

COLLECTIVE REMARKS



THE HDS DIGITAL NEWSPAPER

*Editor Fran Kehr
Designer Carrie Leach*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

I am thrilled to extend my congratulations to all the competitors who participated in the EDWARDS DE MATA LAW, CDI 1*/2*/Y/J/CH/P/AA & HDS SPRING CLASSIC I-II show held from April 25-27 at the Great Southwest Equestrian Center. A big thank you to Edwards de Mata Law for your sponsorship of this amazing show. This year, we had an outstanding young rider/junior representation at the CDI! I had the pleasure of watching some beautiful rides in the open show! We are proud of each and every one of you.

A special thank you goes out to our incredible volunteers whose hard work and commitment made this event a resounding success. In addition, we are deeply grateful to Andrea Hart of Right Start Dressage for her generous donation of goodies for our volunteers. Your thoughtful contribution was very well received and appreciated by all.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to Sarah Denham, HDS Education Chair, for organizing an enlightening educational event with Andres Castano focused on groundwork concurrent with the show. Your efforts in enhancing our members' knowledge and skills are invaluable. Keep your eyes open for future educational events.

We are delighted to host a symposium with Bronze Medal Olympian Ms. Allison Brock at Twinwood Equestrian Center on May 17-18. Riders have been selected from training level through grand prix! This is a fantastic opportunity to learn from one of the best in the sport. Sign-up is available on our website at www.houstondressagesociety.com.

As a reminder, entries are now open for the Summer I & II show, scheduled for June 7-8. We look forward to seeing many of you there!

See you ringside,
Jody Lynn DeStefanis
President, Houston Dressage Society

Breaking News:

- Edwards De Mata Law CDI and HDS Spring Classic I & II pgs.3-6
- Show Calendar pg. 7
- Ali Brock Symposium pg. 8
- Trainers Relocate to FL pgs. 11-12
- Congrats "L" Program Graduates pg. 13
- More News pg. 24

Houston Dressage Society

Board Meeting

Meeting Agenda
April 14, 2025

- 7:00 PM Call to order and intro of guests
- 7:02 PM Review and Approval of minutes from last meeting
- 7:05 PM Discussions
- 7:15PM **April Show:**
- Show Management (Angel)
 - Show Photography (Angel)
 - Awards (Carrie)
 - Special Events (Ashley)
 - Youth Get Together (Cate)
 - Volunteers (Jody)
 - Sponsorships (Jane)
- 7:35PM **Ali Brock Clinic** (Sarah/Jody)
- Rider Applications
 - Advertising to Auditors
 - Dinner and lunches
- 8:00PM **Board Reports**
- 8:00 PM **Treasurer's Report** – Angel/Terry
- 8:05 PM **Advertising/Sponsorships** – Jane
- 8:15 PM **Education** – Sarah
- 8:25 PM **Youth** – Cate Schmidt
- 8:35 PM **Membership** – Diane
- 8:45 PM **Schooling Shows** – Dawn Morris
- 8:50 PM **Publications and Media** – Fran
- 9:00PM **Historian** – Noel
- 9:05 PM Old/Unfinished Business
- Bylaws and schedule
- 9:10 PM New Business
- 9:15 PM Adjourn

Thank you, Edwards de Mata Law, and HDS for a wonderful CDI and Spring Classic I & II

HDS SPRING CLASSIC I HIGH POINTS

| FEI | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|---------------------------|---------|-----|------------------|-----------------------|
| Champion | 68.529 | 2022 FEI PRIX ST. GEORGES | Open | 576 | NORTE DC | ANTONIO GARCIA ROLDAN |
| Reserve | 66.912 | 2022 FEI INTERMEDIATE I | Open | 504 | CHARLOTTE CR | CHRISTINE CALAO |
| Champion | 66.912 | 2022 FEI PRIX ST. GEORGES | Amateur | 417 | HEATHROW | ALEXANDRA MEDINA |
| Reserve | 64.706 | 2022 FEI PRIX ST. GEORGES | Amateur | 515 | CHROMIUM | ASHLEY PIPKIN-JONES |
| Champion | 57.059 | 2022 FEI PRIX ST. GEORGES | JR/YR | 595 | FURST KLASSE REF | ASHLEY LEMM |

National Levels

| | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|--------------------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Champion | 71.625 | 2023 USEF THIRD LEVEL, TEST 3 | Open | 577 | PEKIN DC | ANTONIO GARCIA ROLDAN |
| Reserve | 71.125 | 2023 USEF THIRD LEVEL, TEST 3 | Open | 431 | MEI-FLEURE | JOHN MASON |
| Champion | 66.806 | 2023 USEF FOURTH LEVEL, TEST 3 | Amateur | 406 | SLAINTE CPF | MAXIME GRIFFIN |
| Reserve | 66.75 | 2023 USEF THIRD LEVEL, TEST 3 | Amateur | 505 | DIVA L'OR FD | KRISTIN WILLIAMS |
| Champion | 67.444 | 2023 USEF FIRST LEVEL, TEST 3 | JR/YR | 427 | DON SILVANO | AUDREY GUITREAU |
| Reserve | 67.083 | 2023 USEF FIRST LEVEL, TEST 3 | JR/YR | 438 | ZIGGY STARDUST RSH | GENEVIEVE MOREHEAD |

National Level Freestyle

| | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|---------------------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|--------------------|
| Champion | 63.262 | 2023 USDF THIRD LEVEL FREESTYLE | Amateur | 420 | MISS POW WOW | JILLIAN BOWMAN |
| Champion | 64.528 | 2023 USDF FIRST LEVEL FREESTYLE | Open | 520 | DEANFIELD BENLEAGH | CHRISTINE MCCARTER |

Pony Cup

| | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|-------------------------------|------|-----|----------|-------------------|
| Champion | 55.972 | 2023 USEF FIRST LEVEL, TEST 3 | Pony | 405 | PIKIN FE | ELIZABETH SHELTON |
|----------|--------|-------------------------------|------|-----|----------|-------------------|

Dapples

| | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|-------------------------------|---------|-----|----------|-------------|
| Champion | 65.694 | 2023 USEF FIRST LEVEL, TEST 3 | Amateur | 523 | ROULETTE | BETH RUMORE |
|----------|--------|-------------------------------|---------|-----|----------|-------------|

HDS SPRING CLASSIC II HIGH POINTS

| FEI | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|---------------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Champion | 66.397 | 2022 FEI PRIX ST. GEORGES | Open | 576 | NORTE DC | ANTONIO GARCIA ROLDAN |
| Reserve | 65.147 | 2022 FEI INTERMEDIATE I | Open | 575 | GOVERNADOR INTERAG | ANTONIO GARCIA ROLDAN |
| Champion | 60.956 | 2022 FEI PRIX ST. GEORGES | Amateur | 437 | FURSTENHERZ | LESLIE KOHLENBERG |
| Reserve | 60.147 | 2022 FEI PRIX ST. GEORGES | Amateur | 417 | HEATHROW | ALEXANDRA MEDINA |
| Champion | 52.868 | 2022 FEI PRIX ST. GEORGES | JR/YR | 595 | FURST KLASSE REF | ASHLEY LEMM |

