

Issue Four

THE

2017

ICELANDIC HORSE

Q U A R T E R L Y



Official Publication of the United States Icelandic Horse Congress
Member Association of FEIF (International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations)



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USIHC ANNUAL MEETING

Denver, Colorado • January 13, 2018

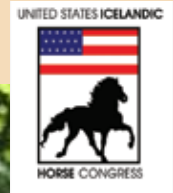
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Watch for more details on the USIHC Website www.icelandics.org



THE USIHC MISSION

- To promote the knowledge of the Icelandic horse within the United States and its correct use as a competition and riding horse.
- To keep a registry of purebred Icelandic horses in the United States.
- To facilitate communication among all USIHC members.
- To represent the United States in FEIF.

The U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress is a member of FEIF (www.feif.org), the International Federation of Icelandic Horse Associations, representing the national Icelandic horse associations of 21 countries. FEIF governs competition activities and regulates the breeding and registration of Icelandic horses throughout the world outside of Iceland.

The USIHC was formed in 1987 by representatives of the U.S. Icelandic Horse Federation and the International Icelandic Horse Association to meet the FEIF rule that only one association from each country is allowed to represent the breed.

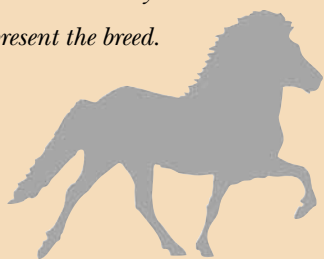


Photo by Jean Ervasti

LEARN

As the owner or rider of an Icelandic horse, you chose a very special breed with its own culture and history. It is important to learn about the breed's unique traits, capabilities, and needs, so that you and your Icelandic horse will have a happy relationship and it will live a healthy and long life in a country far from its origin. As a USIHC member, you have a wealth of information at your fingertips and a personal connection to the best experts in the country.

You receive *The Icelandic Horse Quarterly*, a 52-page all-color magazine, four times a year. All issues since 2008 are indexed and available online.

You have free access to WorldFengur, the worldwide database of all registered Icelandic horses. About 450,000 horses, alive and deceased, are included, with pedigrees, offspring, ownership, and evaluation and competition results. Some horses even have photos and videos. WorldFengur is an invaluable tool for all Icelandic horse breeders and very interesting for the rest of us. Go to "Search Horses" on the USIHC website and find any US-registered Icelandic horse by its number, name, or farm name to link to WorldFengur.

You can take part in—and even help create—educational seminars and teaching programs. For example, the USIHC Education committee developed and now administers the Riding Badge Program for pleasure and competition riders of all ages. On the USIHC website you can find links to certified trainers who are USIHC members and can help you get the best out of your Icelandic horse. The Education Committee also offers Sport Judges Seminars for those wanting to learn more about show rules and how to judge competitions. A \$1,000 grant is available to members who complete their certification to become national or international judges.

The USIHC also has a scholarship fund for members who complete their certification to become national or international judges.

CONNECT

Icelandic horses are social animals, and so are their people. The USIHC is the umbrella organization of Regional Clubs all over the U.S.: There are currently 13 active clubs. Find the regional Icelandic riding club in your area through the USIHC website, so that you and your horse can

ride with friends. The USIHC Board has set aside funding for regional clubs to host clinics, schooling shows, sanctioned shows, young horse evaluations, and full breeding shows.

USIHC Youth members can apply to participate in the American Youth Cup or the international FEIF Youth Cup or Youth Camp. These are great events designed to bring young riders together for a week of fun, learning, and competition.

Through the USIHC website, you can sign up for RSS feeds for the Events Calendar or web updates. You can check the membership list to see if your friends are members and when your own membership expires. And you can stay connected through the USIHC Facebook page.

COMPETE

The Icelandic horse has international competition rules: You can compete in the same classes and under the same rules in any of the 19 FEIF member countries and compare your progress with competition riders from around the world.

The USIHC Competition committee adapts these international FEIF rules for American venues and special circumstances, publishing a new set of USIHC Competition Rules each year. These are available on the USIHC website, along with all the tools needed to put on a sanctioned show, such as entry forms, judging forms, judges' cards, and announcers' cards. (These tools are also useful for organizing fun shows and schooling shows.) Also on the website are lists of recommended and prohibited tack and equipment, track sizes, and other information for competition riders.

Sanctioned shows and schooling shows are eligible for USIHC Funding; contact the Competition committee. Show organizers have access to the IceTest software so that eligible scores immediately appear in the U.S. National Ranking; qualified shows can also send scores to the FEIF World Ranking list. Scores are posted on the USIHC website for everyone to see and compare.

Only USIHC members can join the U.S. team at the Icelandic Horse World Championships, held in a FEIF country every other year. If you hope to compete at an international level, see the team recommendations and requirements on the USIHC website. Tryouts for the team are open and are National Ranking events: Anyone can ride for scores and to get feed-

back from an international judge, whether or not you intend to compete in the World Championships.

PROMOTE

USIHC members promote the Icelandic horse at many equine expositions around the country. The USIHC provides display materials, including brochures and copies of the *Quarterly*. The USIHC Breed Ambassador program rewards members who take their Icelandic horses to all-breed events and shows.

Trainers, breeding farms, and trekking barns can promote their services through the USIHC Farm List in the *Quarterly* and on the website. Stallion owners can promote their stud services through the online USIHC Stallion Book.

And everybody, members or nonmembers, can advertise in the *Quarterly*.

REGISTER

Whether you plan to breed one mare or have a breeding farm, the USIHC Registry and the Breeding committee provide information and services to help you. The Icelandic horse is one of few breeds with international evaluation standards, so that breeding horses from all over the world are judged on the same 10 points of conformation and 10 points of ridden abilities, and all scores are entered into the WorldFengur database. That allows you to compare the quality of your breeding stock with Icelandic horses around the world, both past and present.

USIHC-sanctioned breeding evaluation shows for registered adult horses ages four and up are scheduled by USIHC Regional Clubs and private farms. Breeding shows and seminars are eligible for USIHC funding. All rules and regulations are supplied by the Breeding committee from the international FEIF rules and are available on the USIHC website. Regional Clubs and private farms can also organize Young Horse Assessments for foals to three-year-olds. These assessments also qualify for USIHC funding; contact the Breeding Leader.

In accordance with FEIF rules, the

USIHC has adopted stringent tests before a foal can be registered as a purebred Icelandic horse. You can be sure of the parentage of any registered Icelandic horse and know that your registered foals have proof of their value.

You don't have to be a USIHC member to register your Icelandic horse, but by becoming a member you help support this vital USIHC program.

INNOVATE

The USIHC is a member-driven organization. The more active and involved our members are, the stronger the USIHC becomes. Do you have an idea for a project or event that will support the Icelandic horse in America?

Requests for funding for special events and programs can be submitted to the USIHC board of directors and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Contact the USIHC president for more information.

JOIN US

There are only about 5,800 registered Icelandic horses in the U.S. and the USIHC, at about 625 members, is still a small "pioneer" organization compared to our counterparts in Iceland and Germany. Our committee members and board of directors are all volunteers. Please join us so that the USIHC can, as FEIF's mission states, "bring people together in their passion for the Icelandic horse"!

Yearly membership for an adult is \$45; youth memberships are \$35; or for a family (two adults, unlimited kids) it is \$65. Mail in the form in this magazine or join online at www.icelandics.org/join

QUESTIONS?

USIHC Board members and Committee chairs are here to answer them. For general questions, call or email our information desk or check the website.

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FEIF'S MISSION: FEIF BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER
IN THEIR PASSION FOR THE ICELANDIC HORSE



THE
ICELANDIC
HORSE
QUARTERLY
Issue Four 2017

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On the cover: Congratulations to USIHC Youth member Payton Black of Colorado, who was chosen as the August Rider of the Month in the new Sea 2 Shining Sea leisure riding program. Payton also took part in the American Youth Cup in California in July. Here she untacks Bleikur from Arnarbaeli after a winter ride along the base of the Sangre de Cristo mountains. Photo by Beth Black.

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FROM THE BOARD

CHANGES AT USIHC

After many years of service, Doug Smith has resigned from the USIHC board of directors. We would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Doug for everything he has done for the USIHC over the years. He was directly involved in every department in some way, volunteering his vast skill set to improve communications with USIHC members. He could be trusted to sort out any technical problem, no matter how big or small, and can be credited with making the USIHC website, email list, Quarterly magazine and eQuarterly, as well as our connections with FEIF, accessible and user-friendly to all.

Doug was also the first recipient of the USIHC Sleipnir Award, which is given to an individual for going above and beyond the call of duty for USIHC and the Icelandic horse in the U.S. Doug is one of only two people to have ever received this award. We have all benefited directly from Doug's work in one way or another. Doug, thank you for your service. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to work with you and to learn from you.

In accordance with the USIHC's constitution, the board has selected someone to fill Doug's vacant position. We have chosen Emily Potts, one of the candidates for the upcoming board election, and she has accepted the position. Emily's professional skills—as an award-winning filmmaker and multimedia professional, with extensive experience in web design, digital marketing, branding, and developing visual content—make her an excellent choice to fill this position. Emily, we look forward to working with you.

For the upcoming election, we received nominations for only two new candidates, Emily and Kevin Draeger, along with the two current board members who have chosen to run for another term. Because there were only four candidates to fill three board seats, and Doug's resignation opened up a fourth seat, we will not need to hold elections this year. Kevin will join the board in January, when Andrea Barber's term comes to a close, and we look forward to working with him as well.

We would also like to thank Andrea

Barber for her years of devoted service to the Congress. Andrea has been a long-standing member of the board and has served in various roles, including president and breeding leader. Her writing skills, critical analysis, and legal mind have greatly benefited our organization. Andrea was the driving force behind the Blood Profile Project; she did everything from overseeing the contracts to organizing the funding. This project will benefit Icelandic horses throughout the U.S. Our sincere thanks to Andrea.

CHANGES AT FEIF

In other news, early this year FEIF redefined what they consider "membership." The new definition allows the USIHC to count all those who can be identified as part of the U.S. Icelandic horse community. Previously, we only counted those members who paid dues to the USIHC, but with the new definition we can now count all those who are members of our affiliated clubs, even those who choose not to be USIHC members.

FEIF asks all member organizations to report their membership numbers each fall. In order to provide the most accurate number possible, the USIHC board at its July 17, 2017 meeting unanimously approved the following change to the

affiliated club renewal process: Renewals will now take place in August of each year (rather than in January), and clubs will be required to submit a membership list that includes their members' first and last names along with their city and state of residence. This information is necessary in order to perform a cross check with the USIHC member list. We want to ensure that we are counting each person only once, so that we can provide FEIF with the most accurate census possible.

This fall, USIHC secretary Doug Smith reported to FEIF that we have 1,008 members, once all the lists were combined and the duplicates removed. Last year we could only report about 650 members. This change moves us up to three votes in FEIF. If we had 1500 members, we would get a fourth vote.

MEETING MINUTES

The USIHC board of directors met by conference call on July 17, September 12, and October 12. No meeting was held in August to allow for World Championships travel. Complete minutes, including the monthly Treasurer's and Secretary's reports, can be found online at www.icelandics.org/bod/minutes.

—The USIHC Board of Directors



Doug Smith and Laura Benson and their horses enjoying a ride on the beach. Photo by Heidi Benson.

ANNUAL MEETING

Picture yourself in colorful Colorado! The 2018 USIHC Annual Meeting will be hosted by the Klettafjalla Icelandic Horse Club in Denver, CO on January 13. In addition to the officers' and committees' annual reports and general discussion, the meeting will feature guest speaker Kristina Stelter, a specialist in Celtic and Viking Archaeology, lecturing on "The Horse of the Norse" (see her article in Issue Four 2016 of the Quarterly).

All USIHC members are invited to attend. The meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn & Suites DIA Hotel, 6900 Tower Road, Denver, CO 80249. For reservations call 1-800-465-4329. Please mention the United States Icelandic Horse Congress for the special rate of \$95 per night. The cutoff date for the discount is December 23. Shuttle service is available from the Denver airport.

Watch for more details on the USIHC website, www.icelandics.org, or contact the Klettafjalla Club secretary, Angie Calve, at alazyranch@yahoo.com.

