

## American Dressage Legends: Ivan I. Bezugloff Jr.

*Founder of the first US-based dressage magazine*

In the pre-Internet era in which the USDF was founded and dressage began gaining a foothold in the American landscape, dressage-related information was primarily disseminated via print media. The problem was, there was no US-based magazine dedicated to dressage.



AHEAD OF HIS TIME: *Bezugloff in an undated photo*

In 1971, a Czech-born amateur dressage rider named Ivan I. Bezugloff Jr. changed that when he founded the first national periodical dedicated to our sport. Thanks to Bezugloff's European connections, *Dressage*, as it was originally titled, brought the advice and viewpoints of the Continental dressage establishment to the New World. Soon American voices entered the mix, as did dressage's cousin, eventing; and for 25 years Bezugloff

edited *Dressage and Combined Training*, as the magazine was renamed (later shortened to *Dressage & CT*), to serve as the USA's primary information highway for dressage and eventing enthusiasts.

In its heyday, *Dressage & CT* was a must-read for the intellectual equestrian. There was no gloss, no "equestrian lifestyle" component, no stunning photography, no award-winning design. *D&CT* was rather more like a scholarly journal, with lengthy treatises on training, equine biomechanics, competitions, and sport and governance issues. Its small but passionate group of subscribers hoarded every issue and spent hours poring over the dense content. *D&CT* was known for its willingness to delve deeply into topics—Kay Meredith, a former USDF president, penned a "Dressage for Beginners" series in the early 1970s that lasted for 22 issues—and for its role as the national dressage forum, with letters to the editor being followed for months by replies to that letter, rebuttals to subsequent missives, and so on.

The monthly magazine was quite an accomplishment for a man whose knowledge of dressage was rudimentary at best until he reached his mid-twenties. The son of a Russian emigrant, Bezugloff came to the US in 1952 and took a job as an electronics engineer in New London, CT. Ten years later, he started his own company in Cleveland, OH. From a Hungarian-born employee he learned of nearby Lake Erie College's equestrian program and its director, Laddie Andahazy, and soon the men were having discussions about dressage.

It bothered Bezugloff that there was no US dressage magazine because



he believed that, as in any other sport, there were theoretical aspects to dressage and horse training. Andahazy challenged him to act on his convictions, and in 1971 Bezugloff sold his company and created *Dressage*.

The list of *D&CT* contributors reads like a Who's Who of dressage at the time. Besides Kay Meredith, bylines included Charles de Kunffy, Karl Mikolka, Sally O'Connor, Dr. Kent Allen Vasko, Dr. Deb Bennett, Hans von Blixen-Finicke, Dr. Henri L. M. van Schaik, and Capt. Andrew de Szinay. *D&CT* also published an events calendar, show results, and news shorts. Correspondents in the UK, Germany, and Denmark covered important dressage and eventing competitions.

Bezugloff was also a founding member of the USDF and the founder of Xenophon Press, which published dressage texts by the likes of French trainer François Baucher and equine-biomechanics clinician Jean-Luc Cornille.

Eventually *D&CT* fell on hard times, and Bezugloff exhausted most of his retirement nest egg to keep the magazine afloat. In the late 1990s he sold the struggling title to a consumer enthusiast-magazine publisher, but a little more than a year later, *D&CT* ceased publication.

For his contributions to American dressage, Bezugloff was inducted into the Roemer Foundation/USDF Hall of

Fame in 2002. He died in 2011 at the age of 85. He donated his extensive equestrian library to the USDF, where it now resides in the Gypsy Woods Farm Resource Center at the USDF National Education Center in Lexington, KY. Bezugloff's widow, Natalia, who died in October 2014, generously granted to *USDF Connection* permission to reprint material from *Dressage & CT's* archives. In that spirit, we are proud to republish the following report by Ivan Bezugloff on the first-ever US national dressage championships, in 1981.

