

Dressage offers different horse, rider training

ONCE AGAIN I was clueless.

While getting ready to leave my home to interview Fédération Equestre Internationale Equestrian trainer **Lily Wilson** and her Dressage student, **Cathy Price**, I realized I had no idea where to meet them — just that it was at an arena in Sequim.

I decided to call Sequim veterinarian and co-leader of Discovery Pony Club, **Linda Allen**.

The voice answering Linda's phone was polite, articulate and sounded vaguely familiar.

"She's not available right now, can I take a message?"

It was Linda's teenage Pony Clubbing daughter, **Aimee**. She proceeded to give me precise directions to Lily's location. Thank you, Aimee!

Cathy invited me to watch her lesson because she knew I'd be impressed with Lily's knowledge and training techniques; she was right.

When I arrived, Lily was helping Cathy and her beautiful, 17-hand thoroughbred, **Miya**, work on counterflexing during the posting trot.

FEI-level trainer

Lily, an FEI-level rider, competitor and trainer, specializes in the correct use of aids and employs the FEI training scale to develop and improve dressage horses and riders.

FEI is the international body governing Olympic equestrian games worldwide. Grand Prix level is the ultimate goal of dressage riders and the level viewed at Olympic competitions.

Currently in her 20s, Lily grew up with Pony Club and Three-Day Eventing. As a junior she was part of the Cosequin Junior Dressage Team for the United States Dressage Federation champi-

PENINSULA HORSEPLAY

Karen Griffiths



onships.

She's trained with several international and Olympic Games competitors, and continues to participate in "invitation only" clinics with some of them.

She also trained and competed in Holland for a year.

Lily also has had the remarkable opportunity of accompanying horses in flight across the United States, and more than a few times to Holland, for other owners.

"In the United States, we'd fly on Fed-Ex planes, but when flying on KLM from Los Angeles to Amsterdam, the horses would be behind a door in the back of the plane," said Lily.

"Most people flying with us didn't even know there were horses on board."

She said between the flight and mandatory quarantine transportation costs on international flights were approximately \$12,000.

My horse life center's around barrel racing and other patterned speed horse events.

I've found it true that most dressage riders have a low opinion of the aggressive riding styles so prevalent in "gamers."

When asked why, the most common reply I've heard is that barrel racers "just hop on, spur, kick, run the horse to death while yelling yahoo."

Riders with abusive styles can be seen with any horse sport. Fortunately, most are learning training with force is now good horsemanship.

The more I learn about



KAREN GRIFFITHS/FOR PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

Dressage competitor Cathy Price and her horse, Miya, learn more about counter movements and response to leg pressure during a posting trot from Lily Wilson, a top level Fédération Equestre Internationale Equestrian trainer at a privately owned indoor arena off Sporseen Road in Sequim. The arena is available to those taking lessons with Lily.

horse training, the more respect I have for the dexterity and gracefulness of dressage.

I now see how dressage basics can benefit horse and riders in all disciplines.

Different fundamentals

Fundamentals include teaching a horse to flex, bend and move through various gaits and lateral movements in response to leg and rein aids, without tugging and yanking at the mouth or violently whipping the hind end.

In dressage, a whip, or wand, is merely an extension of the hand.

For example, if your horse is plodding along and you want it to step up the pace,

simply use the wand to tap the hind end in rhythm with the horse until it walks faster, and then stop. Start tapping again if the horse slows down.

"In dressage, a rider is taught to move the horse from the back, which moves the front; lightness comes from teaching the horse to move off its hind end," said Lily.

"The energy comes from gathering the horse together, by engaging the hind end, which moves them closer to forehand thus developing sense of lightness."

Cathy says as a dressage rider living on the North Olympic Peninsula who aspires to move up a level in the show ring every year, "I

was starved for high-caliber coaching."

She was referred to Lily after she started boarding her horse at Sequim Valley Stables.

She trailers her horse over to a private arena for lessons with Lily, who commutes to from her home (she's in the process of moving to Pumpkin Farm in Snohomish) to Sequim two or three times a month to give lessons.

"Have to have a coach on ground to tell you what you need to work on, so each lesson has made a step-change improvement in connection with my mare and our performance in the ring," Cathy said.

"Competitors who haven't seen us since last show sea-

son have commented on our progress, asking, 'Did you send her somewhere?'"

"My proud answer is, 'Nope, I did it all myself, with a lot of help from Lily.'"

Contact Lily at lilywilson.dressage@yahoo.com. To schedule a lesson in Sequim, phone Christine 360-461-2402.

Events

■ **Today, 6:30 p.m.** Arab club meeting at the Holt home in Poulsbo. Trainer and performer Rebecca Parker from Bainbridge is guest speaker

■ **Saturday, 6 p.m.** PSHA Olympic Region's year-end awards banquet at Mariner Cafe, 705 W. Washington St. in Sequim. Dinner starts at 6 p.m. Awards at 7 p.m.

Phone Waynora 360-683-3902 or Pam at 360-452-6087 to confirm attendance.

■ **Saturday, 10 a.m.** BCH Peninsula chapter ride. The group meets at the Sallstrom home, 278 Dunmire Road, Port Angeles, to ride the west end of the Olympic Discovery Trail Adventure Route.

■ **Dec. 8, 7 p.m.** BCH Peninsula Chapter Open House at Clallam County Fairgrounds kitchen to welcome Olympic National Park's new superintendent, Karen Guston. Join the group to learn more about packing skills and exploring back-country trails.

Karen Griffiths' column, Peninsula Horse Play, appears every other Wednesday.

If you have a horse event, clinic or seminar you would like listed, please e-mail Griffiths at horseplay.kbg@olympus.net at least two weeks in advance.

You can also write Griffiths at PDN, P.O. Box 1330, Port Angeles, WA 98362.