

MARYAL BARNETT

USDF LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

"Dressage is not just a sport or art form for me; it is a way of life." So said our Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, Maryal Barnett.

For Maryal, teaching is more than just a profession. It is a passion. Nothing gives her greater joy than seeing her students grasp a skill or concept through lessons that she developed. It doesn't matter to her whether it is the beginner rider learning to sit the trot or an advanced student improving their tempi changes.

Her goal is to encourage them to develop a positive philosophy and recognize that their horse is not just a mechanical thing doing fancy movements. The soft look in the horse's eye and the swinging tail make it all worthwhile.

Maryal has dedicated a lifelong commitment to education. Along with Charles, her late husband of 41 years, Maryal has funded the Continuing Education Grants for Dressage Instructors through The Dressage Foundation.

But, it started long before those grants:

In 1979, Maryal attended the inaugural USDF/Violet M. Hopkins National Dressage Instructors' Seminar as a participating rider and instructor. By 1987, she was a member of the teaching staff at the National Seminar. According to her friend Roz Kinstler, it was at these seminars that Maryal "discovered Major Lindgren and got really involved in education."

She started on the Instructor Trainer Committee in 1991 and became a certification examiner seven years later in 1998.

Since 1993 she has been part of the faculty for the 'L' Program and by 1995 she was Chair of the USDF University Committee.

Her passion for dressage education encompassed the founding and development of three major

USDF Programs over 35 years. Co-Chair of the Instructor/Trainer Committee, Lilo Fore stated that she contributed "significantly" to:

- The L Program
- The Instructor Trainer Program
- The University Program

Another friend, Sue Hughes, fondly recalls: "The Seminar was created by US Dressage Legend, Violet Hopkins, who chose Maryal to head up the committee. Maryal and this committee all were in the local area and were connected with Vi as fellow professionals, students and friends. For eleven years, they met every third Monday at Sue Sherry's house in Wixom, Michigan, as they planned, and then ran this annual event."

At the time, the idea of training and certifying dressage instructors met with some skepticism. While the committee wrestled with the form, function and politics of certification, the Seminar presenters did bring revolutionary ideas to American dressage.

Major Anders Lindgren came and taught the use of cones in our arenas. Sally Swift came for two years and introduced centering, breathing and visualizing well before she wrote her first book. Many others contributed during those eleven years until the program morphed into the Certified Instructors program of today."

Roz and Maryal first met when they were riding at Rowe Stables in East Landing, Michigan. According to Roz, Maryal was riding a "darling" Lipizzan mare named Salterella. Later when Maryal had her horse Cricket, they would travel together to the Chicago area to ride in clinics with Christilot Boylen. Roz says that "it was a big joke between us that we would know when we were improving when she let us off the 20 meter circle." Eventually Maryal did get off that circle. She went on to compete through Grand Prix, winning numerous local

and national awards, including the USDF Horse of the Year from Training Level through I-1.

Her friend Lois Yukins has known Maryal for “at least 40 years.” They used to compete against each other at the Bloomfield Open Hunt Club in Michigan. “Maryal was a very enthusiastic competitor, and always fun to be around. I often kidded her for riding this little gray horse that was built like a polish sausage... The fact was that she was a real competitor and gave us all a run for our money.”

“A few years later I heard about a young horse that was for sale. I went to look at it, rode it and loved him. His name was Cricket. I went back a second time with my father and he too loved the horse, but wouldn't help me buy him. I was so disappointed.

It was not long before I found out that Maryal bought Cricket. How could she do that to me? She had him forever and trained him extremely well. Every time I saw him I was envious, but appreciative that it was Maryal that had him. To this day we joke about 'our' Cricket.”

As a judge, Maryal earned her FEI "C" license. One time, while she was at a forum in Stuttgart, fellow judge Marilyn Heath asked her about a new Rolex watch she was sporting, and if her husband, Charlie, wouldn't be angry? “Oh no. He will be relieved that I am not bringing home a horse.”

Her humor and good nature are widely known. According to Lois, “I think she has the best smile and giggle of anyone I know.”

One of my favorite quotes from Maryal is a truism that should motivate this organization for years to come:

The future of dressage and the welfare of our horses is dependent on the quality of education that our professionals obtain.

In closing, I would like to read a message I received yesterday from Sue Hughes:

The original committee wants to thank Maryal for leading us so well. We want to thank her for the experience for ourselves, the friendships we maintain today, and for the richness that our many small tasks back then brought to our lives as people and as dressage professionals. We say thank you and congratulations, personally, and as a group.

—Sue Ashley, Linda Fretz, Sue Hughes, Joan Humphrey, Alice Preketes, Donna Rickabaw, and Sue Sherry

Tonight, on behalf of USDF, I would like to thank you — Maryal Barnett, and it is my pleasure to honor you with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

George Williams
December 6, 2014