said.

A wooden tab was fastened to the key. It was the key to room number six. I had the key and it was my job to see that the chosen six managed to sneak inside. "Pull yourself together," I said. "I don't want to hear a sound. We need that bath - room." The stairs were dark, but we dared not switch on the light. We crept upstairs, seven people trying to sound like two. I got to our room and put the key in the lock, but it did not turn. I could not open the door. I tried again, but it was no good. Something was in the way. I muttered to myself and tried again. I had a feeling that the giggling would soon start and that would not improve the situa - tion. I tried again. The key was almost in, when I heard a muffled thud from inside the door. Suddenly, I realised my mistake. The key to room number *six* was lying on the floor of room number *six*. I had the key to room number *nine* in my hand. We were standing outside the wrong door! The giggling started. Suppressing our laughter, we stumbled up the last few steps to room number nine and dived in. We expected to hear shouting from room number six, but nothing happened. We were saved!

The following morning, I awoke to find someone hunched up outside the bus. It was one of the pupils from the hotel room. She did not want to climb into the bus

as she was afraid she would wake the rest of us up. I went out to her and asked her why she was not in her room. "I went out to have a smoke", she replied. "Then the landlady locked the door so that I couldn't get back in." I said: "Come along we'll go and tell her what's what." We found her. My French is not good and when I get upset it gets worse, but I manage. I think I said something like this: (that I used *tu* is a Swedish habit, not because I wanted to be disrespectful.)

"I don't know what makes you feel proud of yourself. I have never been to Belgium before, but I find it difficult to believe that anyone in Belgium would feel proud of having locked out a young girl, especially when she is not feeling well. It makes me feel both sad and cross but, most of all, I can't believe you really feel proud of yourself. Why? What have we done to hurt you?"

The proprietress just looked at us and said nothing. Then she suddenly turned around and walked away. We were standing in the hotel foyer and I told the pupil that we might just as well sit down. It was warm, we could use the toilet and we could open the door for the others when they arrived. When the first girls came in from the bus, the proprietress entered too, carrying a large tray full of sandwiches. Her husband was behind her carrying hot drinks. "I hope you'll like this," she said. Then she added: "I am ashamed."

I told this story as part of my speech after an examination. "I know," said one of the girls, "never hit a horse that is troublesome. First check everything."

The positive experiences from the trips abroad made me consider a fifth educational stage - a course with possibilities for both practical horse-training and for language studies. Willy Klaeson is another journalist from *Häst Sport* and has a keen sense of social responsibility. Willy was given the job of working out a plan for the fifth educational stage, using England as the base. I liked the plans he presented, as they would give us the opportunity to utilise one of the leaders in English harness racing, Stella Havard (also a driver and a journalist). Willy's plans were never given an opportunity to be tried out - they came too close to my retirement. Willy Klaeson now dreams about starting his own Frossarbo Stables and is presently getting more experience in social work. The last time I heard from him he was working in a Salvation Army hostel.

## *Leaving the horse*

---

'I only had a few weeks left at Frossarbo Stables. I would be finished by the summer holidays. I knew I had to leave Gumman. Nobody else wanted her. The colts were to become the training horses. It was becoming crowded in the stable. You had arranged for her to spend the summer grazing in Skåne and, after that, your daughter was going to look after her. Gumman had the opportunity to travel with another horse, which would make it cheaper. Because of this, she had to leave before me. You and I went to the racetrack in Stockholm and left Gumman there to travel in a horsebox that was going to Skåne. It was horrible - much worse than I had ever thought. I put on a brave face. I don't think that you or anyone else knew how devastated I was. I have always been rather tough, but it hurt dreadfully.'

I remembered a dream the girl once told me. I asked: "Do you remember dreaming that you came to the stable and Gumman wasn't there? The stall was empty and the others said that I had run away with her. You wanted to kill me. Do you remember that dream? You told me at breakfast, a few days after we had left Gumman."

"No," she replied. "I can't remember dreaming that. But I can remember not being happy at Frossarbo Stables afterwards. All I wanted was to get away."

'It was horrible to leave Lillen. We had talked about it a lot. I knew that we had to do something, as he wasn't well. It seemed terribly unfair. I was lucky, though, that afterwards I could look after Scotten and that he needed me.'

'I often cried when I thought of Lillen, but now I have worked through my grief. I sound like a psychologist don't I? I felt guilty. I had allowed him to go back without me. He became distraught and couldn't find the strength to fight back with his bad leg. I hardly recognised him when I went back for a visit - just before

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

he died. He had shrivelled up. His whole being was unhappy. I know it wasn't my fault and that there was nothing I could have done. I believe that he's in good hands where he is now.'

'I missed Prinsen a lot, as I had become very fond of him. I still remember him. I wonder how he is and how he feels.'

'Even though it is seven years since I left Frossarbo Stables, he's still with me. It's difficult to know that he's dead. I loved that horse very much. When I see horses on television or in a horsebox, I think of Scotten. I feel as if I betrayed him. Everything happened so fast when I left him. He was abandoned in one night.'

'It was terribly hard to leave Kvicken when I moved. I wish he could have moved with me. Of course that was not possible, as there was no way I could look after him. I remember you saying when I came to visit: *You'll have to come back. We don't know how to make him happy.* In a way, that made me feel good. It showed that our relationship had been genuine, even though I knew that already.'

'He was only an animal. I do think of him sometimes - not that often - although I get a warm feeling when I think of him.'

'It was a shock to know that Lillen had been put down. I understood that there was no other choice and that it was the right thing to do. No, I wasn't disillusioned with you. You must have been just as upset as I was. At first, I didn't want to believe that it was true. Afterwards, I thought about him a lot, almost more often than when I left him at Frossarbo. Now that he's dead, it's almost as if he has become mine again and I'm pleased that he's not suffering any more and has no more pain.'

A question I was often asked when we had study visits or when I was away talking about Frossarbo Stables, was whether it had been difficult for the girls to leave their horses. I can see and hear myself answering this question in a television interview. The Finnish-speaking editorial office at Swedish Television, SVT 1, was making a programme about boys and girls at risk: *They Call Us the Pits*. The interview was conducted in the stable. I was standing in the door of a stall beside a horse. First, I talked about the results of the investigation *444 Young People from Stockholm in Crisis*. I was careful to point out that it was not possible to equate the results with the six present pupils at Frossarbo Stables. Towards the end of the interview, I talked about a girl's experiences and thoughts

when she leaves her horse. I began by saying: "For some girls, when they are growing out of their fantasies about horses and beginning to take on life in a new and different way, they sometimes feel embarrassed in front of me. They think that I am going to be upset that they are no longer that interested in their horses. It then becomes important for me to clearly tell them that everything has its own life span."

