

Mission Statement

The California Dressage Society

is an organization whose purpose is to foster an interest among horsemen in Dressage. The program of the Society is educational, designed primarily to offer a framework in which individuals can progress with the schooling of themselves and their horses. CDS is an opportunity - to share, to experience, to learn and to contribute.

1. The California Dressage Society maintains an average of 3000 members.

2. CDS is most proud of its 51 plus year history in creating programs and being a leader and creating innovative events and education. CDS is proud of all of its "firsts". First to create an amateur division, though we called it Non-FEI. First to create a Futurity - Young Horse competition for 4, 5 and 6 year old horses. First to create a judge education program that AHSA took over. First to create two stand alone JR/YR Championships - one in the north and one in the south. First to create an Adult Amateur Clinic Series and a JR/YR Clinic Series where 30 plus riders participate for free with top instructors after being chosen by their chapter. First to create an Adult Amateur Competition called the Regional Adult Amateur Competition (RAAC) with a Roses award for the older amateur.

CDS prides itself on offering programs, events and competitions to encourage and educate its members. CDS also developed a scholarship program to help riders succeed.

CDS is proud of its 51 years of producing the showcase Annual Championship Show with the highest standard of qualifying.

CDS also brought top quality Symposiums to the West Coast.

CDS is proud that this infrastructure over the years has developed team members in the Olympics, Pan Ams, World Cups, and WEGs, starting with Kyra Downton - Team Silver Pan Am 1967; Hilda Gurney Individual Silver Pan Am 1975; Hilda Gurney Team Bronze, Individual Gold Montreal Olympics 1976; and many more up to the present.

3. Our most unique programs are the JR/YR Championships; the Regional Adult Amateur Competition; and the JR/YR and Adult Amateur Clinic Series where the Chapters select their rider to participate with top instructors.

4. Our educational events have a broad range. Our Annual Meeting focuses on educating our Chapter Chairmen on how to put on successful events and programs. Our JR/YR Championships feature a theory quiz and an educational session, for example - sport horse handling. Our symposium and clinic series focus on training. Our Championship show often offers a master class during the competition.

5. For fun - CDS knows how to party. We have a big awards gala at the Annual Meeting that can include dancing, silent and live auctions as well as award presentations. During the JrYR Championships there is usually an ice cream social, meet and greet, poster making contest, or DJ party. Each of the 30 Chapters have their own version of fun from Fashion Show to Trailer Backing Contest.

Additional Comments

By Melanie Lofholm,

California Dressage Society means different things to different people. To some it means a chance for regular (even if only monthly) riding instruction where none existed before. To others it's a competition trip; to still others it means DRESSAGE LETTERS. Many join for the Judges' Forum or to ride in Seminars conducted by imported European Instructors. And a few join to support the cause or to congregate with other interested in dressage.

To me the Society is all of this and more. It is first an assembly of people with a common interest; from there it becomes a viable group of good spirit pooling its resources to foster an interest among horsemen in dressage. It is the organizer's haven, the home for the communications expert and printer, a place for an artist, the secretary's niche, all supporting a diving board for teachers and judges of dressage. CDS is a pool of eager riders anxious to improve themselves and their horses, through instruction and through competition.

CDS is positive. Its strength lies with the local chapters, where self-supporting activities are within the economic and geographic grasp of the members. These chapters, while financially independent, are loosely yet definitely linked to the Society's Executive Board, where each Area Chairman sits as a non-voting member.

This layered nature of our Society furnishes, in my opinion, the best arrangement for our needs. But the structure itself is nothing without the friendship, generosity, cooperation, intelligence and talent of our members. Those essentials make the structure work; in this regard, the Society seems to bring out the best in most people.

Also characteristic, our Society crosses many equestrian fences. It encompasses several different equine breed interests, as well as a variety of equestrian pursuits; from endurance riding to show jumping to pleasure riding for its own sake. I consider this aspect of our membership highly significant, one key to fostering an interest among horsemen in dressage.

Which brings us to a philosophical point. How does one foster an interest among horsemen in dressage? Obviously the way in which one goes about it depends of course upon one's personality and faculties. Some, for whatever motive, believe that dressage can be evangelized, that people can be converted or "shown the way". Some crusade dressage. Undoubtedly they are the crusading type.

From my experience, I find dressage a personal challenge, so much so that I feel that in order to initiate a real understanding in dressage, a person must start with only a mere inkling of what it might be, and must follow with an insatiable desire and definite pursuit to find out what it really is. That involves watching other riders and horses at work. It requires too much discipline for a person to rely on someone else for motivation.

The Society can and does provide that "mere inkling of what it might be" through its activities and brochures, as well as demonstrations and public exhibitions.

In conclusion, I would sum up CDS as "an opportunity" – to share, to experience, to learn, to contribute. But with all of its goodness, the Society is, by its very nature, limited, for it is a composite venture into a highly individualized world. Yes, the Society does open the door. But it is the individual who must take the step.