National Levels

| | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|----------------------------------|---------|-----|--------------------|--------------------|
| Champion | 72.2 | 2023 USEF TRAINING LEVEL, TEST 3 | Open | 440 | NIRVANA | JESSICA FAN |
| Reserve | 71.375 | 2023 USEF THIRD LEVEL, TEST 3 | Open | 431 | MEI-FLEURE | JOHN MASON |
| Champion | 65.417 | 2023 USEF FIRST LEVEL, TEST 3 | JR/YR | 427 | DON SILVANO | AUDREY GUITREAU |
| Reserve | 63.472 | 2023 USEF FIRST LEVEL, TEST 3 | JR/YR | 438 | ZIGGY STARDUST RSH | GENEVIEVE MOREHEAD |
| Champion | 70 | 2023 USEF FIRST LEVEL, TEST 1 | Amateur | 564 | IMP MAGNUS | JOYCE HURDLOW |
| Reserve | 69.444 | 2023 USEF FIRST LEVEL, TEST 3 | Amateur | 423 | DONNA NOBLESS | GABRIELLE DEROSI |

National Level Freestyle

| | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|---------------------------------|-------|-----|--------------------|--------------------|
| Champion | 71.225 | 2023 USDF THIRD LEVEL FREESTYLE | JR/YR | 336 | JOURNEY C | SAGE SMITH |
| Champion | | 2023 USDF FIRST LEVEL FREESTYLE | Open | 520 | DEANFIELD BENLEAGH | CHRISTINE MCCARTER |

Winsome

| | | | | | | |
|----------|--------|-------------------------------|------|-----|----------|-----------------------|
| Champion | 71.625 | 2023 USEF THIRD LEVEL, TEST 3 | Open | 577 | PEKIN DC | ANTONIO GARCIA ROLDAN |
|----------|--------|-------------------------------|------|-----|----------|-----------------------|

Dapples

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----|-------------------------------|---------|-----|------------|---------------|
| Champion | 70 | 2023 USEF FIRST LEVEL, TEST 1 | Amateur | 564 | IMP MAGNUS | JOYCE HURDLOW |
|----------|----|-------------------------------|---------|-----|------------|---------------|



The leading youth athletes in each youth division were

Young Rider: Sloane Macomber

Junior: Adeline Shelton

Children: Zoe Lewis

Congratulations to all the youth athletes who competed in the Edwards De Mata Law CDI & HDS Spring Classic I & III!

Aubrey Ciofi, Sage Smith, Ruby Lewis, Cate Schmidt, Alyssa Longoria, Sloane Macomber, Adeline Shelton, and Zoe Lewis.





Thanks for
the Memories



Educational Event Saturday Evening Hosted by HDS

Thank you, Sarah and Tanya!

Sarah Denham Educational Chair



Andres Castaño

HDS EDUCATIONAL EVENT
Ground Work for a Better Relationship with Your Horse
With Andres Castaño
Saturday April 26
6:30 PM Tellepsen Arena at the GSWE

Andres grew up in Medellin, Colombia, but spent most his childhood riding horses at his families farm in El Retiro, not far from Medellin.

There, his father instilled in him a love for horses and ignited the passion for becoming a professional horseman. As a young man he apprenticed with professionals across many disciplines including colt starting, endurance, and roping; gathering a strong skill set in developing young horses of all types.

Andres has won prestigious horsemanship awards within the Arabian Horse community and has participated twice in the Extreme Mustang Makeover. He is passionate about working with all horses; starting youngsters, retraining quirky horses, or even starting wild mustangs. Andres is committed to a slow, correct method of horsemanship that creates confident, happy, and safe partners for any discipline that is in their future.



HDS 2025 Recognized Shows

HDS Summer Show I & II (Level 3)

June 7-8, 2025

[Show Info and Online Entry Form](#)

HDS Laborious Show I & II (Level 2)

August 23-24, 2025

[Show Info and Online Entry Form](#)

GAIG/USDF Region 9 Championships, SWDC and HDS Autumn Classic (Level 4)

October 2-5, 2025

[Show Info and Online Entry Form](#)

Additional Recognized Shows in Houston Area

Memorial Day Classic

May 24-25, 2025

[Show Info and Online Entry Form](#)

Haras Midsummer Dressage I & II

July 19-20, 2025

[Show Info](#)

DSHB in Hand Qualifiers and Southern Series Final/Recognized Dressage

August 29-31, 2025

[Show Info](#)

Harvest Classic

Sept 6-7, 2025

[Show Info and Online Entry Form](#)

HDS Schooling Show

New Horizon Stables

Sun, Apr 13, 2025

[New Horizon Stables HDS Schooling Show](#)

New Horizon Stables

Sun, May 18, 2025

[New Horizon Stables HDS Schooling Show](#)

WKF Spring Dressage Schooling Show

Sat, May 31, 2025

www.windyknolldressage.com

Haras Summer WDAA & Dressage Schooling Show

Sat, June 28, 2025

[Show Info](#)

WKF Fall Dressage Schooling Show

Sat, Sept 20, 2025

www.windyknolldressage.com

New Horizon Stables

Sun, Oct 26, 2025

[New Horizon Stables HDS Schooling Show](#)

New Horizon Stables

Sun, Nov 23, 2025

[New Horizon Stables HDS Schooling Show](#)

Haras HDS Recognized Schooling Show March 29, 2025

High Points Awards:

AA – Lisa Poynor on Charleston 73.125% in USDF Intro B

Open – Michelle Frank on AKA Tango – 69.026 in WDAA Level 3 Freestyle

Youth – Lauren Cordell on Luck in Love-64.2% in USDF Training Level 3 and **Harper Utay** on TheChocolateFaktry-64.2% in WDAA Level 1.

Judges: Melissa Creswick and Donna Meyer



Total Rides – 90
Total Riders – 42



Twinwood HDS Recognized Schooling Show March 29, 2025

High Points Awards:

AA – Grace Atkins on Landman S 69.375% in USDF Intro A

Open – Jessica Fan on Sansibar 73.438% in USDF Intro B

Youth – Anna Lee Hawkins on Absolut Matthias 70.0% in USEA Starter

Judge: Donna Meyer

Total Rides – 25
Total Riders – 15



New Horizon's HDS Recognized Schooling Show April 13, 2025

High Points Awards:

AA – Grace Atkins on No Stranger to the Rain 70.6 % in USEA Novice

Open – Jackie Ericksen on Devon Ridge Indra 71.5 % in USEA Beginner Novice A

Youth – Shelby Owen on GTB Felix Felicis 69.7% in USEA Novice A

Judges: Celeste Brown and Jayne Lloyd

Total Rides – 93
Total Riders – 49



Welcome Newest Members of The Century Club

The Century Club was established at the Dressage Foundation in 1996, at the suggestion of the late Dr. Max Gahwyler, noted dressage judge and clinician. The purpose of the Century Club is to honor dressage riders and horses that are still actively riding or competing. In order to become a member of the Century Club, the ages of the rider and horse must add up to 100 years or more. The team must also ride any level dressage test and be scored by a judge.

