

ANRC Newsletter - February 2007

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Patte Zumbrun, *Chair*, Baltimore, Maryland, pzumbrun@goucher.edu
Karen Singletary, *Past Chair*, Cairo, Georgia, klsing@alltel.net
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Shelby French, *Director at Large*, Sweet Briar, Virginia, sfrench@sbc.edu
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Susan Sjolund, *Director at Large*, Lynchburg, Virginia, ssjolund@ves.org
Andrea Wells, *Director at Large*, Long Valley, New Jersey, awells52@aol.com

ANRC Advisory Board

Sarah Babcock, Richmond, Virginia, SGBabcock@aol.com
Claiborne Bishop, Charlottesville, Virginia, barracks@sprynet.com
Paul Cronin, Rectortown, Virginia, pauldcronin@aol.com
Dacia Funkhouser, Romney, Indiana, dacia@tctc.com
Jill Randles, Columbia, Maryland, jrandles@umbc.edu
Kit Sydnor, Forest, Virginia, kbsydnor@att.net
Mimi Wroten, Sweet Briar, Virginia, mwroten@sbc.edu

Exciting News

ANRC "The American System of Forward Riding" DVDs will soon be available on the www.totalvid.com website, where they can be downloaded or streamed, as well as purchased. Options for digital rentals, permanent downloads, hard-copy sales, and try-then-buy options are all available. Check the ANRC website www.anrc.org for a link when this new capability is available. The DVDs, and Paul Cronin's book "Schooling and Riding the Sport Horse", can also be ordered via the ANRC website: www.anrc.org. The DVDs provide a systematic approach to riding, training, and teaching. Each volume contains two 50-minute DVDs and an accompanying workbook. Copies of the "Clinic and Certification Center Handbook" are also available on the website. The handbook provides guidelines on how to host a clinic, certification center, or Equitrial and contains criteria for certification at all levels.

Available on the ANRC Website (www.anrc.org) :

Classified ads (Advertise your job! Sell your horse!)
To place an ad, contact Marion Lee at marionhlee@att.net.
Calendar of Events
Articles of Interest
Information on competing in the ANRC National Intercollegiate Equitation Championship

Read on for articles on how ANRC Board members have expanded their horizons

Nationals in 2007 and Beyond

The ANRC National Intercollegiate Championship will be held at Centenary College in Hackettstown, NJ, on April 21 and 22, 2007. For more information and prize lists, contact Andrea Wells, awells52@aol.com. University of the South (Sewanee) will host Nationals in April, 2008. Contact Megan Taylor at mtaylor@sewanee.edu for additional information. Both Centenary and Sewanee have competed in Nationals over the past several years. We are excited to be able to offer participating colleges the challenges of these two new locations for our annual event.

In 2009 Nationals will return to St. Andrews Presbyterian College in Laurinburg, North Carolina, and Sweet Briar College in Sweet Briar, Virginia, will host Nationals in 2010.

The Championship is a USEF-sanctioned event, judged on equitation. Three riders from each school compete as a team. Individual riders may also compete. All riders must be authorized by a qualified official of the school they represent. The competition consists of three phases: an intermediate program ride on contact using the 1-19 USEF tests, a hunter trials outside course 3' in height, and a 3' hunter seat equitation course in the ring. All of the courses may be schooled prior to the competition. Riders ride the same horse throughout. They also sit for a written test on riding theory and equine science. Level Three rider certifications are awarded to riders who meet the criteria. ANRC nominations for USHJA Affiliate Awards for professional and amateurs will also be awarded at the culmination of the competition.

Upcoming Events

Sweet Briar College will host an Equitrial competition on April 1, 2007 for all levels of riders. This competition is open to all, and rider certifications can be achieved if scoring criteria are met. For more information, contact Shelby French at sfrench@sbc.edu.

A forward riding clinic will be held at Sweet Briar College on May 21 - 23, 2007, followed by a Certification Center on May 25. For further details and to register for the clinic, contact Shelby French at sfrench@sbc.edu.

Board Members in the News

ANRC welcomes Sue Glover to its Board of Directors as a Director at Large. Sue coaches the riding team at Virginia Intermont College, which has participated successfully in the ANRC National Intercollegiate Championship for the past several years.

We congratulate Advisory Board member Paul Cronin, who was the USHJA Northeast Regional Affiliate Professional Winner in 2006, nominated by ANRC for his significant contributions to ANRC and the Forward Riding System. The USHJA Affiliate Awards program annually recognizes outstanding juniors, amateurs, and professional horsemen and horsewomen. Paul is also an active participant on the USHJA Instructors' Certification Committee, whose mission is to preserve the American System of riding and jumping by developing an educational and certification program for all levels of trainers. According to George Morris in a recent Chronicle of the Horse article, the program will include recommended teaching and training goals and methods; provide continuing educational opportunities for all trainers; develop teaching skills; and teach knowledge of all aspects of our sport.

