

Clas Adam Ehrengranat

by Prof. Invgar Fredricson

(Professor Fredricson was the head of Flyinge, the Swedish National Stud, from 1983 to 1998.)

Article Posted in "Beridna Högvakten" 2006
Beridna Högvakten is a magazine published in Sweden to benefit the Orchestra that rides to the Castle in Stockholm... "Beridna Högvakten" means "to guard the king."

It is the autumn of 1836 and Adam Ehrengranat sits in his office at the beautiful Flyinge. He is very pleased. He has just finished the manuscript for his extensive riding handbook named "Riding school or art of riding". The only thing that remains is to write a dedication for the king, Karl XVI Johan. He is proud of the book, fortunately he doesn't know that next year he will be forced to resign as the head of Flyinge as a result of a conflict with his superior in Stockholm.

It is the winter of 2000 and the American horse master Craig Stevens sits in a jumbo jet on his way to Stockholm. He has just read an English translation of Ehrengranat's book. He is ecstatic about what he's read since he knows how much of the old French art of riding was lost during the French revolution. His thoughts wander to another priceless collection of books. Not long ago he discovered a large number of amazing books at "Livrustkammaren". Emil Fick, an accomplished fencer and rider, who helped design the rules for the Olympic Games in Stockholm 1912, handed over his large book collection to the Swedish Government in 1933. One part deals with fencing and is long since catalogued. The other part is not yet catalogued, but is one of the finest collections in this world of equestrian literature. It contains not only books and articles but also a large number of handwritten letters by prominent leaders of the horse community. There are two original manuscript by Swedish writers, Johan Lewin Eklund, head of the stables at Uppsala University "Systeme om hastens rörelser"

and "Häste-Scholan" (about the horse's movement and horse school)

When I recently meet Craig Stevens for the first time, he told me that after some of his students shown him Adam Ehrengranat he developed a strong interest for the Swedish art of riding. This resulted in the translation of "Riding school, or art of riding". Together they also translated writing by the famous Lewin Ekelund and some other horse masters from that era. Craig Stevens plans to process and collect some parts and within 5 years publish a book about "Classical Swedish Equitation".

Back to Adam Ehrengranat.

Born in 1792, Adam Ehrengranat left his home town Stockholm in 1803 to study at Uppsala University. His education took place mainly in French and included all a young noble man should master (language, mathematics, science, fencing, dancing and riding). Ehrengranat learned to break and train aggressive and difficult stallions.

In 1739 the riding academy at Uppsala University was reopened. From 1744-1774 Lewin Ekelund was the head of the academy. He was trained at the best riding academies in France and Italy and he brought the spirit and teachings to Uppsala.

After studies at Uppsala University Ehrengranat continued to the riding school at Strömsholm.

From 1802-1807 Ehrengranat studied veterinary medicine in Copenhagen. In 1809 he published a treatise on the hack, and in 1818 published a treatise on movements of the horse in the art of riding, where (among other things) he presented the new movements shoulder in, half pass and reversed half pass. He thought these movements useful for collecting and suppling the horse. Later research has showed that the human eye can not correctly perceive and analyse the different gaits in detail. But Ehrengranat understood well how the different degrees of collection

influence the horses balance. He builds the mobile horse. These treatises and his book about the art of riding make Ehrengranat the founder of Swedish biomechanical research for horse.

In 1817, Ehrengranat was appointed head of Flyinge.* He began to train the previously untrained stallions. In spite of his deep understanding of the horse's biomechanics he always instilled in his student that the horse had to be treated as a sensitive and feeling being. To be a good rider you have to be technically skilful but also you must understand and interpret the horse's psyche and reactions.

Craig Stevens' fascination for Adam Ehrengranat is based largely on the fact that the art of riding, that was dominated by France from the 17th to 18th centuries, was destroyed in France during the French revolution. Almost all knowledge was lost when the skilled horse masters of the French upper class were killed. Later when the French tried to rebuild the art of riding there were large conflicts as to how this was supposed to be done. Adam Ehrengranat's work is unique since he, as a thorough student of the French literature about classical equitation, remained completely without influence from these conflicts.

The German way of riding that now dominates Swedish riding tells you that the horse should be collected by pushing with the seat and legs against a soft and steady hand. By an artistic cooperation of several aids at the same time it is possible to develop the horse's inborn movements. But for this to actually work the rider has to have a steady and supple seat, and also the ability to coordinate with precision all the other aids in a way that the horse can understand. The problem today is that most riders don't have a good enough seat that enables them to coordinate these aids in an appropriate manner. This results often in misunderstanding between horse and rider. This in turn usually leads to the horse either being nervous and tense or lazy and dead to

the aids. With the French system that is based on the principle "hands without legs and legs without hands" it is much easier for the rider to give clear signals that the horse can understand.

On my way home my mind is buzzing after the intense discussion with Craig Stevens. But I'm also stimulated. It has clearly been useful for me to have my early ingrained, German influenced way of looking at riding and horse training questioned. At the present time in Sweden there are 300,000 horse. If these horses live on an average of 20 years, it would mean that 15,000 young horses every year should be broken to saddle or prepared as driving horses. There are today only a handful of professional horse trainers specialised in young horses. This means that almost all horses are trained by people without the proper knowledge. An intriguing thought would then be to develop a through and through Swedish training system based on the teachings of Ekelund and Ehrengranat adapted to modern times. This may be a question for modern hippological research? Most probably such a training system would not differ much from that already used by western riders in natural horsemanship.

However it happened, Adam Ehrengranat would say in triumph from his cloud 170 years later that "the true art of riding will never grow old".

To wrap this up I refer to Clas Adam Ehrengranat's curriculum vitae. There you can read more about the exiting life of the most skilful leaders of Flyinge that space will not permit me to write about here.

Veterinary Professor. MD, Ingvor Fredricsson, Head of Flyinge 1983-98.

This is a very rough translation of Professor Fredricsson's article provided by Craig Steven's advanced student, Lena Danius. Thank you Lena!

