



# FWDC Newsletter

***Just want to thank all of our veterans  
for your service!***

May 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting mostly dealt with the upcoming schooling show and taking care of all of the details. Thanks Peggy for being in charge of volunteers.

**June 4<sup>th</sup>** is the **schooling show** just [click here](#) for the entry form...if you aren't ready to ride please come on out and volunteer ([contact Barb](#)). **Kristin Currie** will be our judge and show is at the fabulous **Willow Draw** arenas. Please come at 10 am on Saturday if you would be able to help set up the arena.

## UPCOMING DATES:

**JULY 22<sup>ND</sup>** is Pool Party at [Renee's](#) House in Weatherford – This is great fun BBQ with friends, cooling off and great conversation.

Please plan on bringing a dessert or side to pass.

### **AUGUST 12th**

↳ ~~**AUGUST 21<sup>ST</sup>**~~ is Scribing Clinic at [Dyanna's](#) House in Weatherford. Lots of amazing food, videos and practice scribing. If you show this is a great way to help you understand what all of those marks mean on your tests. Also, this class allows you to start to qualify to scribe at future shows.

# Horse Shows are Fun...Right?

Pat Senn, FWDC Member

I started my dressage career somewhat late in life after riding in other disciplines. Despite the late start, I just attended my third recognized show with my dear 15-year-old Lusitano gelding, Virtuoso. My goal was to attain one more Second Level score and two Third Level scores for my USDF Bronze medal. At the show, Virtuoso demonstrated his exceptional intelligence, character and humor, the highlight of a weekend that must include the word "cluster" in its description.

The Fort Worth Dressage Club, of which I am a member, was hosting the show, so I had some additional responsibilities. The week before the competition, I made and packed for transport 36 dozen (432) homemade chocolate chip cookies—18 dozen stallions (with nuts) and 18 dozen geldings (without nuts). I also procured, packed and loaded all the equipment and supplies for our coffee station.

I became concerned about hauling my horse with my low mileage (76,000) but aged, 2002 Ford F250. Men love this truck beyond reason. I have three men begging to buy it and a salesperson who told me to keep it rather than trying to sell me a new one. Convinced this truck was an engineering feat never to be equaled, I gave my trusted mechanic carte blanche to go over it with a fine-tooth comb and fix or replace anything that could cause a problem due to age or improper functioning. The Thursday before the show, he gave me a bill for \$3,000 and told me the truck was good to go.

Now, it's Friday morning and I am already a nervous wreck. With only four hours of sleep while suffering gastrointestinal distress and a whopper headache, I head off at 5:30 a.m. to my barn, 70 miles from my house. My trainer and I plan to get an early start, settle in at our leisure, get close trailer parking, and avoid being rushed. I stop at a gas station a couple of miles from the barn to fill up for the trip, but when I go to start the truck, it is dead. All I get is a clicking noise. I don't know much about engines, but I'm pretty sure this is bad. I call my roadside assistance at 7 a.m. to get help.

Fearing a jumpstart may not work, a tow truck is dispatched to my location with an estimated arrival in 30 minutes. It's now 8 a.m. No tow truck. My trainer has gone on to the show and it's raining pretty hard. People keep pulling up behind me at the gas pump waiting for me to finish and I have to keep apologizing for being in their way.

It's now 8:45 a.m. and the tow truck driver calls to say he is lost – not a good sign. He shows up at 9 a.m. (one-and-a-half hours late) and tries to jump my heavy-duty truck with a small plastic case called a "jump kit." It looks like it would not jumpstart a lawnmower. This, of course, fails and he asks me if I have jumper cables. He brings a tow truck but not jumper cables? I have been waiting for two hours, refusing offers of help to jumpstart my truck because I was promised "professional" help would be arriving soon. I find my jumper cables and we get the truck to start. I am thrilled it started with just a jump – I don't trust this guy to properly and safely load my truck onto the wrecker!

Luckily, there is a Ford dealer about five miles away and I am able to pull into the service area as the truck dies again. It is determined that the alternator is bad and needs to be replaced. I'm not real sure why the alternator was fine at the mechanic's shop on Thursday and dead on Friday. My mechanic has some explaining to do!

The service manager gives me a ride to my barn and then tells me he will try to expedite the repair so I can still make it to the show that day. I call my husband in big-time tears and he decides to come to the barn (70 miles away) to provide moral support and to take me back home if repairs cannot be made in time to go to the show Friday. While at the barn, I watch four of my friends prepare to leave for the show in a big, happy caravan. They are pairing up horses in two trailers and their trailers are full. They are kind people and they feel bad for me, but they have no room for another horse. They do, however, take my homemade cookies that I remember to grab from the truck and promise to get them to the

competitors' reception that evening.

It's now about noon and I don't have a clear plan. The Ford dealer says the truck may be ready by 2 p.m. My husband and I pass the time by brushing my horse and getting a bite to eat. At 2 p.m., the service guy calls to say they should receive the ordered part any minute and it might be done by 3 p.m. Well, . . . maybe I can still go. I can hook up and leave by 5 p.m., since it's about a two-and-a-half-hour drive. At 4:00 p.m., after many tortuous hours, I decide to pull the plug on leaving Friday as the truck is not yet repaired. My husband and I drive the 70 miles home in horrific rush hour traffic. I am disappointed. It's been a long, frustrating day and I consider just scratching the whole show. As despair is setting in, the dealer calls at 6 p.m. to say the truck is ready and I decide to set out Saturday morning for the show.