EVALUATIONS

The USIHC Breeding Committee has announced two breeding horse evaluations to be held in 2018. The first will be held at Léttleiki Icelandics in Shelbyville, KY, on May 23-24, along with a young horse linear description on May 25, and a USIHC-sanctioned sport competition on May 26-27. Judges for the breeding show will be Þorvaldur Kristjánsson and Marlise Grimm, both of whom judged the breeding evaluations at the World



Brigit Huwyler of Newtown, CT sports her Sea 2 Shining Sea t-shirt and patch out on the trail.



The Tölt T1 winners at the August Flugnirkeppni show ride a victory lap. Left to right, Carrie Lyons-Brandt on Veigar frá Lækjamóti scored 6.33, Kydee Sheetz on Tandri from Aslan's Country (5.50), and Coralie Denmeade on Salka frá Frostastöðum (5.0). Photo by Susy Oliver.

Championships this year.

The second 2018 breeding evaluation will be held at Harmony Icelandics in Iowa in September, co-hosted by the Toppur and Flugnir USIHC-affiliated clubs. A sport competition may also follow this breeding show.

Several young horse linear description events are also planned for 2018. In addition to the one in Kentucky in May, one will be held in Wisconsin, two in Minnesota, and one in New York. These events may also include demonstrations and discussions regarding full breeding evaluations and the new FEIF Riding Horse Profile system.

SEA 2 SHINING SEA

Organized by the Leisure Riding Committee, the Sea 2 Shining Sea Ride is a virtual tour of the United States. The ride runs from July 4, 2017 to July 3, 2018 and is open to all USIHC members, either as individuals or as teams. All the details (including the fine print and a running score chart) can be found on the USIHC website at <https://www.icelandics.org/s2ss>.

As of the beginning of October, when this report was submitted, our riders have collectively traveled 21,300.3 miles. In first place is the Klettafjalla Icelandic Horse Club (with 6,714.4 miles). Second is the Hell's Icies Pony Club (4,315.5 miles), and third is the Northeast Icelandic Horse Club (3,890.6).

"Most of us have shared photos from our rides on the Sea 2 Shining Sea Facebook page," notes coordinator Linda

Templeton. "We have all enjoyed reading each others' posts and cheering each other on. This is a truly awesome community of riders!"

Jeannene Heinrich was designated Rider of the Month for July. Says Linda, "It was hard for the committee to determine the winner of our first Rider of the Month award, as so many of our riders have contributed and shared. However, one of our solo riders stood out. Jeannene doesn't have a team to push her forward and encourage her, yet as far as our solo riders go, she has logged the most miles. She has also volunteered time to help the com-



The stallion Marel from Creekside Farm [US2010104426] represented the U.S. at the World Championships Breeding Show in Oirschot, the Netherlands, in August. Photo by Martina Gates.

mittee, has posted great photos, and what tipped the scale, has used this challenge as an opportunity to be an ambassador for the breed." Jeannene was still the highest solo rider as of the first week of October.

The August Rider of the Month was Payton Black. "This young lady loves this breed, is competitive, takes other breeds along with her, and has logged more hours than any other rider!" notes Linda.

The September Rider of the Month is Kristen Humble, who took her Icelandic to a judged trail ride. Says Linda, "We tip our hats (helmets) to you and your dedication to this amazing breed and this fantastic challenge!"

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The World Championships for Icelandic Horses are organized every other year in one of the FEIF member countries (other than Iceland, which does not allow the import of horses even temporarily for shows). This year's championships took place in Oirschot, the Netherlands, from August 7-13 (see the stories in this issue).

Long-time USIHC Board member Doug Smith, as FEIF Director of Sport, bore the ultimate responsibility for the management of the sport competitions, while USIHC president Will Covert was Deputy Chief Sport Judge. The U.S. Team leader was Katrin Taylor Sheehan. Linda Templeton represented the USIHC in awarding the U.S. sponsored trophy to the World Champion in P2 Speed Pass 100m.

Three riders qualified to represent the USIHC: Ayla Green, who competed as a Young Rider in Five Gait (F1); Jennifer Melville, who competed in Tölt (T1) and Four Gait (V1); and Chrissy Seipolt, who withdrew.

Ayla scored 5.10 in the Five Gait (F1) competition, riding Mári frá Kolgerði. Both flew from California, making them the horse-and-rider team that came the longest distance to compete. Ayla's aunt, Laura Benson, commented: "We're so proud of this incredible pair. Ayla got unlucky in the first pace sprint, which cost her the finals, but she didn't get flustered or skip a beat, and performed the rest of her test on Mári with style and power. The U.S. should be very proud. Thank you so much to everyone who helped in getting



Jess Haynsworth (left) and her students enjoy a picnic during the Mad River Valley Icelandic Horses' Summer Horsemanship Program in Vermont. For more photos from the camp, see the NEIHC Club Update. Photo by Augustin Demonceaux.

Ayla and Mári to Holland. They traveled farther than any other horse and rider team, to show what we are capable of in our growing Icelandic horse community, and they definitely made a good impression." Commented USIHC Board member Andrea Barber, who watched the competition on livestream, "I was most impressed with how she handled the problem in the first pace sprint. It's easy to ride when things go right—but a true rider is revealed by how they handle things when they go wrong. She kept her cool and got things right back together. Bravo!"

Jennifer Melville scored 5.00 in Tölt (T1) and 5.60 in Four Gait (V1). Though Jenny is American, she trains in Germany, as the opportunities for showing are so much greater there than in the U.S. She and her reserve horse, Feykir frá Ey 1, gave beautiful performances, although they did not score high enough to make it into the finals.

The U.S. was also represented by a breeding horse, the American-born stallion Marel from Creekside Farm [US2010104426], bred by Barbara Frische and owned by Katrin Taylor Sheehan and Nicole Kempf. Marel scored 8.54 for conformation and 7.83 for rideability, for a total score of 8.12. He was shown by rider Þórður Þorgeirsson.

The 2019 Icelandic Horse World Championships will be held in Berlin. According to FEIF rules, the U.S. can send seven adult riders and up to five additional youth riders. For more information on the team selection process and on preparing to ride in the competition, see www.icelandics.org/competition/wc_team.

BLOOD PROFILE PROJECT

Andrea Barber reported to the Board in September that data analysis on the Blood Profile Project has been completed (see the articles on this study in Issue Three 2016 and Issues One and Two 2017 of the Quarterly). The Cornell University researchers conducting the study are now finalizing their data table and preparing their reports for publication in the Quarterly and in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. The journal publication, which may come out after the Quarterly announcement, will let the broader, international Icelandic horse community benefit from the study and bring it to the attention of veterinarians with no USIHC connection. In the meantime, Bettina Wagner, the lead Cornell researcher, has offered to continue to respond to individual requests from vets or horse owners who need information about normal blood values in Icelandics to help them diagnose or treat a specific case.

KY WORLD RANKING SHOW

Jess Haynsworth writes: From October 6-8, Léttleiki Icelandics welcomed around 50 horse and rider combinations for three days of World Ranking sport competition in Shelbyville, KY.

The show was organized as three separate shows, with FEIF class preliminaries each day. To become World Ranked, a rider must have three sets of scores over 5.5 in a given class, and offering three days of competition is one way to allow American riders to get all of their scores at once.

We have not had many World Ranking shows in the U.S. The track requirements are very specific, and the costs of bringing in five qualified judges are not insignificant. Therefore it was a very exciting opportunity for U.S. riders to test themselves and their horses under a more high-pressure competition environment than we normally have access to.

Léttleiki Icelandics actually brought in six FEIF International judges: Will Covert (the head judge), Alexandra Danneman, Hulda Geirsdóttir, Þorgeir Guðlaugsson, Pétur Jökull Hákonarson, and Nicolai Thye. Because Alexandra rode in a few classes herself, Hulda judged in her place. The rest of the time, Hulda was the announcer and kept things very entertaining, with quick humor and great educational comments for spectators.

On Friday evening, a Young Horse Linear Description was held in the indoor arena. Barbara Frische evaluated several young horses and a handful of foals in front of an audience, explaining what she was looking for and considering in each horse.

For the final day of competition, a hard, driving rain fell for most of the day. However, due to the fabulous facilities at Léttleiki, spectators were kept very comfortable. Horses and riders on the track stayed safe, due to the management team at Léttleiki rushing out first thing in the morning to level the track and deal with any drainage issues. When the FEIF classes had ended, youth and fun classes were moved indoors to the arena.

The Léttleiki Feather prizes were awarded by the judges to the lightest and most harmonious amateur riders. The adult winner was Darlene Johnson and

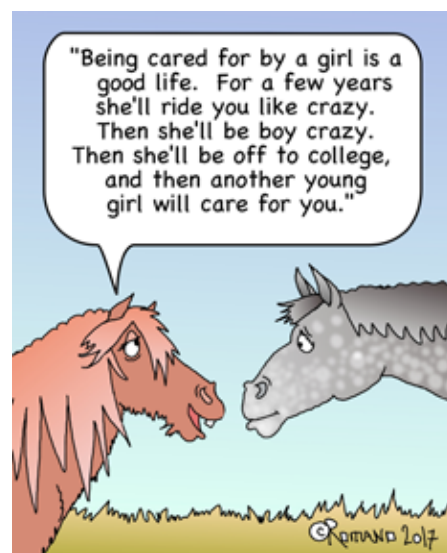


Photos by Susy Oliver from the 2017 Kentucky Icelandic Horse Show, held at Léttleiki Icelandics in October. Top left, Alicia Flanigan and Leiftur from Locust Hill were the high scoring pair in the youth division on Friday and Saturday. Top right, Jessica Haynsworth and Vigri frá Vallanesi had the highest score of the day on Friday, with a 5.33 in Four Gait V1. Center, Terral Hill and Þróstur frá Hvammi won the F1 finals, scoring a 6.05; they also won the 100 meter Speedpass with the fastest time of the weekend. Bottom right, Kathryn Love and Pegasus frá Skyggni had the highest Four Gait V1 score on Saturday, with a 5.97, as well as the highest Tölt T1 score of the day, with a 5.87.

the youth winner was Darlene's daughter, Zoe—gentle riding must be a family trait!

The Léttleiki Svali Award, for the most promising young rider under age 14, was given to Chloe Alizadeh Riles.





WORLD CHAMPIONS

The 2017 World Championships for Icelandic Horses were held August 7-13 in Oirschot, the Netherlands (see the stories in this issue). Complete scores in both sport and breeding competitions can be found on the FEIF website at <https://www.feif.org/Service/Documents/World-Championships.aspx>.

At the closing ceremony, the Team Trophy was awarded to Team Iceland and the FEIF Feather prize for feather-light riding to Máni Hilmarsson, a young rider from Iceland.

The Golden FT Feather was awarded to Jolly Schrenk (DE) for her performance on Glæsir von Gut Wertheim. According to the FEIF press release, the pair “showed suppleness and at the same time strength, collection, and lightness. Her horsemanship reflects respect for the horse—and friendship. Both Jolly and Glæsir smile.”

The Combination Four-Gait was won by Johanna Tryggvason with FöniX frá Syðra-Holti (DE), in second place was Jakob Svavar Sigurðsson with Gloría frá Skúfslæk (IS), and third was Jolly Schrenk with Glæsir von Gut Wertheim (DE).

The Combination Five-Gait was won by Magnús Skúlason with Valsa frá Brösarpsgårdin (SE), in second place was Þórarinn Eymundsson with Narri frá Vestri-Leirárgörðum (IS), and third was Lisa Drath with Bassi frá Efri-Fitjum (DE).

“Three cheers to the 2017 World Championships that were,” said the FEIF press office, summing up. “Thank you to all the horses—without them we would all have fewer friends. Thank you to the riders and grooms, and to the judges—they provided all the excitement. Thank you to the shopkeepers who aimed to feed our desires (and our needs). Thank you to the office staff, the rule keepers, and the organizers—they managed to keep everything running smoothly. Thank you to the volunteers, they made it all possible. And thank you to the spectators, who behaved impeccably, showing a lot of understanding and even more enthusiasm for the Icelandic horse. Let’s do it all again, see you in Berlin in 2019.”

CLEAN CHAMPIONS

The 2017 World Championships was certified a 100% clean event by FEI Clean Sport. No prohibited substances were found in the 20 random samples taken from among the 204 registered breeding and sport horses.

The horses had come to Oirschot from 15 countries. They were housed in four spacious stable tents, amid tight security. The horses who came directly from Iceland were kept separately in order to minimize potential cross infection. To ensure the greatest possible calm, the only people allowed in the stables were the riders, team leaders, and grooms.