We also congratulate Shelby French, who received the USHJA President's Distinguished Service Award, given to recognize and honor the dedication and service by members to USHJA and our sport.

Newly Certified Riders

ANRC is pleased to recognize four riders who were certified on November 5 at Sweet Briar College. Katie Davilli, Corinne Davies, and Alison Sims earned Level Three Certifications and Meredith Newman received her Level Two.

Clinics, Equitrial, and Certification Centers

If you would like to host a clinic, Equitrial, or certification center with ANRC instructors and/or judges at your barn, contact Laura Norment, Education Chair, at lauraunderhillnorment@yahoo.com. Additional information is also available in our publication, “Clinic and Certification Center Handbook”, which can be ordered from our website www.anrc.org. The handbook explains how to plan for and conduct these events and details the criteria for achieving certification at all levels.

The ANRC’s Role in Achieving My USEF Judge’s Card
by Laura Underhill Norment

I have been interested in judging since I was about 12 years old. It always seemed like the perfect job for me; I could sit and watch horses go all day, and the fact that someone would pay me to give my opinion about the whole thing—well, all the better! Plus, I am organized so bookkeeping was never a problem for me, and the act of making on-the-spot decisions over and over again suits my brain.

My exposure to the ANRC system started my judging career, since I got my Recorded Judge's card from the ANRC before I started the USEF process. Although the formats are different, any type of judging that requires you to write down, organize, and articulate what you think about a ride is helpful.

When I began my quest for a USEF license, I first attended a judge’s clinic in order to learn what the process was and to meet people. Although it was an expensive undertaking, I was lucky that working for a college riding program helped to offset a large portion of my personal expense. Next, I started networking. I contacted anyone and everyone I knew who was a judge and told them I was seeking my license. Most were very helpful in providing references, and email was a godsend. The telephone was my next best friend, although it was often hard to get people to call back especially if I did not know them. I was only turned down once—and that was by someone I knew!!

I did twice as much as the USEF required. For example, if I was supposed to judge a minimum of six days, I did fifteen, and I traveled out of my zone four times—once all the way to Oregon—to make sure I judged enough horses that I did not know. If I needed ten references, I asked twenty-five people in order to make sure I got at least ten. The one thing I did not know at the beginning was that I should ask every judge at the show if I could sit with him or her—not just one. When seeking a license, you should try to judge mostly the A/AA rated divisions—these divisions normally have a different judge each day, which helps to maximize your time at the show. I judged as many local shows as I could in order to have an extensive judging resume, and their managers were great to use as references as to my skill and professionalism. I also used my ANRC connections, since there are many people active in the ANRC system who are also active USEF judges. I wrote lots of thank-you notes and emails to let people know how much I appreciated their time and efforts to help me. The best part of the process was that I met so many interesting people and made some good friends along the way.

The ANRC forward riding system helps me in judging because I knew from the beginning what a good performance should look like and how it is transferred to the show ring. The ANRC system of education and riding levels made even more sense to me after watching lots of rounds—especially when people and horses were in classes where they did not belong. The process of judging has made me a better teacher, trainer, and exhibitor. It has definitely added value to my business and made me more aware of the “big picture.” I would recommend pursuing a USEF license to anyone who thinks he or she would like to judge. You do not have to be “famous” or a big name rider or trainer, but you do have to be diligent and be able to recognize and reward quality horses, riding, and performance. The ANRC system is a wonderful springboard in order to achieve this goal.

Starting Over in Minnesota

by Pam Whitfield

When I moved to Minnesota in December 2001, I had a truck, a horse, two saddles and a baby inside me. Plus a husband waiting for me in the Great White North: Alex had taken a job with IBM in Rochester ten months earlier. I stayed behind in North Carolina ostensibly to take my PhD comprehensive exams, but in reality I wanted to get my riding students through one more glorious show season and compete my young horse over fences a little longer--before life-as-I-knew-it ended.

In the winter of 1998, Paul Cronin told me that I just needed a “patron,” a sponsor who would make it possible for me to run a lesson program or a show barn in Greensboro, instead of running from farm to farm as a freelancer instructor. Although I didn’t know it at the time, I had already met my patron, and given his daughters lessons. Three months later, he would call me to look at four fancy ponies he’d shipped up from Florida on trial. That day, we made a deal: Ledford Farms was born, and I had my own lesson program to develop and manage.

When I gave up my position as program director to follow my husband to Minnesota, other professionals said I was crazy to leave such a situation: my great clientele, the local horse industry, all that I’d built for myself from scratch. Maybe I was. But I was also pregnant with my first child, and as unrealistic as I was about motherhood, I still knew it would change—forever--my role in the horse business.

