

## American Dressage Legends: Major Anders Lindgren

*The Swedish cavalry officer helped bring instructor education to US dressage*

Reflecting our sport's European roots and the influence of many foreign trainers in American dressage, several Roemer Foundation/USDF Hall of Fame inductees were not born in this country. All cared deeply about dressage and invested much of themselves in growing the sport in the New World.

No discussion of the history of US dressage is complete without a mention of Major Anders Lindgren (1925-

Lindgren got his equestrian start via the Swedish cavalry. From 1954 to 1968 he taught at Strömsholm, the Swedish Army Equestrian Center. Reflecting the cavalry's multidiscipline nature, Lindgren competed in eventing as well as dressage, and in 1959 he won the Scandinavian Eventing Championship. In 1971 he won the Swedish National Dressage Championship title, and the following year he was the reserve rider for the Swedish

can Dressage Legends: Violet Hopkins," June 2014.) Over the next ten years, Lindgren introduced nearly 1,000 US instructors to the systematic, structured approach to teaching dressage that he had learned at Strömsholm.

Lindgren taught the instructors how to create lesson plans and how to design and use specific exercises for horse and rider. He was one of the first instructors to use cones to mark out an arena pattern for teaching a movement or exercise; his best-known patterns were later compiled in the book *Major Anders Lindgren's Teaching Exercises* (Trafalgar Square, 1998). In Lindgren's instructor seminars, demonstration riders served as students for the instructors, whose teaching performance was critiqued by Lindgren and other participants. In a logical extension of the instructor seminars, Lindgren brought Swedish FEI "O" judge Eric Lette and Finnish Olympian Kyra Kyrklund to the US to conduct USDF National Symposia.

Lindgren also organized and taught more than 50 USDF regional instructor workshops, which followed the format of the national seminars. Dressage clubs including the New England Dressage Association, the Northern Ohio Dressage Association, and the Rocky Mountain Dressage Society regularly sponsored the workshops for their members.

As an early proponent of instructor certification, Lindgren urged the USDF to establish a formal program to certify dressage instructor/trainers in a method similar to various European equestrian trainer-licensing programs. His vision culminated in the establishment of the USDF Instructor/Trainer Program in 1990, which has since been emulated by organizations including the United States Eventing Association.

In 2003, Lindgren was inducted into the Roemer Foundation/USDF Hall of Fame.

The national and regional Lindgren seminars were widely anticipated and received substantial equestrian-press coverage. *USDF Connection*



TEACHER OF TEACHERS: Maj. Anders Lindgren in an undated photo

2010), the Swedish-born cavalry officer and Olympian who introduced the American dressage community to a systematic method of "training the trainers" and whose seminars were the forerunner to the USDF Instructor/Trainer Program, USDF instructor certification, and major USDF educational symposia including the FEI-Level Trainers Conferences and the National Dressage Symposia.

eventing team at the Munich Olympic Games. He was also a longtime Grand Prix-level dressage competitor.

In 1975, Lindgren retired from the Army and began a new career as a civilian equestrian instructor/trainer. A fellow Swede, Col. Aage Sommer, brought Lindgren to Violet Hopkins' farm in Michigan in 1981 for the inaugural USDF National Instructors Seminar. (Read more about Hopkins in "Ameri-



TRAINING THE TRAINERS: Lindgren at the 1985 USDF/Hopkins instructor seminar

thanks freelance writer Patti Schofler for granting permission to reprint her coverage of the 1989 regional seminar in California, which appeared in the July 1989 issue of *Dressage & CT* magazine. (Editor's note: The photo above did not appear with the original article and is from the USDF archives.)

## USDF/Lindgren Instructors' Seminar

The day the US has an academy for riding instructors, the academy's teaching tools and philosophy likely will reflect the work of Major Anders Lindgren of Sweden, who has joined forces with the USDF to teach teachers how to teach through a yearly series of regional seminars. Lindgren began this year's series at Santa Rosa, California, in April, and will end in October in the Boston area.