After another night of limited, restless sleep and anxiety-induced gastrointestinal distress, my husband and I set out at 6:30 a.m. for the 70-mile ride to the Ford dealer. I pay for the repair, go to the barn, hook up, load up, and have an uneventful trip to the show. I arrive at noon, tired, anxious, ticked-off at my mechanic, but grateful to be at the show and super grateful that this truck problem did not happen with my horse in the trailer on the side of the highway.

The rest of Saturday goes fairly well. I am able to school my horse in the warm-up ring but not the competition arenas - it will have to be a surprise for him Sunday! I join friends for a pleasant dinner, tuck in my horse for the night and walk across the street to my hotel. I sleep well until 2 a.m., then anxiety and continued gastrointestinal distress set in. At 5:45, I put on my white breeches (who thought that was a good idea?) and go tend to my horse.

After some Pepto-Bismol and Advil for breakfast, I forgo even coffee for the sake of the white breeches and, quite possibly, my dignity. I choose to ignore the fact that my new ill-fitting custom boots are causing serious discomfort and have made my left foot go totally numb. I warm-up my horse and set off for the scary colosseum arena for my 3-1 test, feeling very nauseated. I mistakenly go

into the arena itself for my pretest look about and am reprimanded by the judge. Great start. In my defense, the only test I watched on Saturday was in the ring next door where the rider went into the dressage arena proper after the previous rider was done. Apparently, the other ring had an obstruction that prevented the rider from being able to go all the way around the outside of the arena, thus inside dressage ring warm-up was allowed. My bad.

Test goes pretty meh. My horse is very tense looking at the big scary coliseum with people moving about in the stands. He is pretty distracted by this new environment so I feel I have to pop him a couple of times with my whip - which he ignores. I get through it and score a 60.785 percent - just enough for a Bronze medal score. The judge does not like me popping my horse and tells me I need to be subtler with my aids. Isn't that wonderful? I make such a great impression!

Next test is 2-2, scheduled for an hour later in an outdoor, covered arena with a lot going on outside. Test goes better except for a very awkward simple/flying change combination that defies description. . . oops. I am not reprimanded for any rule violations and manage a 62.051 percent - again enough for a Bronze Medal score. Relief. Not super scores but, with my limited experience and severe case of nerves, I am okay with it. When asked about my rides, I answer "good enough."

It's now 11:45 on Sunday morning and I have a decision to make. I signed up for three tests on Sunday (2-2, 3-1 and 3-3) with the hope of being able to scratch one, or possibly two, if I make acceptable scores on Saturday's tests (2-2 and 3-1). Well, Saturday did not happen and now I am sleep deprived, nauseated, and ready for this to be over. Do I stay an additional four hours and try the 3-3 test with a tired horse in the scary coliseum arena with a judge who thinks I am a horse-beating idiot? I reluctantly decide to stay. After all, it was quite the ordeal just getting to the darned show and I might as well give it a try. At the very least, it will give me some experience, right?

In the four hours I have to kill, I start loading the non-essential stuff into my trailer, which is

conveniently located more than a block from the barn. I take several loads out to trailer in my little rolling cart in a painfully slow, exhausting, laborious process. It proves to be a really bad way to prepare for a late afternoon ride in an already diminished physical and mental state. I end up just launching things into the trailer from the ground. It is the biggest mess you have ever seen and I don't care – even now.

I find a test reader and track down the braider to re-do several braids that sprang loose. After a quick warm-up, I don my big-girl panties and head off to ride a test I don't know very well and have never done in public for a judge whom I feel has formed some negative opinions of me – EXCELLENT! The test is not going great, but OK through the trot and walk tours. When it's time for the first canter transition, someone up in the stands comes blasting down the walkway on a scooter. My horse sees this person flying by and freaks out. He leaps straight up, goes sideways then backward until he hits the arena rails, scaring himself again, then he goes sideways again. I'm in the middle of the arena by the time he settles but we are both too flustered to continue. I ask to be excused. I am guessing this incident did not improve my standing with the judge. She actually is decent and tells me to go ahead and trot him forward some so that he

doesn't end his ring appearance on this unfortunate note.

I would really like to end this story now but I'm afraid there is one more chapter. I finish packing, load my horse, and drive to the barn without incident. I unload my horse, undo his braids and get him settled in. Meanwhile, a Texas-style storm kicks up with frequent lightening and high winds, hail, and a tornado watch quickly approaching. I hastily un-hook my trailer, questioning the safety of being in contact with a giant metal object with so much lightening about and start my 70-mile trek home.

I drive no more than two miles before the rain and wind become dangerous. The wind is really battering the truck about and the heavy rain makes visibility near zero. I pull into the same gas station I had spent Friday morning in and sit under the awning at the gas pump for 30 minutes until the storm backs off. I hadn't eaten all day and am thrilled to find a can of Easy Cheese, some crackers and a cold diet soda in my cooler. As I enjoy my nutritionally devoid dinner, it occurs to me that for the second time in three days, I am stuck at this same gas station in the rain - didn't see that one coming.



Pat and Virtuoso