*From all around the country, riders and horses traveled thousands of miles to Oklahoma for*

## THE INSILCO UNITED STATES DRESSAGE CHAMPIONSHIPS

By Ivan I. Bezugloff Jr.  
Reprinted from *Dressage & CT*,  
January 1982

The standing ovation accorded representatives of Insilco Cor-

poration at the Sunday awards banquet captured as nothing else could the enthusiasm of competitors, management, and spectators at the conclusion of the historic 1981 Insilco United States Dressage Championships, held October 23-25, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Maryal Barnett, a rider from Michigan, expressed it well: "Excellence without competition would only be a promise. Thanks to Insilco for allowing more than a promise to take place."

Despite the absence of some well-known faces, particularly from the East, the Insilco Championships program included good competition at all levels. Fifty-one horses from fourteen states traveled an average of 2,517 miles (round trip) to compete after receiving invitations based on national rankings through the United States Dressage Federation's Horse of the Year program, and the American Horse Shows Association/United States Equestrian Team Almaden

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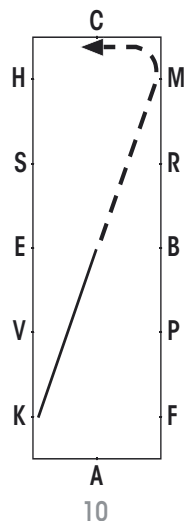
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*Donauglanz, owned by Gregory Chandler and ridden by Terry Koenig from Virginia, was First Level Reserve Champion*

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Regional Finals. A total round-trip mileage of 128,358 was reimbursed at a rate of 15¢ per mile for a total of \$19,258—a not inconsiderable budget item, reflecting management's desire to make the trip feasible for the greatest number of competitors possible.

The riders were enthusiastic about the opportunity to compete against horses and riders from all across the country, most having never met in head-to-head competition. "This type of event is very beneficial to the competitors," Jaye Cherry of Sunland, California explained. "It seasons the riders and horses—something local competitions don't provide. The United States needs to have this type of event to provide up and coming riders the chance to experience head-to-head competition with the best the country has to offer!" She was echoed by Midwesterner Carol Grant from Hartland, Michigan: "The Insilco Championships are the type of competition that produces the pressure we need to go on to international competition. We need this type of big time competition—it will become the absolute high point of the year held on an annual basis."

The innovative program for the Insilco United States Dressage Championships featured preliminary classes on Friday and Saturday and ride-off classes on Sunday. Horses at the four national levels performed one test each day under the scrutiny of two judges, with a different pair of judges for the second day. The four scores were totaled, and the top three horses at each level returned to the competition arena on Sunday for a third test judged the full jury of five. The total scores from the three tests determined the Champion, Reserve Champion, and third place for each level. At the four international levels, each horse performed one test each day on Friday and Saturday for the full panel of five judges. The top three horses, again based on cumulative scores, returned for a six minute freestyle ride based on the FEI Free-Style (Kuer) requirements, again with five judges.

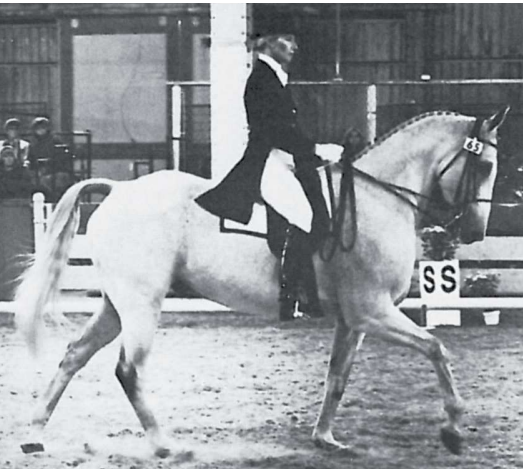
The results of the Kuer were added to the preliminary class scores to select the final winners.

Robert Freels of Bedford, New York, representing the Insilco Corporation, and Kay Meredith, president of the United States Dressage Federation, presented ribbons and congratulations to the top three horses immediately following each ride-off class. The ceremony, concluding with a victory round to the thunderous applause of the appreciative audience, was only the beginning of the awards festivities. Sunday evening, the awards banquet included the distribution of \$11,700 in cash prizes, as well as trophy plaques, special awards at each level, and a beautiful competition award featuring the Insilco Championships medal for each of the competitors who had come so far, regardless of their final placing.

