

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On behalf of the entire Board of the American Saddlebred Horse Association, we hope you enjoy the 2015 *Journal Of The American Saddlebred*, which is being distributed to all members of the Association. For the first time this year, we are proud to include the current WCHS winners from the 2014 show.

2014 was a busy year for our Association! We rolled out our new ASHA Marketing Plan at our 2014 Annual Convention in February. Under the leadership of Marketing Committee Chair Allen Bosworth, the ASHA is focusing on four key objectives, namely (I) increasing membership in the ASHA; (II) increasing numbers of ASB foal registrations; (III) increasing and fostering saddle seat lesson programs and riding instructors; and (IV) effectively positioning the American Saddlebred so that our breed is consistently represented to key audiences. We were pleased to bring back the printed ASHA Membership Directory, which will be published on a bi-annual basis going forward; our 2014-2015 Membership Directory was mailed out to all ASHA members in late spring. Our *American Saddlebred Daily* publication was better than ever at the 2014 WCHS, and for the first time the ASHA had a booth in the North Wing of the fairgrounds which enabled us to publicize our breed to a much broader audience.

In December of 2014, we welcomed Bill Whitley as the new Executive Director of the ASHA. Bill's lifelong involvement in the industry will enable him to be an effective leader of the Association, as well as the "face" of the ASHA. In January 2015, we will welcome seven outstanding individuals to the ASHA Board of Directors, namely Allen Bosworth, Sandra Currier, Elisabeth Goth, Donna Pettry-Smith, and Jenny Taylor, as well as returning board members David Rudder and Kenny Wheeler. We will hold our 2015 annual meeting of the ASHA membership, as well as ASHA Board and Committee meetings, at the UPHA Convention in Savannah, January 15-17, 2015, and new ASHA officers for 2015 will be elected in Savannah. Also in January, ASHA's Equine Welfare Committee will be the proud recipient of the 2014 USEF/EQUUS Foundation Humanitarian Award, the first time that this Award has ever been presented to a breed affiliate committee. We are very excited about the unveiling of our new ASHA Web site in 2015, as well as the dramatic changes that will come with our new technology/computer upgrade system.

I have been honored to serve as the President of the ASHA for the past three years. I have been blessed to serve with a talented Board of Directors and a wonderful and dedicated ASHA staff, and I thank them for their support and involvement. I am a true grass roots Saddlebred owner and small breeder (the above photo is me with one of my broodmares and newborn colt that was foaled right before my eyes one cold February night a couple of years ago). I grew up on a small farm in Lawrenceburg, Kentucky in the 1950's and 1960's, with horses and ponies in the backyard. Many folks refer fondly to past decades as the "good ole days" of the American Saddlebred industry, when Freedom Hall was packed to the rafters for every session of the World's Championship Horse Show, when there was television and newspaper coverage of the Louisville show, and when the winner of the Five-Gaited stake at Louisville was honored at a black tie event in the ballroom of the Brown Hotel on Saturday evening after the show.

We all know that the world is a very different place today; in order for our breed to survive and thrive we must adapt and continue to be relevant, and take advantage of social media as a means for spreading the word. In today's world, very few people grow up on farms anymore; young people have many different options for recreational and athletic activities; and disappointingly, our circle of American Saddlebred owners has steadily declined over the past few decades, while Quarter horses and hunter-jumpers seem to be thriving. Our breed is the best kept secret in many parts of the United States, and certainly on an international basis, of which I became painfully aware during my involvement with the 2010 World Equestrian Games. In December of 2005 I attended a board meeting of the delegates to the FEI to make Kentucky's final pitch to host the 2010 WEG, and I had to answer the question politely posed to me by several of the FEI delegates, "now please tell us, what exactly IS this 'American Saddlebred' type of horse that you own and breed?"

We all share a passion for the American Saddlebred and feel that we have the best equine product on the market; my hope for the future is that the Association and our membership can work together in effective marketing and promotion of our breed, as well as the lifestyle and values that we associate with our breed. The ASHA has initiated and is pursuing several programs that we believe will truly make a difference, including the following: (I) development of "Select Series" or "B Circuit" horse shows (similar to the special series in Missouri and the Carolinas, designed to enable the more novice horses and riders to be a part of the horse show experience without feeling like second-class citizens); (II) promotion and fostering of saddle seat lesson programs, particularly in underserved metropolitan areas where there are plenty of equine enthusiasts but no saddle seat programs to be found (thanks to the initiative of our former ASHA Board member and friend Bill Marple, we have established the "Marple Pay Back" program to help new saddle seat instructors establish programs in underserved areas); (III) activation of our nationwide ASHA Charter Club network, as ambassadors for our breed and as a 'think tank' for innovative ways to promote our breed in different parts of the United States; and (IV) teaming up with other saddle seat breeds in a new "Saddle Seat Coalition" to promote our saddle seat discipline. We believe that increasing the demand for ASB's (particularly increasing the demand for middle market Saddlebreds) will lead to larger foal crops in years to come.

Randy C. Patrick



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