

Dedicated to Promoting the Equestrian Sport of Dressage in USDF Region 8



Come Grow with Us!

# The Central Vermont Dressage Association

www.cvda.org

## The Half Halt

The Newsletter of the Central Vermont Dressage Association

### President's Message

Our weather has not cooperated this spring, but I hope everyone is riding and is looking forward to the upcoming season, despite the weather we've had recently.

CVDA has hit the ground running this year! Members should have received their Omnibus by now. We're offering several new clinics this year, in addition to our three shows and two Development Days. In our effort to provide affordable educational opportunities to our members, CVDA is heavily funding several clinics, including the Anne Gribbons clinic. Try to participate by riding or auditing!

Our first event was geared towards Juniors; it was hosted by Nancy Byrd and had a great turnout. Sarah DeGrasse spoke about her experiences in Florida with Lendon Gray's program. Thanks to Nancy Byrd and Heidi Hauri-Gill! By sponsoring new junior awards, we are increasing our recognition of CVDA's junior riders. We're eager to attract more junior members to our membership.

This year, we have a new venue for our annual meeting and banquet. We are looking forward to seeing everyone out this year, and I would love to see a large

percentage of our membership be eligible for our year end awards. Award requirements are listed in the Omnibus and on our website.

As always, your feedback and ideas are very important to us. If you are not seeing the types of events that you would like to attend, or you have new ideas, how about letting us know? If you've watched a clinician teach and think they would provide a valuable education to our members, we want to hear about it! We're currently working on a membership survey and hope everyone will participate so we are better informed.

I would also like to remind everyone that our shows, development days, and clinics are all run by our outstanding volunteers (without whom CVDA could not function). There are plenty of opportunities to help. CVDA's contact information is online, or you can speak directly to Volunteer Coordinator Jeanne Woodward-Poor. She does a fabulous job making sure all our shows are covered.

I am looking forward to a very exciting year for CVDA. I hope to see you at all our upcoming events.

—Kathi Bruce

### Table of Contents • April 2017

President's Message .....	1
CVDA's Youth Member Meeting.....	2
Half Halt Editors/Designers Needed! .....	2
Spotlight on Membership: Nancy Bliss Byrd.....	3
Ida Norris: A Hobby or A Professional Lifestyle? ....	4
How to Train Your Brain for Confident Riding.....	5



# CVDA's Youth Member Meeting

by Rose Keller

On March 12, 2017, Board representative Nancy Byrd was kind enough to invite all CVDA junior members into her home for an afternoon of discussion and video on the topic of dressage.

The meeting began with a video of one of the world's top dressage riders, Charlotte Dujardin, with her mount "Valegro". As Nancy herself put it, "She's someone we can all aspire to."

Following the video, guest speaker Sarah DeGrasse gave us an overview of her journey with horses, and her experience in Lendon Gray's Winter Intensive Training Program.

I've had the privilege of knowing Sarah for the past seven years, from the



*Sarah DeGrasse and Heidi Hauri Gill's Don Bosse. (Photo by Bob Langrish)*

time she was my counselor at pony camp, to competing alongside her in this year's Youth Dressage Festival. Her journey from riding lower level dressage on her first horse to going down to Florida to train under Olympians and dressage legends is truly inspiring to me.

Stories like hers are important for all of us to hear, as, sometimes, up here in New England, we can feel we are a little isolated from the rest of the dressage world...

Regardless of location, and although we may not look like much yet, young dressage riders are the future of our sport—the sport of dressage. Yes, we are indeed lucky to have the support of CVDA!

## New Content Editor & New Layout Designer Needed for CVDA's *Half Halt*!

### **Would you like to contribute to CVDA in an important way, by becoming the "Half Halt" Content Editor?**

Do you love to write? Are you nosy about who is doing what, where, and when? Are you organized?

Lisa Geovjian is retiring from the position after more than ten years of welcoming, cajoling, and enjoying member contributions.

