

AHA Convention Tulsa OK 2016

The AHA convention was held for the second year in a row in Tulsa OK. Although the initial plan had been to return to Denver this year, the facility there was still undergoing construction. We were fortunate that Tulsa could accommodate us. The Hyatt Regency did a nice job of hosting a large number of delegates, and aside from a crush at the restaurant during dinner hour, was able to provide a pleasing experience. Of importance to me personally was the response of the hotel to send shuttles to the airport with little delay, meaning we could de plane and get to the hotel in a timely manner.

A total aside from a report on the committee meetings etc at Convention this year ~ I would like to remind all convention goers that not everybody coming is familiar with the convention routine. My experience at first (I've been a delegate for six years) was pretty lonely. Where I have learned to enjoy the various aspects of the association experience, I continue to see too often, people new to convention who reportedly don't feel welcome or included. I wouldn't write this, but frankly, it disturbs me to hear that any one individual feel 'left out' and not included in the AHA family. Cynthia Richardson mentioned this when she first took office as President of AHA. She reminded us to be welcoming to others, to include others in our groups and to help make the experience more positive for all.

Of course it's human nature to tend to spend our time with those who have like interests, sharing the same values and opinions. It would behoove us to take note of individuals who are not included, and perhaps take the time to open a conversation with them. What we are doing now is not increasing the popularity of the AHA but alienating others who might have some opinions to offer to help our breed.

I was able to attend many meetings daily. Because my personal interest is in Sport Horse, I made a point of attending the sport horse and dressage committee meetings. Discussions at the sport horse meetings became heated when the topic of mixing tack and attire within the dressage-type and hunter-type classes i.e. particularly when crossing over from one to another in SH under saddle. Whereas the dressage organization tends to lean towards little bling, and is very rigid about tack and attire, hunter bits are 'wide open' and hunt attire is becoming more colorful. Should there be more clarity towards what is acceptable in each venue. At one point the input from stewards was

interesting, since this group is charged with keeping order, keeping uniformity and basically maintaining organization prior to and during classes. They shared their frustration regarding mixed attire and ask for rider/trainer education relative to what is appropriate for dressage vs hunter classes? We agreed as a group that we need to do more to educate newer riders to a discipline that might be 'foreign' to them prior to showing, or at best prior to their classes, rather than being critical and undermining their attempts.

The Dressage Committee meetings were focusing again this year on Western Dressage, and we were updated about how the newer discipline is growing in popularity in the United States. The question was raised as to whether we as a dressage organization let the WD people write their own rules relative to whips, bits, attire etc or help direct them appropriately. I personally appreciated how the culture of the committee was welcoming and inclusive to the WD members, inviting them to share their concerns and questions, without taking an 'our way or the highway' attitude. Frankly, this is a different impression from my view point in that I've found dressage in general to be fairly rigid. The dressage community (traditional and western) came together with more common grounds and less opinion, welcoming individuals sharing their experiences and concerns. This alone will change the future of WD and hopefully bring more people into the discipline of Sport Horse.

As many of you know, much of the focus this year was on the shoeing resolution. People showed up (seemingly out of nowhere) to voice their support and opinion about how the specifications as proposed will "protect the health and well-being of our horses and the integrity of the sport". I admit not agreeing on some of the data presented, but did not feel comfortable speaking up.

Patti Colbert was the key note speaker, and gave a very nice presentation of the Time to Ride organization, an organization encouraging stables, clubs, businesses and other horse professional to take steps to grow their business by introducing new people to horses and expanding industry in general. She was so entertaining, and her presentation thought provoking and encouraging.

2016 was overall a good convention. We still have a ways to go, but in some areas are making progress.