My reasoning is this: This entire experience is a process. The horses have their time, a time that prepares the girls for dealing with real life again. It is important for the girls to understand that it is right that they should leave their horses. As I said, everything has its own time. I can also say that many former pupils have felt good about their horse giving happiness to someone else in their absence.

"And that is something really good," said the reporter, pointing out the part of my investigation where I mentioned the young girls whose mothers did not want to have anything to do with them. "Is it not also important that it is the pupil who has left the horse and not the horse that has left the pupil?" I liked this comment. The television clip showed it and I mention it here as well. "That is a very good comment," I said. "Yes, it is different. I can make that choice on my own and I can begin to walk away."

Now, when I pose the question, I am not at all certain about the answer. Our conversations have given me new ideas. The girl's horse has been even more important to her than I had thought. 'It's now seven years since I left my horse, but I still think of him very often.'

'You must think me mad. It's ten years ago, but I still find myself having conversations with my horse.'

The girls had found it much harder to leave their horses than I had believed. 'It was terrible. I cried and I dreamt about him.'

When I hear this, I think it wasn't the waning interest in the horses that made the girls embarrassed in front of me, if indeed they were. Perhaps it was my expectations of them that made them quiet. As they had now become the world's best horse-handlers, surely they should be able to cope with leaving their horse to someone else?

The idea that a pupil should be able to take her horse with her when she left had always been there. There had to be certain conditions though: It had to be a

practical and economical proposition, for both the pupil and for Frossarbo Stables. It should be a good thing for the pupil and a good thing for the horse. Several pupils had been able to take their horses home for a couple of weeks during the summer holidays or in connection with work experience at a stud or with a trotter trainer. Four girls did, in fact, take over their horses. This was not an attempt to protect the girls from the pain of having to leave their horse - it was because it is important to dream and, at times, it is important for this dream to come true. In order to make this dream come true, we had to talk to each other often. I want to believe that we did talk to each other often, but I realise that we should have talked even more.

It was important for the girls to feel needed in the stable. If we were to look after our horses properly, it was necessary for everyone to help. Looking after the stable took time and time was limited. This shortage of time affected our conversations - they waited to happen, but often never did. Perhaps we were not sensitive enough and perhaps we didn't always have the courage.

'Towards the end, I thought I might ask someone to take my hand, to help me sort out the hardness inside me and to talk with me in depth. I didn't know how to ask.'

'Were we not spoiled? Sometimes I think we had too much of everything - it was too easy and we had too much freedom. Why didn't you simply tell me that I had to stay, that I had no choice? Okay, I had chosen, I was already pregnant and I wanted the baby. Still, I wish you had broken through my defence so that I wouldn't have been alone. No, it wouldn't have worked if you had been harder - it would then have been just like the other places, kids against staff. We could have talked more. Sometimes I think that you saw more than you could cope with and you became quiet instead. We really should have talked more.'

## *Remembering Frossarbo Stables in words*

---

'To tell you the truth, I long to be back almost everyday. I went on a job-seekers course at the beginning of the year. We were asked to paint a picture of a special place where we would like to be. I painted a picture of Frossarbo Stables. The psychologist who runs the course said that I must value that place a lot because I had painted it high up on the paper. I wanted to be back because I felt good there. I could be myself and there were no pressures. You were allowed to fail.'

'I thought about the time when we were coming up to give you a farewell send-off at the beginning of this last summer. When the car approached Frossarbo Stables, I wanted it to go faster and faster. "I want to get there," I told the others. "I can't wait any longer!" It was ten years since I had left Frossarbo Stables and five years since I had last visited. Yet the feeling was so strong. I simply wanted to be there. I think it was the peace I longed for. At Frossarbo I felt peaceful.'

'I'm not just missing Scotten, but I'm also missing the time I had at Frossarbo Stables. Everything felt so much easier there. I really would like to come back and do it all over again. I have photos of everything. It's a time I don't ever want to forget. When I show the photos to my mates and tell them about Frossarbo Stables they always say: *How nice, that couldn't have been an institution, surely? No, I say, it was home.*'

'It was one of the best times of my life. Initially, I felt embarrassed about having been there, but that has since stopped. Now, I'm proud of having been there and of having managed to complete the whole course. For a few years I even earned some extra money by shoeing horses. I have girlfriends that are envious of me for having been at Frossarbo Stables. It was a good thing that we were allowed to decide for ourselves whether or not we wanted to be there. I was so terribly tired of all the *musts*. It was always *must this* and *must that*, never what I wanted for

myself. At Frossarbo Stables I could do what I wanted and you trusted me. It was absolutely fantastic.'

'But Frossarbo Stables came to an end as everything else does. Everything comes to an end. I've thought a lot. When I was at Frossarbo Stables there were many things I didn't understand. Frossarbo Stables was like the classic picture of someone riding along the seashore at sunset. I used to play truant. I had hung about on my own at night. I could have committed suicide. But then I heard about an institution with horses. Horses are only for rich girls, aren't they? Yet, it was the truth. It was like a dream, a dream come true. Frossarbo Stables still lives in me, both as something real and unreal. It was utterly wonderful.'

'What I remember most, was the unbelievable feeling of freedom when I was driving fast by myself. It makes me shiver when I think about it. It was something very special. I'm glad I had that chance.'

'I remember the stable as something light. I became calmer and more grown up there. I grew when I was allowed to look after and take the responsibility for someone I liked. I found a kind of love I'd never had before. I could sit and talk to my horse and I felt that he somehow understood. It gave me a peace as if every - thing inside me was released. I miss that feeling even today, the feeling of release.'

The strength and the intimacy with which the girls remembered the stable and the horses and the way they expressed those memories, fascinate me. I know that I am the one talking to the girls; I know how memories can be misconstrued, but I am not after minute details of the truth. I am not endeavouring to show that Frossarbo Stables, during a certain period of time, was like this or that in relation to other treatment alternatives. What I want to do, is to convince others about something that thrilled me, namely, the enormously rich therapeutic milieu that the environment of the stable and the horses created. I am spellbound by its richness and how much of that richness we could have managed better or perhaps by that which we did not succeed in managing at all.

## *The girl and the horse Theory and magic*

---

If the five-step model of Frossarbo Stables is drawn in picture form, it will look like a scale. Scales may look the same, but the information they provide can be very different. One scale may be no more than a list showing names in random order, with no specific ranking or implication. This is called a nominal scale. Another scale is the ordinal, where the sequence of the information is important - one comes before two and two before three and so on. This scale does not show the gaps between one, two or three. The interval scale, however, does show this. This scale would show that the distance between one and two is the same as between two and three. The quotient scale is another even more detailed scale. This scale has an established zero point, meaning the figures in a quotient scale can be exposed to all four mathematical functions. A model converted into a scale can easily mislead, since there is nothing to show what type of scale it is. This can lead to misinterpretations and the simplification of facts that the scale is supposed to indicate. Reality very seldom follows a straight line. Reality moves at will.