Century Ride for Cherie Werfel



Cherie Werfel's Century Ride at Twinwood Schooling Show. Cherie is riding DJ Black. Cherie is Leslie Kohlenberg's mother and Jessica Fan's grandmother. Pictured with Cherie and DJ Black is Sarah Isham.

Century Ride for Karla West Dee and Marie Morgan



Karla West Dee (*photo on left*) and Marie Morgan's (*photo on right*) Century Ride at Solstice Farms on April 12th. Karla rode Venus (AKA Enchanted Love Affair) in third level, test 1. Marie rode Mighty Mouse at Intro A. Mighty Mouse (34) has been retired for years but graciously agreed to perform one last test for Marie Morgan (72). He's been such a trooper over the years and behaved as though he had never stopped. Marie was in tears at the end of her ride, sensing the special bond that will remain forever. To make things even more special, Mighty Mouse and Marie's first Grand Prix test was at Fran's show years ago. So goes the cycle of dressage and friendship in our area!



A wonderful crowd of old friends came to watch and cheer this special occasion.

Houston Trainers relocate to Ocala, Florida

Marta Renilla expands Woodlands Equestrian Club to include Ocala facility.



Woodlands Equestrian Club will be running as always thanks to my amazing team of trainers, office manager and groomers... for all of our boarders, sale horses and riding school. It is a 15 year established business that runs very smooth and is well organized.

I will be doing periodic visits to WEC to supervise and to give lessons and clinics. I will have the same management I do now but on the distance.

I will be taking my show horses to Ocala and some of my own sale horses. European Dressage Horses will operate the same. EuropeanDressageHorses.com Boarders will be in training in both locations. I will be the General Manager of both places.

Ocala equestrian center will be called Woodlands Equestrian.

Located: NE Ocala, Florida on 12 acres. 20' to WEC. 15' to Ocala downtown.

- Brand New ALL WEATHER GGT 80X200 arena. Automatic irrigation system with rain sensor and a new independent dedicated Well.
- Brand New 20, 12'x12', stall barn with: Rubber mats, automatic waterers, hot/cold wash stall, Roof insulation, Exhaust fans, Large equipped tack room with AC.
- Updated 6 stall Barn with Automatic waterers, Rubber mats, Roof insulation, finished tack room, Wash stall and Storage room. B&W Paint coming soon.
- Brand New 12 sturdy individual paddocks with Automatic Waterers
- Large riding field
- Large, enclosed hay barn with lights
- 2 RV Hookups, one of them with Septic
- Direct access to miles of trails, bridle paths, and eventing courses
- Updated cottage house double wide with 2 bed/ 2 bath
- Coming soon Red Iron Covered Arena and Mirrors.



Interview with Marta:

<https://youtu.be/1CTABzWjL4?feature=shared>

Ben Winger and Ben Albright move to GoldMark Farm

After nearly 20 years in the Houston Dressage community, it is with a bittersweet feeling that we share the news that Paragon Stables will be closing its doors to its Dressage program. [Paragon Stables](#)

First and foremost, we want to extend our deepest thanks to Paragon Stables, Melany and Tom Lipar, Anna Burtell, our dedicated clients, farriers, vets, body workers, saddle fitters, coaches and every single person who has been a part of this incredible journey.

While this chapter is closing, we are pleased to share that the Quarter Horse breeding operation will continue, ensuring that the legacy of Paragon Stables will live on in a different form.

Reflecting on all the years spent here, it's difficult to fully capture just how meaningful these experiences have been. The connections we've made, the lessons we've learned, and the incredible horses and riders we've had the privilege of working with have all contributed to some of the best years of our lives. We are truly grateful for each and every one of you who has been a part of this journey with us. The memories we've built together will stay with us forever.

After seven years filled with growth and incredible memories at Paragon, it's difficult to put into words just how deeply thankful we are for the opportunity to have been a part of this community. Melany and Tom have been incredible mentors and friends, and we are forever grateful for their support and guidance. While the sadness of leaving is overwhelming at times, we are equally excited about the future. We are ready to embrace new challenges, expand our horizons, and continue our work in the sport horse world in a new location.

Now, for the next chapter in our journey. Ben and I are thrilled to announce that we are making the move to Florida, where we will become full-time residents. Change is one of life's constants, and it's with that spirit of change that we have made the decision to relocate to Ocala, Florida, and begin this exciting new phase of our lives at GoldMark Farm.



GoldMark Farm, located just 12 minutes from the World Equestrian Center, is a state-of-the-art facility that sits on 1,500 acres of beautiful oak tree-covered fields. It is truly a haven in the heart of horse country, providing the perfect setting to continue our work with horses at the highest level. We would also like to extend a heartfelt thank

you to Paul and Janelle Bulmahn for welcoming us with open arms to GoldMark Farm. Their generosity and support have made this transition possible, and we are truly grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such an incredible team.

We are excited to begin this new chapter of our journey with the same passion and dedication we've always had. We can't wait to continue building our relationships in the equestrian community and look forward to all the amazing possibilities that lie ahead.

Thank you again to everyone who has been part of our story thus far. We are deeply grateful and excited for what the future holds.





USDF Congratulates the Newest L Education Program Graduates!

The following candidates graduated from the USDF L Education Program's Final Exam hosted by Houston Dressage Society (Held March 1-2 in Katy, TX)

Colleen Akin
 Stephen Hayes
 *Victoria Kelley
 *John Mason
 Alexandra Medina
 *Lindsey Parker
 Emily Roy
 *Lisa Rush
 Dr. Sandy Venneman
 *Ametey Wensel

*Denotes those who have graduated with distinction from the USDF L Education Program and may be eligible to enter the USEF/USDF 'r' Licensed Dressage Judge Training program.
 The above USDF L Graduates will be listed on the USDF website.

After a successful graduation, candidates are referred to as USDF L Graduates. L Graduates are NOT licensed dressage judges. Therefore, they may not advertise themselves as L judges.



The USDF L Education Program offers a comprehensive curriculum created to teach participants and auditors how to evaluate dressage performance at Training through Second Level. It is not just for those who want to become licensed dressage judges. The program's intent is to give competitors, trainers, and instructors a broader insight into the evaluative techniques of judging dressage, qualify individuals to officiate at schooling shows, serve as continuing education for licensed judges, and to serve as a prerequisite for entering into the USEF/USDF 'r' Licensed Dressage Judge Training program.

Charles De Kunffy: Saved by Horses

Words by, Jennifer B. Calder

[Chronicle of the Horse: Charles De Kunffy](#)

Classical dressage master Charles de Kunffy died April 14. He was born in 1936 in Hungary and was a member of the Austro-Hungarian nobility. He wrote seven books and many articles for the Journal of Equitation and Culture and has a lecture series online.

Announcing his death on social media Monday, his longtime student Jessica Jo “JJ” Tate wrote of the man she called her mentor and family:

“The world has lost a true gentleman, a man who had a deep love for horses, and the most knowledgeable gift of teaching the people who love them as well. I don’t think I’ve ever known anyone who could actually claim “am I right, or am I always right?” On so many horses, and in so many lessons (on life lessons as well) he was always right. The dedication to what’s right, no matter what, will really stay with me for the rest of my life. He was always this beacon of hope, this ray of elegance, and a moral compass for me. In a world that can be fickle and lacking content, Charles de Kunffy always grounded me into what is right, not only in horse training, but in life itself.”

