

AHA National Convention Denver, CO 2014

The 2014 AHA Convention was held at the Denver Marriott Tech Center, where it was last held in 2012. I shared others' concern at that time that although the motel staff was friendly, considerate and attentive that the motel itself was not convenient to any shopping or sight seeing but overall an OK facility. My personal issue, mostly because of poor planning, was difficulty finding transportation to and from the air port. I assumed that there would be a shuttle of some sort when I arrived at the Denver airport at 6:00 PM, only to be informed that the only transportation at that time was taxi. I had not arranged to travel with another delegate so ended up paying a \$65 cab fare. I made an attempt to obtain a shuttle for the return trip, but since the motel staff warned me that the shuttle service was 'sketchy' at best, I took a cab back to the airport also. Unfortunately, I had not budgeted for \$130 in transportation. Live and learn.

I will reiterate what I felt was the most impressive aspect of the Convention: setting the stage for the entire schedule with a heartfelt welcome by Charles Bass, followed by invocation again including prayers for those we left at home to care for our animals. Color presentation of both American and Canadian flags and then a beautifully sung national anthem for both countries was so very touching. The general sessions were very well organized and presented.

I attended break out sessions as follows: Sport Horse Committee, Dressage Committee, Equine Stress/Research & Education Committee, Promoting Positive Change and Breeding and In-Hand Committee.

The Sport Horse Committee covered several areas: review of current resolutions plus the judging systems relative to Sport horse in-hand and sport horse under saddle. Apparently there is an ongoing issue with judging the sport horse under saddle classes in that although the judging has been fair overall that the classes are too long. There appears to be a consensus of opinion that the judges currently being used are not accustomed to under saddle classes, thus the lengthy classes. There was further discussion about providing consistent education for all judges judging the Arabian classes. This was accepted well overall.

The key note speaker was Scott Trees, a commercial photographer and excellent speaker. He initially shared his history of involvement with the Arabian horse from showing as a youth ("back in the day when the Arabian was actually a 'do it all' horse and kids could ride and have fun") where people had a long term relationships with their Arabian horses to his current focus on the show ring via photography, where people seem more intent on winning than enjoying their horses. Mr. Trees asks: "Are we losing sight of the horse"? He challenges us to change the public perception, whereas we currently sell and show and promote amongst ourselves that we access new people and promote the wonder that is the Arabian.

On that line, there was increasing focus on the Arabian as a non show horse partner and the great enjoyment people experience through trail/pleasure riding, participating in clinics

Mary Trowbridge's update on the Horseman's Distress Fund was, as it is every year, heart wrenching, enlightening and empowering. She brought to light that the HDF is not "a hand out, but a leg up", stating that every time you allow someone to give to you you get a piece of that person's courage to go forward. Several individuals and regions generously committed to donating to this worthy cause. Some how I felt reassured in that knowing if for any reason I was put in a situation (emergent or not) where I needed help that the Distress Fund would be there for me.

The 2014 Convention was another success. After four years, I'm beginning to feel more of a part of the Arabian community and more committed to education and support of my fellow Arabian enthusiasts. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity!

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Region X
Delegate, MAHA