This is the problem when thinking with models. The horse pulls the girl through the five steps which make up an ordinal scale. One step can merge with another and the girls can jump from one to the other, forwards and backwards. The scale, however, wants to describe a maturing process that moves in sequence from step one to step five.

The term *developmental psychology* tells us that the maturing process is seen in steps, levels or phases, with one following another often in relation to biological age. When using these models, it is common to think that a difficult or missed developmental phase will result in problems that lead to disabilities in adult life.

In many books, puberty and adolescence are described as a 'second chance'. During the teenage years, hormonal onslaughts turn everything around and we are given another chance to sort out our development. In many institutional treatment models, the underlying driving force seems to base itself on a perceived regression to an earlier phase, in order to then build a new and better developmental path. All psychological theories are, through necessity, simplifications of a reality that, to say the least, have a tendency to be both complex and chaotic.

In the turmoil of life, we believe we can see patterns and connections. We create models in order to clarify these patterns. These models give us security and a way of managing the turmoil. To a certain extent, they also help us to see what future results may look like. It can be of great benefit to have a theory to fall back on. It may very well be true that we all have our own privately held theories on which we constantly fall back - theories about everything, from the meaning of life, to how to win on horses and how the young people in compulsory care have become what they are. These theories may be simple: *Everybody knows what kids are like*, or they may be sophisticated: *A topographic model of our consciousness*. Still, they are only models, not reality itself. Reality is always something more.

Towards the end of his life, my father-in-law owned a small holding in Medelpad. The cottage had piped water and an outside toilet. The toilet had a wonderful view of the lake and the forest-clad mountains. Above the toilet rolls were a couple of amusing pictures. One was of a man walking in the pouring rain saying to himself: *It's good for the potatoes - it's good for the potatoes*. The other picture was made up of three squares. In the first square, you could see a sculptor busy creating a head from a model who was sitting on a chair nearby. In the next picture, the sculptor was irritated and cross as his head did not look like the model's. In the third and last picture, the sculptor was busy re-moulding the model's head to make it more like the one he had created.

One difficulty with theories, is that they can become our masters instead of being our servants. We force real life to fit our theories instead of the other way around. We put on glasses that make us see *our* theories only. We view others, who cannot see what we can, as shortsighted. Another difficulty, is that it takes time to understand how theories are built. It is necessary to understand and get used to the various concepts and observe how they influence the mechanics of the

theory. It is not always easy to integrate a theory. In spite of all this, theories are exciting - exchanging theories may lead to seeing something new.

The five-step model could, in all likelihood, incorporate several developmental theories. During my planning period, I had also put on my object-related glasses that I later exchanged for spectacles with plain glass. Even with these spectacles, a residue of the object-related ones remained and the concept of the *transitional object* kept turning up.

The transitional object is found in Winnicott's building site of theories. It is described as constant sadness, lasting throughout life. We have been part of paradise; in complete union with another human being, been cared for totally. But we have been kicked out and we will never be allowed to go back. We are alone and we stand outside, constantly forced to relate to the reality that surrounds us. Throughout life, we work to make the inner world harmonise better with the external world. The transitional object can assist us in accepting and coping with being thrown out. The transitional object is not transitional *per se*, but represents the child's transition from being one with its mother to being in a relationship with her. The transitional object becomes the child's first possession: It belongs only to the child and the child makes the decisions. If the illusion of complete control is crushed too soon and too hard: *It is I who am in control and reality is what I want*, then it is good to have something there that is real and that will do what I want. In Winnicott's theory, the transitional object appears during the second half of the first year of a child's life. When it has done its work, it fades like an old colour, its magic powers shrinking away. It is forgotten, but not lost. It is not pushed into life's constant sadness room, but finds its way into the boxroom of reality, together with all the other useless litter. It is kept there for a while in case it will be needed. Finally, at a spring-cleaning session, it disappears. There may be a last friendly pat and a: *Do you remember?*

When I look through the newspaper clippings and the television programmes, I often repeat: *There is a time for everything*. The girl and the horse have their time. The girl then leaves her horse. Other things come between them and take over: The horse has done his job. Someone else can now use him. The girl leaves her horse at a recycling centre to give joy to another girl. She is not the small child who gives her dummy to another child who is crying because she cannot cope with listening to the crying. She is a young woman who gives the child the dummy because she can feel its sadness. In spite of my plain-glassed spectacles,

I looked upon the horse as a transitional object in the sense that Winnicott means. A transitional object grows weaker and loses its power and significance. When the horse has finished his work, the girl will lose interest in him and will turn her gaze to something more interesting out there in the real world. Therefore, it is not difficult for the girl to leave her horse, so I had thought.

The horse, however, was more than a transitional object. He did not drift away; he did not lose his power and it was not easy for the girl to leave him. In our conversations, girl after girl spoke about the closeness they had felt with their horses. They told me how they still talked to the horse, even though it had sometimes been several years since they had left Frossarbo Stables and saying goodbye had been painful. But I had not perceived this. Perhaps I did not actually have plain glass in my spectacle frames: I had simply believed I had. Perhaps I tried, not only, to mould my clay sculpture, but also real life. It may be partly possible to understand and describe the horse as a transitional object, but only partly - the horse is something much more.

Winnicott's building site is a workplace with much light, in spite of a continuing struggle with sadness. It is a workplace that does not always need labour: There is also room for holidays and travel. These journeys are between the inner and the external reality. It is all right to travel now and then and the journeys are encouraged. They are even described as being of vital importance. They are journeys with a programme and the programme is called play. The grown-ups would like to call them art tours, music tours or study trips with horses. They are actually journeys for play and it is through this play that children and adults find the creative force needed to find themselves. It is no wonder that Winnicott's building site seems full of light.

Another concept within the Object-related Theory, is the schizoid condition. Different personality types and behaviours embrace this condition. In its extreme form, it expresses itself by the suppression of feelings and as a lack of empathy. It is a condition of lasting war. The war occurs when the child painfully notices that it is not good enough the way it is: It needs to invent a false self, which is constantly afraid of being unable to cope or of being exposed. It is a battle between coming too close and not succeeding, and of becoming isolated and not being able to cope. It seems that it is not necessary to fight this battle with a horse. A horse can be close without exposing anything. In this lies magic and it is a magic that heals.

The concepts of dependency and non-dependency are found in many theories. In Gestalt Therapy, it is the driving force. As human beings, we move between a state of non-dependency and dependency. This is the natural order of things. If the driving force breaks down and we begin to choose only non-dependency or dependency, then it is time for therapy. The therapy lubricates the driving force, so that we find the freedom to move between non-dependency in some situations and dependency in others - again or, perhaps, for the first time.