In his memory, we’re republishing this article, which ran as a feature in the June 5, 2017, issue of The Chronicle of the Horse.

Dawn had yet to lighten the sky as Charles de Kunffy, then around 20, set out on the deserted streets of Budapest to make his way from his apartment to the riding academy. The city on that early November morning in 1956 was under martial law, imposed by the occupying Soviets. The curfew lifted at 6 a.m., and de Kunffy had six horses in training.

Lining the elegant avenues, communist sharp shooters were positioned atop buildings and behind doorways, keeping a close eye out for suspicious behavior. De Kunffy, like all Hungarians, constantly feared for his life. He walked calmly, trying not to draw attention to himself, well aware that a gesture as innocent as pulling a handkerchief from his pocket could be misconstrued as going for a weapon. He carried the white piece of cloth in his hand, its purpose two-fold: for wiping his nose on this chilly morning and/or to wave as a sign of surrender.

Across the street in front of a movie theater, a soldier paced back and forth patrolling the area. A young boy of approximately 6 appeared from a side street and determinedly approached the door of the theater with a piece of paper in his hand, most likely a Hungarian revolutionary leaflet.

As the child struggled to tape the paper on the glass, the soldier silently approached, leveled his gun, and shot the boy in the back of his head.

The sole witness on the street, de Kunffy choked back vomit. The child fell silently into a crumpled heap. De Kunffy dared not, turn his head nor acknowledge the horror he had just viewed. Instead, he focused on putting one foot in front of the other, the sanctuary of the riding academy closer with every stride, as he wondered if the next bullet would strike him.

Even after the passing of more than six decades, the memory is too painful for de Kunffy to discuss with me in person, but he describes that terrible moment in his memoir, a book he tells me “Is not an autobiography but a thank-you note to those who helped me survive, the horses and the like-minded people who loved them.”

He writes in “A Rider’s Survival from Tyranny,” “And so it happened, that I did not get shot but I had to watch someone else die. I reached my horses; riding them helped me live that day. I could not tell what I saw. Even now I can only write it to avoid sobbing.”

For de Kunffy, horses not only saved his life literally—as an elite rider, he was allowed by the Soviets to continue his equestrian education in the hopes that he (and other top riders) would bestow future prestige on the communist occupiers—but also, they did so spiritually and emotionally.



And de Kunffy reciprocated, devoting his life to repaying these animals through the preservation of the art of classical dressage and horsemanship.

“With dressage, you are in charge of the horse’s emotions and spirit and intellect. So, you don’t just develop his body to be stronger or more precisely balanced, you have to address his mind and his sweetness of temper. That’s why it’s dressage and not just riding—because it goes beyond the physical,” he says.

*Renowned horseman Charles de Kunffy died April 14.
Monica Adams Photo*

A Gorgeous Dream

We’re sitting side by side on a down-filled sofa in an elegant living room reminiscent of the old salons of Europe with art hung floor to ceiling, a glittering crystal chandelier and rich oriental rugs. Large windows frame orange and lemon trees, their branches heavy with fruit.

De Kunffy lives alone in the townhouse. (“I would go crazy with anybody,” he says. “No, I am not the type who can live with other people. Claustrophobic.”) In the distance the mountain range outlines the western edge of Palm Springs, California.

We are a long way from Hungary.

One side of a photo album rests on each of our knees as we flip through it together.

De Kunffy is now an octogenarian. I think. He won't confirm my questions as to his age or how old he was during the Nazi invasion.

"This is what we keep a secret. Exact years. Divulging exact dates of age and other important things is considered totally rude and impermissible because it makes you a statistic. I lived the Nazi occupation, but I don't have to say how young I was. I was a child," he confirms politely.

He is so unfailingly well-mannered and gracious with a musical, lilting voice. As we chat, he slowly divulges more information.

Part of his hesitancy is his abhorrence of what he calls "celebrity culture" with its blurring lines between the personal and the public.



"I loathe celebrity culture. There is something so despicable about it. Wasn't Hitler a celebrity culture? Mussolini? Stalin? All these disgusting creeps. I don't like to discuss too much of my personal life because I think it jibes into the whole celebrity thing. I always say, 'Nobody is entitled to know that' and they should buy my future book," he adds, giving me a mischievous smile as his elegant fingers turn the pages of the album.

He's been writing an account of his life that goes beyond the few years detailed in his aforementioned "thank you notebook" along with a video documenting his life story. But that is for the future. We are here now.

Image after black-and-white image of an idyllic life prior to the Nazi, and later, Soviet occupation, are affixed to the pages: de Kunffy as a 3-year-old sitting on a rocking horse under a magnificently decorated Christmas tree; exterior shots of the 45-room castle in Hungary where he lived as a child (which he was to inherit, had history not intervened).

Charles de Kunffy grew up as a member of the Budapest aristocracy, but German and Soviet invasions would transform his life. Photo Courtesy of Charles de Kunffy

Others of the exotic 49-acre park that surrounded the castle, with its imported trees from Africa and the United States.

Photos of carriages and horses. So many horses.

The family-owned racehorses, riding horses, draft horses, carriage horses, ponies. You name it, and that equine was represented. De Kunffy's father acquiesced to his 7-year-old son's

demands and registered a racehorse in his name. The horse would go on to win a derby three years later, the silver cup now sitting on the bookshelf in his Palm Springs home.

De Kunffy also began taking riding lessons from a former cavalry sergeant that same year, on a horse named Csillag.

“My childhood was like a gorgeous dream. Nobody was out to hurt anybody,” he says as he turns the pages and continues to narrate images.

He points to a photo of his aunt, who was in a position to offer forged documents to Jews allowing them to flee, which they all sadly refused. Another of a smiling young child, the son of their Jewish general manager.

“He was murdered at Auschwitz, that boy,” he says sadly.

It’s an album of ghosts, both of people and innocence.

“It was a big switch,” he ruminates as we look at the images. “From living in paradise to dropping into the reality of utmost brutality.”

That these photos survived is astonishing. De Kunffy found them—some 200 in all—beneath the melting snow in the English ivy surrounding the castle.

Discarded by the Russian “liberators,” the history of his childhood was quickly disintegrating in the elements.

