

Flatlander History

by Shirley White & Sharon Gibbs

Presented at the 1995 15th Anniversary Awards Banquet & at the 2005 25th Anniversary Awards Banquet



Many years ago, on January 20, 1980, the first meeting of what was to become Flatlanders' Dressage Association was held at the Production Credit Office in Lima, Ohio. It was presided over by Shirley White, who was later declared our Founder.

Shirley White graduated from Salem College, West Virginia, with a bachelor of science in equestrian studies, and a riding masters from Meredith Manor. She was the director's groom, taking care of Kay Meredith's dressage horse, Blue Jay. (He was the first Quarter Horse to go Grand Prix, and was long listed for the 1980 Olympics.)

Shirley found and/or created an interest among her riding students, who contacted their friends, and all the local horse enthusiasts who could be found. Thus began the FLATLANDERS.

We were billed as a "casual, fun-loving group of friends who yearn to learn dressage. . ."

Many names for the organization were suggested—various historical, topographical, high-brow, and humorous. Flatlanders was selected not for the way that we land, but for the land where we live.

Our "Firsts"

The original purpose of Flatlanders' Dressage was to share, promote, and develop dressage, to provide communication between dressage clubs re: shows, etc.

First officers were: Pres. Georgiana Walters; VP Sharon Gibbs; Secretary Sue Schaeffer; and Treasurer Sarah Moser. Other Charter Members are Susan Carter, Flo Hollingsworth, Denise Hunter, Cathy McKinney, Shirley White.

We were billed as a "casual, fun-loving group of friends who yearn to learn dressage" in our first newsletter published January 20, 1980. It was a real letter to members and prospects from "Your Horsey Friend, Sharon (Gibbs)", and was complete with cartoon of "your horse and mine" (circles made him dizzy).

We met on Sunday afternoons. Our dues were \$12.00/single & \$15.00/ family.

At our first meeting, we showed slides of the 1978 World Championships and ate cookies.

Our first show was held August 9, 1980 at Shady Maple Acres (Dr. Skiver's) in Harrod, Ohio with judge Vicki Cole Gray, "r". We had dressage and hunter/jumper classes.

The following March we got our first tee shirts from The Electric Tee Shirt Factory (with a somewhat different logo on them from the one we have now).

Our first banquet was Feb. 2, 1981 at Delphos Gymnastics; we ate chicken.

Our first outstanding member was Sharon Gibbs. Club colors are light blue and dark blue.

On September 12, 1981, we voted to add "C.T." to our name and activities, and to invite members of the C.E.E.S.P. (Club For European Equestrian Sporting Pursuits) to join us.



We Join USDF

In 1982, we finally had the 25 members required to become a USDF Group Member Organization! The newsletter was officially named *The Collection* (after FDCTA didn't choose Sharon's suggestion in the "name the newsletter and win a new bridle" contest).

Award-Winning Members

Barbara Davis received the award for best sportsmanship show day. Gael Bourquin gave an outstanding combined training clinic for Flatlanders and members of Auglaize River Valley Pony Club. The Improved Team was Sue Schaeffer and Warrior, a 26-year-old Morgan horse Sue got from a free ad.

Ups and Downs

In 1983, we had a real wingding called Sweethorse Sunday For Horse Lovers At Heart, a gala occasion which was lots of fun and a great success.

Unfortunately, our film festival at OSU was a *flop* financially. We did, however, enjoy the training films we had rented, along with *lots* of popcorn we had hoped to sell.

August of that year was our first show at the Allen County Fairgrounds with judge Diane Braden.

In the '80s, we actually had five active male members! Also, a great deal of work went into the creation of FDCTA EXTENSIONS, our own training and rating system.

Early Shows

We continued having annual shows at the fairgrounds with recognized judges.

In 1987, we donated \$1,566.50 to Equestrian Therapy, and kept \$1,000.00 seed and operating money. That year, entries were really slow until the last moment, when we had to come up with a second judge and second ring. It was, also, the year of our incorporation!

By 1988, we had a really big show with dressage and jumping. Even though the cool September day we had envisioned turned out to be 105 degrees, which really hurt our entries, we made a \$2,800 profit, enabling another very generous donation to our favorite charity, Equestrian Therapy. This was our last BIG show; the "doers" had done themselves in.

Special Events

In 1990, we toured the famous Lexington Farms: Spendthrift, Brookside, and Gainsborough (the Sheik's farm where the horse, Life at The Top, really, really *had* life at the top!). Our first camp was held with our instructor and friend, Sue Hughes, and has since become a tradition.



We had a great time doing "Once Upon A Pony" at Once Upon A Sunday at OSU, where we photographed children on E.T. ponies, recording their thrilled little faces for posterity, and earning money for us and ET.

Dr. Tyznick, with his famous horse stomach, was an interesting guest, as was Martin Kearin. There have been many, all sharing valuable equine info.

We proudly sponsor the Auglaize River Valley Pony Club (ARVPC).

We have had clinics with many highly qualified clinicians. We've toured, viewed, read, collected, audited, tasted, sampled, and practiced all kinds of things related to our favorite animal and friend, the HORSE!

Throughout the 1990's we continued with adult camps, trail rides, shows, and the Extensions program. With the help of great program committees, we've had saddles fitted, pastures and hay evaluated, toured breeding farms and equestrian therapy programs and participated with, and for, the Findlay University Equestrian Programs.

In 1995 and 1997, our newsletter, The Collection, won the USDF small GMO (under 75 members) newsletter award.

In 2000 we strengthened our awards program with the goal of attracting new members.

In 2002 we voted to drop our USDF GMO membership and join USEA.

In the fall of 2003, two quadrille groups were organized—one meeting at Rose Hosafros' in Arlington and the other group rotating between riding at Mary Lou Paxton's (Vendocia) and Ginger Denman's (Delphos).

The summer of 2003 we voted to, and began work on, host an open schooling show during 2005.

In the fall of 2004, the quadrille members merged and began practicing to present a videotaped "less-than-serious" Christmas ride for the Club.

Equinitis still unites us

After all this time, we're still a fun-loving group of friends with EQUINITIS, who really believe that old quote, "The outside of a horse is good for the inside of man" (or woman).