“Since the horses are the athletes,”

explains the FEIF press office, “it is they who are selected for the doping tests, and we are happy that so far our sport remains pretty clean, at least at this very high level of competition. Ten percent of all horses were randomly selected for a blood test, which was then sent to a lab for analysis.”

All the horses were also checked for injuries both before and after each event. “The fact that unfortunately some horses are disqualified due to (hopefully only minor) injuries, shows that the system works. Arguably, some horses enjoy this level of competition, with its emotional ups and downs and noise, more than others. But riders and spectators alike share an earnest desire to keep the welfare of the horses as our highest priority.”

YOUNG LEADERS SEMINAR

The FEIF Youth Committee is holding its second youth leadership seminar on January 12-14, 2018, in Berlar, Germany. Among the guest speakers are World Championship rider and teacher Jolly Schrenk; Gabi Bussman, an Olympic athlete and expert in sports psychology; Ulla Fehse a circus artist and expert in motivation; and Henning Drath, an expert in international horse media. Topics to discuss include, How do I build a team? What is the difference between teamwork and a partnership? How do I practice communication at a higher level? The event is partly theoretical and partly practical, but participants do not need to bring a horse.

Anyone between the ages of 18 and 26 is eligible to attend, but space is limited. Each FEIF member country can send a maximum of three participants (with an overall limit of 30 participants). Registration takes place via the national association and is confirmed by the national youth leader. For more information on this and future leadership conferences, contact the USIHC Youth Committee at youth@icelandics.org.

FEIF YOUTH CUP

The 2018 FEIF Youth Cup will be held July 28 to August 4 in Axevalla, Sweden. At this event, the dressage test will be replaced with the option of Tölt in Harmony Level 1, and V4 will possibly be replaced by V5. For more information on this and future youth events, contact the USIHC Youth Committee at youth@icelandics.org. The deadline for video applications for the 2018 Youth Cup is December 1.

NEW VIRTUAL RIDE

The FEIF virtual “Ride to Reykjavik 2018” has begun. This is the sixth year of FEIF virtual rides, which take Icelandic horse riders from all over the world to the central event of any given year. “The idea is simple,” says organizer Gundula Sharman. “Instead of joining a real relay ride, which would be difficult when going to Iceland, you add up all the kilometers you are riding in the countryside and send them in once a month. The aim is that alone, or as part of a team, you will ‘arrive’ in Reykjavik in time for the national horseshow, Landsmót, on July 1, 2018. On the way, you’ll meet a lot of amazing people (on Facebook) and will enjoy the pictures from a huge variety of landscapes and seasons—from everywhere that the Icelandic horse has found a home.” The ride began on August 14, but riders can join at any time. Registration is free and easy. See <http://feif-virtual.weebly.com>.

FEIF CONFERENCE

The 2018 FEIF Conference will be held in Stockholm, Sweden on February 2-4. The annual conference includes the yearly Delegates’ Assembly and the annual

department meetings for Breeding, Sport, Education, Youth Work, Leisure Riding, and the national chairs. Apart from these meetings there are lectures and discussions on general themes. The conference is open for all active members of FEIF member associations, members of FEIF committees, and people otherwise connected to the work of FEIF.

The Delegates’ Assembly is the main meeting, where all important decisions are made. The FEIF board and two delegates from each FEIF member association participate. Each member association must nominate its delegates in advance, and the number of votes of each member association is based on the number of its members. The FEIF Board of Directors has one vote. Proposals put to the Delegates’ Assembly are passed by a simple majority, unless they concern a change in the FEIF statutes, the membership of a new association, or the expulsion of a member association; these require a two-thirds majority.

FEIF COMMITTEES

The Sport and Sport Judges Committee met along with the rest of the FEIF board and committees in Haarlem, NL in October. Both committees had full agendas covering the status and future of the World Championships, judge licenses (examinations for new licenses and procedures to retain existing licenses), and the status of pace on the oval track. Information about specific proposals and decisions as well as recommendations, will be distributed to the national associations before the 2018 FEIF Conference, to be held in Stockholm in February.

The FEIF Education Committee had a constructive weekend. The main topics on its agenda were the details of the proposal on the CPD structure for trainers and instructors listed on the FEIF website, preparation of the education seminar in Hólar in March 2018, and the procedures on how to collect the information on available educational materials and the possibility to share it among all FEIF member countries. Ideas for future seminars were also discussed.

The Leisure Committee has now

finalized all the paperwork relating to the Riding Horse Profile. A short digital introduction will be ready late in December, and the Profile will be presented at the Trainers’ Seminar at Hólar in spring 2018. Following this, the Leisure Committee will be available to introduce the Riding Horse Profile at events for trainers listed on the FEIF website.

The project of securing ancient and existing trails for future riding has been launched. From now until the FEIF Conference, the Leisure Committee needs to determine how information about the trails can be stored and made available to the public. We intend to use an existing platform, allowing users to place their own routes, give short introductions to any challenges or facilities there, and share photos. It may even be possible to make arrangements to take tours. Suggestions or recommendations on which tools to use are welcome.

Since “Nature” was the overarching theme for the FEIF committee meetings, the Youth Committee worked on ways to bring a closer relationship with the environment, along with a deepened understanding of the nature of the Icelandic horse, into everything we are doing. Events now being planned include a Young Leaders’ Seminar in January 2018 in Germany and next year’s FEIF Youth Cup, which will take place in Axavella, Sweden. We are also planning to introduce an international photo competition in 2018.

In the Breeding and Breeding Judges’ joint meeting, the main topics on the agenda were the review of the 2017 World Championships; examination, relicensing, and duration of breeding judges’ licenses; cross-border cases and possible solutions; preparation of the 2018 seminars, including the breeding judges’ seminar and the young breeding trainer seminars levels 1 and 2. The committees also worked on preparing the proposals for the Delegates’ Assembly. Details will be sent to the national associations by mid-December.

CLUB UPDATES

There are 13 Regional Clubs and one Activity Club affiliated with the U.S. Icelandic Horse Congress. To find the one nearest you, see the USIHC website at www.icelandics.org/regionalclubs. Contact information for each club can also be found there. The following clubs filed updates on their activities this quarter.

FLUGNIR (MINNESOTA & WISCONSIN)

BY JACKIE ALSCHULER

The annual Flugnrkeppni competition was held on August 26-27 at beautiful Winterhorse Park in Eagle, WI. Our judge was FEIF International Sport and Breeding Horse Judge Silke Feuchthofen from Germany.

In addition to her judging responsibilities, Silke held a Saturday afternoon presentation regarding the three formal methods supported by FEIF for evaluating Icelandic horses: Young Horse Linear Descriptions, Breeding Evaluations, and the Riding Horse Profile.

Her presentation featured several horses, and the audience included the local 4-H Horse Bowl Quiz Team members, who were at the show to provide our lunches as their fundraiser.

Our show had an excellent turnout, with riders and horses from Colorado, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, and we had a large contingent of youth riders. The Beer Tölt



class was very competitive. Winterhorse Park owner Barbara Riva held off the three talented youth riders (who rode with Sprite) to win the class.

For more information on the Flugnr activities, please visit our website at www.flugnir.org.

Scenes from the Flugnrkeppni, held in August at Winterhorse Park in Wisconsin. Top, the Novice class awaiting results. Right, Kydee Sheetz and Tandri from Aslan's Country perform in the Tölt T1 preliminary round. Bottom left, Dave Loftness placed first in Novice Four Gait. All three photos by Susy Oliver. Bottom right, Dave and Eve Loftness (left) and Susy Oliver and Kydee Sheetz competed in Pairs Abreast. Photo by Alex Dannenmann.



FRIDA (MID-ATLANTIC)

BY MILLIE ANGELINO

This fall was a busy time for the Frida Icelandic Riding Club (FIRC). On September 16-17, the club hosted a clinic with Guðmar Pétursson.

Writes Marilyn Tully: "The weather was perfect and everyone was in a great mood as they arrived throughout the day Friday. Trucks and trailers pulled in and unloaded one horse after the other at the beautiful new guest barn at Montaire, Antje Freygang's Icelandic horse farm in the gently rolling hills of Middleburg, VA. Antje and her husband, Mike, have created an incredible venue, complete with covered arena, grazing pastures, oval track, and guest barn. The clinic started on Saturday morning and concluded Sunday evening. While Guðmar has held many clinics in the area over the years, he still manages to impart new lessons and riding skills to his students. Does one ever tire of learning and relearning ways to supple our horses? Become lighter on the bit? Use the hind end more effectively? Get cleaner tölt? Guðmar organized everyone so that we had opportunities for individual attention, as well as group work. There was also the option to have private lessons Monday and Tuesday. All nine of the participants that weekend



Guðmar Pétursson works with FIRC member Mitch Martin at the clinic in September. Above, Suzi McGraw sports the club shirt. Photos by Marilyn Tully.



left with a series of exercises to build on the skills they learned at the clinic. Mike, with his exceptional culinary talent, cooked and prepared delicious lunches and dinner each day. A big shout out to Mike! A big thank you to the organizers, Millie Angelino and Suzi McGraw, and all who made this clinic so special. And a special thank you to Antje and Mike for so graciously providing the use of their beautiful facility."

In October, two FIRC members, along with TROT (Trail Riders of Today), a local horse club, hosted a Halloween trail ride at Rosaryville State Park in Virginia, followed by a BBQ at their house.

In November, the club hosted a schooling show, again at Montaire, which has a large covered arena with state-of-the-art footing well suited for our beloved gaits, as well as a regulation oval track, where horse and rider can happily showcase their hard-won skills, whether professional or novice!

FIRC is already looking ahead to 2018. We have scheduled our first sanctioned show in two years, to be held at Montaire on October 27-28. Please mark

your calendars, and stay tuned for more information.

GLITFAXA (CALIFORNIA)

BY GABRIELE MEYER

Since our last report, our club has continued to grow, and we were able to organize our first clinic on September 30. We had a great turn out, with seven horses and around 15 people attending. The clinic took place on a farm in the little agricultural town of Fairfield, CA. The farm boards all kinds of different breeds, but no Icelandics. To the farm people our clinic must have felt like an invasion of the Viking horses!

Our clinician was Carla Bauchmueler, a level III Centered Riding Instructor and Trainer A of the German FN (also see her article in Issue Two 2017 of the Quarterly). For most participants, this clinic was their first practical encounter with the concepts of Centered Riding, and most riders wanted to improve tölt or trot. Therefore, Carla chose "Following the Motion" as the theme of the clinic.

Starting out without horses, we went through a short sequence of warm-up exercises, which can and should be used before any ride (from experience, I know how hard it is to follow through with this). We then continued to think about our pelvis and its shape, and how to position it to keep an imaginary bowl of water from overflowing. We learned that centering the pelvis (hence Centered Riding) is the single most important way of communicating with the horse. We then learned how to engage the psoas muscle to elongate and flatten the lower back.



Centered Riding instructor Carla Bauchmueler gave a clinic for the Glitfaxes club. Photo by Gabriele Meyer.



Carla Bauchmueller talking about straightness and trying to keep the horses on “train tracks” with Glitfaxe members Henriette Bruun on Faxi from Creeksedge (left) and Lisa Herbert on Krummi from Fitjamyri. Photo by Teresa Halperin.

Carla went on to explain how the footfall of the horse differs in walk, trot, and tölt, how the horse’s barrel swings during one cycle of each different gait, and the implications for our seat.

The riding sessions were designed to demonstrate the theoretical insights we had achieved during the bodywork session. We started out with aides leading the horses at a walk, so that the riders could close their eyes and solely concentrate on feeling into their bodies and finding their centers. With eyes still closed, riders learned to feel the dimensions of movement of the horse’s back. The riders felt how one side of their pelvis got lifted upwards, while the other went down, and how one side got pushed slightly forward, while the other remained back. Putting these two separate movements together, we felt the “backwards paddling of the hips.” Riders also learned to feel how these movements increased if the horse was being led in a faster walk, how it decreased in a slower walk, how it felt in big circles vs. small circles, and how to slow down the movement and stop it altogether, so that the horse slows down and stops too.

Carla also explained the importance of “Soft Eyes” vs. staring, breathing correctly, and “Leading with Clear Intent”—the basics of Centered Riding.

