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Keep horsing around with the help of these local equestrian shops

By John T. Miller



ReactorPanel Saddle Company.

Photos John T. Miller

“After a further study, we found the heart rates of the horses were lower without the flap.” The company has decided to delay release of the product until it is patented.

The saddle is for English-style riding, but the newly developed flapless version fills the niche market for endurance riding. “These competitions are like ultra marathons,” said Weinger, “with the horses traveling over 100 miles.”

Commenting on the local equestrian scene, Weinger said, “The area is rich and deep with riders. Moraga is a great central location to reach them.”

New Colt on the Block

While Dover Saddlery is a relative newcomer to the area, moving into the Moraga Shopping Center in the fall of 2015, the parent company was established in Wellesley, Massachusetts, in 1974 by the Power brothers. The Moraga store is the second West Coast location after Laguna Hills, and the next closest is in Colorado.

Current manager Tracy Burke has been with the Dover Saddlery for 12 years and helps open new locations for the company. After receiving a law degree in Massachusetts, she decided to work for Dover instead: “Dover was my go to tack store while growing up, and then became my undergrad job. After I passed the bar I decided I’d rather work for them than be a lawyer.”

The store serves English-style riding and also has veterinarian medicines, supplements, horse care products and basic barn supplies. They sell their own makes of saddles, including Circuit and Warendorf, and carry about 10 other brands of saddles.

Burke is here temporarily doing training and looking to hire a new permanent manager. “I am amazed at how tight-knit the horse community is here and how well they support each other,” she said. “Everyone is invested in the community (of riders), helping the equestrian scene flourish.”

homemade treats

Moraga made by Moj

FROM MOJ, WITH LOVE Trained in Paris, Moj produces homemade treats from her certified kitchen in Moraga. Primarily organic ingredients and lots of love come together in cakes, cookies, French macarons and pastries. You can order a graduation or wedding cake, order an occasion-appropriate gift box, have an entire event catered, or just pick up a couple of treats. If you are tired of store bought cakes and pastries give Moj a call at **925-286-4434**.

Three saddlery, tack, and bridle stores, with three different stories, have been created in the Lamorinda area to serve the robust equestrian community here.

Horsing Around

The first to arrive on the scene, the Orinda Village Horse Shop, was opened in 1995 by owner Linda Englestad. With a motto of “Everything for the horse and rider,” Englestad has fashioned an independent, locally owned shop that can respond to requests and local needs.

The business was originally called “Horsing Around,” but a dispute over naming rights led the local company to change its name.

“This shop has been a part of the community for so long that we are familiar with the local barns, trainers, and riding programs offered,” said Englestad. “Being a locally owned shop, we are able to easily adapt to requests or local needs.”

Originally, the company focused only on English riding, which is the type featured in the Olympics and includes Hunter/Jumping, Dressage and Endurance. Last year, however, they expanded into Western style, which includes Rodeo, Pleasure Reining, and Trail. They also introduced a consignment program recently for customers to resell merchandise.

The company especially focuses on helping new riders and also carries items for the horse lover who may not ride.

A Patented Leather Saddle

Tucked into a small office space in the Moraga Executive Plaza, the ReactorPanel Saddle Company provides quality saddles to local riders, customers all over the United States, and some international clients.

Carmi Weinger bought the saddle business in 1999 from an English company, and has developed a product unlike any other.

While some of the buyers are local, most of the sales go to customers across the United States, and a handful of saddles are sold

internationally. Using video links, the staff can custom fit the saddle to the new owner’s needs.

Weinger says, “With the touch of a button, I can be working in Virginia in the morning, Colorado in the afternoon, and Tennessee in the evening.” The company won’t sell a saddle without a two-week trial. “We have technology for a remote fitting all over the globe.”

The company is working on a new name -- since many think something nuclear is implied by the Reactor part of the current logo. More importantly, the local group is about to patent a new flapless saddle they helped develop for an endurance rider.

“We found that women in their 50s and 60s had a better sense of connection to their horses without the flap,” said Weinger.



Orinda Village Horse Shop.



Dover Saddlery.

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Traffic lights hit temporary roadblock

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“Preliminary estimates given to us range from 10-12 weeks, but we are aggressively pressing for this timeline to be shortened in the interest of expediting a public safety project.”

At the same time the city staff is also exploring ways to install the rest of the equipment that has

no conflicts and can safely operate the signal in a temporary configuration.

The project had been slated for completion by the end of April 2017. Coe apologized for the delay saying, “A series of separate issues ranging from unmarked underground utilities to equipment short-

age has had a cumulative effect on our ability to stay on schedule.”

He says that although the current issue with overhead line clearance is “a significant obstacle” city staff is actively pursuing all strategies to speed up completion.