The international ground jury was headed by Col. Donald W. Thackeray of Maryland, and included Michael Mathews of Michigan, A. J. Pot from Holland, Inez Propfe-Credo of California, and Gillian Wilson from Canada. Nigel Casserly of Virginia as announcer, local coordinators Bob and Bea Pape, Patricia Ritchie of Connecticut as competition manager, and Jeanne Braceland of Pennsylvania as competition secretary, all were tireless in their efforts which were rewarded by a smoothly functioning competition, appreciated by the competitors, and assisted by a large corps of volunteers from Oklahoma and across the country.

Spectators from twenty-two states and Canada braved unseasonably cold Oklahoma weather on Friday and Saturday, with the addition of rain on Sunday morning, to warm the competitors with their interest and applause. The Sunday afternoon international-level Kuers, each set to appropriate music, drew the largest audience as well as the most thunderous ovations, a new experience for many of the horses and riders.

Woodimix, a Thoroughbred gelding owned and ridden by 26-year-old Kim Beardsley of Issaquah, Washing-



Blue Jay, owned and ridden by Debbie Demmi of Florida, was the Intermediate 1 Champion

ton, won both Grand Prix preliminary classes, entering Sunday's freestyle ride-off with a commanding lead which he maintained despite two costly omissions which lowered the Kuer score, to be named the Insilco United States Grand Prix champion. Jaye Cherry's Appaloosa, Moga, was ranked fourth after the Friday preliminary class but moved up on Saturday to second and maintained that ranking through the Sunday ride-off. Third place at Grand



Montu, owned and ridden by Shellwyn Nelson-Nathan of California, took third place in the Prix St. Georges

Prix was Moonshadow, a Thoroughbred mare owned and ridden by Barbi Breen of Los Osos, California.

The preliminary class averages over 607 sent Percy III into the Sunday freestyle ride-off with a commanding lead for the Insilco United States Intermediate 2 Championship. The chestnut Hanoverian, owned and ridden by Carole Grant of Hartland, Michigan, maintained his lead to claim the title. Amon Ra and owner/rider Natalie Lamping of Algonquin, Illinois presented the top scored Intermediate 2 freestyle ride but it was not enough to take over the lead in the three-day cumulative score, placing the seven-year-old Thoroughbred stallion as Reserve Champion. Prussian Dudley, owned by Chuck Grant and ridden by Mari Zdunic of Brighton, Michigan, gave a crowd-pleasing musical performance for third place to complete the midwestern domination at Intermediate 2. Prussian Dudley, a Trakehner/Thoroughbred cross, was Mari's only mount for the competition

after Barbara Brennan's Frenesi was scratched from Grand Prix competition due to an injury on Friday morning—a tremendous disappointment after a successful competition season and the long trek to Oklahoma.

Winning the Insilco United States Intermediate I Championship after leading the field through all three days of competition was the Quarter Horse gelding, Blue Jay, owned and ridden by Debbie Demmi of Tampa, Florida, and familiar to many as the former mount of Kay Meredith. Achat, a striking Hanoverian/Thoroughbred stallion owned by Lyla Grant and ridden by Trip Harting of Hidden Hills, California, was ranked third after the Friday preliminary class but moved up to second after Saturday's scores were posted and emerged as the Intermediate I Reserve Champion. Third place at this level was Vertex, a Trakehner gelding owned and ridden by Lois Heyerdahl of West Salem, Wisconsin.

Melissa Beardsley's Black Bart traveled from Vashon, Washington to earn

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*Forget Not, owned by Virginia Campbell Scott and ridden by Cara Campbell of Texas, was third at Second Level*

the title of Insilco United States Prix St. Georges Champion in convincing style, taking a commanding lead after Friday's preliminary class and never relinquishing it. The Appaloosa gelding's performance upheld the Beard-sley clan's championship mood and confirmed the Northwest as an emerging dressage area. Third after Friday's preliminary class, Haagan Dasz moved into second place on Saturday, and on Sunday was named Insilco United States Prix St. Georges Reserve Champion. The Percheron/Thoroughbred gelding is owned and ridden by David Lackey of Clarkston, Michigan.

