

American Dressage Legends

Lowell Boomer: Man of Action

By John Boomer

Meet the founder of the USDF. First in a series on the Roemer Foundation/USDF Hall of Fame inductees.

Throughout the summer of 1972, a feeling was growing that the United States needed an organization to

The USDF Hall of Fame (now the Roemer Foundation/USDF Hall of Fame) was established in 1996 “to honor and preserve the achievements of the people and horses that made outstanding contributions to the growth, development, quality, popularity, and appreciation of dressage in the United States,” according to the Hall of Fame website.



PIONEER: Lowell Boomer in an undated photo

Some of the earliest inductions were posthumous. Others were dressage notables, then in the twilight of their lives, who have since left us.

As time marches on, these greats run the risk of becoming just names in a history book—or worse, names no longer recognized. We who care about our sport should take the time to learn about them and their contributions; after all, as the saying goes,



EQUESTRIAN FAMILY: The Boomer family in the 1940s, ready to ride in the family class at the Nebraska State Fair Horse Show. From left: Lowell Boomer on Royal Eclipse, Gladys Boomer riding Bugle Boy, John Boomer on Anchors Aweigh, and Jim Boomer on Miss Toots.

if you want to know where you’re going, you need to know where you’ve been. What’s more, many Hall of Famers contributed important writings on dressage during their lifetimes—texts that deserve to be reread and studied by a new generation of enthusiasts.

In that spirit, this month *USDF Connection* is launching a new series, “American Dressage Legends.” In each issue we’ll introduce (or reintroduce) you to a Hall of Fame member. We’ll also bring you exclusive writings by or about each legend, in the hopes that their wisdom, knowledge, and legacies can live on.

It’s only fitting that we begin our series with the man who is best remembered for getting the USDF itself off the ground: Lowell Boomer.

promote dressage. As Col. Donald W. Thackeray said, “We need an organization to take the ball and run.” But there was considerable disagreement as to who the ball carrier should be, and the thorny problem of where to locate the headquarters.

My father, Lowell Boomer, who owned an equestrian center and a printing company in Lincoln, NE, volunteered to help, and suggested Lincoln as a “center of the nation” geographic site.

Eighty-one people convened in Lincoln on February 17-19, 1973, to form the United States Dressage Federation. They named Lowell Boomer the new organization’s executive secretary, a position he would go on to hold for twelve years, followed by four years as president.

During the USDF's formative years, Lowell Boomer was devoted to organizing, developing, and directing its management and governance team while determining what dressage people wanted their new organization to do and not do, to be and not be. In 1989, he formed The Dressage Foundation (dressagefoundation.org), also in Lincoln, to cultivate and provide financial support for the advancement of dressage, as its mission statement reads.

Riding his pony as a child, Lowell later frequently visited the US Cavalry School at Ft. Riley, KS, to watch US dressage Olympians Col. Hiram Tuttle and Col. Isaac Kitts school their horses, and then went home to emulate them. After establishing his Great Plains Equestrian Center just outside of Lincoln, Lowell went on to ride and compete in horse shows, to fox hunt, to organize horse trials, and to teach and train riders in jumping, eventing, and dressage. He took special joy in teaching horsemanship and horsemastership to his two sons and later his three grandsons, all of whom went on to become accomplished horsemen. Lowell was happiest when training a horse or teaching a rider.

Lowell Boomer was honored throughout his life with prestigious equestrian awards. He is the first inductee into the USDF Hall of Fame, the founder of the Nebraska Dressage Association, and the recipient of the Braley Gray Award and the United States Equestrian Federation's sterling-silver cowboy hat, the latter the USEF's Jimmy Williams Lifetime Achievement Trophy. *The Chronicle of the Horse* named him one of its 50 most influential horsemen of the twentieth century.

Not only did Lowell Boomer share generously his time and talent with the equestrian world, but he also gave richly of his treasure. When the USDF built its new headquarters in Lexington, KY, a donor gave \$50,000 to the capital campaign with a stipulation that it must be matched. Lowell sent his personal \$50,000 check to put the capital campaign over the top. He

Can she hear you?

If she's using an Eponaire communication system, she won't miss a word.

We understand how important your lessons are to both you and your students. Our systems provide easy, clear, discreet communication to help you train at your very best.

Our comprehensive selection of one-way, duplex, and PA compatible systems are available in a variety of price ranges. We have a system to suit your needs and your budget.

Contact our experts for help in selecting the right communications system for you!



Shop online anytime at
www.eponaire.com
or call us at:

1-866-513-7700


EPONAIRE
equine products

 2014	2 Divisions <i>Art and Photography</i> 3 Age Groups <i>15 and under, 16 to 21 and Adult</i>
	ENTRY DEADLINE JULY 1
	The grand prize winning entry will be used as cover art for the USDF Member Guide. www.usdf.org <i>(awards/other awards)</i> for complete contest rules and entry form
USDF ARTS CONTEST	

TIME TO NOMINATE CANDIDATES

April 15, 2014

is the deadline for
nominations for:
**Participating Member (PM)
Delegates in All Regions**

To accept the nomination,
and if elected, a PM delegate
nominee must:

- Be a current Participating Member of USDF.
- Currently reside in the region for which they are running as a candidate.
- Agree to serve a one year term, from the time of election in 2014 until the election in 2015.
- Attend the 2014 USDF convention.

e-mail all
nominations to
nominations@usdf.org

regularly donated to both USDF and The Dressage Foundation. He established a \$500,000 charitable remainder unitrust for The Dressage Foundation with part of the proceeds from the sale of his printing company to his employees when he retired.

The View from C is a little book published by and available from The Dressage Foundation. It contains material from a lecture given by Dr. Dietmar Specht of Germany during an American Horse Shows Association (now USEF) International Level Judges' Forum at Linda Zang's Idlewilde Farm in Maryland in 1981. It electrified the American dressage audience, and many remember it vividly even today. Lowell Boomer purchased the publishing rights to *The View from C* and donated those rights to The Dressage Foundation, which copyrighted and published the book, helped by a generous donation from Priscilla Endicott to cover the initial printing costs. In the foreword, now-retired FEI 5* judge Axel Steiner writes: "I hope

all of you, be it riders, judges, owners and other interested horse people, pick up this little book again and again, as you might find something new each time."

From Lowell Boomer's vision came two premier dressage organizations, structured and operating as separate entities, one focused on education, the other on funding. Lowell, who died in 2011 at 100 years of age, has left a rich legacy for our sport. ▲

John Boomer, Lowell Boomer's son, is a lifelong equestrian and a former CEO of The Dressage Foundation. A retired business executive, civic leader, and philanthropist, he lives with his wife, Lynn, in Lincoln, NE.

Editor's note: For more on Lowell Boomer and the founding of the USDF, see "Through the Years: United States Dressage Federation" and "USDF Notes from Lincoln," November 2013. Visit the Roemer Foundation/USDF Hall of Fame website at usdf.org/halloffame.

What Stinks?

Not my stall.

I keep it fresh & healthy with



Sweet PDZ HORSE STALL
ReFreshers[®]

#1 Stall Deodorizer, 25 Years & Counting.

To find a retailer
near you call,
800.367.1534
www.sweetpdz.com