After the group lessons, we took a much-needed lunch break. The after-

noon sessions were private and tailored to each rider’s personal situation. We had a wide range of horses, from seasoned trail horses to a five-year old youngster, and everything in between. Some worked on trot, some on tölt, some on canter, some on speeding up, some on slowing down, all while applying the concepts of Centered Riding we had learned in the morning. No small challenge! There was a lot of information to process and to apply, and after such a short time the

concepts were certainly not 100 percent remembered or even applied. But the progress the riders and horses made was obvious.

The riders agreed that everyone came out of the clinic with a new understanding that riding starts first and foremost with working on ourselves. Henriette Bruun summarized, “The combination of learning to feel the different movements in myself, learning what happens when the horse’s legs hit the ground in the different gaits and what movement that produces in my body, and then taking that knowledge to the mounted work was really cool and exciting and opened a whole new horizon!”

Laurel Edgecomb added, “It was at a level that anyone could benefit from, beginner to advanced.”

Lisa Herbert said that she “loved connecting with even more Icelandic horse riders and sharing our stories and enthusiasm for this beautiful breed. The clinic was wonderful, with very clear and helpful advice on how to help my horses find and maintain all their gaits while staying relaxed and connected to me. Would love to do more!”

We thank Fairwind Farms in Fairfield



Lori Birge becomes a Viking in the “dress-up area” of the Hestafolk booth at the Washington State Fair. She is using Pam Nolf’s traditional shield and standing with her horse Geisli. Photo by Pam Nolf.



for hosting our event, and we are also grateful that this clinic was sponsored by the USIHC under the Affiliated Clubs Clinics Support program.

HESTAFOLK (NORTHWEST WASHINGTON)

BY LISA MCKEEN

Wow, our club's Leavenworth trip to Mountain Icelandic Ranch was great! We had six club members travel from the west side of Washington and stay there for an extended weekend. We were all able to either camp at the Mountain Icelandic Ranch or to find Airbnbs close by. The company was so much fun, Patti Erikson is a great hostess, and we were able to spend lots of time talking and riding. The riding there is fantastic, with wide safe trails and access to the river where the horses could splash a bit. At the Saturday night potluck, it was such fun to meet the 4-H riders, their parents, and reconnect with Harriet Bullitt and Alex too! We definitely want to make it a regular trip.

Our club members have been having great discussions about safety and how to best help our members and horses be safe on the trails. We are working on an idea for a self-rating system for horses and riders. That way we can plan for small groups if we have green riders or horses, or more challenging rides for veterans.



The Hestafolk booth at the Washington State Fair was designed to look like a Viking ship—and visitors were encouraged to become Vikings. The horses' stalls were the body of the ship, complete with shields and banners. Photos by Lisa McKeen and Monica Urrutia-Sheehan.

We also had a pilot clinic, working on ourselves and our horses. It was fabulous to spend three days together learning and eating and laughing together.

We have several new members and members who have new horses. What a joy to see the club grow and develop! We have mainly been using our horse time to trail ride in small groups for the summer. It's much easier to coordinate rides for two and three than it is to organize our whole group. Our summer schedules have been full, and then the smoke and heat made it unsafe to tax our horses' lungs. The forest fires in our state have been devastating on so many levels. We have horses that got ill, humans who got ill, and it was just too smoky to ride. I know I am anxious to be able to get back on and rack up some miles for our Sea 2 Shining Sea team. Today, as I write, a blessed rain is falling at last. Clean air and green grass are on the way!

Two members (Lisa Roland and Alys Culhane) were able to attend scent training clinics with Terry Nowaki. His clinics are reported to be very hands-on and informative about animal behavior, and he comes highly recommended. He got his Icelandic experience in Alaska and Oregon, and is very impressed with our breed. They are not reactive, but easily focus on a task.

Horses are rewarded for finding a person. Alys's horse Tinni, she notes, "caught on to this really fast, and right before alerting, would turn his head for the treat!"

The highlight of this quarter was our participation in the Horse Breeds Display at the Washington State Fair in Puyallup, WA. This fair sees in excess of a million visitors per year. We were invited to bring three horses at a time and share them with the crowds at the fair. We divided the 13 fair days up, so that no horses had to do more than four days. Pam Nolf designed the theme of the display and club members helped to execute it. We made our area into a Viking ship, complete with a dragon



The horses loved the attention from fairgoers at the Washington State Fair. Photo by Monica Urrutia-Sheehan.

prow, a red-and-white sail, wooden board-looking fabric, and furs. We shared a video of Icelandic horse riding, brochures, and informational posters and blurbs. We hung Viking shields along the panels of the stalls. The horses were the best ambassadors for the breed. They liked having the people look at them and held up well, despite the 90-plus degree heat and smoky conditions. Luckily it began to rain and cool off during the second set of horses.

This endeavor required our whole community to pull together. Cascade Club members filled in where we didn't have members from Hestafolk able to bring horses. The fair staff was amazing to work with, and we feel better connected with the horse world in our area. We are already planning next year's Viking Encampment and Educational Ship.

We are now busy constructing next

year's schedule of Freya Sturm and other clinics, planning trail rides and trips. We want to continue exploring mounted archery, Intrinzen style training, and building our horses' strength and flexibility. Trail training is also a huge interest for all of us. We plan to expand our clinics next year to partner with other clubs and to explore the use of the tool that FEIF provides for rating riding horses. Happy Trails!

KLETTAFJALLA (ROCKY MOUNTAINS)

BY JULIA ANDERSON

The second annual KIHC Icelandic Mountain Rendezvous was a joyful occasion, with much laughter and friendship. We rode in the Burro Days Parade, in Fairplay, CO again, with an amazing show of bravery from our horses. Turning



Leia Tilton on Skjoni dressed in period costume for the Burro Days Parade in Fairplay, CO.

the corner to head down Front Street—the “gauntlet”—I could tell my mare was looking for a way out! A dance troupe in front, cars behind and the streets lined six deep with people of all ages.

At one point we all decided to hold back from the group ahead of us and then go for a full-out tölt, just to show off, and just when we said, “OK, let's GO!” a little boy ran out in front of us to pick up a little piece of candy from the street. We all looked on in shock (but, of course, none of the horses went). The candy throwing from the parade entrants was an unexpected scary thing for the horses. There were also many unexpected noises, and the basic chaos that can be expected of a parade. But the other three Icelandic horses seemed to really enjoy the event, and I was happy to have had a positive experience in the parade, with all of us finishing in one piece. Best of all, we were smiling all the way!

NEIHC (NORTHEAST)

BY JESS HAYNSWORTH

The leaves, they are a-changin' here in the Northeast, and for many NEIHC members, that means bundling up in sweaters and gloves (and maybe some bright orange gear to ward off hunters) and heading out for some of the most beautiful riding of the year. As our horses get fuzzier by the minute, we can reflect



Members of the Klettajfjalla club rode in the Burro Days Parade in Fairplay, CO: Leia Tilton and Skjoni, Julia Anderson on Arnkatla, Kris Ahlberg on Pippi, Chrissy Kipple on Mokkur.



NEIHC member Caeli Cavanagh performed a liberty routine at the Laufskálarétt show in Iceland.

back on a fun and busy summer full of shiny coats and exciting NEIHC events.

On July 9 and August 26, Mad River Valley Icelandic Horses in Warren, VT held mounted games competitions for young riders, ages five to ten. The riders spent the morning teaming up in pairs to get their horses groomed and decorated with glitter for the event. There were three competitions: a judged Obstacle Course, a timed Baton Race, and an Ice Cream Tölt challenge, which one of our young riders came up with as a kid-friendly alternative to the more traditional Icelandic event, the Beer Tölt. Afterwards, kids and adults gathered at the main house for a potluck lunch and a ribbon ceremony. The show was great fun, and we would like to thank Anne Hyde for hosting, Ellen Reidy for judging, Amelie Maranda for helping us out all day, Kyla Bourne for manning the in-gate and for running the timer for us during the Baton Race and Ice Cream Tölt, and all of the kids, parents, and spectators who teamed up to make this day so much fun. For the August competition, each rider got to choose music to be played while they rode, and this was a great addition—selections included music from Hamilton and Led Zeppelin, because Vermont kids are just that cool!

From July 15-16, Mad River Valley

Icelandic Horses also hosted a Classical Dressage Weekend Workshop with Canadian trainer and instructor, Jen White. This workshop weekend was something of a crash course in French classical dressage, with particular emphasis on the concepts of mouthwork and “leg without hand, hand without leg.” Eight horse-and-rider pairs participated, including two youth riders. The workshop included a lecture, one in-hand lesson, and two under-saddle lessons. We had a

great range of participants, from professional trainers to adult amateurs, ranging from beginner to advanced, and a great range of horses in terms of age and training experience. It was wonderful to see the improvement that riders made with their horses throughout the weekend, and Jen gave us all homework to practice going forward. Many of us found that the French style of classical dressage is particularly applicable to training the tölt, since it focuses on lightness and freeing up the horses’ shoulders. We would love to have Jen come back again! Thank you to Anne Hyde and Bill Haynsworth for hosting this clinic.

From July 31 to August 5, riders from Merrimack Valley Icelandics in Massachusetts traveled with their trainer, Ebba Meehan, to Iceland. Nancy Rohlf writes the following: “Several members of Merrimack Valley Icelandics traveled to Iceland for a trek with Guðmar Pétursson and Linda Pétursdóttir at their farm Hestaland. Our week-long trek on wonderful horses introduced us to beautiful western Iceland with its glacial rivers, hot springs, and grasslands. Our guides grew up in the region and were very knowledgeable about the area and the best riding routes. We were able to work on perfecting our fast tölt and got to know some stellar



NEIHC members rode on a trek in Iceland led by Guðmar Pétursson and organized by Ebba Meehan of Merrimack Valley Icelandics in Massachusetts. Photo by Jean Ervasti.



Students at Mad River Valley Icelandics' Summer Horsemanship Program used paints to learn anatomy. "Horse-safe paint was used," notes teacher Jess Haynsworth, "and Thór frá Skorrastað was well compensated with cookies." Photo by Jess Haynsworth.

trekking horses. We had such a good time that we plan on returning next summer for another adventure with Guðmar, Linda, and Ebba."

On August 14-19, Mad River Valley Icelandic Horses held our first Summer Horsemanship Program for young riders. Participating riders were given their "own horse" to care for and ride over the course of the week. Students rode in the morning, had a lecture at lunch time with instructor Jess Haynsworth, and then worked on activities and projects pertaining to the day's lesson and lecture topics afterwards, with help from counselors Emese and Keziah Dunn. Lecture topics included the Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare, age appropriate introductions to conformation, biomechanics, and ethical riding and training, recognizing and caring for common ailments and injuries in horses, understanding Icelandic sport, breeding, and Gæðingakeppni competition, and how to use Worldfengur in order to learn more about each student's horse. Over the course of the week, students learned many practical skills including how to longe, how to check digital pulses, and how to wrap legs safely



Arianna De Forge and Thór frá Skorrastað perform at the end of the Summer Horsemanship Program in Vermont. Photo by Tammy Kolbe.

and correctly, as well as working on fun group projects like finger painting the parts of the horse onto our lesson horse, Thór, and research projects to learn more about their horses. On the final day, the students each performed a riding program for their parents and families, which they set to music of their choice,

and they presented the projects they had worked on over the course of the week. It was great fun to watch the students teach their parents what they had learned, and we got excellent feedback from everyone involved. We look forward to holding more Summer Horsemanship Programs in the future!

On August 20, Emese Dunn and Jess Haynsworth competed in a hunter pace at GMHA in Woodstock, VT. Our team was called the Mad River Valkyries. Our horses, Spönn frá Efri-Rauðalæk and Vigri frá Vallanesi, had never competed in a hunter pace before, but seemed to really enjoy it. The pace followed eight miles of tough Vermont hills, and we competed against 20 other teams. We received several compliments from other riders who were impressed that our small horses were hardly sweating or breathing heavily as they passed more seasoned and much larger hunt, eventing, and CTR horses! At the end, we were pleasantly surprised to learn that we had won blue ribbons for coming in "first" behind the Champion and Reserve Champion teams. It was our first hunter pace, but it definitely won't be our last!

