HDS Thanks You, Olva

Editor's Note: HDS commissioned this article to highlight long-time HDS supporter Olva Stewart Pharo.

Olva has done it all for HDS for more than four decades. She was involved at the beginning of HDS, she served as a board member and as newsletter editor. She currently sponsors two awards per year--The Calaveras County AA award at the Spring Classic and the HDS Autumn Classic AA High Point Award in the fall. 2019 is the last year for the Calaveras County AA award, the longest-running trophy in HDS history. This article summarizes Olva's journey from competitive Hunter rider to equestrian journalist to successful equestrian artist and dedicated supporter of equine sports.

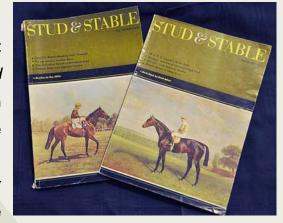


Olva was raised a "city kid" in Houston, Texas, but an uncle bred and raised horses on a farm outside the city. She says "I never owned a horse as a child but somehow over the years I ALWAYS managed to have horses to take care of and ride". The photo shows Olva at age 1 "riding" one of her uncle's Palominos.

Olva graduated from UT Austin in 1969 with a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts, and then returned home to Houston. Weekdays she worked in advertising as an artist but many nights and weekends were spent at the long-gone Edgepark and Parish stables (where she took hunter seat and jumping lessons). Her first horse Buddy "was only 14.2 without shoes but he taught me to jump."

Olva moved to England in 1975 and was hired as the art director for an Ascot-based racing magazine called *Stud and Stable*. She rode a great deal and was able to learn about journalism and equestrian photography ... but she wasn't able to get residency so she returned to Houston.

The experience in England encouraged her to get deeper into design and advertising for equine facilities and equine



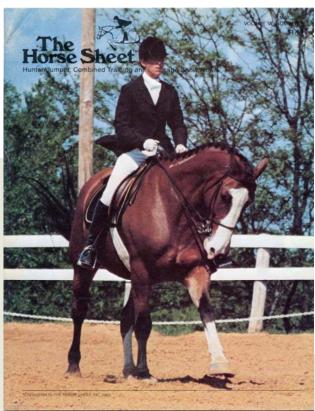
events (including work on the logo for the brand-new "Houston Dressage Society"). She also got even more serious about riding, purchasing a three-year-old race-bred Appendix Quarter Horse with the registered name of "Heza Splash". Olva renamed him

"Calaveras County" after Mark Twain's famous 1865 short story, but his barn name stayed "Splash". According to Olva "we were the epitome of green horse and green rider at the beginning, but I had a number of very good and very patient trainers. We ended up going to a lot of hunter/jumper shows during our 12 years together and we won a lot of ribbons."



Olva competing on Calaveras County in 1983

"I loved jumping but I wanted to learn more about riding. Somehow I found the



1985 issue with HDS member Fran Kehr on the cover

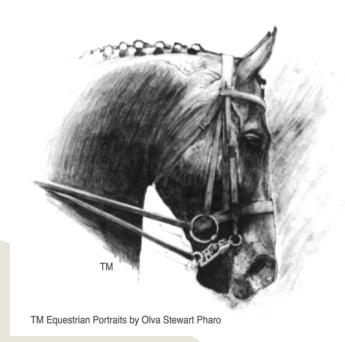
Friendswood English Riding Club and a group of ladies who wanted to start a "Houston Dressage Society". I had only heard of dressage as something done by the Spanish Riding School. They set me straight!" That was the beginning of more than 40 years of involvement with dressage in general and HDS in particular.

Olva's active involvement in the hunter/jumper and dressage worlds led to a business opportunity. In those preinternet days, it was difficult to find out about upcoming English equestrian events and results of past competitions.

So Olva founded "The Horse Sheet" in 1980. She spent the next six years as editor, photographer and journalist, covering hunter/jumper, dressage and combined training events from Arizona to Florida. Olva also started and published "The Stable, Farm and Trainer Directory" which still exists online at www.texashorsemansdirectory.com

Olva continued to ride her gelding Calaveras County in multiple disciplines, though she admits that "he didn't really have the patience for dressage!" He passed away in 1989, six weeks before Olva's son Alexander was born.