Theories simplify our reality and make us think that we understand what we see. To understand, can also help us to realise what may happen: Theories are maps to show the way. Some theories stress the necessity of understanding the past in order to have the strength to go forward. Tidying the past becomes important. Retrospective models use words as kindling wood, but words can be magical too. One example of the magic of words can be called *the magic of repetition*. If you continuously talk about something terrible, it becomes less terrible. It is softened; it becomes rounded and loses its intensity and you can then make something more from that which is terrible, rather than simply being afraid of it. Words can set you free. It is important that we learn how to use words and it is also important that we learn to use words more often.

Gordon Allport, a leader in American psychoanalysis, stresses that no retrospective therapy is complete until some forward-looking therapy has also been included: What plans do we have for our lives? What do we want to achieve? We so easily forget to talk about questions like these, skimming over them while we focus too much on our past. We only talk about the misery and forget that life has many more demands.

According to Viktor Frankl, the last conversation becomes the first one. He builds his theory on the innate desire to give as much meaning to life as possible. Frankl talks about the importance of having a solid inner image of someone you like or something that is important to you. This image will help you endure your loneliness. Viktor Frankl did not have a horse to hold onto, but he had some grubby pieces of paper on which he had written down the basic concepts of his Logotherapy. These pieces of paper helped him through hell itself: He was a prisoner in Auschwitz concentration camp and he survived!

The law of Parsimony, more a research rule than a yardstick of law, emphasises the importance of explaining things as simply as possible. But how can you give

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

a simple explanation of what is happening between a girl in compulsory treatment and her horse? How can this relationship make sunbeams shine, even in the dark? I have spoken about transitional objects and most of us recognise and understand the thoughts behind them.

At some stage, we have all been the centre of the universe. But we have had to go out into the cold Milky Way; out into the exposed spaces of the universe and take our own place, a small star, with a light so weak and brief that only a few have time to observe it. Obviously, we need to hold someone else's hand during such a journey. If we have no one, we will have to create someone. Even a star the size of a grain of sand has an inner strength of some magnitude. From being an ordinary grey stone, it can create a miraculous light - just ask the poet Maria Wine. She had a magic stone that protected her and gave her hope on her journey through space. She always carried it with her. One day at school, her teacher asked her what she was holding, forcing her to open her hand. There was the stone. When the teacher saw it, she said: "We don't have stones in this class - room!" She took it and threw it out of the window. Maria Wine is still looking for that stone.

What happens between a girl and her horse is far more than the creation of a simple transitional object. A transitional object will fade, but a horse does not. Is it also right to use a concept, which is part of a theory with a specific time limit? The transitional object may be there right at the blast-off from the centre of the universe. It may also arrive at the end of the first year of life or soon thereafter. The horse, though, becomes a companion in space much later on.

Alice Miller talks about witnesses: Our need to have someone who will observe only us. If there is someone who is noticing us, then we can manage the journey on our own, if not, we cannot cope. Everything becomes too empty and too lonely. A last, desperate, stand may be to try to recreate the universe in our own small grain of sand, but then there is no room for real life. Reality has to be left out.

The horse becomes a witness; I am big, I am strong, I am warm, I am beautiful, I am alive. Many are afraid of me. I inspire respect. You have chosen me. Even so, it is actually I who have chosen you; I look at you, I listen to you, I will never betray your confidence, I will never reveal your secrets to another living soul, I will never laugh at you, only with you and I am here. Your looks don't matter, I

am still your friend. I am your witness. I will confirm that you are important and that you matter.

If this strong, warm, living creature can care for me, then perhaps there is hope. As Virginia Woolf would have said, it all has to do with self-confidence. In her theory of life, a lack of confidence was the root of much misery. We all need self-confidence in order to have the strength to live. Men have made it easier for themselves, having given themselves a self-confidence bonus: They maintain that it is far more important to be a man than a woman. They may also say white skin is more important than black.

Fred was an elderly white man. He had been a groom to Delvin Miller for many years. In December 1963, we were in Florida with the horses for their winter training. My two horses were in the stall next to Fred's. One evening, we had a beer together. We were sitting in a bar in the section set aside for blacks. "I like sitting here," said Fred. "I feel as if I am somebody. I sometimes think about what I have done with my life. It isn't much. I have been looking after my horses. Because of them, I have been able to see a fair amount of America. If it had been just the horses and me, I would have enjoyed my life. But it hasn't been just the horses and me. It's been all the others as well. Nobody has respected me. You young people have only your own dreams of becoming horse trainers. You think of me as a loser, an old man with no dreams. The owners who slip me a few notes when their horses win, see only their own glory in the winning, they never see me. I know I am only a fucking groom. That is why I come here. Here I am respected and envied. I'm not a fucking nigger. Here I'm something more."

A deep and hoarse laugh came from the next table. A woman was sitting there; large and buxom, in a flowery dress and black as the night. "Mister, where am I to go then? I'm not just a fucking nigger. I'm also a fucking woman!"

Viktor Frankl talks about the importance of having a firm inner image of someone you like, that you can carry with you wherever you go. This image helps you to cope with your loneliness.

What does the horse mean to the girl - apart from being exactly what it is - a training horse in a teaching course for the management of horses? Within which theoretical system or systems does the horse fit in order to explain the importance he has for a girl? The horse is not a human and he cannot be captured by one single human theory as he is too swift and too beautiful. You catch a glimpse

and then he is gone. At times, he is a shadow of a transitional object, at times a witness who gives hope and, at times a permanent object that makes life bearable. Most of the time, however, he is a friend who provides self-confidence. What theory will fit a friend like that?

A reporter asked one of the girls: "What did the horses teach you?"

"I have become more self-confident," she replied.

"But how does that show?" the reporter asked.

"I have the courage to talk to people more and to say what I think."

Another reporter got the following answer:

"I have learnt patience and that's a bloody good thing to have. It's also nice to be important to someone - it gives you a good feeling. It's a feeling that gives you self-confidence. It's a difficult feeling to explain."

What is happening between the girl and the horse, is a meeting that is not always possible to portray in a single picture. Perhaps this is because it is a meeting on so many levels. One needs to create a picture that can be interpreted in various ways. It is not just a constructed meeting for one's own needs and dreams. It is a real-life meeting. The horse exists. The horse is there for me. The horse meets me. It is a meeting without words, but a meeting that can create words. This meeting can open up new places for new meetings, with space for fantasies and play and possibilities for sadness and crying. Such a meeting between a girl and her horse will, perhaps, become magical, because it is so simple and has so many implications.