On September 14-17, young horse evaluations and a breeding show clinic and seminar were held at Bel Di farm in Washingtonville, NY. Martina Gates writes the following: "The idea of an evaluation clinic was born in Europe, where the concept has been executed with much success. An experienced rider presents the horses in front of a FEIF breeding judge, who gives unofficial scores with comments about why and how the scores can be improved. Shannon Fitzgerald from Bel Di Farm brought this idea to the U.S., with the intention of having it in conjunction with a Young Horse Assessment at the Cobleskill Fairgrounds in New York. Unfortunately there was very little interest, which is also a reflection on the lack of breeding shows in the U.S. So the event was moved to Bel Di Farm, where two Holar instructors gave a great clinic instead. The Young Horse Assessment was on Thursday, and three young horses participated. On Saturday afternoon, judge Herdís Reynisdóttir gave a

conformation clinic. All participants had the chance to judge in groups, followed by a lecture and dinner.”

On September 16, Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir of Solheimar Farm in Tunbridge, VT received her Centered Riding Level 2 certification. Nancy Brown writes the following: “Sigrún has been incorporating Centered Riding into all of her riding instruction for the past few years, and we have really seen the improvement in our own riding and in our horses’ attitudes. An FT trainer certified in Iceland, Sigrún is expert at training the gaits, and with her new competence in Centered Riding, she is now more able to pass on to us, her students, how to use our bodies in a way that strengthens and continues to improve our horses’ strength and the quality of their gaits. In order to impress upon us how important our own body awareness is to the quality of our riding, she has also been offering fun monthly clinics combining Centered Riding with the Alexander Technique, Tai Chi, Tae Kwon Do, and other disciplines that combine balance with posture. Our horses have never been happier.”

On September 25-27, West Wind Farm in Delhi, NY hosted an Intrinzen clinic with Steinar Sigurbjörnsson. Martina Gates writes the following: “This was the third time Steinar came to teach



What’s better than a beer tölt? An ice cream tölt for young riders. Left to right, Liesl Kolbe on Þór frá Skorrastað, Harriet Shipman on Víkingur from Thor Icelandics, Arianna De Forge on Spönn frá Efri-Rauðalæk, and Finja Meyer Hoyt on Goði frá Neðri-Svertingsstöðum. Photo by Augustin Démonceaux.

our group. We had originally started with just a few horses and riders, but every time Steinar has come our group has grown! We are now seven riders with 12 horses ages five to 28! When we began this journey, none of us had ever done any training like this, so it was amazing to see the progress we all made. The muscle development and balance in our horses

has improved significantly. The horses are all able to carry themselves on their hind ends, and their necks have developed into graceful arcs. Their movements have become light and high-stepping. I don’t think any of us thought we were capable of this kind of training. It is simply fantastic how far we have come. The horses are so eager to play, and now that they have



A scene from the NEIHC Breeding Evaluation clinic, held in New York in September.



Zophonias and Martina Gates perform a mounted Intrinzen exercise, cued by Steinar Sigurbjörnsson. Photo by Amy Goddard.



Young riders Tristan Brickner (left) and Kamilla Brickner enjoy a trail ride in the Vermont woods. Photo by Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir.

found their balance and strength we have begun riding them again. With help from each other we will keep on training, and I know everyone will be excited to show Steinar what we have accomplished when he comes back in the spring.”

On September 29, Vermont resident and NEIHC board member Caeli Cavanagh performed at the Laufskálarétt show in Skagafjörður, Iceland. The show, which accompanies the horse round-up every year, has been a yearly tradition for decades, and Caeli was very proud to take part with her horse Þeyr frá Ytra-Vallholti, which she is training for her third year at Holar University College.

On October 6-8, Léttleiki Icelandics held a World Ranking Triple Header competition, which several Northeast riders were able to attend. See the show report in this issue.

From October 23-25, Himneskir Landi in Newfane, VT hosted a clinic with Guðmar Petursson. On November 2-3, Guðmar Petursson held a clinic at ANJ Stables in Byfield, MA. Then, he moved on to Bel Di Farm in Washingtonville, NY for another clinic on November 4-5.

From November 9-12, the NEIHC represented the Icelandic horse at the 2017 Equine Affaire in Massachusetts. Horses of Iceland and Solheimar Farm of Tunbridge, VT, led by trainer Sigrún



Steinar Sigurbjörnsson and the participants in his Intrinzen clinic, held in New York in September. Photo courtesy of West Wind Farm.



At the NWIHC Clinic, Mandy Pretty demonstrated non-invasive “wrapping” techniques on horses and their owners that showed an immediate improvement in balance and posture.

Brynjarsdóttir, presented a demonstration during the Saturday Breed Segment and two Breed Demos on Sunday. We hope we will have seen many of you there, and wish you all a great Winter. Happy tölting!

NWIHC (EASTERN SLOPE CASCADES)

BY DEBBY DILLARD

The North West Icelandic Horse Club was host to Mandy Pretty of the

Icelandic Horse Farm in British Columbia, Canada, in September. The two-day “In Touch With Your Horse” workshop was held on a beautiful but windy fall weekend at Makani Farms, owned and operated by Greg and Debby Dillard, and located in Ellensburg, WA.

The workshop was open to all riding disciplines and horse breeds, and combined the philosophy, bodywork, groundwork, and riding tools of the Tellington TTouch Method with the bio-mechanically correct rider-handler awareness exercises of Connected Riding.

The first day started in the classroom, where Mandy taught the participants new tools to help create a more functional posture in humans and in the horses. They participated in exercises that gave them an understanding of how to address the smallest signs of imbalance to improve their overall function as handlers and riders. There was plenty of learning, fun, laughter, and education in the classroom work.

Following the classroom work, the participants and their horses, which consisted of four Icelandics and four “big” horses, met in the arena for groundwork. Here, they learned how to utilize what they had learned in the classroom in non-habitual leading positions, practicing correct neutral posture during movement, and examining the movement and behavior of the horses.

Connected Riding was the theme for the afternoon. Mandy helped all the riders learn ways to feel correct self carriage, so that the horses were able to move



Mandy Pretty of the Icelandic Horse Farm in British Columbia held her “In Touch With Your Horse” clinic for the NWIHC, combining T-Touch, Connected Riding, and other techniques.

freely and in a non-restricted fashion.

Day two explored another layer of this vastly deep work. The classroom was filled with chatter as everyone participated in exercises to improve lightness on the reins and, again, finding that “neutral” posture. The afternoon was filled with Connected Riding instruction, and Mandy also demonstrated non-invasive



Toppur Club members heading out for a group trail ride at Harmony Icelandics in Iowa.

“wrapping” techniques on horses and their owners that showed an immediate improvement in balance and posture, as well as better functional movement.

Overall, the weekend was a complete success for horses and humans alike.

TOPPUR (IOWA)

BY VIRGINIA LAURIDSEN

Toppur Icelandic Horse Club members gathered on September 9 for a leisurely morning trail ride. We even invited a few “big” horses to join us, and a great time was had by all. Mother Nature smiled upon us, with sunshine and moderate temperatures, when we gathered at Harmony Icelandics in Peru, IA. After a short period of chaotic barn preparation, we set out on the woodland and prairie trails. We let the “big” horses lead the way, as they were much more excited about the venture. The Icelandics lived up to their bragging rights as calm, reliable, and sure-footed companions. New member Laurie Cleveland felt the tölt (aka “giggle gait”) for the first time. As predicted, she couldn’t stop smiling! Following a wonderful ride we all gathered for a delicious lunch and animated conversation, about Icelandics, of course!



Toppur members Virginia Lauridsen on Gunnhildur frá Kollaleiru and Daniela West on Hler frá Gullberastöðum.



Toppur member Virginia Lauridsen and her stallion Gosi frá Lambastöðum were the T1 winners at the Kentucky Icelandic Horse Show. Photo by Susy Oliver.

THE 2017 AMERICAN YOUTH CUP

BY MEGGIN HENDRICKS

I am simply a mom and a supporter of all the amazing young Icelandic horse riders here in California, so when I was approached by Heidi Benson and members of the Northern California Icelandic Horse Club (aka Kraftur) to see if we might be able to make another Icelandic Horse American Youth Cup happen, I was skeptical. But I discovered that when a few people put their minds together in this incredible community, great events happen: AYC 2017 was held at Coast Road Stables in Santa Cruz, CA in July.

When we sent out the applications for AYC 2017, we were amazed and surprised at the amount of interest, and the quality of the responses we received. Twenty riders were accepted from nine states: Alaska, California, Colorado, Kentucky, Maine, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Team leaders were Kevin Draeger from Wisconsin, and Julia Hausenaur, Jessica Blough, and Ayla Green, all from California. We were incredibly lucky to have trainers Ásta Covert, Laura Benson, Heidi Benson, and Caeli Cavanagh. Will Covert judged the USIHC-sanctioned show at the end of the week.

Riders and team leaders were housed at the beautiful Rachel Carson College and the University of California Santa Cruz. They stayed in dorms situated



Judge Will Covert gives feedback to Eden Hendricks after her ride. Photo by Mike Hendricks.



The cardboard horse was one of the favorite non-riding activities at the American Youth Cup. Each team built a horse, then chose two people to be the legs and perform the footfall of each gait. Photo by Carol Tolbert.

on the edge of a forest overlooking the beautiful Pacific coastline. A team of dedicated parents transported the riders to and from the college and ranch for long, exciting, learning-filled days at Coast Road Stables. It was wonderful to watch the relationships between riders quickly develop as the four teams, Waveriders, Violet Vikings, Green Beans, and Red Riders, worked together.

In addition to extensive riding and training, the teams created team posters, crafted gaited horses out of cardboard, performed fierce charades, and researched a project on Icelandic breeding farms throughout the world. Exhausted at the end of the day, the riders brought pillows and blankets up to a common room for presentations. In one talk, Will Covert and Doug Smith spoke on FEIF Sport judging. In another, Caeli Cavanagh explained the Icelandic Reiðleiðir or “Riding Ways” event, which she described as memorizing a pattern of circles, diagonals, figure-eights, etc., and doing each move in a different gait. It requires a lot of concentration by horse and rider for smooth transitions between gaits and direction. Not many of the AYC participants chose to compete in this event in the final

show, as it is really challenging, but it was fun for those watching to see it unfold.

Thursday brought a day of rest for the horses while the teams had a fantastic field trip to the beach for games, swimming, burritos, and a bonfire. The kids also spent a long evening writing thank you notes to all the people who had donated their horses and time. It was amazing to see how quickly friendships blossomed and how supportive riders were of one another, especially during the nerve-racking days of the final show.

Parents were allowed to attend only



Eden Hendricks and Viska frá Álfárósi competing in T1 Tölt. Photo by Heidi Benson.

the sanctioned show at the end of the week, and watching their young riders actually brought tears to some of the parents' eyes. One mom expressed awe not only at her daughter's riding ability, but also at the relationship her daughter had built with her horse in just one week. It was a joy to get to know each of the riders and watch them unfold throughout the week. We are a very lucky community of horse lovers to have such a close knit, excited, passionate, intelligent, hard-working group of youth riders to keep the fires burning for the future of the Icelandic horse in the United States.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

We asked the young riders to comment on their AYC 2017 experience. Here is what they said:

Payton Black, 15, Colorado: "The experience I gained from the American Youth Cup was great! I made many new friends and learned a lot of new things. I also fell in love with a bay mare named Lilja. I loved California and all of the trainers I got to work with there. Now, I'm taking what I learned to use on my own horses. I can't believe the difference that being a better rider makes for them. Thank you to everyone who helped me get here!"

Eden Hendricks, 15, California: "I really enjoyed having down time at the end of the day at UCSC and getting to know all the riders and more about each one. We did a lot of laughing and goofing around in the dorms. I also really loved having a personal lesson from each of the trainers and getting different perspectives on how

to work differently with my horse."

Jay Maio, 15, Wisconsin: "The AYC was the highlight of my summer! I learned so much about horses, thanks to the amazing Icelandic horse trainers, and met so many friends along the way. I was happy to be on the blue team because Kevin was my team leader and I knew him from horse shows from the past. Not only did we learn about riding Icelandic horses, we also learned how to take care of them. Each of us was given a horse to ride for a week and then compete against other teams in a two-day competition when the weekend came. I was given a five-gaited horse named Hvati. He was a fun horse to ride. Noticing that he was five gaited, I took the opportunity to learn more about pace and how to get the horse into it. I never scored for pace, but I was so happy to learn. I could then implement the techniques I learned with the horse I'm riding now. Overall, I learned so much about riding horses and met so many friends over that weekend, and I can't wait for the next one to come!"