It is time for new energy and enthusiasm to make CVDA's newsletter

an even better source of sharing and information. The newsletter is now 100% online, and it is presented quarterly.

The content editor works with clinic and show managers to present articles about everything and anything that has occurred that might be of interest to our members. The designer does just that: design!

CVDA is open to a new direction, new feature articles, or just a continuation of the current format, depending on the desires and talents of the new editor.

### **Or would you like to contribute to CVDA in another important way, by becoming the "Half Halt" Layout Designer?**

Laying out the newsletter is fun! If you have experience, so much the better. If you don't, jump in and learn how to do it! We'll provide help and give suggestions if you need either.

If you are willing to try either of these, please contact Kathi Bruce at [danek@vermontel.net](mailto:danek@vermontel.net).

## Spotlight on Membership:

# Nancy Bliss Byrd

I grew up in Warner, NH, where I caught the riding bug early. My parents had little knowledge of horses, but they happened to purchase a home with some acreage and a barn when I was just a year old. They figured horses would be a fun family activity and would also teach their four children responsibility. When we became old enough, we joined 4-H and Pony Club, and we took lessons at local riding stables. I was hooked!

I moved to Strafford, VT, in 1978 to be a working student at Denny and May Emerson's Tamarack Hill Farm. There I honed my skill as a horsewoman and event rider. I soon became the head working student, and later an assistant riding instructor. I had the opportunity to ride many different horses, both green and made, most of them Thoroughbreds or Thoroughbred crosses, sitting on five horses a day (sometimes more). With many hours in the saddle and the support of a good instructor, I moved up the levels of competition quickly.

In 1980, under Denny's tutelage, I won the Junior National Championships at Radnor on Cobblestone, a horse that I leased for a year and later bought. Together, in the fall of 1981, we competed in our first international advanced level 3-Day Event at Chesterland. Subsequently, I was selected to attend a January training session with Jack LeGoff, the USET coach for Three-Day Eventing. In 1982, after placing 2nd at the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event, Cobble and I competed at the World Championships in Germany on the United States Equestrian Team Three-Day Squad, winning the bronze medal. In 1984, I was short-listed for the Olympic Games on my two horses, Cobblestone and Rio Doge, an off-the-track Thoroughbred who I trained from a youngster through the international level. On the cross-country course at the final selection trial my experienced horse Cobblestone fell and landed on me. A fracture to my neck ended that Olympic dream.

Still fascinated by training horses, I continued to bring along and compete horses at the lower levels of eventing. Always hungry to learn more about the three phases of eventing, I took horses to Florida for three winter seasons to practice my show jumping technique. I rode with Julie Ulrich of Friar's Gate Farm. She had a strong dressage background, having ridden with Karl Mikolka, and we had a mutual friend in Jack LeGoff. We hit it off immediately. Those were some very fun winters!

Sometime in the early eighties, I started riding with Jane Savoie in order to improve my dressage scores in eventing, and to improve my training skills in general. Later, after my show jumping experience in Florida, Jane guided me in competing Tai Pan, an ex-event horse turned dressage horse, through Intermediare I. From 1997 until 2005, Jane kept me on track in the training of Dove, an Oldenburg mare that I purchased from Huntington Farm as a five year old. Dove was a challenge, but together we made our debut at Intermediare II earning qualifying scores for the Region 8



*Nancy and Cobblestone, 1982 World Championship, Luhmuhlen, Germany. (Photo: Hugo Czerny)*

Championships. To this day, Jane is one of my most valued mentors and friends.

I believe it was also in the early eighties, at the height of my eventing career, that I started participating in CVDA activities. The shows were a good way to give my horses low-pressure exposure to the dressage ring. I also distinctly remember a CVDA-sponsored talk given by a sports psychologist. I have used his relaxation and visualization techniques to my advantage in competitions and in life for over thirty years! Thanks, CVDA!