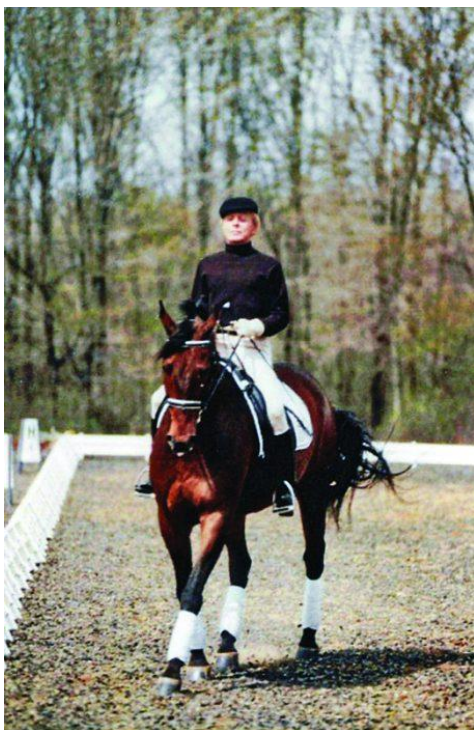
The photographs would later be smuggled out of the country by an Italian diplomat and mailed to de Kunffy following his escape to the United States after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, but we are getting ahead of ourselves.

A Rider’s Memory

De Kunffy’s recollections of the Nazi occupation remain vivid as he recalls the first time he saw the SS soldiers.

“It was March 19, 1944. We were, as we were very often, in a gorgeous Landau carriage. We didn’t use autos in the countryside; the roads were not paved. We were in a nearby town pompously sitting on the main square when all traffic was stopped because the German invasion was coming through. We were allies, but they didn’t trust us anymore. They thought that Hungary would skip out, and we had—how should I say? We gave them reason to believe this. They weren’t wrong,” he concludes with a proud chuckle.

“And so, they came in and occupied the country, but in one day, in 24 hours, we were under German occupation, and they put in a puppet government to carry out a Nazi program,” he adds.



“So anyway, you asked about Nazi occupation—I lived it! I’ve seen it, and from a rider’s point of view. I have a rider’s memory of these SS troops on horseback. A column on horseback. They sat there in perfect, impeccable vertical balance, eyes closed, and they were sleeping!

The horse was walking, and they were sleeping. Exhausted, 15-, 16-year-old soldiers, fast asleep on the horses,” he says, still incredulous after all this time.

Nazis quartered with the de Kunffy family in their castle outside the town. “We hated them!” de Kunffy says with a snort. “Well, not everybody in Hungary did. There were some Nazis, but my family hated them. All civilized people did.”

His family was treated well by the SS troops, however.

“The aristocracy was not bothered by the Nazis. Aristocracy had a great respect from them. They were very class conscious and totally anti-Bolshevik,” he explains.

The Nazis stayed in the castle for only a brief time, leaving Hungary on Sept. 11, 1944, but they inflicted unimaginable horror during those months.

“They came in March 19th, and the Jews were sent to their death camps by June 30th at the latest. What are we talking about? Three months?! They gathered up and enslaved and packaged and shipped and murdered 1.5 million Jews from Hungary,” he says angrily.

Following the end of World War II, Russian troops entered and occupied the country. Unlike the Nazis, the aristocracy held no sway. In fact, they were targets.

“In the communist regime, when you are born into the upper classes, you were labeled an ‘enemy of the people’ and also a ‘class enemy’ and many other labels. You were slated to be as demeaned and destroyed as possible but ultimately killed by work and lack of medical care. They took you into concentration camps, and they worked you to death,” he says.

De Kunffy’s father would be sent to a communist work camp (he survived) along with the aunt who offered to forge documents for Jews (she died days after she was released). The castle was seized and all 80 of their horses taken.

It would be other horses and those who trained them who now entered de Kunffy’s life, thereby ensuring his survival.

“Horses gave me the undeniable prestige of having talent and diligence and a progress toward high achievement,” says Charles de Kunffy. Photo Courtesy of Charles de Kunffy

Saved By Horses

The skill de Kunffy demonstrated on horseback transformed into a lifeline under the Soviet occupation.

“Horses gave me the undeniable prestige of having talent and diligence and a progress toward high achievement,” he explains.

This, in turn, reflected well on the communist regime.

“In sports and arts, success became an advertisement of communist supremacy. When you have talent that could be trained to become an exhibit monkey, then you are on a golden list. When you reached an elite [level], you had a chance. It didn’t guarantee you anything, but you had a chance of survival,” he says.

“I was set on my road to survival, if not fame, by riding so well and by doing the work, by pulling my weight. Mental and physical weight. So, this one way I mean horses saved me, but the other way was that it saved me emotionally and psychologically because I had to practice the virtues that horses teach you. And they teach you mercilessly,” he says, “to be all those things: brave, generous, empathetic, patient, disciplined. They raised me.”

“[I]t saved me emotionally and psychologically because I had to practice the virtues that horses teach you. And they teach you mercilessly to be all those things: brave, generous, empathetic, patient, disciplined. They raised me.”

Charles de Kunffy

He was admitted to the Riding Academy in Budapest in 1952 as the youngest student in the school’s history.

The Academy had been revitalized by the communists in the hopes of fielding Olympic riders, and de Kunffy’s instructors were all products of European equestrian institutions, including Vienna and Hanover. Many were high-ranking officers with advanced degrees, educated not only in horsemanship but scholars in their own right, and, in turn de Kunffy was educated in the same classical manner, which emphasized academic education and an unwavering respect for the animal.

“They educated the virtues, the spirit and the intellect. You had to know your academics. You had to know why you rode the shoulder-in and why, if you do it this way, it’s inferior, and if you do it that way, it’s superior. You had to know the entire academic theory. People who were cruel or roughed up a horse or jammed into his mouth and backed him up, they were out within minutes. The horse always comes first,” he says, switching to the present tense.

It was true for him then, and it’s true for him now.

Coming To the United States

California held a magical appeal for de Kunffy from the time he was a young boy. His grandmother had taken a Cunard voyage around the world in 1938 and shared her memories and photographs before the war tipped the world upside down.

After immigrating through New York, his plan was always to live on the West Coast.

“I asked for Carmel when I was processed to get a sponsor because I remembered all this from my grandmother’s stories. I was just enchanted by the pictures and the books she showed me, and it happened. I got to California, and I live always here. I’ve never lived in any other state,” he says.

As to the events leading to his escape from behind the Iron Curtain on Nov. 22, 1956, he bristles.

“I won’t tell that because it still shakes me, and I break down and cannot tell it. I was asked to tell it many times, and I can’t. It’s too horrible to really chat about it. I can relive it in my memory, but I cannot talk about it,” he says, visibly upset.

The timing of his escape corresponds to the Hungarian Revolution, an unsuccessful uprising lasting a few weeks in October and November of that same year. It resulted in the deaths of 2,500 Hungarians and 700 Russian troops with more than 200,000 Hungarians fleeing the country.

I change the subject.

Upon arriving in the United States, de Kunffy attended the University of California at Berkeley on a scholarship, graduating in 1962 and becoming a philosophy and psychology teacher in the San Francisco area, lecturing to high school and college students.

Although he escaped alone, he was later able to buy his parents’ release.

“Communists don’t like money at all,” he says sarcastically.

“But I bought them, and they were cheap!” he jokes. “And I never let them forget. They said, ‘Oh, we are so grateful we can live in America,’ and I said, ‘Don’t you forget, you were so cheap.’”

While at college, he visited the famous Pebble Beach riding stable near his home in Carmel and was asked to ride a horse whose owner was in Hawaii for an extended trip.

