

2018 AHA Convention, Tulsa, Ok

The 2018 convention is one for the history books. Friday afternoon, during the general session, an electrical fire started in one of the Hyatt's escalators. The entire hotel was evacuated. All of the convention attendees and other hotel guests were evacuated outside and across the street. Initially, we thought we would return shortly and most left their convention materials at their seats. After some time, AHA announced it would be several hours before we would know if we would be allowed back into the hotel and if we would be allowed to stay the night; convention was convened for the day. Groups started walking towards area restaurants for dinner. The AHA Yapp app kept us informed. A couple of hours later, it was announced that we would be able to return to our rooms in groups and the Hyatt would find lodging in area hotels for Friday night. Most had to walk up many flights of stairs to pack their belongings. Fortunately, the elevators were being operated manually and we were able to use them to descend to the hotel lobby. Once outside, we were assigned lodging for the night. Convention attendees were scattered all over downtown Tulsa and the surrounding areas, some as far as one hour away. Convention reconvened Saturday morning at 10 am. The items accomplished were the elections, resolutions, distance horse of the year, youth of the year, and voting for the 2021 convention location; we were finished shortly after 1 pm. This meeting was held at the Doubletree down the street. My notebook was never found. This report is from memory. No one was allowed to spend Saturday night at the Hyatt. If you were able to leave Saturday night, they suggested it. Any fees or charges will be reimbursed by the Hyatt or AHA.

Wednesday - The Sport Horse Committee had submitted a resolution to clarify the sport horse showmanship rules. Most of the first meeting on Friday dealt with further clarifications and language clean up. At issue, to my surprise, was the resolution submitted, only allowed for clear grooming products for hooves. The Equitation and Showmanship Committee asked for that to be changed to allow for hoof black. Their argument was that exhibitors from traditional showmanship or even a pleasure class where hoof black is allowed could get disqualified. The sport horse exhibitors, however, felt coloring feet is not true to the sport disciplines and did not want the change. During Saturday's general session, an amendment from the floor was made and passed allowing for hoof black in sport horse showmanship.

I did attend the Plenary Session to pitch the PAHA resolution that was submitted allowing half-Arabian stallions to show in performance halter. I explained why the resolution was put forth and why it is important to pass it. The resolution at this point, met with little resistance. The committees assigned to vote on the resolution were USEF Arabian Division Rules Committee, Equine Stress and Research, and the Breeding and In-Hand Committee. From what I was told, the Equine Stress Committee took great offense to this resolution. It was mentioned that passage of this resolution would have Sheila Varian rolling over in her grave. The argument was half-Arabians are not a breed. As such, there should not be classes promoting breeding.

The last meeting I attend Wednesday evening was a forum discussion on qualifications. Most agree qualifications to compete at regionals and nationals are too easy. The problems are developing a system that is general enough that is applicable for all divisions in all parts of the country and one that does not negatively impact all levels of showing. For instance, to make the reining qualifications tougher may work in Texas where reining is popular but would kill the opportunities for the very few reining horses in the north east. If we make qualifications tougher for regionals and nationals, the qualifying shows would fair better but at the expense of the regional and national shows. AHA relies on the national show income to operate. This applies also to the club and regional shows. Show income is the primary source.

Thursday – During this first general session, Nancy Harvey stated while the lawsuit with the Purebred Arabian Trust has been finalized, both sides have asked judge for clarifications. AHA is to provide PAT with access to the database, but how? There is a Colorado statute that states the losing party of a frivolous lawsuit pays the winning sides attorneys' fees. This is a point of clarification. Nancy also stated there has been a lawsuit going on for the past five years about registration papers. A person rescued a horse and is suing AHA for the papers. Glenn Petty stated that US Nationals did

better than budget as did Sport Horse Nationals. Youth Nationals was down, but Canadian Nationals were up essentially a wash. The magazine continues to lose money and they are trying to come up with a solution for that. Brad Short, the AHA controller, gave a basic accounting lesson to the group. While the audited financials may show an income loss, the organization is actually fairing pretty well due to several years of positive cash flow. Basically, AHA is not spending all of the cash that is coming in the door but putting some in reserves or savings. The legal fees from this year created a negative cash flow where AHA had to dip into savings. Managing cash flow is a better indicator of health organization than possibly the audited financials.

The second Sport Horse Committee spent more time redrafting their resolution. After this meeting, the third amended version was going to press.