I enjoyed teaching, passing on what I had learned from my own experience. From 1980 on, I supported myself by teaching riding, first at Denny's and then out of Ann Kitchell's Huntington Farm, where I rented a barn and ran my own summer programs for juniors. I taught clinics across the country, and supplemented my income by buying young horses, training and selling them. In the autumn of 1984, I became the trainer and barn manager at Hermit Hill Farm in Lyme, NH. I taught, trained and coached, including many juniors.

As a new CVDA board member, my goal is to make CVDA more kid-friendly—dressage can be exciting! I recall riding my first line of one-tempi changes. It was as exciting as jumping at speed around my first steeplechase course!

Harry and I were married in 1995. He is my biggest supporter and cheerleader (even though he is allergic to horses!). We built a home and small barn in Orford, NH, where we raised our two children. Levy, age 20, is a mechanical engineer major at Northeastern University. Cecily, age 17, is a junior at Brehm Preparatory. She is a CVDA member, and enjoys training and competing in dressage and para dressage. I ride Cecily's horse while she is in school.

I am feeding my passion for education by taking a course in service dog training. I am working with two joyful Golden Retriever/Labrador Retriever pups.

# A Passionate Hobby or A Professional Lifestyle?

by Ida Anderson Norris

I teach other riding instructors and trainers, primarily; they come from all over. In the winter, they come to me in Florida for a month or two of thorough evaluation, to figure out how to get themselves ahead, for intensive tune-ups for competition, for concentrated training for themselves. It allows them to focus on learning, and to see how they can get ahead in their own riding careers.

The gamut of information that these trainers (from Second Level to Grand Prix) may need to progress in their businesses, their competing, their equitation, their horse management and their training skills is always unique. What they want to talk to me about is a continuing surprise!

Today, one trainer talked to me about her concerns with a client. This trainer has been a working

horse professional for five years. She had ridden her whole life but had day jobs in other industries before taking the plunge 5 years ago to becoming a full-time horse professional. Like many, she has taken numerous riding lessons, attended clinics, read extensively, and gone to Pony Club as a child. She is anxious to continue her education in a thorough and formal way.

The true extent of the lifestyle of a full-time horse professional had not occurred to her until we talked. Professionals need to be flexible and available to their clients. Balancing their own family and personal lives can be a challenge. There will always be a horse show on July 4, which probably means no family barbecues on July 4—ever. Patience is required with clients that are on their time off (some tend to be casual about their appointments at the stable because this is their recreational time).

Additionally, there is sometimes diffi-

culty with people viewing your assistance as being worthy of payment. Often, it is difficult to realize that all of your information is hard earned and worth money. Your time is worth money! In reality, it is all that you have to sell; you can only work so many horses a day or teach so many lessons.

For the professional, horses need to be cared for morning, noon and night. Client care and instruction come after hours and on weekends. For people coming into the industry, it is important to recognize this different lifestyle.

I counsel riders who are thinking about becoming professionals to be sure to be a working student somewhere or to “shadow” a professional long enough to understand the way of life. It has great demands but fulfilling rewards. Be sure it suits you before you begin.

Contact Information for Ida Norris:

[www.dressageclinics.com](http://www.dressageclinics.com)

Summer: 503 Mill Pond Rd., Benson, Vt. 04743

Winter: 5650 S.W. Mapp Rd, Palm City, Fl 34990

# StressLess Riding: How to Train Your Brain for a Confident Ride

with Andrea Waldo

by Terri Satterlee

For many of us, there has been a time in our experience with horses where we have felt, at a minimum, stressed, all the way to terrified. Everyone's experience is different, yet in discussing why we attended this unmounted clinic, there were many common themes.

Andrea did a wonderful job in reminding us how our brain functions, and when a threat emerges, whether real or imaginary (as our brain does not distinguish between the two), what happens. Our Fight or Flight Response, which evolved to protect us from harm, kicks into gear and—boom! Our heart rate increases, extra blood flows to our major muscle groups, making them become tense, and *logical* verbal thinking is circumvented, not allowing us to access the skills we have.