“So, I rode, and the people were awestruck because the horse was on the bit, was longitudinally flexed, and was rhythmically cadenced and flowing and this high off the ground,” he says measuring a great distance with his hand in relation to the floor.

“They said they had never seen anything like that. I wasn’t hanging on the reins or waterskiing on the horse. The owner showed up one day, after like six months of my riding his horse. He watched me ride. I didn’t know he was the owner when I was riding, and he said, ‘I want to give my horse to you because it’s unbelievable to see you two together. I want you to have it!’” he says with a laugh.

He recalls it cost \$90 per month then to board a horse, even a free one, and his scholarship was \$96 per month.

“I had to work to eat, so I said, ‘I can’t have a horse because I don’t have the money.’ So anyway, that was that. It was a brief period of a year or so, and then I didn’t ride again for a while,” he recalls.

Just Good or Bad Riding

Years passed, and then his academic students, intrigued by the stories de Kunffy would sometimes share about his previous life of riding and training horses while in Hungary, asked for his help.

“They turned out to be very ambitious young riders who knew nothing, and I started to teach them. They were three-day eventers, but of course, you need dressage. That is the ultimate correct sport, three-day eventing,” he says.

It was the manner in which de Kunffy had been trained. His classical equestrian education made no differentiation between the various disciplines.

“Hungary and elsewhere, there were just good riders or bad riders. There wasn’t, ‘I’m hunt seat equitation; I’m a jumper,’” he says. “There is only one riding and one way of keeping the horse pain free and keeping the horse in an evolutionary progress from simple to complex. In other words, you find a piece of nature, and the job is to—painlessly—teach this piece of nature to become a monument of art. To use his faculties with such precision and educated propriety



that you have maximum performance with minimum effort, and that is the classical goal,” he says.

“Jumping is one movement of dressage. You can choose to piaffe and then the next day do cavaletti work, and you jump as part of the whole thing. This segregation in riding did not exist in my upbringing,” he adds with a small shrug.

Charles de Kunffy’s classical training in Europe didn’t distinguish between disciplines, and he learned a bit of everything. Photo Courtesy of Charles de Kunffy

Classical Versus Competitive Dressage

Relying on the lessons he learned from his master instructors, de Kunffy introduced the riders in his orbit to the art of classical dressage. He became a judge (eventually he became an FEI judge) and took a year off from teaching school to give lessons. A second sabbatical followed, and he never returned to the classroom, shifting his teaching back to the ring, authoring numerous books and articles on the topic, and giving clinics worldwide.

When asked if he sees a difference between classical and competitive dressage he answers, “None! There should not be.”

This division comes down to knowledge, he says, or lack thereof.

“Judges are not equal in knowledge. Some terrible, some excellent and everything in between. I like judging very much, and I based it, of course, on knowledge, not on politics or heresy. I actually saw what was happening and could evaluate it. I understand, and I now teach judges and instructors, and they say over and over again, ‘Why were we not taught this? Why?’” he explains.

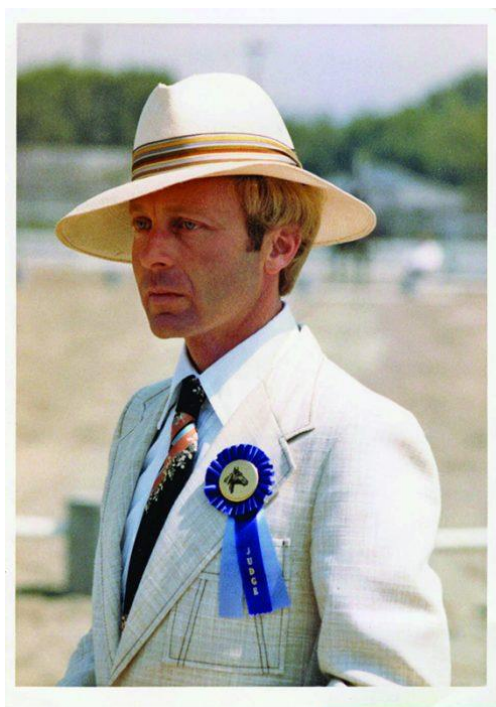
Sonja Vracko, a former Grand Prix rider who operates View Ridge Farm Equestrian Center outside of Seattle, is a fellow S-rated judge and has worked alongside de Kunffy for four decades.

“He is a very good judge and a very good clinician. He has a keen eye and more knowledge than anybody I know. He applies that knowledge both in teaching and judging. We are very close in our scores in the judging. We see things the same way, and he has a way of conveying his message that is extraordinary. He is very special,” she says.

“He has a way of conveying his message that is extraordinary,” fellow USEF S-judge Sonja Vracko says of Charles de Kunffy, who she judged with for decades. “He is very special.” Photo Courtesy of Charles de Kunffy

De Kunffy bemoans the lack of mentoring and riding academies, which he sees contributing to the dilution of dressage.

“This art, the art of mentoring, you cannot find a recipe book; you cannot find an instructional book. The best books—and I think I wrote some of them,” he jokes with a smile, “are not instructional manuals because there is no way of transmitting a great art that is body, mind and soul.



“It cannot come from the pages of a book,” he continues. “It is a good skeleton on which you can build your meat. You can have the books, but you cannot stay only there. You need a mentor, and you need an academy that brings you up so that your culture is equine friendly. So, you don’t just know what the horse needs physically, but you know also how to respect his mentality and his nature.”

De Kunffy sees fewer and fewer classically trained dressage riders. Instead of spending years training under a mentor and learning to produce a horse up the levels, he sees too many young people with no experience beyond riding a made horse in competition. “Replacement [of trainers] is not forthcoming, and what poses as a replacement—which is a pretense—are 17-year-old girls saying, ‘I give you a dressage lesson,’ Go to hell, kiddo,” he says with a dismissive wave of his hand.

For many years, de Kunffy wrote proposals to universities and college with equestrian programs, outlining the necessary steps to re-create the prestigious riding academies of his youth, to no avail.

“In all the great arts, like the plastic arts—painting, sculpting and all of that, everybody was apprentices. Leonardo da Vinci was the student of Ghirardelli—the older artist guided them and guided their spirit. The same in riding—it was always a mentored art, and you put huge value on those who knew what it was all about,” he says.

“If it’s correctly judged,” he concludes, “Of course the classical riding has to be victorious because that is what competition was meant to be. Show us where you are in the progression to your ultimate goals.”

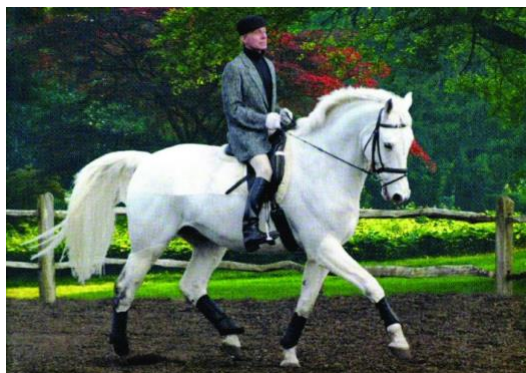
De Kunffy has been encouraged by the many judges he’s instructed over the decades.