The following short reflection is my interpretation of what one of the girls told me after the notebook and the tape-recorder had been put away. We had a last cup of coffee and I was just about to leave. As I recollect, these words about her dream are her own:

'The dream is of a real friend, one that is on my side and one that understands just how I feel. The dream is of never having to be alone, of knowing that there is someone there for me and that I am important to this someone. To dare to dream this dream, is the hardest of all; to believe that it's true and that someone really longs for me. I don't know if I would long for myself, I'm not much to long for. Could I believe in somebody who said that he or she really wanted me? If they got

to know me, would they still long for me? I can't believe that. It is hard to trust in another human being when I know what kind of a person I am. Scotten was a horse. I could trust him. I also think that Scotten longed for me. That is what is so amazing. It is like a miracle. Scotten knew me and, even so, he wanted me! It's difficult to understand. I think of it often. Once I woke up crying. In my dream I had seen Scotten in a meadow thick with green grass. He saw me and neighed and then started running towards me. Then I woke up and I cried.'

Is this some sentimental girlish romance novel, or is this also part of the magic? The historian of religion, Wendy Doniger, talks about myths and our eternal need for myths when we abandon, or are abandoned by others. She wants us to question how much we can, or dare, trust another human being when we are in trouble and when we feel we have lost our trust.

How can I know that this is the real you? If you are not the real you and I have no strength to be the real me, then my reality exists without an *us*. Perhaps it is into this turmoil and emptiness that the horse enters, becoming someone to hold onto; someone to caress, someone to snuggle up to and someone who responds with a warm muzzle. It is not me, nor a human you, yet we are an *us*. Is this part of the magic?

## *A bridge to the future*

---

The close contact with the horse; the care, the friendship and the responsibility, have opened a road that has not, as yet, existed. If the road existed at all, it was not possible to travel it. But now, both the road and the possibility of travelling it, are a reality.

I am thinking of a pupil who built her life on the knowledge that she, at least, had a father who cared for her: Not everybody had that, but the father had so much angst inside himself, that there was no room for either peace or an ability to care for his daughter. His daughter did not have the strength to acknowledge this, why should she? If she had, there would have been nothing left for her to hold onto and she would have been completely alone with someone worthless - herself. In my picture, I can see how, during her years at Frossarbo Stables, she begins to give herself a pat on the back, not just her horse. She is worth patting. She knows, now, that she has value. No longer is she a nobody. Once on a television programme, a pupil said: "I am fine as I am, and the others are fine as they are." Now the first pupil can say the same thing. She was depressed when she left Frossarbo Stables. She could say: "I now know that I am alone. I dare to see that, but it doesn't exactly make me happy." I can hear the words of yet another pupil describing how it felt leaving Frossarbo Stables. "It felt as if the time had come to take stock, but I never got around to asking the right questions."

I can see how my last picture ties in with some of the first ones. I talked about blowing up the walls of the therapy room, as the traditional methods of therapeutic work shut out many young people: The door to the room is locked and you will need a special key to get in. To put it another way, a special key is needed in order to have the possibility of entering and also to make it possible for the door to be locked from the inside if you might want to stay there.

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

Of course, I want to see a link. My pictures are simplified but it is the privilege of the artist, within a defined framework, to be able to seize something and attempt to make it recognisable. My pictures strive to show that, by blowing up the therapy room walls, there are girls who have managed to find that special key that will give them access to the room. Now that they have the key in their hand and are ready to enter, the question is how?

The average treatment time at Frossarbo Stables varied to some extent during the years. In the last three years, up to 1998, it was shorter but, as you are aware, it lasted between eighteen months and two years. Many pupils describe the stay at our institution as a sanctuary, a place to be spoilt, with no hefty demands, a place for peace and quiet, a place to build up courage.

The television cameraman who drove with a pupil in the double sulky through the woods asked: "What are your feelings when you drive?"

"I feel happy and free," the girl answered.

The girls eventually left Frossarbo Stables. What happened after that? How could bridges be built between life in the institution and life that followed? This is one of the major problems for institutional care and one is always reminded of this. How can the girls use the trust and the closeness that they have built during the time at the institution? It is a nagging problem that has to be solved over and over again. Although organised attempts have been made during the years, there is no *final solution* because the problems are expressed in many and varied forms by each individual.

When state-run compulsory care schools for young people existed, there was a large and cherished organisation, within the institution itself, called *vusk*. *Vusk* is a Swedish abbreviation for care outside school. This led to another abbreviation *visk* - care within school. The legal period for treatment was then three years and critics often referred to that period as the legal safekeeping time. The way *vusk* worked varied within the different institutions, as did the duration within the total treatment period. Many institutions had created the post of Rehabilitation Officer to work solely with *vusk*. The staff working with *vusk* kept contact with all *vusk* pupils. They helped them find jobs, gave them economic assistance and they could support them through telephone calls or home visits. If a *vusk* placement broke down, the pupil was referred back to the institution and became a *visk* pupil again.

Older staff working at these reform schools become rather lyrical when speaking of *vusk*. Although, as with all large organisational ideas, it also had its faults: I could point out difficult, almost insoluble professional problems relating to economic remuneration when the staff worked across the bridge. It seemed as if, in practice, traditional *vusk* mostly became a question of economic transactions. Of course, there were *vusk* staff who managed to create something beautiful from the job. I and many others believe that Gert Bergman at Lövsta in the sixties and Ulla Wiklund at Bärby during the seventies, were such artists.

Nowadays, the major responsibility for treatment rests with the pupil's local social services department, with all young offenders having to be re-assessed every six months.

As the co-operation between a pupil's social worker and the staff at the pupil's institution can, at times, become strained, I find it difficult to think of a better basic solution than to give the local district council the final responsibility for planning the treatment. It is questionable if we, in our everyday work, might not exaggerate this strain. In my research *444 Young People from Stockholm in Crisis* and in several subsequent studies, co-operation is shown to be good in seventy to eighty percent of the cases. The latest research was presented in *Dagens Nyheter*, in March 2001. The percentage for good co-operation is still high - seventy to eighty percent. In the research, these percentages are pronounced as remarkable, and unexpected. Good co-operation is unfortunately not a guarantee that the bridge to life after the institution will function. An unmistakable weakness in bridge-building, is the movement of staff. If the secretary to the social services leaves; the assistant treatment officer of the institution leaves, in a few years' time there is no certainty that the pupil will have anyone familiar to turn to in a crisis situation when he or she may need help.

All previous pupils were always welcomed back at Frossarbo Stables, especially over weekends, but it was also possible for them to stay for a week if needed. If we had too many visitors, we had to draw up a waiting list and sometimes we had to refuse because of other reasons. There were few weekends without visitors. The visits carried no cost, either for the pupils or their local councils: They were our treat, as the visits were part of our bridge-building. It was never enough, though. With more and more old pupils and more and more new staff, bridge-building became weaker, leaving us feeling inadequate.