Isabelle Maranda, 15, Vermont: "The 2017 AYC in California was an amazing experience. I enjoyed meeting other youth riders from all around the country who share the same passion I do. The opportunity was something I will never forget. The staff, trainers, and other youth members were so friendly and welcoming. Each horse had a unique personality and they were all so talented. Everything at AYC was fun, even the cleaning! Even though AYC is about learning and riding, it is also about bringing the youth com-



Maria Octavo and Áradís from Tamangur, with Grace (Gray) Strausser on Huglúf frá Vatnsholti in the background. Photo by Mike Hendricks.

munity together in this country and that is just what everyone did. I would like to thank everyone who put time and effort into making the AYC possible."

Olivia Rasmussen, 16, California: "The 2017 AYC was full of laughs, new friendships, and most importantly Icelandic horses! The week was spent bonding, training, and learning. Each day we had an individual lesson to prepare us for the competition. We chose three classes to show in. I picked individual Tölt, Four Gait, and Reidleidir. I especially enjoyed doing Reidleidir because it taught me important patterns I can do with my horse. For this I had to make and memorize a program for the competition. Although it was challenging, it was very fun and rewarding.

"One of my other favorite events was the cardboard horse. Each team had to build a horse and then place two people inside to act as the legs. Then we had to show each gait. It was hysterical to watch everyone trip over each other attempting to Canter or Tolt. Although this activity was very funny, it was also educational. We learned the exact foot fall within each gait while trying to recreate it.

"I had such a great time getting to know the other participants, especially my roommates. I found it so interesting to hear about how everyone got into Icelandic horses and what the community is like



Maile Behringer competing on Harpa from Rock Ranch. Photo by Heidi Benson.



Jamie Blough on Stjarni frá Blönduósi listens to comments from judge Will Covert. Photo by Mike Hendricks.

where they come from. One of the most important things I took away from the event is that the youth riders in the U.S. are incredibly supportive when it comes to competing. During every ride, people would show enthusiasm for the other riders. Whether it was a Good Job! or That looked great!, it showed that we are a community. During the AYC I had the opportunity to meet so many amazing Icelandic horse riders and further develop my relationship with old friends. I truly believe I made friends that week that will last a lifetime, all because we share the same love for the Icelandic horse.”

Karli Schmutz, 14, Alaska: “I was on



Smiles all around, as Eva Dykaar on Mári frá Kolgerði and Isabelle Maranda on Tígull frá Hrólfstaðahelli practice a pairs routine. Photo by Heidi Benson.

the purple team, the Violet Vikings, with team leader Jessica Blough, and got to meet other riders from all around the country. Our team received the team horsemanship award. One thing I really enjoyed was putting together a pairs drill team pattern. I also really enjoyed riding a new horse and working with the different trainers. This was a great experience that I would definitely do again, and would recommend to anybody else. Thank you to everybody who made it happen!”

Robyn Schmutz, 15, Alaska: “It was such an incredible experience. I got to meet, train, and ride with so many talented people from all over the country. All of the organizers put an enormous amount of effort into making this a great experience for everyone. To ride a different horse for a week was very fun, because I got to learn some different tools that I hadn’t used before. I came home from the AYC with much more confidence about riding new and unknown horses. I am so thankful for all the connections I made, and I look forward to seeing everyone again. I hope anyone who considers applying for this event in the future does it, because it was certainly one experience that I will never forget.”

Gray Strausser, 15, Pennsylvania: “All of the kids were great and helped each other out, and I was so happy to be with other Icelandic horse-crazed people like me. On the first morning, I was filled with anxiety as I waited to meet the horse I was assigned for the week. After morning chores and a tour, I was given a great



Zoe Johnson on Þór frá Litlu-Sandvík 1 and Karlie Schmutz on Sleipnir frá Ey 1 concentrate on their pairs routine. Photo by Heidi Benson.

mare named Hugljúf! She was a pretty chestnut with a lot to teach me. Being able to work with a horse that was experienced, but knew how to test me, was one of the highlights of the whole camp. Ásta Covert and Heidi Benson gave me lessons throughout the week and really helped me get the best out of her.

“The camp wasn’t all at the barn; we got a day to go to the beach! We made a cardboard horse and a poster about a breeding farm. These activities were great for team building; I got to connect with my teammates on a totally different level. Our team leader, Julia Hasenauer, really helped us with everything, but still challenged and encouraged us. Throughout the week, we had presentations at the campus about the different gaits and judging the horse. We were able to ask questions and learn valuable information that could help us in the future.

“The morning of the show I was really excited to ride my first individual program. With all of the help from the team leaders, the trainers, and my teammates, I felt prepared and ready to ride. The team spirit was great, and we all were so happy to watch everyone do really well with his or her horses. At the end of the first day of the show we did the cardboard horse show, and it was so much fun! We laughed so much and definitely made some great memories making fools of ourselves. It was a great way to let off steam. I can never forget this experience at the AYC, it was so fun and informative. I made great friends and was able to work with some amazing people. The love and support I have received will stay with me for a lifetime and someday, I plan to pass it along.”



Top left, The Violet Vikings: Maile Behringer, Isabelle Maranda, Karlie Schmutz, Eden Hendricks, Eva Dykaar, and team leader Jessica Blough. Top right, Kajsa Johnson and Lólita from Valkyrie Icelandics. Middle, The Red Riders: Cameron Tolbert Scott, Gray Strausser, Shay Harvey, and Jamie Blough, with team leader Julia Hasenauer. All three photos by Heidi Benson. Bottom left, The Green Beans: Haley Werheim, Zoe Johnson, Alicia Flanigan, Olivia Rasmussen, and Maria Octavo, with team leader Ayla Green. Photo by Mike Hendricks. Bottom right, Maria Octavo and Áradis from Tamangur. Photo by Heidi Benson.





Top left, Shay Harvey and Fleygur from Destiny Farms. Top right, The Wave Riders: Jay Maio, Payton Black, Robyn Schmutz, Mary (Mouse) Hedrick, Kajsa Johnson, and team leader Kevin Draeger (not shown). Middle, left to right: Jay Maio and Hvati frá Ketilsstöðum, Payton Black showing Lilja from Shaggy Mountain, and Olivia Rasmussen with Sylgja frá Ketilsstöðum. All five photos by Heidi Benson. Bottom left, Gray Strausser showing Hugljúf frá Vatnsholti. Right, Heidi Benson taking a break from photographing with Mary (Mouse) Hedrick, Jamie Blough, and Kajsa Johnson. Photo by Mike Hendricks.



SEAT SCHOOLING

BY ALEX PREGITZER

Have you ever watched a highly accomplished rider and just thought to yourself, I wish I could sit like that? I have. The picture we see looking at that rider on that horse is one of absolute harmony: a quiet and well balanced seat and invisible aids that make horse and rider look like one. A goal worth pursuing.

One of the attractions of horseback riding is that there is always room for improvement, no matter what our skill level is. There is always more to learn about horse management, nutrition, health, communication, gait training, and countless ways to improve our riding.

Working on our seat is one of many ways to improve our riding and our relationship with our horse. One efficient way of improving the rider's seat are seat exercises on the longe line.

THE LONGE LINE

In Europe, it is customary to start riding lessons on the longe line. Any rider of any age will usually start their lessons on a solid school horse, learning to balance on the longe line until they have developed an independent seat and are ready to move on to riding off the longe line. Most riders will continue having seat lessons on the longe line regularly after that, beginner riders as well as Olympic athletes.

Giving one another seat lessons on the longe line is one of the many exercises in any trainer course for Icelandic horse riding instructors (trainers) in Germany. Even very advanced riders can fall back into bad habits such as poor posture if they ride by themselves, without anybody to watch or provide feedback.

In the U.S., the same practices are used in some areas of equine sport, but not as much in others. The American Pony Club endorses the idea of seat schooling on the longe line, and many traditional dressage stables use the exercises as well.

Seat exercises on the longe line improve:

- an independent, deep seat
- balance
- coordination
- core strength

- endurance
- trust in oneself and the horse
- harmony between horse and rider
- specific seat problems

They also help in learning to see and feel the diagonal at the trot (posting correctly) and to see and feel the correct canter lead.



SEAT EXERCISES

The exercises themselves will depend on the rider's age, agility, and experience. A very young child may simply sit on the horse while the horse walks (possibly with an extra helper walking next to the child or securing him or her) to develop a feel for the movement. A little further on, the child may do some little exercises at the stand still.

Children learn very well if they are having fun, so a longe lesson for a child would be put together differently than one for a teenager, adult, or senior adult rider. The exercises may have funny names or be connected to something they know (Now pretend you are picking apples, swim with your arms, play the piano, box...). An experienced instructor will know what exercises to choose to either slowly build up confidence and strength or to provide just the right challenge to a more ambitious, adventurous type of rider.

Some of the exercises I use in longe lessons are:

- riding different gaits simply sitting with your hands on the pommel
- stretching one or both arms out to the side
- stretching one or both arms out to the front
- stretching one or both arms straight up over your head
- stretching out both arms to the sides and rotating your body to the inside or outside
- rotating your feet, one at a time, in both directions
- rotating your shoulder blades backward
- rotating your arms (stretched out) backward, in big circles
- swinging your legs forward and backward
- holding on with one hand, touching the horse's poll with the other hand
- holding on with one hand, touching the horse's tail with the other hand



Seat schooling is a great way to practice focus and balance. But you need a good school horse like Kraftur frá Grafarkoti, who is happy to trot at an even speed on the longe line. Trainer Alex Pregitzer controls Kraftur, allowing student Nina Rasche to concentrate on her seat. Photos by Andreas Eichelmann.



Seat exercises teach the rider to separate the motion of the seat and legs from that of the hands, arms, and shoulders. Photo by Andreas Eichelmann.

- holding on with one hand, touching the rider's toe with the same side hand or opposite hand
- riding transitions with hands off the pommel
- posting without stirrups
- transitioning between posting and sitting trot, as well as a two-point seat or Icelandic trot seat

All of these exercises can be executed with or without stirrups, depending on the level of difficulty, and are done on the left and right rein at the walk, trot, tölt (not as common), or canter, changing direction often for the benefit of the horse and the rider. At times, the rider may be asked to use the reins or not, depending on the lesson goal. Usually the duration of such a lesson is about 30 minutes.

THE LESSON GOAL

How do these exercises help? Without having to worry about using the reins or which direction to go, and instead simply relying on the horse and the instructor for control over speed and direction, the rider is able to focus entirely on his or her seat and on the task at hand. The exercises are designed to isolate body parts, which enables the rider to learn to use different parts of the body independently (for example, not to have your hands bouncing while your body is moving along in a sitting trot). At the same time, the rider gets stronger and fitter, which are crucial to being supple on the horse. Only an athletic rider will be able to sit well and use his or her aids in a well-coordinated fashion.

Obviously, finding an experienced instructor with a wonderful school horse is key to the success of these exercises. If you have an Icelandic horse instructor close

to you, ask if they will offer longe lessons on a good school horse. Many dressage barns or pony clubs will have experienced instructors and solid horses for these kinds of lessons, too.

THE INSTRUCTOR

Good instructors will tell you openly what they can or cannot do for you, and if they have a suitable horse for these types of lessons. After each instruction (for example: "Rotate your arms backward, eight circles, counting out loud"), your instructor should watch you carefully, observe, and give immediate and simple, clear feedback. For example: "That was good!" Or: "That was better than before." Or: "Let's try it again." Through feedback, we are able to develop a muscle memory, improve over time, and learn to correct ourselves.

In order to improve and learn, it is vital to get feedback from your riding instructor (this is true for all riding lessons, not just longe lessons). After each instruction (for example: Rotate your arms backward, eight circles, counting out loud), your instructor should watch you carefully, observe, and give immediate feedback. For example: That was good, that was better than before, so let's try it again. You did a great job rotating your arms, but your heel slipped up so please watch that the next time... Through feedback, we are able to develop a muscle memory, improve over time, and learn to correct ourselves.

THE HORSE

The most important part of a seat lesson is the school horse. A suitable horse has to:

- have a good disposition, be calm and steady
- move evenly

- be confident and brave
- be used to the rider moving aboard the horse and doing exercises
- be forward
- not be sensitive to being touched in different places or the rider shifting his or her weight
- be well trained to voice cues
- slow down or stop immediately on command

The equipment used will vary with the personal taste of the instructor. I like to use a halter underneath the bridle, since I prefer to attach my longe line to the halter rather than the bridle. I make a knot in the reins if the rider is not using them. Depending on the horse, I prefer not to use side reins, but some instructors do use them. Usually I use a saddle, but some instructors use a bareback saddle pad or a vaulting girth.