“There is an incredible hunger for knowledge from those candidates and no supply. Demand, demand, demand, no supply. They loved it. They had all these questions, and I had the answers. They were asking me about the ideals, and that is legitimate. What are the ideals, and how do we get there? These judges were so keen to be really excellent and discern, but they got four of these courses, and then they were let loose on humanity!” he says with a laugh.

De Kunffy says he never feels things are hopeless because people can change.

“But the spirit of riding with this competition mania and assigning everything to competition success is devastating for me because, to license somebody to instruct at the highest level because she rode a fourth level test with 60% or something? We just so casually say, ‘Competition is enough. If you compete, then you should be a trainer.’ Come on! A trainer has to know so much and all for the horse’s sake,” he says.

“We are custodians of an ancient art that has been fiddled with, experimented with, tried by millions of riders through the ages, and what we’ve retained as a classical understanding is what worked most of the time for most horses to the highest level—that’s what we retained. Why should we now, because we call it competition, destroy it?” he asks.



“Culture is more than knowing the dates of the Renaissance,” says Charles de Kunffy. “Culture is level of inner life, and I got there because I was taught by horses and those who trained them.” Photo Courtesy of Charles de Kunffy

Dressage Hall of Fame

For his efforts to keep the art of classical dressage and horsemanship alive, de Kunffy was inducted into the Roemer Foundation/USDF Hall of Fame in 2013.

“It was a huge nod. I value it enormously. I think of it as truly a great honor. This is the greatest honor USDF can bestow on a person, so of course I am very appreciative of that,” he says.

But for de Kunffy, it’s always been about the horse and not the accolades.

“The horse feeds you—it’s completely intravenous. It never stops. It is a meditative art. You are a student of the horse. You are listening. Correct form comes from correct content. Content to form, not form to content,” he says.

And yes, the horses have fed him since childhood. They fed his spirit, his mind and his intellect. By listening to their lessons and perfecting his riding ability, horses kept him alive during a brutal historical period. De Kunffy has spent his life reciprocating and advocating on behalf of the animal that saved him, acting as a link between the prestigious training he received in classical dressage from the masters in Europe and students of today.

“Horses were my survival vehicle. I became a man of, eventually, quite substantial culture, and culture is more than knowing the dates of the Renaissance. Culture is level of inner life, and I got there because I was taught by horses and those who trained them. I survived,” he said.

And so shall classical dressage, if de Kunffy has anything to say about it.

THINKING LATERALLY: SHOULDER-IN

Now that the initial and most important tool of all the lateral work is installed – leg-yield – it’s time to move on to the next step in Part 2 of my guidelines on training the lateral work.

BY ROGER FITZHARDINGE

<https://www.equestrianlife.com.au/magazine/issue-109/thinking-laterally-part-2/>



It is very important to realize that the constant and repetitive lateral exercises so far are all moving the horse away from the flexion and direction of the bend. It is very important to realize that it is positively the rider’s seat and leg that initiates the sideways movement, and at all times the horse must remain forward-thinking and in both reins with a comfortable contact; not strong and not non-existent.

This contact is a feel that varies as the horse develops carrying capacity and should become lighter as he becomes stronger by taking the weight over the hind end and lightening the forehand. Contact is also something that comes a little with the horse’s character, genetics and training. No matter what the exercise, the most important ingredient is keeping a forward thought — and that forward thinking, on behalf of the horse, is constant and is still very present when collection and any lateral movements are initiated. Once the horse learns to move off the inside leg, he must then learn to move off the outside leg. But first, the last of the exercises where the horse looks away from the direction of travel: the “shoulder-in”.

Leg yield right and leg yield left.



PREPARATION IS KEY

Now that your horse has a great grasp of moving away from the inside leg, it's vital to teach him to also move away from the outside leg. This exercise will be helpful before the shoulder-in, as it's a good idea to get the feeling you can connect one side to an outside rein then the other side to the opposing outside rein, and then you can get the connection to both reins and straight. Hey presto! "Off the forehand" is really an amazing thought to grasp! It's about

connecting the left ribs and shoulders into the outside rein, and then the right ribs and shoulders to the left rein; then you have worked out how to connect the two sides together and lift the chest and withers! Remember the first vital step that is all-important is "forward" followed by "longitudinal submission". A little interlude before the rigors of shoulder-in.... that's a sentence and a half, but a great way to think of collection and connection!

The best way to start shoulder-in is in a counter change of hand from leg-yield left to leg-yield right. So, the change of direction in the sideways is initiated by the riders outside leg; this then becomes an understandable inside leg, and then you straighten and go back to the other direction.

Start on the 1/4 line and leg-yield to the wall. On the wall, flex to the wall and move back to the centerline, straighten and turn towards the flexed side. This is a great suppling exercise and will initiate the work towards the travers and the half-pass, and the walk and canter pirouettes. It's at this moment of moving from left to right bending that, at that moment when they are straight, you have connected the two sides, and the shoulders can be raised.

The shoulder-in is performed on three tracks, where the horse is bent around the riders inside leg so that the horse's inside hind leg and outside foreleg travel on the same line. The angle of the horse to the wall is approximately 30 degrees. He looks away from the direction of the travel.

The best way to explain the positioning for the shoulder-in to start with, is that if you imagine a circle of 10 meters, ridden twice, and as the circle finishes you were taking frame by frame photos, as the first step of the second circle begins, then freeze that moment! This moment is the position for the shoulder-in, and then you simply take that position of your horse down the track, maintaining the flexion, bend, forward movement and angle. The exercise starts to improve the engagement and helps the horse to get better balance and

learn to carry more weight on the inside hind as it steps well under the body... and that is under, towards the middle of the horse as well as forwards. It helps strengthen and stretch the rump and sacroiliac areas as well as the back.

The first step off the track onto the circle, and it's the moment to freeze and move down the track. The horse clearly here is on the circle.



As has been discussed in the previous article, the quality of the movement is only a representation of the preparation. So, it's important to make certain that the horse understands the preparation for this movement. In the beginning the exercise is raw and it's more like a leg-yield on an angle down a line or a long side and is primarily about getting the inside hind leg to move away into a steady outside rein. A good way to simply get the horse to understand this is to start on a long side, even in walk, and then to bend and flex the horse to the outside, and with your outside leg push the quarters away from that outside leg. The rail will stop the shoulders from escaping and help initiate the right feeling. This is really "quarters-in" and is a raw exercise simply in forehand and quarters control.

As the word implies, it is a "shoulder-in" and not "quarters-out" as was explained in respect to the holding of the position as the horse's shoulders step off the track. This exercise is only a preparation control exercise and is nothing like shoulder-in but initiates a feeling. In the beginning after a few leg-yields to the long side attempting to move the quarters to the wall and then proceeding down the wall in this angled leg-yield affair, you can then come off a circle or corner and try riding simply down the long side a few times at an angle, as long as you have a very well established outside rein that doesn't simply allow a flexed neck and a falling-out shoulder with no angle of the horse's body to the wall. It is always important to practice both sides equally and watch that the same bend (body) and flexion (referring to the neck) is present on both sides. The bend and flexion should be as you would have on the circle leading into the shoulder-in. Again, visualize that you are the eye from a drone above and that the bend and flexion as you step into that first step off the circle again is snapped and held and taken down the track with an outside rein maintaining the shoulder and the inside leg creating an active inside hind. The bend and flexion are maintained through the whole horse's body and the rider has a feeling that the ribcage is soft, away from the inside leg and a feeling of sucking the rider into the saddle and a feeling of the inside leg being drawn into a hollow (not a stiff) pushing-out rib cage.