Horse people always know how to start over, make something from nothing, build their reputation out of thin air. It took me a year to adjust to the upper Midwest and decide what I wanted: to teach in a college full-time and work the horse industry on the side. I met a lady at the out-gate of an open show who wanted to start an equine science degree program at the local college. I wrote curriculum and got a job teaching the early courses. A year later I landed a permanent position in the English department and made a deal that enabled me to continue to teach equine science courses in a split course load as long as that program needed me. My college is probably one of the few institutions in the country that would allow a faculty member to cross disciplines like that, so I feel lucky.

Meanwhile, I tried to figure out what a girl with a forward riding education could do in this part of the country, stock type horses ruled, and hunter-jumper shows and barns were few and far between. I began to get requests for clinics, then regular lessons. I found an undercurrent of horse folk who realized that western riding in an English saddle could only take a person so far. Some of them even wanted to learn jumping: for fun or to do over-fences classes at breed shows.

Because I was earning new judges cards for this part of the country, I could take the pulse of the show industry. I was surprised to find that hunter under saddle events are exploding at the breed shows, and more and more shows are starting to offer hunter hack and over fences classes. Although draped reins, loose legs and drawn-up heels are all too common, I have ring-stewarded for AQHA judges who deplore such equitation issues as much as I do. I could see how the riders needed tighter, more effective positions, more stability in the saddle and a base of support in the leg. I knew how to improve these things: **two-point and more two-point**. Riding over uneven

terrain, using transitions, ground rails, and eventually jumps all teach a rider how to support rather than interfere with the horse's natural balance, rhythm and forwardness.

I am honest with my Midwestern students: I tell them that learning classical hunter seat equitation may not translate into ribbons under western-oriented judges. But it will improve their balance, strength, position, coordination, and use of aids. Forward riding will challenge them and give them a different perspective on how their body works and their horse moves. It will be refreshing for their horse. It might even cross over: parents of riders have told me that the "English riding" helped their child with western pleasure, reining or even games events.

Half of my students do breed shows; the other half stick to 4-H and the local open circuit. They all want to improve; they find cavaletti and jumping work exciting, and they desire, deeply, to be "correct" riders. I credit their focus and work ethic to Minnesota farm values; some riders never had lessons before, only what their parents or friends could teach them and what they could learn through trial and error, and yet they are competent, confident horsemen. They just need some polish. When they quit worrying about their horse's headset and begin to focus on what's happening beneath them, and how they can influence that, then we make progress.

I do not teach head carriage; I teach the horse's comfort and finding connection through the reins with soft, feeling hands. Riders who yank, spur and see-saw don't enjoy my clinics, because I forbid that, as well as backing a horse onto his haunches (or across the arena) every time he makes an error. The principles of forward riding, especially the idea that a happy horse is mentally stable as well as physically so, stand me in good stead. I was worried that I could not teach in a stock-type world, but I'm actually in the right place at the right time: the industry is changing, especially in regards to its hunter horses, and the upper Midwest wants to be progressive, not behind.

My students moonlight at hunter schooling shows once or two each summer, where they ride two-foot courses on their Paints or Quarter Horses and thoroughly enjoy each approach and every stride. One family I teach shows mules at the national level; the middle daughter's mule is leggy and rhythmic in the canter. She actually looks Thoroughbred-y. At her first hunter show, she beat 18 other horses in the warm-up class, including ten from the one "real" hunter barn in town. I could hear that trainer standing by her trailer, bellowing, "Who brought mules to a hunter show?!" I laid low for a few classes and watched my mule-girls rack up ribbons left and right.

Sometimes I worry that I have squandered my horse's best years. He was going to be my three-foot horse, my anchor in the lesson program, and my best advertising. At age five, he was well on his way, but then I brought him to Minnesota and he spent the next four years turned out with a rich round bale, getting fat and sassy, with little more than trail rides to keep him in work.

Luckily, all his early years of riding over open terrain meant that we could happily and safely ride in bean fields, canter down trails, hack across rolling hills (when we could find them) and pop over the occasional downed tree. We only jumped in the fall, when the local hay farmer let me set up a course in his alfalfa field, but without horse shows to go to, I found I cared less for jumping. I needed new goals.

At age ten, Casper is not past his prime, and neither am I. We have new things to try and other riding worlds to explore. We've taken up dressage with a Rochester native who just returned from ten years on the east coast. Jennifer is a self-made Grand Prix level rider and trainer and a Delaware Valley College alumnae. We moved into her new facility the first day it opened, and the skills I have learned while riding under her have enriched the hunt seat lessons and clinics I offer.

I'm learning to use leg yielding to straighten a crooked horse, teach students that contact comes from engagement, and find a new level of self-carriage in the horses I ride.

Casper and I competed in our first dressage show last month, earning a sixty percent on our test. Not stellar, but it's a start.