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

In response to this feeling of inadequacy, I am going to argue for yet another bridge. I call this bridge the *therapy bridge* and I would like to see it as a bridge for all young people in compulsory care, not only for the pupils at Frossarbo Stables. It is not so much a bridge to life after an institution, as it is the bridge throughout life.

*There is a lot sadness that needs to be expressed in words and it is important that these words are spoken, as they can be the difference between a reasonable life and an unbearable one.*

With a key in her hand, a young person should be able to choose for herself whether to go into the therapy room or not. The young person should have the right to use this key for about five or ten years after he or she has left the institution. With the key, would come a therapy voucher to pay for, at least, fifty sessions. The money would have been set aside during the time at the institution as part of the treatment cost. This would equal one to two percent of the total care cost for an eighteen months' treatment at an institution. The youngsters would decide whether to use the vouchers or not. If they wished to use them, they should not need to bow and scrape, and their social worker should not need to certify in writing their desperate plight in order to apply for economic assistance.

*The voucher should be used positively when they wished to move forward.* The social services would manage the cost and give assistance by finding capable therapists. An alternative to this would be that SiS employ regionally-based therapists to be available to the youngsters. It is important for the *therapy bridge* to be a bridge for a period of time.

A weakness in our social thinking is that, like our society in general, we have a fixation about age. We know that there are few dramatic changes, either psychologically or physically, from the ages of seventeen to nineteen or twenty-one to twenty-two. Yet, legally, the differences are clear and therefore the safety-net becomes weaker. It is therefore important that the *therapy voucher* system covers an extended period of time as it takes time to find oneself and, during that time, it is easy to slip and fall by the wayside.

It is always possible to find objections to concrete suggestions. Difficulties are easy to find and it is simple to conclude that a suggestion is impossible to implement: I know, I have lived with the *it can't be done* test. Anything compulsory is

an enormous intrusion in a young person's life. There ought to be certain rights too. Such a right should be the facility to carry on with that which was begun during the institutional care period. The positive development that has begun should not be lost, or discontinued for reasons of poorly organised finance. If there is a need and a will, all the therapeutic opportunities must not become that which could have been.

### *At the end of the road*

---

For a girl, the meeting with the horse became a meeting with herself; with the other girls and with the staff at Frossarbo Stables. In these pictures, the staff are in the background with the centre and the light above the girls and the horses. This does not mean that the staff are less important: We were the human partners the girls talked to. The horse started the talking; the horse initiated the questions and the training helped the girls to formulate questions and to save them the material with which they needed to work out the answers. Together, we deliberated and investigated; we shared our thoughts and experiences, we succeeded and failed together. We tried to refine and clarify words and we tried to find new words for new ideas. We, the staff, wanted the girls to follow and trust us, just as the horses followed and trusted the girls. We drew maps together and, together, we looked for possible new paths.

Ultimately, it was the staff who had the responsibility and power. However, we knew this and the pictures need not mention it. Within compulsory care institutions, however, we have been given an official and legal right to exercise power. We can legally, and with humane propriety; isolate young people, read their letters, check their faeces and have them chased by police, but in this picture gallery, no room has been given to the staff. There are already a great many galleries where the focus is on the staff, their management and training. Even so, I would like to say something, relating to the staff, in this last picture.

On one occasion, when she was fairly new to the job, a member of staff said: "Frossarbo Stables is a strange place. Here, it seems, everybody is boss."

If you are a boss, you take responsibility for your work; you take responsibility for your pupils, for your colleagues and for yourself. If you are a boss, you take the knocks but you are never subjected to knocks and this is a big difference. You are

your own person when you are a boss. As a boss, you want all your co-workers to be able to stand on their own two feet and criticise you to your face and not behind your back. You also hope that your pupils will emulate your standards, begin to stand on their own and take some responsibility for themselves. This is what environmental therapy is all about. This is its centre and its soul - to make things better by being together.

Dealing with life by yourself becomes much easier if you feel that your work has a meaning and that it is fun. Everything is so much easier if you feel you can trust the people with whom you work and that you are liked by others. There ought to be a law that says that, in every workplace, all workers should have, at least, a couple of best friends.

When I look back on my ten years as principal of Frossarbo Stables, I can see before me a long line of *besties*, and it has been a privilege to have been able to work with all of them. Through their stories, many of them have come into focus in this series of pictures. In order to give everybody space, there would have to be another collection: If I mention some, I want to mention all. Apart from Bert, in Picture 13, I will discuss one other: Berit Ädel. Bert and Berit were the two B's that I leaned on over the years. Berit came to live at Frossarbo Stables at the end of the first year and, thereafter, to work in the stable.

There was much to do everyday in the stable. Even so, if a girl was upset, one of us would give her extra time. We would go to the tack room and sit there in peace and quiet and clean a harness or go for a long drive in the exercise sulky. The girls would, however, mainly go to Berit, who had a natural and straightforward manner towards them which the girls trusted. By respecting the girls and taking them seriously, Berit became the role-model of Frossarbo Stables. When Bert retired as stable manager, Berit stepped in.

I have come to the end of my road and have left Frossarbo Stables. My memories are many, but if I were to bring out one last image, it would have to be this:

It is a beautiful autumn day. One of the pupils is about to drive fast for the very first time. She has got the track through the woods to herself. There will be no risk of meeting anybody else or of being disturbed and she is eager and tense. "I'm rather nervous", she says. The track is two-point-three kilometres long and she has to drive four laps, the last one being the fastest. On some of the straights, she will almost reach racing speed. When she has finished the drive, she has to

lead the horse, at walking pace, the three hundred metres to the stable. The girl and the horse speed away. As I wait for them to return I go for a walk in the woods to look for mushrooms. I see them returning at walking pace. I am behind a couple of trees and they cannot see me, but I can see them. I see a sweaty horse and a girl with shining eyes, grinning all over her face and I can hear her say to herself: *I am divine! Damn it!*

## *The spirit lives on*

---

The Swedish edition of *The Girl and the Horse* was printed in September of 2001. Five years has passed. I have talked a lot about the book, in both Sweden and Norway, England, US and South Africa and have spoken to people both young and old. Many claim to understand the feelings that the girls have towards their horses. Many would like to experience those feelings for themselves; some say they have; some, who say so, are old. They know what the girls are talking about. They also miss their horses, their old working mates. A farmer, for example, said:

“When I hear you talk about the girls and their horses, you help me put words to that empty feeling I have had ever since I had to trade my horse for a tractor. In those days the horse was just with us; a natural living thing in the centre of our lives, the way it had been for as long as we knew. Then the horse just disappeared, more or less overnight. The horse was not there anymore. In a deeper sense, I do not think we understood what we had lost. It was not just a work tool that had grown out of necessity. It was something more - a working mate, a life companion.”