ON THE GROUND

In addition to longe lessons, another way to improve your seat for riding is to do gymnastic exercises on the ground. In Europe, some physical therapists who are also horseback riders or instructors specialize in giving clinics to riders that combine exercises on the ground with exercises on a balance chair (such as the Balance in Motion or Balimo chair) and on horseback. I don't know of any instructors in the U.S. that offer this combination, but any good physical therapist should be able to work with us.

SOURCES

These websites have some further information about seat exercises on the longe line:
<https://practicalhorsemanmag.com/training/improve-riding-with-longe-lessons-25940>

<https://dressagetoday.com/instruction/longe-lessons-at-the-spanish-riding-school-12294>

This website has a nice video of a longe lesson. The exercises shown here are fairly demanding: <http://www.equestriancoach.com/content/lunge-lesson>

This web site provides information about the Balimo exercises developed by sports physiologist Eckart Meyners:

<https://practicalhorsemanmag.com/health-archive/7-balimo-exercises-to-improve-your-balance-in-the-saddle>

A TASTE OF THE CHAMPIONSHIPS

BY HELEEN HEYNING
PHOTOS BY MARTINA GATES



The stars of the show: Glória frá Skúfslæk [IS2008282582] and Jakob Svavar Sigurðsson of Iceland scored an unbelievable 8.94 to win the T1 Tölt competition.

Full of happy anticipation, photographer Martina Gates and I arrived at the World Championships for Icelandic Horses on Wednesday, August 9. The competition grounds in Oirschot, a small village in the south of the Netherlands, belong to the Icelandic breeding farm and riding school Breidablik and are prettily situated among pastures and woods in the countryside. From these rural surroundings, one would not guess that the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world!

The World Championships for Icelandic Horses were held here in Oirschot exactly ten years ago. The representatives manning the WC booth at Landsmót, the Icelandic National Horse Show, last year had assured us that the 2017 championships were going to be even better than those in 2007. It turned out that they were right, in many ways.

FUN AND EXCITEMENT

The venue and logistics were wonderful. An army of over 500 volunteers from all over Europe facilitated parking (no hassles, no major back ups, except perhaps upon leaving all at the same time at the end of the day), oversaw the campgrounds, checked tickets, handed out starting and results lists, cleaned the restrooms, and all else. Everything ran smoothly. There were no major hiccups.

With 50,000 expected visitors and no guarantee of dry weather, the show organizers created walkways with large metal sheets, protecting the grass underneath and keeping us from sloshing through the inevitable mud. Another improvement was the covered grandstands, with a seating capacity of 10,000 people. No worries about getting wet or getting too much sun!

A large tent city housed all the indoor stuff, including lectures and demonstrations, with a great number of vendors making for a shopping mecca. (Tack! More tack!) This was all set on wooden decking, so it was extremely comfortable

to move around anywhere.

And then the food. In my book, good food equals happiness. The restaurant chain “La Place” had several stations going under the large food tent, offering a variety of meals freshly made on the spot and attractively displayed. It was so well organized that there were minimal waiting times. The quality was outstanding.

Throughout the grounds, a party atmosphere prevailed. Non-stop music was blasting all of the time. The weather was quite cooperative, with pleasant temperatures and only some showers now and then. We constantly bumped into friends and acquaintances from Europe, Iceland, and the U.S.

Henning Drath, the German announcer known from many Icelandic horse events, as always knew how to draw the enormous audience into the thrill of the pace races, his booming voice vibrating with excitement. This being Europe,



Charlotte Cook of Great Britain won the P2 Speed Pace with a time of 7.43 seconds, riding jockey style on Sæla frá Þóreyjarnúpi [IS2006255474].



Young rider Lona Sneve of Norway and Stóri-Dímon frá Hraukbæ [IS2002155124] took second place overall in the P1 250 meter Pace Race, with a time of 21.46 seconds.

beer and wine were served at the pace track, contributing to more happiness among the spectators.

One of the great things about any Icelandic competitive event is the enthusiasm of the crowd. Shouting, singing, and waving large flags are the order of the day. If you sat in the Icelandic section of the grandstand, your view was often obliterated, as the whole audience would rise and chant: Ís-land, Ís-land!

SKILL AND STAMINA

Despite the constant adrenaline rush, the general atmosphere at the World Championships was calm, easy, and composed. The program ran exactly on time, keeping everything flowing beautifully. My only complaint would be that the press was granted no access to the horse-and-rider facilities, so that a view behind the scenes was impossible to get.

Arriving mid-week, we did miss most of the breeding classes and some preliminary rounds. We were sorry, for example, to have missed seeing our own Ayla Green ride (see the sidebar). The championships always run a whole week, gathering steam toward the weekend and the finals. Most days the program ran from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., so these are long days.

As one has to qualify to compete, it follows that the caliber of horses and riders is top notch. The horses were fan-

tastic, both in looks and in performance. They truly get better and better every time, as years go by. Fifteen countries were represented at this year's championships, and more than 250 horse-and-rider combinations were listed.

Of particular note were the amazingly talented young riders (ages 16 to 21). One after the other showed skill and stamina, as well as beautiful form.

It must also be mentioned, however, that several horses were disqualified at the vet check, which happens before prizes are allocated. We were also bothered by the evidence of a large number of gaping mouths, swishing tails, and harsh bits. The difference in T2 (Loose Rein Tölt) was striking: happy and relaxed looking horses, ears forward, not fighting against restraints. Food for thought.

Different riding styles are always apparent during the pace races, but Charlotte Cook (GB) on Sæla frá Þóreyjarnúpi stood out with her unusual aerodynamic posture: Her crouched jockey seat resulted in her winning P2 (SpeedPass, the 100-meter pace race with a flying start), a first for Great Britain



Frauke Schenzel of Germany and Gustur vom Kronshof [DE2009134130] took first place in F1 Five Gait with a score of 7.29.



Jennifer Melville, an American who lives in Germany, competed for the U.S. on Feykir frá Ey in T1 Tölt (scoring 5.00) and V1 Four Gait (5.60) in the preliminaries.

It was impressive to see, in F1 (Five Gait), how easily pace was achieved every time. Four canter strides and boom! Right into pace. It seemed completely effortless every time.

And how contagious it was to see some riders smile! Jolly Schrenk, winner of V1 (Four Gait), second in T2 (Loose Rein Tölt), kept smiling all the way through. Her horse, Glæsir von Gut Wertheim, seemed to be smiling as well. He certainly moved in an easy, relaxed manner. Heart warming indeed. Jolly was awarded the Golden FT Feather for her performance. As FEIF noted, "Her horsemanship reflects respect for the horse, and friendship."

T1 (Tölt) is usually one of the highlights of the show, and that was certainly true this year. With an overall score of 8.94, the winning team of Jakob Svavar Sigurðsson on Gloría frá Skúfslæk was all harmony and happiness. A stunning performance by a beautiful rider on a very supple horse—fast yet amazingly even in her strides!

Going to an event like this always challenges one's endurance. How long can you maintain such a daily high? The days roll into each other with not enough sleep, not enough time to digest, no place to reflect. But how good it was all the same! There's nothing like sharing a passion with so many others. We were very happy to have been there.

MORE INFORMATION

Complete results of the 2017 World Championships for Icelandic Horses can be found on the FEIF website at <https://www.feif.org/files/documents/WC2017.pdf> (for sport results) and https://www.feif.org/files/documents/WC_2017_Breeding_results.pdf (for the breeding show).

The 2019 Icelandic Horse World Championships will be held in Berlin. For more information on the U.S. team selection process and on preparing to ride in the competition, see www.icelandics.org/competition/wc_team.



Winner of the T2 Loose Rein Tölt was Johanna Tryggvason of Germany and Fönix frá Syðra-Holti [IS2006165087], with a score of 8.38.



Clockwise from top left: The top young rider (age 16 to 21) in T1 Tölt at the World Championships was Olivia Ritschel of Germany on Alvar frá Stóra-Hofi [IS2007186005], with a score of 7.78. Jakob Svavar Sigurðsson of Iceland won the Tölt Horn with a beautiful performance on Glória frá Skúfslæk [IS2008282582]. Some of the hundreds of volunteers that make the World Championships happen. Jolly Schrenk of Germany won the Golden Feather Prize for her strong but supple performance with Glæsir von Gut Wertheim [DE2007141621]; the pair also won V1 Four Gait, with a score of 7.70, and took second in T2 Loose Rein Tölt with a score of 8.21. Winners of the V1 Four Gait A-finals parade off the track.



AN INDESCRIBABLE FEELING

BY AYLA GREEN

It's hard to believe that in August I was in The Netherlands with my horse Mári frá Kolgerði competing on the U.S. team at the World Championships for Icelandic Horses.

This accomplishment, just a few months ago, was an inspiration given me by Valdimar Auðunsson, the judge at the CIA Open Spring Show at Flying C Ranch in April. In the past, thoughts of competing on this level had gone in and out of my mind, but I had never really thought it was possible. (Shipping your horse on a seven-plus hour flight to compete for one week is pretty insane.) But this would be the last World Championships I could compete in as a Young Rider, under age 21.

THE RIGHT PARTNER

I also knew I had the right partner with Mári frá Kolgerði.

Mári came into my life when I was 15. A client of my mother's ranch, Centaur City, bought him from Iceland as a five-year-old, based on a video and his breeding. She didn't know what she was getting into. Mári is a son of Glampi frá Vatnsleysu and Bára frá Húsavík (a daughter of Spúni frá Miðsitju), which is a very impressive heritage. But Glampi horses are known to be hot and a little bit temperamental.

When Mári arrived in California in 2012, he was practically untouched. He had been ridden, but from what we could tell it wasn't anything educational for the horse. His new owner decided that she would not be able to handle him, so my mom, Heidi Benson, took him on. For the first year my mom worked with him mostly on the ground, gaining trust, and asked me to help her. I was still very young. I'd had experience with young and difficult horses, but not ones like him. Mári was a whole new level for me. After the first few rides, I was enchanted by him and continued to work with and train him. Mári took a very long time to gain trust, and it was not the easiest process, but the outcome of it is one of the best things that ever happened to me.

Mári is now the best horse we own. I



Mári frá Kolgerði back home from Amsterdam and "so full of himself" after competing at the World Championships. Photo by Eleanor Andersen.

like to think he is one of my soul mates, after all of these years of bonding and teamwork. He is also a great competition horse, because he has miles of experience

on the track. I have spent hours discovering what works best for him, strengthening him, and keeping his stamina up. I feel that I have never trained a horse so

much—and purely out of the joy of doing it. He has done so many things that most other horses have not, making him safe on the track, as well. For example, he has been one of the main stars in the Knights of Iceland performance team, exposed to lots of lights, loud music, and pacing through fire at expos like Equine Affaire. He has gone on trails many people don't attempt. For much of my teenage years, I explored the endless trails that we have access to at home and took Mári through some pretty extreme places.

He also just has a very good mind. He is polite, well behaved, and does almost everything without hesitation. That is why I love to compete on him so much. He is a one-of-a-kind horse.

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN

I decided to do it. With the try-outs due in May, I had one month from the CIA show to train, practice, and shoot a video. I had very recently come back from Iceland, where I am studying in the equestrian program at Hólar University College, and Mári was pretty out of shape. But I just put my head down and did what I do best with a horse that has been one of the biggest influences in my life for over four years. We got great feedback on our five-gait program, scoring a 6.9—to qualify for the team I only needed a 6.0.

I had no idea what I was getting myself into. But I did everything in my power to get us to Holland. I made phone calls and wrote emails and letters left and right asking for donations. I could not believe the support I received from people! The majority of the money I raised (about \$21,000) came from several incredibly kind personal sponsors, to whom I am endlessly grateful. The rest (\$2,367) came from Go Fund Me. It really is true that anything can happen if you put your mind to it.

After so much paperwork and logistical planning, suddenly Mári and I were on a plane to Holland. I was so mentally exhausted I couldn't even feel nervous, just relieved—and so incredibly excited to enter a world I had never seen before.

