

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

“ I look back on what a ride it has been, especially in this our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year!”

Robert Funkhouser



As my second three-year term as an officer comes to an end making it time to step aside and let some new individuals with new ideas join the other dedicated members of the American Saddlebred Horse Association board who are seasoned to the challenges and high points of this organization, I look back on what a ride it has been, especially in this our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year!

Along with Bret Day and Tandy Patrick the three of us came on board right in the middle of the now infamous lawsuit. Rocky times to say the least and what an introduction we had. From our pledge class came two Presidents and a member who has headed numerous committees and been the voice of reason through many situations. I feel honored to have worked beside these two, as well as all the members of the board who have served during our tenure.

These six years have been filled with ups and downs but mostly lots of passion for the American Saddlebred Horse alongside of individuals from all walks of our sport. The time, energy and expertise these board members give, all at their own expense, is inspiring and greatly appreciated. It's easy to identify and complain about the problems; it's a whole different ballgame to come up with solutions and have them implemented.

We've navigated through the lawsuit, multiple Executive Directors, a bad economy, dwindling registrations and transfers, the roll out of the new website and database, in addition to issues with the USDA and animal rights activists. Can't say any of these have been fun, but certainly a big part of my tenure. The website has been frustrating to say the least and I'll be the first to own, we haven't gotten it to where it needs to be yet, however, that mission is not over. I will also say it is already light years ahead of what we had and what it can do for us. Forty-three additional Hall of Fame Broodmares have been found with the new database, a job that used to have to be done by hand. That's just the tip of the iceberg of what it now provides us for things like High Point programs, CH status, Sweepstakes and Futurities.

Getting to do things like carry out the Mission Statement, namely promoting the American Saddlebred, is the bonus and rewarding piece of being in this position and a part of this board. We will forever be indebted to Allen Bosworth who has given so unselfishly of his expertise to organize us and hold us accountable for marketing tasks. While there is still so much more that needs to be done, there are many pieces and parts that are working in harmony to promote and advance the American Saddlebred in many different usages. The greatest result of our revved up marketing efforts hasn't necessarily been something that came directly from the ASHA, although much marketing funds have been raised and much goodwill generated as a result of the Trainers' Equitation class, the Pro-Am Challenge and the Stallion Sweeps. To me the feel good story of recent marketing efforts has been the number of individuals across this country that have gone above and beyond to promote the American Saddlebred through an array of events and venues in celebration of the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Saddlebred Horse Association. The ASHA Charter Clubs have been most instrumental leading the way for these efforts, giving this organization an incredible base of foot soldiers.



Marc Of Charm meeting his young, adoring fans during Elisabeth Goth's Junior Exhibitor Tea Party

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Kudos to Executive Director, Bill Whitley, and Marketing Manager, Michelle Krentz, for continuing to come up with programs that do fund the marketing efforts, in addition to their work on many other publicity opportunities.

While these two are the most visible parts of the team, it is indeed a team effort to keep all the moving parts moving in the right direction. Registrar Lisa Duncan, Communications and Technology Manager Cynthia Lowell, Prize Programs and Memberships Patricia Edwards, Youth/Charter Clubs and Memberships Brenda Newell, Assistant Registrar/DNA Katriona Adams, Registrations Associate Liz Pierson, Transfers Associate Lauren Honican and Accountant Mary Constantine all take great pride in their jobs serving the membership and the American Saddlebred Horse.

The world itself is ever evolving so it should come as no surprise that breeding and marketing horses for whatever job they may end up with is ever evolving. Less available land has made horse ownership harder and harder, with fewer and fewer people being introduced to horses through pleasure and trail riding. The further we move away from an agricultural society, the harder it is becoming to have a foundation of future American Saddlebred owners and we as a breed are not alone in this struggle. The statistics show it across the board for many disciplines.

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Protection Act. Those regulations, focusing on shoeing and the inspection of horses by the horse shows would greatly change who we are in addition to eliminating numerous shows that would now be

financially responsible for providing inspectors to inspect our horses for something that has never been a part of our history.

From this, the ASHA, the United Professional Horsemen's Association (UPHA), the American Hackney Horse Society (AHHS) and the American Morgan Horse Association (AMHA) joined forces to form a USDA task force that has been working to push back these senseless and needless regulations. I have never been prouder to work with a group of people dedicated

to protecting the American Saddlebred, the Hackney and the Morgan. With help and guidance from some very good friends of the American Saddlebred, namely Frankie Trull, Steve Gaw and Randy Luikart, we put together plans to combat this on several fronts. I'd like to especially thank all those who wrote letters and those who reached out and gave us strong political connections. Our associations working together is the wave of the future, much like our Super Convention this year.

This issue has made us step back and look at all of our practices and make sure we are doing everything we can to put our horses in the best light with both the public and officials. Most of our efforts have come in the form of education. Another portion has been and will be changes in how we do things. While we are a sport based in deep tradition, there will be challenges to make our public perception stronger. The haters are always going to hate, but there are always things we can do to help our image.

As we've said many times before our horses receive better care than most of the people in this country, however, that ever-growing culture of animal activists who don't want horses used for any sport and hardly human companionship, are putting all breeds under a microscope and as an association we have chosen to be proactive rather than reactive as the issues of shoeing, tails, etc. will be an ongoing attacks from these groups.

In closing I would ask that everyone be an ambassador and share your American Saddlebreds with the world so future generations will be able to enjoy the horses that have so greatly enriched our lives.



Also part of the changing landscape, as the ultimate show horse, the American Saddlebred, its owners and its trainers were pulled into a battle this year with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which is being driven by the Humane Society Of The United States (HSUS). Suddenly, the mission of the USDA to end the practice of soring in the Tennessee Walking Horse industry, unintentionally pulled us into the conflict with some broad and ambiguous language written into proposed regulations to strengthen the Horse