At Santa Rosa, 12 instructors and 20 auditors participated in Phase B of this two-year program, which features Third through FEI level instruction. Introduced in the five-day program this year were sessions on freestyle, presented by "I" judge and former Olympian Alexandra Howard of Watsonville, California.

Another addition, provided by Lindgren, was a video of Danish television coverage of dressage at the 1988 Olympics, with Lindgren's voiceover providing insight into the Grand Prix Special rides. The video was shown to participants and the public on the Saturday night of the program.

A graduate of the Swedish Royal Officers Academy and a student of the Swedish Army Equestrian Center, Strömsholm, Lindgren was short-listed for the Swedish team in 1952-60. In 1963 he became an instructor at Strömsholm under Lt. Col. Baron Hans von Blixen-Finecke. On the Swedish Warmblood gelding *Eko* he became Swedish national dressage champion in 1971, and the alternate member of the Swedish Olympic team in Munich in 1972. He has brought

his international training and teaching to the US because "people in the US need to be informed on the international scene, on training methods they've never seen," he explained.

Lindgren is a supporter of a US certification program for instructors. Ideally, he would like to see a national academy, which would allow the US to become less dependent on Europe. "You need a place where you can stay for a year or more and study with the masters. You don't have just one facil-



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ity here. The problem is, this is not a country, but a part of the world," he said. Because of the country's size, the regional seminars were developed.

This her fourth regional seminar, instructor Lynn Brown of Loomis, California, observed, "A lot of instructors teach because they are successful riders, but they don't necessarily teach well. That's why the concept of this program is so great."

Phase A of the regional seminars will begin again next year and include how to get the horse on the bit, how to help students to relax and supple a horse, how to use the cavesson and long lines with a young horse, how to implement long-range planning and how to do lesson plans. Phase B includes upper-level training and improving riding techniques.

The signature of the Lindgren method is the use of small fences, buckets and plastic cones in the arena to induce students to look ahead and plan. "Look happy and look up," Lindgren repeated throughout the seminar. "Ride with your eyes and your weight."

For example, two sets of two small traffic cones were placed about three feet apart on either side of X. The participating instructors "broke the line" of the track and trotted through these "gates," then leg-yielded back to the rail. This exercise is designed to "disturb" the balance at the withers and shoulder, thereby suppling the horse.

In another example, he used cones to mark the zigs and zags for the counter-changes of hand in half-pass.

Throughout the five-day seminar, Lindgren and the participants evaluated training, teaching and planning techniques. In the evenings, the instructors planned lessons to be taught the next day to volunteer demonstration riders, affectionately known as "guinea pigs." The instructors, auditors, Lindgren and the riders offered their thoughts on the teachers' communication skills, working relationships, planning, knowledge and teaching techniques.

"Students are used to my drill. Last year was torture," said Lindgren of the

lesson planning. "At first they were unfamiliar with procedures. Then they learned how to teach. This year they have confidence."

Howard joined the sessions as a freestyle judge and expert. One morning was dedicated to judging, with demonstration riders performing parts of tests as the group scored them and gave comments. Howard, in turn, gave her evaluation. She also taught the participants how to choose and diagram music. At the end of the third day, she performed a Kür to Music on her Swedish Warmblood stallion *Pilgrim*.

Students heard more Lindgren wisdom as he demonstrated his skill with the long lines, telling an anxious mare, "My rhythm, my rhythm. You stretch on my conditions." To an anxious handler whose horse would not move forward and kicked out, he said, "Make him know this is unacceptable. They must see that you are not scared, but that you are logical."

A tearful guinea pig experienced the Lindgren touch after her horse gave her a difficult time. Lindgren ended the session by hugging her and thanking her for putting herself before the group's scrutiny.

Lisa Beckett of Palo Cedro, California, a participant at several previous Lindgren seminars, summed up this year's seminar: "The quality of instructors has improved, as well as the instructors' riding abilities. The difference in Anders and other international instructors is that he inspires you to become a better instructor, a better rider. Nothing is negative. It's all positive." ▲

—Patricia Schofler

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