After lunch, I attended the Sport Horse National Show Commission meeting. A few weeks ago, the commission chair, Cathy Gage, had passed away from a riding accident. Vice-chair Jim Porcher stepped up. The commission asked for a received permission to operate the commission with one less member for 2019 so they would have time to fully vet a replacement. 2019 SHN's will be held in Balmoral Park, Crete, IL. This is an all-outdoor facility about an hour south east of Chicago. A one year contract for the Idaho Horse Park was signed for the 2020 show. Jim Porcher believes exhibitors will be so please with Balmoral, they will want the show held their permanently. The move to a more central location makes Jim's comment not a surprise to me. I think a permanent location is the intent of the commission.

I attended the Eventing and Driving Committee. The carriage drivers are desperately hoping no classes will be dropped from future SHNs. When a full slate of classes is held, drivers will show up. I suggested that the committee come up with a quick reference guide for show management on how to hold driving classes, a basic tutorial. Driving is a spectator draw. I know when I was as SHN this year, we went to all of the sessions that had driving classes.

Next, was the Dressage Committee meeting. The Dressage Committee submitted two resolutions this year. One to disallow whips for western dressage at nationals and the other to disallow callers as nationals. Karen Homer-Brown, who was instrumental in creating western dressage was adamantly opposed, along with myself, to these resolutions. Whips and callers are allowed at all levels and all shows of western dressage. Why do we need exceptions to these discipline rules? Karen explained while there are similarities to dressage, western dressage was created to aid in the training and development of working western horses. Callers and whips help in the training process. The members of the Dressage Committee in attendance voted to defeat these resolutions. Ultimately, both were withdrawn.

I walked in on the tail end of the Regional Restructuring Forum. A committee was created to look at redrawing the regions and potentially reducing the number of regions and reducing the size of the board of directors. The committee did bring forth a plan or recommendation. They felt it was up to the members to decide if and how a regional restructuring should take place. The audience did not care for this approach. Many were expecting a plan to be revealed. Three different speakers who have gone through governance restructuring of national organizations did make comments. Instead of a bottom up approaching which would dictate redrawing the regional map first, the organization needs to change from the top down. If the intent is to reduce the size of the board, first determine the duties of the board, than determine the size. Is it necessary for the BOD to vote and comment on rule changes, for example. Define the scope and duties first, then, the rest can start taking place. It is not unrealistic to expect a governance restructuring to take three to five years.

We finished the night up with the Region 15 Caucus Meeting. The main agenda items were to approve the regional budget and to vote to see if Kim Dickinson should be paid a retroactive stipend for managing the 2018 regional show. The vote was 7-4 for Kim to receive \$2,500. The 2019 show budget does include payment for the show manager. We ended the night with dinner.

Friday – My first meeting of the day was back to the Dressage Committee. There was discussion about AHA adding Intermediate A/B to the class codes list. The dressage rules state a horse/rider combo can show in two consecutive levels. At the FEI levels, the order is Prix St Georges and Intermediate I followed by Intermediate II and Grand Prix. If Intermediate A/B were added, then the order would be Intermediate I then A, followed by Intermediate B and Intermediate II. It's a pretty great leap from I 1 to I 2. Adding A/B would reduce that leap. It was voted by the committee members to change the name of the committee to Dressage and Western Dressage.

The general session started at 2pm and it was shortly after that that the fire started. We were finished for the day.

Saturday – The general session began at 10am. All delegates had to be re-credentialed and new ballots passed out. It was announced that we would begin with elections and the resolutions. Any other topics would be discussed if time allowed. We voted on the offices/committees that had contested seats. I did win a seat on the Nominating Committee. Next, we began discussion the resolutions. Three were withdrawn, one was referred back to committee, and the rest were approved. Resolution updates can be found on AHA's website. The AHA youth of the year and the distance horse of the year were announced. PL Mercury is a 27 year old horse that completed several endurance rides this year including the Tevis Cup. We also voted on where the 2021 convention will be held. 2019 will be held back in Tulsa. 2020 will be held in Reno, NV. 2021 will be held in the Canadian side of Niagara Falls. Convention adjourned shortly after 1pm.

Respectfully,

Cricket Gates

2018 Convention Report

Ruthann Gavitt

Wayne and I attended the AHA Convention in Tulsa in November and enjoyed the opportunity to absorb lots of information about what is going on in the Arabian horse world and renew acquaintances with many old friends who share our passion. Unfortunately, however, we were unable to complete our delegate duties there.