I have frequently thought about the old man's reflections. The horse has been with us ever since the Stone Age girl tamed her foal. He has been with us in the fields, on the battlegrounds, transporting us back and forth, helping and supporting us in all phases of our daily lives. He has been so natural for us that we have taken him for granted: He should just be there. Now he is not. He has been left to the domain of leisure time and only accessible to a few. For most of us, he remains something to be seen on television, in sport programmes and American Westerns. It is now, when he is gone, that we start to realise that we are missing something more than just a piece of equipment. I can hear my Frossarbo girls telling me over and over again how many times they sneaked up to their horses in the middle of the night to cry and get comfort. When I close my eyes, I can see millions of youngsters doing just that, century after century. The horse was more than just a piece of equipment that

became ineffective and produced too little. The horse was, as the old man said, a life companion. We all need life companions; nowadays, maybe more than ever.

After an abrupt break in the knowledge chain of man and horse, we are now slowly regaining this knowledge. We are suddenly starting to see sunbeams where no sunbeams were seen before. Margareta Håkansson, a physiotherapist and a researcher, reports stunning results from her work at the University Hospital in Gothenburg, with girls suffering from anorexia who are riding. And a staff of mine Marianne Tuuvas, trained at Frossarbo and applying the Frossarbo Therapeutic model in a private enterprise, is doing very well. She emphasizes the importance of the Horse Educational programme and that each girl has the responsibility of her "own" horse.

In Norway, the private organisation Hest og Helse (Horse and Health) and its Secretary Wenche Wallgren, are constantly trying to promote knowledge of the health aspect of man and horse. They run seminars and fund treatment programmes, such as the one Jeanette Lysell runs at Gusta Hospital in Vekshuset, Oslo. They have reported good success rates for riding therapy programmes with young schizo - phrenics and drug addicts. Another successful programme has been carried out by Nina Wieger, with handicapped children being given new quality of life in training with horses.

From the US a successful Equine Assisted Psychotherapy programme is reported by Carol Kildow and Terry Draper, One Quarter Horse...Three Quarters Heart.

Winning back knowledge means trying to win the politicians as well. Some months ago, I made a presentation to an audience of 'horse people'. After the lectures, many came forward, wanting to buy the book, not because they wanted to be convinced, they already were, but to collect ammunition to convince their local politicians that projects with horses could be taken seriously and could open up new possibilities. Although more research is coming in, there is still too little ammunition.

As a result of my experiences within the realm of compulsory treatment, I was invited by SIPU, working on behalf of Sida, to see if Sweden could, in any way, support the creation of good facilities for children in compulsory care in the Northern Cape in South Africa. This has mostly occupied me since my retirement. Until June 2005, I have been in charge of a programme called Contract-Financed Technical Co-operation between the Northern Cape Child and Youth Residential Care programme and the National Board of Institutional Care of Sweden, SiS. My South African counterpart is Herman Mooketsi, Director for Social Work Services. I have shared my experiences from Frossarbo Stables with him and he sees the promising possibilities to use

Animal Assisted Therapy within the field of compulsory treatment. In the proposal to Sida for an extension of the Co-operation programme for three more years he emphasises the need to also run staff training programmes connected to Animal Assisted Therapy.

I have also discussed the overall aspect of using animals in therapeutic situations with the open minded and well known South African journalist Dianne Smith. She has been "a path opener" for the notion of Animal Assisted Therapy in South Africa with articles in both Kimberley and Johannesburg newspapers. With the introduction of harness racing in South Africa, one could now use the Frossarbo Therapeutic Model in its full capacity.

In a discussion of Animal Assisted Therapy, there are some aspects that have to be emphasised. Firstly, the aim of using an animal should be clearly defined in the therapeutic process. The animal is there for a specific reason, not just for the fun of it.

Secondly, one has to be very aware that people may hide under the cover of therapy, when what they really want is cheap labour to promote their own breeding or racing industries. This is not Animal Therapy.

Thirdly, one which is close to the first one, but is well worth mentioning on its own: Bringing an animal into the therapeutic environment, means that there has to be one person who has the absolute responsibility to see that the animal is well treated and is not hurt, as, in a therapeutic situation, there may be a lot of sadness and anger 'floating around'. In Animal Assisted Therapy, one more 'lane' is added to the basic concept of parallel processes. Clients are important, staff are important and animals are important. They should all be treated with respect and dignity.

During this last year, I have also met with many staff working within compulsory care. When we discuss the concept of parallel processes, many claim to have made progress by establishing a therapeutic working situation using methods within a strictly formalised reward system, based on cognitive-behavioural techniques. Instead of staff spending many hours discussing how to get the youngsters out of bed, they now find themselves in a situation where they can interact with the youngsters much sooner in a more positive way.

When I started my therapeutic training in the late fifties, psychoanalysis was 'the method'. A life-long project on the psychoanalytical couch did not sound too discouraging, but how was one to find unlimited time and unlimited money resources? My first presentation of an Animal Assisted Therapy programme at Berkeley in 1962, was to oppose the exclusiveness of psychoanalysis - to try to open up and reach

## *THE GIRL AND THE HORSE*

---

some of those locked out. Then, in the sixties, the big psychodynamic wave hit the shores of Sweden. There were Carl Rogers, Eric Berne and TA, Fritz Pearl and Gestalt Therapy, Viktor Frankl and Logotherapy, the British school of Object-related Therapy with Melanie Klein, D.W. Winnicott and all the others. Everyone was there.

The next wave to hit Sweden, and now we are talking contemporary time, is the wave of Cognitive Therapy. In the beginning, it was looked upon as being an over-simplistic way of regarding and describing therapeutic processes.

A front figure in presenting cognitive behavioural techniques within the SiS organisation has been the psychologist Bengt Daleflod. He took a simple and straight forward stand, the one of looking at research, to see what had worked and what had not worked. He came to the conclusion that Cognitive Therapy was a far better approach within compulsory treatment. When research funds are being granted, the majority goes to Cognitive projects than that of psychodynamics.

The big theoretical battles are mostly fought in the arenas of the universities. On the institution floors, the battles are about finding and combining working solutions, rather than arguing the excellence of one theory over another. It seems as if humans, like horses, are not easily captured in one theory. There are always new doors to be opened and new paths to be walked.

In Animal Assisted Therapy, one may approach an animal from different angles, having different ideas of what one hopes to gain. Trained as a psychotherapist, I approached the horse in both individual and group therapy. As a psychotherapist, one may rely on different theories - they may be of cognitive or psychodynamic origin. But, whatever the theory, whatever the method, there are two processes with which you always have to cope.