This, of course, often happens simultaneously with our horse (or should I say “flight animal”?) experiencing the same thing. As we know, the horse will often run first and ask questions....later. As we know, telling someone to “Relax!” when they are in a high anxiety state is ineffective at best. Andrea gave us a plan to tame the anxiety, and tools to invoke the goal of functioning optimally regardless of the circumstances or emotions we have.

The first step (like many roads to self improvement) is to acknowledge and accept your fear without judgment or criticism. The alarm in your body and mind will only quiet when it has been responded to. It will only persist until

you pay attention to it. Reassure yourself by asking if the thought is actually true; many of our “brain traps” are actually our “stories” from the past or the future, and are not happening in the present. Many of these stories can also interfere with our ability to achieve mental focus and calm behavior. Always frame problems in the past tense, and frame solutions in the present.

An example of a Brain Trap is “Catastrophizing”: My horse will bolt and I will fall, break, and.....” A strategy discussed to free oneself from this trap is to come up with three other possible scenarios: the best case, neutral, and the most likely. *Make a plan* for what you will do if the worst starts to happen. Effective riders “don’t wait to see what the horse will do...instead, the rider tells the horse what to do.”

We also spent time “owning” our skills. Many of us compare ourselves to others by only seeing their outsiders. We don’t recognize our own skills because we feel that, if they aren’t perfect, then they aren’t worth much. In order to feel confident, we need to recognize our own competence. Note *what went well*, and *stop exaggerating weaknesses*.

“Perfectionism is just fear, in really good shoes.”

—Elizabeth Gilbert

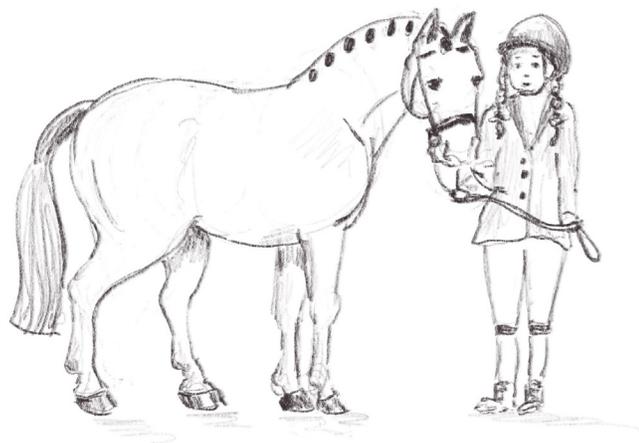
Rather than trying to “relax”, Andrea introduced creating a state of “Focused Calm”. Focused Calm is a behavior that we can engage in regardless of the emotions we are feeling at any given moment. This occurs by creating a “Performance Self” before riding that is separate from our Real Self (i.e., all of our fears and emotions). Our “Performance Self” is very aware of our abilities, it does not care about the result, and it only exists in the present moment!

*Delete* negative or irrelevant thoughts, and envision situations going well. Nerves are a normal part of the process, but don’t let them hijack the ride. Acting calm leads to increased calmness.

Tactile things enable our mind to stay in the moment. Focus with images rather than words; they take less time for our brain to compute. Invoke the SuperHero Pose!

“The master has failed more times than the beginner has even tried.” Confidence grows by taking risks and putting oneself out there. Become comfortable with being uncomfortable; there is never a perfect time, and never are we 100% ready.

When the seminar was concluding, some of us asked Andrea if she ever worked with riders in a mounted format, and she does! Many were interested in a clinic for those taking their horse to a new place or situation, and practicing show stressors. We will see if there can be a Chapter 2!



# CVDA Braiding and Grooming Critique

## Description:

CVDA is proud to support growing knowledge and learning of all our junior members. This is a fun way to help our junior members learn how to better their braiding and grooming skills for showing! Children will present a well-groomed braided horse or pony and receive feedback accordingly. This is an unmounted event. Please present your horse or pony in bridle with show number only, with rider in all appropriate show gear.

**CVDA Summer Show**

**At Lunch Break**

**Between Upway and E Barn**

**We hope to see you and your well-groomed/braided horses!!**