At about 3:30 on Friday, when the general session in the convention center was already way behind schedule, the announcer suddenly told all to evacuate the building due to an electrical fire in an escalator. We grabbed our personal items and, with no coats, filed out with the others in an orderly fashion into the chill. Outside we were moved farther up the street as the fire trucks arrived and were able to shelter in an office building there. A lot of folks kept checking their phones to little avail (ours was upstairs in our room), and after a while hotel personnel arrived to tell us it could be hours until we could get back in to the building. Others were venturing out in search of food and comfort, and we finally found a nice restaurant where we could have a quiet dinner.

Then we walked back to the hotel where we learned that small groups of people were being gradually let into the building to get their belongings and when they came down they could be shuttled to another hotel to spend the night. We got to the head of the line to get to our room by agreeing to walk the 10 stories there. Quickly gathering and packing our things in the residual acrid fumes of the electrical fire, we were lucky to get an elevator back down and find a parking valet who helped get our car.

Assuming that no further business could be conducted with no usable venue and the delegates scattered, we started the long drive home at that point. We have since learned that enough of the delegates were able to be assembled (Oh, the wonders of modern technology!) to have a quorum for a short meeting at another hotel the next day and deal with the most vital votes on officers and resolutions.

Having attended the plenary session and a number of committee working and voting sessions, I felt I had a good understanding of the issues and was ready to vote on even the most controversial resolutions. These included the following:

(1) a proposal to allow amateur exhibitors to receive pay for giving very basic riding lessons to beginning riders without compromising their amateur status. This was promoted very effectively by prominent individuals, including Peter and Lori Conway, as a way to get more beginners riding Arabian horses, but raised a world of questions in the minds of many others.

(2) a proposal to permit as many as 4 concurrent shows qualifying for multiple regions, which was seen as a potential benefit to some clubs, but as a death knell to others.

(3) a set of rules for sport horse showmanship which became controversial on one small detail; to stay in line with sport horse in hand class rules, the sport horse committee had prohibited hoof black, while the equitation and showmanship committee and other main ring entities were unwilling to support the entire resolution unless the hoof black provision was removed because it might make it too difficult for the exhibitor to move quickly from one ring to the other.

(4) The USEF Rules Committee session that I attended voted on a large number of resolutions, but ran out of time did not address what I was hoping to hear—their reaction to a resolution requiring a study of the advisability of AHA cutting its ties with USEF. In another committee session I heard a sensible opinion: perhaps this should be studied, but not as a result of a resolution.

Eventually we will learn from our fellow PAHA delegates or the AHA website the ultimate fate of these and the other resolutions.

Convention Report

Wayne Gavitt

Ruthann has related the disruption of the sessions. I will report some observations from my attendance at commission and committee meetings. The Working Western Committee took exception to amateurs receiving pay in any form. Discussion then dealt with the resolution allowing judges of other breeds to judge Ranch Riding class at Arabian shows. In general discussion Karlan Downing asked for consideration of a plan to divide Ranch Riding by rider levels in an attempt to reduce class sizes.

At a meeting of Equine Stress there was discussion regarding the resolution which would require that horses not involved in a work-off must be excused from the ring to the paddock. Other groups said they could not vote in favor of this unless *must* was changed to *may*. The committee was not inclined to make this change. The rest of the session addressed a concern that some riders are showing their horses in too many classes. How do you deal with this? Is it the responsibility of the show secretary? The Steward? The Judge? How about the rider who lunges their horse for an hour before every class? Judges present stated that a visibly exhausted horse probably wouldn't fare well in a class.

The Driving and Eventing Committee reviewed the events of Sport Horse Nationals. There were no recommendations for any change in the class offerings, but there was discussion about the placement of classes in the schedule. Chris Bickford insisted that Turnout should be the first offering of all, and that Gamblers Choice, his favorite, should be offered on Saturday night in the featured session. The committee Chair was non-committal.

The Resolution put forward by PAHA to permit Half Arabian stallions to compete in Performance Halter seemed acceptable in the Plenary session, but elsewhere traditionalists objected.

We are eager to learn the disposition of all the resolutions discussed

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It was interesting attending the convention, the last time attending was in 2003. On the whole the overall process has not majorly changed. The individual delegates as group were mostly the same as in 2003. That in my observation goes to dedication of the individuals involved in the association.