One is the building of trust between you and your client. I have worked with youth in compulsory care, kids that have been let down over and over again; kids who do not dare to say yes, because another failure would hurt too much, kids who keep on saying no, no, no. I have had a co-worker in this job. The amazing thing about this co-worker is that he is, at the same time, a safeguard for the kids. When I push too hard, or get too insensitive, the kids still stay because of the safeguard, my co-worker.

---

The other process in therapy with which one has to cope, is a fragile one and, at the same time, the most important. This is the process of not just daring to trust another being, but starting to trust yourself, liking yourself and caring for yourself. Here, too, my co-worker has played an important role. By trusting my co-worker, it seems to be easier for the kids to start to see their own value.

Dear friends and colleagues, you know this is tough work. You know what I am talking about. You know the value of a co-worker like the one I have had. I give him to you. He is there for you to keep. He stands tall and strong, not just on two legs, but on four. He is yours.

*Sven Forsling*

Stalbo, November 2006

---

## References

- Akers, R. (1985): *Deviant Behavior. A Social Learning Approach*. Belmont, California.
- Akers, R. et al. (1997): *Social Learning and Deviant Behavior*. Am. Soc. Rev. 44:636-655.
- Åkesson, N. (2001): Socialtjänstenkät, ungdom. Allmän SiS-rapport 2001:3.
- Allport, G. (1963): *Preface to Man's Search for Meaning*. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Bergström, U. (1995): *Invandrarungdomar på särskilda ungdomshem. Delrapport från Utvärdering av socialtjänstens institutionsvård av barn och ungdomar*. Socialhögskolan, Stockholms Universitet.
- Bergström, U. (2001): *Uppföljande undersökning av ungdomar som under åren 1990-1995 har varit inskrivna på särskilda ungdomshem i Stockholm*. SiS projektnummer U-97-3001-1. Personlig kommunikation.
- Blom, B. & Edström, C-G. (2000): *Om gråskalan*. Personlig kommunikation.
- Briar, S. & Irving, P. (1965): *Delinquency, Situational Inducements, and Commitment to Conformity*. Social Problems 13:35-45.
- Börjesson, B. (1979): *Inre och yttre tvång*. Stockholm: Tidens Förlag.
- Börjesson, B. (1990): *'Frivillighet och tvång inom missbrukarvården'. I: Forskning om missbrukare och vården, särskilt tvångsvården*. DSF.
- Börjesson, B. (1990): *'Avskyn för det man inte förstår breder ut sig i världen'. Sju perspektiv på barn och ungdomars levnadsförhållanden*. SoS-rapport nr 5, Stockholm.
- Cloward, R. & Ohlin, L. (1960): *Delinquency and Opportunity*. Glencoe Ill: Free Press.
- Cohen, R. & Felson, M. (1979): *Social Change and Crime Rate Trends*. Am. Soc. Rev. 44:588-608.
- Daleflod, B. (1993). *Stagnation eller evolution? Översikt av hoppgivande forskning med relevans för ungdomsvården*. Scandinavian Journal of Behaviour Therapy. 22:88-117.
- Doniger, W. (2000): *The Bedtrick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Elliot, D. et al. (1985): *Explaining Delinquency and Drug Use*. California: Sage.
- Erickson, M. & Lamar, T. (1965): *Class Position, Peers and Delinquency*. Sociology and Social Research 49:268-282.
- Forsling, S. (1974): *Behandlingsundersökningar vid Bärby 1971-1973*. Slutresultat och sammanfattning. Socialstyrelsen rapport 7.
- Forsling, S. (1987): *444 Stockholmsungdomar i kris*. Stockholms läns landsting.
- Forsling, S. (1991): *Blir värstingen värre?* Stockholms läns landsting.
-

## THE GIRL AND THE HORSE

---

- Forsling, S. (1992): *Värstingflickor, finns dom?* Stockholms läns landsting.
- Frankl, V. (1963): *Psychiatry and the Meaning of Life: Foundations of Logotherapy*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Gold, M. (1970): *Delinquent Behaviour in an American City*. Belmont, California: Brooks/Cole.
- Hepburn, J. (1977): *Testing Alternative Models of Delinquency Causation*. Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology 67:450-460.
- Jensen, G. (1972): *Parents, Peers and Delinquent Action*. Am. J. Soc. 78:562-575.
- Johnson, R. (1979): *Juvenile Delinquency and its Origins*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Korpi, S. & Hermodsson, A. (2000): *Fyra av tio flickor försökte ta sitt liv*. DN Debatt. Stockholm. Liska,
- A. (1981): *Perspectives on Deviance*. Englewoods Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Matsueda, R. & Heimer, K. (1987): *Race, Family Structure and Delinquency*. Am.Soc.Rev. 52:826-840.
- Miller, A. (1998): *Wege des Lebens*. Sieben Geschichten. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag. Svensk översättning: Vagar i livet: Sju berättelser. Wahlström & Widstrand, 1999.
- Miller, K. & Harrison, J. In conjunction with Baldwin, R; Dancer, S; Miller, D; O'Brien, J; Pownall, H. & Smart, T.W. (1968): *Care and Training of the Trotter and Pacer*. The United States Trotting Association. Harrisburg: Telegraph Press.
- Nordin, S. (1959): *Spänn banden*. Stockholm: Bonniers.
- Nordin, S. (1982): *Mitt liv i sulkyn*. Bilaga. Travskolan, Stockholm: Guidentryck.
- Odratt, G. (2000): *Att alfabetisera valfångare, socialarbetare och andra*. Gränsen som mötesplats, vänbok till Lars-Erik Lundmark. Socialstyrelsen
- Reiss, A. & Rhodes, L. (1964): *An Empirical Test of Differential Association Theory*. Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency 1:5-18.
- Sarnecki, J. (1993): *Uppföljning av §12-vården i Stockholms län*. Delrapport 5. Stockholms läns landsting.
- Sarnecki, J. (1996): *Problemprofiler hos ungdomar inskrivna på särskilda ungdomshem i Stockholms län åren 1990-1994*. Vård av ungdomar med sociala problem. Red. Armelius B-Å. Et al. SiS.
- Short, J. (1957): *Differential Association and Delinquency*. Social Problems 4:233-239.
- Sutherland, E. (1947): *Criminology*. Philadelphia: Lippincott.
- Tittle, C. et.al.(1986): *Modelling Sutherland's Theory of Differential Association*. Social Forces 65:405-432.
- Voss, H. (1964): *Differential Association and Reported Delinquency Behavior: A Replication*. Social Problems 12:78-85.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1971): *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock. Svensk översättning: Lek och verklighet (1981). Stockholm: Natur och Kultur.
- Woolf, V. (1929): *A Room of One's Own; On Not Knowing Greek; How should One Read a Book*. Svensk översättning: Ett eget rum och andra essäer (1985). Stockholm: Tidens Förlag.