After four years as a full- time mother, Olva began attending horse shows again and taking photographs. As she recalls it "in 1993, one of those photos inspired me to see if I could still draw. I did a drawing of an idealized Grand Prix dressage horse and I still



use that portrait as my Equestrian Portraits logo."

Olva explains "I loved hunters and loved to jump, but I admired dressage and how it developed a horse's talents. I also liked the ladies I met at the HDS meetings and events. Hunter shows had already become businesses put on by show managers who traveled around the state and the country. But a dressage show was a club effort and a group effort. I wanted a way to

support the shows and the efforts of the amateur riders like myself."

In 1993, the HDS Spring Show was held at Pine Hill Farm in Bellville. Olva made a print of her recent horse drawing, had it framed, added a brass plate and made it an award. She intended to give it to the high point amateur rider but "I learned that you could not just walk into a show and give an award only designated for amateurs, it had to be open to all. That's why the first recipient was Pam Fowler Grace, an open rider."

The following year, the award was made an official award for adult amateurs. Since 1994, Olva's *CALAVERAS COUNTY ADULT AMATEUR HIGH POINT AWARD* has been given to the HDS Adult Amateur with the highest average score at the HDS Spring Show. Olva says "This was my first donated perpetual trophy. Not really knowing what I

was doing and what I could afford, I created a wooden plaque with the Grand Prix horse head logo in bronze and two facing Levade horses in resin on each side. There was

room for 27 brass plates".

The 2018 winner, Julie Brown, will have her name engraved on the on the 26th brass plate, so 2019 is the last time the trophy will be awarded. In addition to the perpetual trophy, Olva has generously continued (for 20 plus years!) to create and donate "take home and keep" versions of the award for each winner recently most plaques with a horse head relief made from resin. The final two take-home awards will incorporate bronze horse heads.



Olva's generosity towards HDS ended up leading her to a new career. "Since I was still creating the perpetual trophy, I used another framed print for the 1994 Calaveras County Award. This time the drawing was a portrait of an actual horse still competing in our region. A competitor walked up to the drawing and said "Is that Adelssohn?" She had recognized Hans Jurgen Boone's Trakehner Stallion Adelssohn from the drawing. Then she asked "Can you draw my horse?"

Since that fateful question, Olva has done more than 300 equestrian portraits, including these lovely commissioned drawings in graphite and colored pencil (used here with Olva's permission).



Olva says, however "I always enjoy drawing, but my real love is sculpture." She has produced over 20 bronze portraits of horses and has also created more than 20 unique trophies, mostly perpetual. They are being presented at dressage shows from Devon to Del Mar and at jumping competitions across the country. Most of the trophies are shown on Olva's website at http://www.olvastewartpharo.com/Trophies.html





Three of the trophies may be familiar to HDS members. First of those is the trophy Olva donated for High Point AA at the HDS Autumn Classic, which will again be awarded in October 2018.

The second trophy may be familiar to anyone who has attended the US Dressage Finals, since it is prominently displayed in the Alltech Arena during the Finals. It is the Calaveras County Perpetual Trophy for the US Dressage Finals Grand Prix Freestyle Adult Amateur Champion. It was first awarded in 2014.





The third perpetual trophy (and annual take-home plaque) was commissioned by Tina Wentz in memory of her son Jonathan, who competed in the 2012 Para-Equestrian Olympics and sadly passed away later that year. The trophy is awarded annually to a para-equestrian athlete (in dressage, driving, reining, vaulting or jumping) "who has competed and excelled in multiple international competitions and received scores that contributed to the individual and/or team ranking on the FEI ranking list during the competition year."



Olva is moving to the Hill Country "sometime", but still plans to keep in touch with state and local horse events. She will almost certainly be present for part of the Region 9 Championship and HDS Autumn Classic in October. Her AA High Point trophy will be on display and HDS members will compete to get their names on the 2018 plaque attached to the base of that trophy.

Presentation of the Jonathan Wentz Memorial Trophy, left to right: Christina "Tina" Wentz, USPEA Director, Olva Pharo, artist, and USEF Director of Para-Equestrian Laureen Johnson

If you see Olva at the show, it would be a great time to say "Thanks for more than FOUR decades of support and generosity to HDS!". HDS is certainly glad that Olva found the Friendswood English Riding Club back in the mid-1970's and we are grateful for her help and support.