Opening session on Thursday, made me realized how much the membership after 15 years has declined. PAHA fielded four delegates with a total twelve delegates for Region 15. I remember PAHA sending 16 delegates to the convention in years past when I attended. The room was so much smaller for the attending delegates. Opening session consisted of introductions, Canadian National and U.S. National Anthems. All the reports listed in the agenda, Officer nominations and Panels/Boards/Committee nominations. A talk by American Horse Council, results of committees elected by Board of Directors. There was a presentation on Arabian Racing. The general session ended.

Safe Sport Forum: The forum was an interesting meeting, my observation of the forum was the meeting room was split between those in favor who either had previous training or previous experiences and those who were flat out resisting the training. There was discussion defining the training, the reporting requirements. There were comments on why it had to be done, questions on how they could avoid doing the training ie, was show pass an option. Comments from the presenters: there will be a safe sport training video for juniors in the future. It appears that they will address the use of show pass to avoid the safe sport training, my observation is occasional use not a problem – over use may result in a safe sport training requirement.

AHA Website Tutorial: there was a demonstration on how to do things on the website. The main issue I observed was the newer webpages were easy to work thru. There is a mixing of previous(older) software(webpages) that operate in more cumbersome way. If you have problems on the website, my suggestion is contacting AHA. In my experience, the presentation seemed over simplified for me others may have enjoyed the presentation. I did not stay for the whole presentation.

Hunter/Jumper Committee: There was an extended discussion regarding a situation that occurred at Sport Horse Nationals in an Adult Amateur Owner class, which an Amateur unrelated to the owner was allowed to ride/compete/exhibit the amateur owner's horse. It appeared to me that the individuals in the meeting that were also exhibiting at open hunter jumper shows supported the situation that any Amateur even not family related to the Amateur Owner should be allowed to ride/compete/exhibit the Amateur Owner's horse. It also appeared those who exhibit/compete at only Arabian/Half-Arabian competitions were of the understanding that only Amateurs related to Amateur Owner may ride/compete/exhibit the Amateur Owner's

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horse. The comment was that the situation was at USEF and based on the decision of that situation was how the Amateur rule would be applied in the over fence division. It is interesting that many years ago I remember the elongated comments from convention floor that amateurs should not be allowed to compete in amateur owner classes. Oh, how times have changed.

Region 15 Caucus: There was a meeting to address the passing of the budget and related items

On Friday afternoon the general session resumed with some reports and presentations. Then the fun began with a report that the escalator had a fire and we were told to evacuate the building. As a group we eventually reconvened in local building lobby to motion for adjournment, fully expecting we would be returning to the hotel later. End result, no joy! The hotel had to be fully evacuated. We all have interesting experiences at where we ended up.

On Saturday, the convention reconvened at the Double Tree for doing the resolutions. Everybody had to be re-credentialed, there was a quorum (lost about 50 delegates from Friday afternoon). Elections were held. Moving thru the resolutions it was decided to not read the resolve of the motions, comments on convention floor was limited on time at the microphone. It was handled efficiently. After the convention was adjourned, AHA provided a luncheon buffet for those in attendance which was a very nice gesture for the challenges that the delegates experienced.

In conclusion the Hyatt was very accommodating with any challenges including providing shuttle service. Any additional expenses that the delegates incurred for November 16 & 17, an AHA non-employee expense report is needed to be completed and submitted for reimbursement for: mileage, airfare, hotel, dry cleaning, shuttle, cab, parking. Hyatt has agreed to help cover the previous expenses.

I remember when I first became a delegate in 1984, the standing comment was the convention in Bismark, ND was the talk of the most interesting convention since the delegates were snowed in all week. I heard comments on Saturday of the convention that what we experience in Tulsa was worse than the Bismark convention. Interestingly I was asked if it was going to be another 15 years until I attended another convention. That is a good question....

Overall in retrospect it is reassuring that the process for resolutions, meeting, addressing delegates issues has in some ways remained the same and ways improved. It appeared to me that there were more options for the delegates to interact. Credentialing was easier.

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With the challenges of the fire incident, AHA employees did an excellent job of organizing the situation. AHA use of Yapp App to inform delegates was enlightening, needless to say I learn of the app existence in the middle of the fun.

The coordination of the Tulsa Fire Department, Hyatt employees, Red Cross and AHA employees/staff made a difficult situation bearable. They deserve are gratitude and thanks.

Submitted by,
Val Bastinelli