ON THAT TRACK

Arriving at the competition grounds on Friday, I had five days before competing: My Five Gait (F1) preliminary round would be on Wednesday afternoon. Un-



"I had never really thought it was possible," says Ayla about competing at the World Championships. Photo by Laura Benson.

less I qualified for the finals, it would be my one-and-only time being judged on the World Championships track. (I had opted not to ride in a second event, two being the maximum allowed by FEIF rules.) At first this felt like so much time to practice, but it just blew right by. I had wonderful coaching from Freyja Amble Gísladóttir, as well as the support of my friends and family.

Come Wednesday, the big day, I was so excited I could not wait to get out there on that track. I had spent the beginning of the week training, of course, but also watching many of the other preliminaries, which only made me thirsty to get out there myself. I did not feel nervous in any way. Mári and I had been through so much to get to this point, there were just good feelings in the air.

I cannot explain the feeling of competing out there, on that beautiful track, with a horse that has brought me so far and taught me so much. This feeling is indescribable. It was just Mári and me, and that's all I knew for that brief five minutes. We scored 5.10. This is nothing small. I came off the track crying, not because we had missed our first pace sprint

(causing a large deduction in points), but out of complete joy: Mári and I were competing at the World Championships! We went out on that track and did the best we could possibly do in that moment, through hard teamwork and dedication.

I will never forget that moment. We ended up in eighth place out of 11 in the Young Rider Five Gait division, or 28th out of 35 in Five Gait (F1) overall. I am proud of the performance we put on, and I am proud of the way we represented the U.S. I am proud to take these things so seriously, because this is the way that things are going to change for the U.S. as an Icelandic horse representative.

THE SAME PASSION

We are all here to do the same thing, with the same passion for the Icelandic horse, and that is why I am so grateful for this experience. This will definitely not be my last time representing the U.S. at a World Championship event. The future is bright! I had such a wonderful experience. I met new people, learned so much, achieved quite a few things, and was inspired even more to continue doing everything I can for these horses and our country.

I could not have done any of this without all of the helping hands I received. Many thanks to everyone involved in any way: To Doug Smith for loaning me his truck and trailer to drive Mári to and from the Los Angeles airport. To Ásta Dögg Bjarnadóttir-Covert for giving us a place to stay in LA. To Terry Benson, my grandfather, for flying to northern California to help me drive Mári south. To the U.S. team leader, Katrin Taylor Sheehan, who did so much to help me plan out my trip, including picking up and dropping off Mári and me at the airport in Holland. To my many generous and kind sponsors. Most of all, to my mother, Heidi Benson, and my aunt, Laura Benson, for supporting me all the way and giving me the tools, confidence, and drive to do the crazy things I do.

Of course, I can't forget my horse, Mári frá Kolgerði. He is one hell of a horse! I am so lucky to have him in my life and to have had him as one of my best teachers in life. Ours is a partnership that will last forever. There are some really exciting things ahead, and I can't wait for them to come!

THE HORSE AS HERO

BY ALYS CULHANE



Raudi hustles through the tunnel so that she might stand on the mat. Standing on the mat, as well as the TTeam, wrap increase proprioception.

Santa's grotto, wear a Santa hat while I sang a song, wade through a plastic bottle ice flow, weave through a festive star comprised of buckets, stand quietly while I ate something delicious, trot with a Santa sack on her back, and step through a curtain with a tinsel cascade. The grand finale was an obstacle of my choice: Raudi was to spin a wheelbarrow wheel.

My living in Alaska meant that I had to deal with additional obstacles: I had to take down and reassemble the paddock course, and practice time was limited by a lack of daylight and below-zero temperatures. My husband, Pete, made our first video on December 21, the shortest day of the year. He then submitted our completed video to Vanessa Bee, the Agility Club founder. Raudi and I received individual scores and numerical evaluations at the month's end. We came in seventh, with a score of 89, for which we received a participatory ribbon.

Our low score was partially due to inexperience. I had too few plastic bottles in the bottle bank, and my Santa sacks hung dangerously low. And Vanessa said that my lead rope was too tight. Little did I then know, but the latter indicated that something major was amiss.

I kept doing agility, because both Raudi and I enjoyed this unique sort of

I acquired Raudhetta from Alaskastadir in 2003; she was eight months old. Her breeder told me, when I purchased Raudi, that she had a strong temperament. Strong temperament indeed—the first time I led her, the 400-pound filly yanked the lead rope out of my hands and raced with great abandon around her paddock. I dealt with this and other seemingly insurmountable challenges by becoming a Centered Riding instructor, a TTeam Practitioner, and a Bones for Life/Feldenkrais teacher. Over time, Raudi became a reliable trail horse.

Our one weak link remained Raudi's penchant for pulling me in the direction she wanted to go—which was not always the direction I wanted to go.

In December 2014, a local Icelandic horse owner told me about the online International Agility Horse Club. Members set up an obstacle course and take their horse through it while being videotaped. The horse, pony, mini, or donkey com-

petes in a pre-determined division. The video is then submitted for evaluation. I signed on as a club member because I sensed that this would strengthen Raudi's and my on-the-ground bond.

I printed up my monthly sheet and set up the Christmas theme course in our horse paddock. Raudi, in-hand, was to jump over a snowdrift, walk through



Alys and Raudi approach the tarp on the agility course.



Raudi and Alys walk through the tunnel in unison. Notice that Alys's hand is on the horse's withers.

groundwork. And our scores improved. In September 2016, Pete and I began constructing what TTeam founder Linda Tellington Jones calls a "Playground of Higher Learning," or a site that "helps take the horses beyond their instinctive fears by making them feel the ground beneath their feet and the space around their bodies." We decided to situate our playground behind our cabin, in a bowl-like area surrounded by birch trees and ferns. We excavated the land, put up fencing, and built an equipment shed. We finished this project this past August, the same month in which Raudi was ranked 19th out of 100 in the International Agility League Leaderboard standings.

I was proud of our accomplishment. However, for the past few months Raudi had seemed like she was merely going through the motions of navigating the obstacles. She'd step on the hula hoop and hit ground poles with front and rear hooves. She seldom trotted when asked. My observation was affirmed by Vanessa's March 2016 comment, which was, "You're working harder than your pony!" Why was this? And what might I do about it? I didn't want to forego doing agility with Raudi because I really enjoyed it.

The answers to my questions began making themselves apparent in March 2017, shortly after I acquired a copy of Kathy Sierra and Steinar Sigurbjörnsson's collaborative e-book, *Intrinzen Posture: Getting Started*. I read it several times, each

time getting increasingly more excited about the fact that Kathy and Steinar were making the connections inherent to horse and human body awareness: movement science, motivation science, ideokinesis, and positive reinforcement training. I could relate, because these were also my training-related areas of interest.

Coincidentally, Steinar was scheduled to do a three-day Alaska Icelandic Horse Club-sponsored clinic in late May. I opted to audit his three-day riding clinic and do three hours of private lessons on the fourth

day. I watched on the first day, as Steinar trotted in-stride, alongside a horse and its rider. The word that came to mind in observing him was "presence," as defined by Amy Cuddy in her 2012 Ted Talk and book by the same title. Says Cuddy, "Presence is a term that's hard to define, but those who have it are in the moment, self-possessed, confident, and taking great joy in what they are doing." My initial impression held fast over the next three days, as Steinar coached approximately a dozen Icelandic horses and their riders, in the arena, in the center of a tolt track, and on the track itself.

I set up an agility course in the arena on Day Four. It consisted of traffic cones, ground poles, hula hoops, and corn oil containers tied together with baling twine. I released Raudi into the enclosure. She strode over to the far side of the arena and focused on a distant herd. I bit my lower lip as my supposed superstar agility horse ignored me. Steinar entered the arena. He was smiling, and seemed not bothered by the fact that Raudi had more pressing concerns. We talked at length about intrinsic learning, or learning in which the horse takes an active role in owning its own movement. When I asked for further clarification, Steinar said that owning movement means "taking joy in being agile, flexible, supple."

I initially thought it odd that he didn't immediately tell me to retrieve Raudi and have me do as Natural Horsemanship clinicians such as Ray Hunt advocate and make



Steinar Sigurbjörnsson walking Alys through an agility course, with Raudi following on the side.



On your mark, get set, go! Alys and Raudi do the bucket weave.

“the wrong thing difficult and the right thing easy” by focusing on the movement of her feet. Rather, he waited until she came to us. I watched as he ran his hand along her topline and in this way connected with her. Raudi stood briefly, ran off again, came back to us, and then headed toward the ground poles. I ran off after her. Steinar joined in on our third lap, and together we three trotted around the arena perimeter.

Steinar lifted his legs. I lifted mine. Raudi lifted her legs. He took my hand. I placed mine on Raudi’s withers. I felt lighter in my bearing, and suspected that Raudi did too. Raudi kept going when I asked her to whoa. Steinar told me that I needed to shift my weight backward so that Raudi might more readily do the same.

We subsequently played with my horses Hrimfara from Lough Arrow II and Tyra from Tuskast, both of whom were feeling more sociable than Raudi. We did Intrinzen “Crunches” and the “Panther Walk,” intrinsic activities that go hand-in-hand with the mirroring activity that Steinar and I had done while trotting with Raudi. Steinar was quick to add that these exercises would also be of benefit to Raudi, who was heavy on the forehead.

I enrolled in Kathy and Steinar Project Proprius online program in August 2017,

because Raudi and I were making headway with the Intrinzen exercises. Even Pete noticed that she was lighter on her feet. At the same time there was still a slight, nearly imperceptible disconnect between Raudi and me. Sometimes she was gung-ho about doing obstacle work and at other times she could care less. We hit an all-time low doing the September 2017 agility course. She was required to trot through six parallel poles and, along the way, go over a tarp and through a curtain. Pete and I watched the final video together. There I am, now on YouTube, for all the world to see, dragging my hapless mare behind me. Talk about embarrassed. Raudi’s on-again off-again attitude had me baffled. It was like a missing puzzle piece.

The missing piece materialized as I was watching a Project Proprius video in which Kathy referenced scholar Joseph Campbell’s hero archetype. According to Campbell, the protagonist embarks on a lengthy journey in which a mentor serves as a spirit guide. I embraced this literary framework when I was in graduate school; consequently, I was able to envision what Kathy said that, in general, horses are striving to become the best they can possibly be—that is, joyful, supple, agile, and brave. And my academic training also enabled me

to envision humans as equine spirit guides.

Was I assisting Raudi on her journey? In relation to what Steinar calls being “bad ass,” that is, being bold in her movements, the answer was no, as evidenced by the fact that I was forcing her to do what I wanted to do. She had no say in the matter, hence, the resigned attitude. If anything, she was the antithesis of hero.

My seeing Raudi as a hero on her own journey, and me as her spirit guide, was what grounded us. My motto became “play, play, play.” I stopped shaping Raudi’s behavior and began encouraging movement while at the same time remaining cognizant of my own posture. We began playing tag, predator, and soccer, activities in which we ran in multiple directions. I also decided to forego using the lead rope in practicing the October agility course and began doing liberty work exclusively. Raudi seemed to enjoy herself, as together we raced through the tunnel and through the scary corner. Having a good time: This is where we are now. At the month’s end I’ll do an in-hand agility video. If she again acts unenthused, we’ll do liberty work exclusively. We’ll see. All good adventures take unexpected twists and turns, and Raudi’s journey has been no exception.

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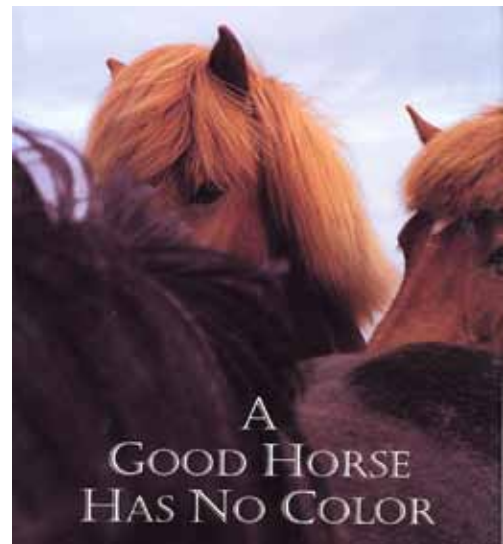
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Five-Gait Farm Icelandics-
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Jennifer Denning and K.c. Thornley
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(831) 332-5328 (phone)
fivegaitfarmicelandics@gmail.com
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Philippi, WV 26416-7198
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icywoman@msn.com
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Barbara and Daniel Riva
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