Neck flexion (no shoulder-in).



Imagine it's the same feeling as a wave getting ready to break... it comes up and the weight of water moves away from the inside. This is the feeling of the wither and shoulder moving away and coming upward and sucking you into the inside.

RIDING THE SHOULDER-IN

So now that the horse and rider have an idea about moving towards the shoulder-in, a clearer explanation of the aids is needed. It's worth noting here that it is perfectly fine to start the shoulder-in in the walk then progress to the trot, depending on the horse, the paces and the attitude, as sometimes trot is a more forward-thinking pace and easier to get a good rhythm and tempo. It is good to start in rising trot, when a better feeling for the tempo can be controlled, before doing it in

sitting.

Always the horse must maintain the rhythm and forward desire, and it's even more important to keep this as the horse goes sideways. There must be a feeling of thoroughness, and when you initiate any sideways desire, your horse never wants to push through the contact and get hollow. Perhaps a little too round is more desirable than coming against the bridle and bracing and hollowing the back. A very common problem is the lack of control of the outside rein, and when riders just use their inside leg and inside rein then all you see is neck-bend and shoulders that are stuck falling out, and this is a serious fault.

It has to be said that this is an excellent shoulder-in training moment, and as is explained it's often better to see a little rounder outline in training for strength over the back rather than hollow.

The aids for shoulder-in are simply the inside leg near the girth for the last few strides prior to the line to get your horse to realize something is coming up, and to keep the inside hind connecting to the outside rein and so keeping the bend through the body and spine. The outside leg is behind the girth in a neutral fashion to protect the outside hind leg from escaping out and then the inside rein keeps the flexion steady — and most important is that the outside rein controls the shoulder off the wall and then through the half-halt takes the

horse in shoulder-in down the track. The rider's eyes and body language should be focused in the direction the horse is going, i.e., down the track.

It is important at this stage to have someone on the ground to watch, or a mirror that when you look into it you should only see three tracks... or legs. These are the inside fore to the inside, the inside hind and outside fore in line, and the outside hind on the track. You will see three legs from the front; three tracks not four. "It is a very hard movement to ride correctly."

This is clearly three tracks as you can only see three legs. This is a very good three tracks for competition... it's not a modest three tracks!

At no stage in the shoulder-in should the hind legs cross over, as with the correct bend the hind legs go down the track. Again, think of the still photo of the first step onto the circle, and the hind legs go down the track, not crossing over. If they do it's deemed leg-yield and will get a low mark in competition and will probably be on four tracks. It is important to say here that in a competition it's probably best to think about having three-and-a-half tracks really, as otherwise the shoulder-in will appear modest and probably get a comment of not enough angle. A very important part of this exercise is to always straighten the horse at the end of the exercise by taking the forehand back to the track. This is not necessary if you are riding shoulder-in on to a circle as in the competition test, the shoulder-in is really the first step of the circle. But when training, it's all-important to control the shoulders and so bringing them back to the track is essential, and then as with any lateral movement, always refresh the forward's desire.



BUILDING A BETTER HORSE

It is a very hard movement to ride correctly but it is so, so important as it is a preparatory position for so many movements... the half-pass... the pirouettes. It is an exercise that is used at all the levels from Elementary (really before this in training) through to Grand Prix and is used not only as a suppling exercise but one to develop balance and engagement through a stronger way to use the hind legs to carry the weight and free the forehand.

The movement known as shoulder-fore is ridden the same as the shoulder-in but in a more modest angle bend and flexion and is used as a straightening exercise on the long side. It basically is a balance and position exercise to keep and help the horse remaining straight and balanced.

The exercise can be done in walk as well and is a good exercise for any horse that gets slow hind legs in the collected and medium walk. So, with any horse that when you collect the walk becomes a little lateral, shoulder-fore/in will help hurry the hindlegs and help keep the walk steps pure. The shoulder-fore in walk is a good preparation for the walk pirouettes. The shoulder-in is done in trot, and in competition only in collected trot. The shoulder-fore can be useful in gaining straightness with a crooked horse and can be held in forward and collecting strides in the trot. It is a good idea to ride small transitions within the shoulder-in forwards and collecting to create energy and control.



This is a modest shoulder-fore in canter to protect the horse's natural instinct to be quarters in! This is a straightening exercise.

Shoulder-in can cautiously be used in canter as a straightening and balance/engagement exercise but caution here to take care of the purity of the canter steps, and the use of shoulder-fore is a better option. This positioning is what's needed in the preparation and balancing prior to the canter half-pass (essential in the control and positioning for the zigzag) and the canter pirouettes.

The shoulder-in is an exercise in shoulder control and engagement and is one of the most used tools on the road towards better dressage and stronger and more confident and balanced horses. What is so fantastic that even the four-in-hand driving horses have to show shoulder-in during the dressage phase.

The final shoulder-in photo shows every perfect bend and flexion, the correct angle and the poll at the highest point with the horses inside hind truly engaged and carrying the weight. The pair is in wonderful self-carriage. There is no seat, no inside, outside legs. This is truly masterful and then to cap it off they are in unison. The man (Boyd Exell) is a genius! This is what you strive for in dressage horses and shoulder-in where the horses do it themselves in confidence and balance... take that!



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Farewell to Ben Winger and Paragon Stables



Memories and Blessings are what God and Tom gave to me when we created Paragon Stables. For more than 20 years everyday was graced with the beauty of sharing this little bit of heaven with people and ponies.

It probably would not have existed except my husband wanted me to stop hopping from barn to barn with Anna Burtell. So basically, it was built for her. A big thank you to her for helping us create Paragon. She is and always will be a lifelong friend!!!

And then I was blessed with Benjamin Winger. I have learned and enjoyed watching him make every challenge with my horses into a victory. I witnessed him take what he had to work with and make it the best it could be. Someone raised him well (Melanie and Nancy). I know he and Ben Albright (who I give thanks to also) will flourish and grow with the opportunities to come at the beautiful facility Gold Mark in Ocala.

I truly love this sport and the joy it brings every day. My hope is that I have been able to give back this joy.

So many memories and so many friends. Too many to mention but you all know who you are.

Blessings to all!!

Forever, Melany Lipar

Letters to the Editor

[Email Fran Kehr](#)

Good afternoon, Fran,

I have been inside all day working on a boatload of paperwork.

I was in my email inbox again and then I noticed that I had not read the HDS Newsletter.

I just finished reading it a few moments ago and it was really fantastic.

Lots of fun to read and new people that I don't know and now I know a little bit more about some of the people that I have seen at shows and other horsey venues.

Thank you so much for making my afternoon brighter.

Now....back to the paperwork!

~Roxanne

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