Shellwyn Nelson-Nathan's Montu, a Hanoverian mare, improved steadily throughout the three competition days. The Tarzana, California, pair ranked only fifth after Friday's performance, but their Saturday efforts produced the second best Prix St. Georges score of the day, moving them up to third place in the overall standings for a final third place finish after the free-style on Sunday.

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The close contest at Fourth Level that emerged after Friday's preliminary round was resolved on Sunday with the victory of Fast Sailing, a Thoroughbred owned and ridden by Kamila Dupont of Moorpark, California. First by less than ten points on Friday, Fast Sailing came back for a Saturday test ranked first by both judges, a feat repeated before the full jury of five on Sunday. Fourth Level Reserve Champion was Pregelstrand, a Trakehner stallion owned by Vanda Werner and ridden by Leslie Koelbel. This horse, from Parker, Colorado, was ranked third after both preliminary classes, but moved into second place following the final ride-off test on Sunday, nosing out third place finisher Nick of Time, a Quarter Horse gelding owned and ridden by Holly Essex of Fresno, California.

Placing first in all three days of competition to emerge as the Insilco United States Third Level Champion was yet another Essex horse, L'Histoire. The Anglo-Norman stallion was one of three horses that Holly brought to Oklahoma, familiar territory to the former Texas resident. Cricket, a Thoroughbred cross, worked up to a second place finish at Third Level for his owner/rider Maryal Barnett of East Lansing, Michigan. Slipping to third after holding the second rank going into the ride-off was Sleuth, a Thoroughbred gelding owned and ridden by Lyn Prevolos of Corte Madera, California.

A close contest for the Second Level Championship was brewing after Friday's preliminary class, with Stephanie Blockley's Return Engagement tied with Per Waaler's Scorpio II in the first position. Return Engagement, a Quarter Horse based in Stanwood, Washington, took over the lead on Saturday and maintained the advantage through the Sunday ride-off to take home the championship, leaving Scorpio II, a Westphalian from Woodland Hills, California, to a strong reserve. Third place at Second Level went to Forget Not, a Clydesdale/Thoroughbred and the lone Texas entry. Owned by Virginia Campbell Scott of Houston, Tex-

as, Forget Not was ridden by Virginia's sister, Cara Campbell, and received the considerable audience support of the many Texans who had come to the competition as spectators.

First Level saw the heaviest competition, reflecting the national picture of over 800 horses with scores recorded toward USDF Horse of the Year awards. Eleven horses comprised the Insilco First Level Championship field, with the eventual winner, Laurie Falvo's Unguarded, coming from a tie for third and fourth after Friday's preliminary class to a decisive victory on Saturday, and finally to the championship title. Unguarded, a Thoroughbred gelding, is based in San Diego, California. A strong second place ranking gave the reserve championship to Gregory Chandler's Donauglanz, a Trakehner stallion ridden by Terry Koenig of Greenville, Virginia. Ranked first in Friday's preliminary test and tied at third for Saturday's effort, Donauglanz equalled the winner's score in the ride-off test to

miss the championship by only three points. Third place went to Chapter XI, a Thoroughbred mare owned and ridden by Barb Asplundh, a student at Lake Erie College, Painesville, Ohio. Each rider and owner bringing a horse to the Insilco Championships received a Lucite paperweight containing the commemorative medal which was struck exclusively for the premier 1981 event. The Insilco United States Dressage Championships 1981 were sponsored by the Insilco Corporation, a "Fortune 500" company and the leader in corporate support of equestrian sports since 1977. Conducted under the auspices of the United States Dressage Federation, Inc., and recognized by both the USDF and the AHSA, the 1981 championship show broke important ground for the future of dressage competition in the United States. Asked if there should be future competitions of this nature, the answer from the competitors was a resounding and unqualified "Yes!" ▲

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