

Convention 2015

By Toni Marie O'Daniel, MAHA Delegate

We are back in Tulsa but at a different hotel than expected. The Marriott had to undergo major renovations so we were at the Hyatt. It was a nice hotel with lots of places to eat during the week. The rooms were close to each other for breakout sessions so it made it quite pleasant to walk around. There were great vendors and as always the youth silent auction was presented with flair.

It was an interesting convention for me since the Amateur committee that I chaired was presenting four resolutions. After attending the plenary session as well as committee I was able to attend, I was amazed to see that there was little to no discussion on the resolutions that the Amateur committee was bringing forth. Does that make any difference? For most things it would be a good sign... for this...a red flag. People had talked and made up their minds, but never realized both sides of each resolution.

The Amateur committee was asked to find ways to bring new people and new horses into AHA. Also, as the chair, I was tasked to find a way for the Amateur committee to become a positive force for AHA. The Amateur committee is the largest committee in AHA therefore it has quite a diverse outlook on the horse community. They are vested!! They are passionate!!! They are us. It is comprised of individuals that are the grass roots as well as national contenders. but we all love the Arabian horse.

The committee in 2014 voted to rework a resolution that had been in the works for a few years. A sub-committee was put together and for a full year, broke the ideas down into four different segments. First, the definition of family needed to be addressed now that the supreme court recognized same sex marriages. Equine Canada had already addressed this issue so the committee felt it was time to get with the times and update the definition of family. There was some discussion in different committee meetings mainly about how secretaries were going to deal with this issue. Also, some felt that the wording of common law shouldn't be part of the resolution. These issues were addressed on the floor of the convention and the first of the four resolutions passed.

The second part of the 2014 resolutions that was broken down was a lease option for amateurs that would allow an amateur to lease a horse for a term of 1 year at a time and they would be able to ride in AO classes. Again at the plenary session there was little to no discussion on this idea other than a few people who disagreed with the whole idea of someone who does not own the horse being able to ride in owner classes. There was little to no debate. Currently in our association, owners can lease out their horses to someone and the person can ride it all classes that are not AO. There was some brisk discussion at the Amateur committee and it was wonderful for people who were passionate about their ideals to present them and see how others felt as well. After a strong debate the motion was defeated and the lease option was withdrawn. The committee also decided that they did not want to bring it back for more review.

The other large part of the 2014 resolution that was pulled out was the option for two non-related owners to own a horse together and both be able to show in AO classes. This resolution was an "and"

relationship on the registration papers so no family members would be able to show the horses. This would be limited to the two owners on the papers only. This section was really brought forward to address the issues that were presented to the committee. This is focused on the grass roots and lower level show rings. The discussions again in many of the breakout sessions was minimal and the plenary session was also quite reserved for this discussion. The talking points in the Amateur committee again focused on an AO owning one horse and the loss of sales for breeders and the people with lots of money going in with another person and buying that expensive horse and taking both national wins in different age groups at the regional and National level. It was exciting to see how the more the discussion was had the more the flavor of the room changed. People were able to see some of the good that this resolution could bring. The idea that two people could go out and buy a horse that neither of them could have done before since the money was not available. The idea that they would both be paying the boarding, training, vet and ferrier fees and now maybe able to put the horse into training since the fees could be split between the two of them. The understanding that instead of 3 or 4 family members riding your horse, it would be only two amateur owners. The example that college students might not have to sell their horse as they went off to college but could have the other person who also owns the horse could ride while they are away at college and maybe the college student would be able to ride during the holidays and summer break. The idea came up that this was a great thing for people who owned an older horse and didn't want to give up ownership of that horse but would love that horse to be worked and maybe shown.

This whole process was amazing to watch and see the changes in people's thought processes. Even though the resolution didn't pass, many people from all over told other amateurs that their opinion had changes on this idea. The Amateur committee will bring this resolution back next year. The committee will be working to educate more members of AHA to help them understand this resolution for next year.

The final resolution that was addressed by the amateur committee was an amateur who owned a rescue horse and was not able to show in Amateur Owner since the Charity had to have their name also on the papers. This would only affect a couple horses over a few years, but there were two different ideas on this resolution as well. People wanted owners to have the charity's change their ideas on this issue, not have AHA make a rule for this.

The other issues that really were worked on at Convention was the issue of the coalition group that was at US Nationals and took pictures/video's of halter trainers that they felt were abusing their horses in and out of the ring. Most of the members felt that they didn't feel that what happened was abuse, but also realized that what we see and do is not what others who do not understand what we do, see. We as owners/trainers need to be more observant and respectful of what we do and how others may perceive what we do. USEF has a yellow warning card system that may be looked into to help alleviate some of these issues.

Overall, the convention was a huge success. As always, hard issues were discussed and recommendations were worked on. But the horse community was together and it was a great time for all. See you next year.