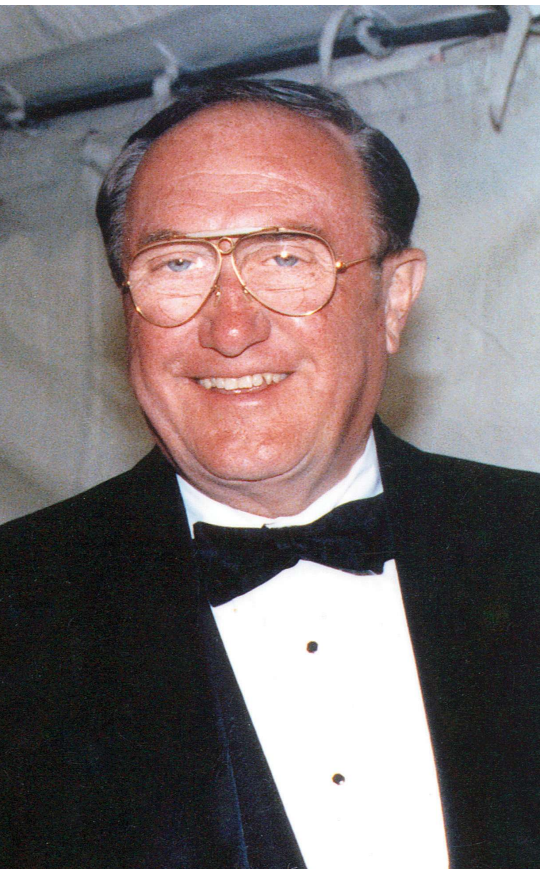


American Dressage Legends: John H. Fritz

The USDF, USEA, and USET—just a few of the houses that Jack helped build

There are doers, and then there are those whose accomplishments tower over those of us mere mortals.

Captain John H. “Jack” Fritz (1924-2012) was a superhero of US equestrian sport. Were it not for his efforts, American dressage—and eventing,



THE DIPLOMAT: *Fritz in an undated photo*

and Pony Club, and the North American Junior and Young Rider Championships—would not exist today, at least not in their current robust forms.

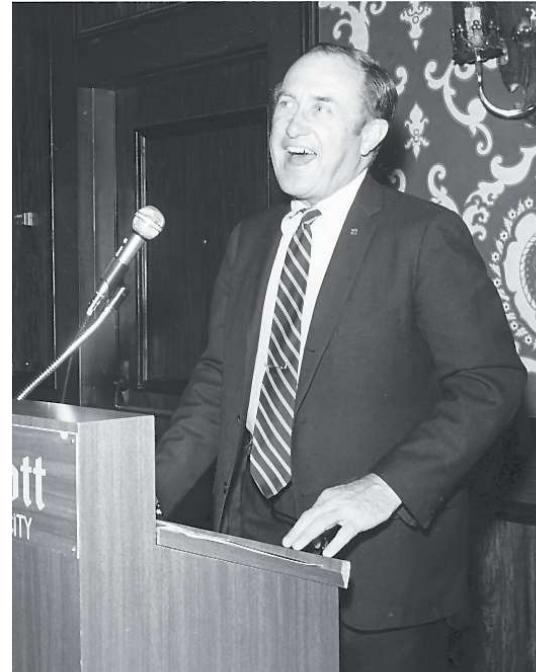
Fritz was one of the cavalry-era Army officers who brought his equestrian knowledge and organizational

expertise to the fledgling horse-sport world of the 1950s and 1960s, as sporting associations sprang up to fill the void left by the cavalry’s mechanization. A hunter/jumper rider as a youth, he had become interested in dressage while a student at Princeton University in New Jersey in the late 1940s. Fritz rode at the Princeton Riding Club under Anita Hazek, a native of Austria who had trained at the Spanish Riding School. At the riding club he also had the opportunity to study with Major Deszo Szilagyi, a graduate of the Hungarian Cavalry School.

After college, Fritz entered military service. While stationed in Tokyo during the Korean War, he rode regularly at the Imperial Palace, taking instruction from two members of the 1932 Japanese Olympic dressage and eventing teams. In the spring of 1952, he participated in a show-jumping competition that included Crown Prince Akihito, who later became the emperor of Japan.

In 1951, when the United States Equestrian Team was founded, Fritz joined and soon assumed a leadership role. By 1965, he had become the USET’s director. From 1974 to 1989, he served as its executive vice president; later, he assumed the volunteer role of assistant secretary-treasurer and continued to come into the USET offices in Gladstone, NJ, almost daily. During his long tenure, Fritz was the resident expert on USET and American equestrian history—a fitting role, considering that he was a professor of history at Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey for more than 25 years.

“In the 1950s and early ’60s, I happened to be in a part of the United States where dressage and eventing



“HE GOT US ALL TOGETHER”: *Fritz at an early USDF convention*

was taking root,” Fritz said in a 2003 interview with *USDF Connection*. “It was a growing sport, and not many people were involved. There was a need for somebody who was interested in both, and it was me.”

Fritz’s next organizational move after the USET was in 1955, when he joined the US Pony Clubs, which had been founded the year before. He went on to become a USPC president and in 1995 was honored for his years of service with the Pony Club Founder’s Award.

From there Fritz became interested in eventing, and in 1959 he helped to establish the United States Combined Training Association (now the US Eventing Association), which inducted him into its Hall of Fame in 1999. A driving enthusiast to boot, Fritz is also a founding member of the Gladstone (NJ) Driving Association.

Podcast Alert



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Fritz, who earned his eventing and dressage judge's licenses in the 1950s, served the American Horse Shows Association (now the United States Equestrian Federation) for more than 40 years. In the 1960s, when the AHSA formed dressage and eventing committees to establish rules and competitions, Fritz was a member of each and chaired both. He also later became an FEI judge, and he was a member of the eventing ground jury at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and at the 1987 Pan American Games in Indianapolis.

In the early 1970s, Fritz helped to found the Eastern States Dressage and Combined Training Association and the Delaware Valley Combined Training Association, both of which went on to become USDF charter group-member organizations (GMOs).

Members of these and other regional and local dressage clubs, frustrated at what they saw as lack of attention to dressage by the AHSA, wanted to create a national dressage organiza-

tion. Fritz, not surprisingly, was called on to help, and he attended the founding meeting of the USDF in Lincoln, NE, in 1973, where meeting organizer Lowell Boomer recruited him to serve as chair and keeper of order.

The delegates from the clubs who attended the USDF founding meeting were a "polyglot group," the late former USDF president and 2002 USDF Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Lazelle Knocke recalled in a 2003 interview with *USDF Connection*.

"There was no common thread except, 'How can we get a national [organization] off the ground?' So you needed someone who with humor, and yet with authority, could make it work. So Lowell turned to Jack Fritz. He was at that time a college dean, so he was used to handling unruly folks. He got us all together."

Fritz was also a strong supporter of young equestrians. In 1967, he and co-founder Robert E. Cacchione—the latter of whom was a student of Fritz's

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CELEBRATED: Fritz (left) at a ribbon-cutting for the Roemer Foundation/USDF Hall of Fame at the 2006 USDF convention

at the time—created Fairleigh Dickinson University’s riding program. Together they also launched the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association, which today has almost 400 member colleges in 45 states and Canada.

Fritz left an enduring legacy for aspiring young international equestrian competitors. He believed that young riders in North America needed a continental championships similar to those held in Europe, and the creation of the North American Young Riders Championships (now the FEI North American Junior and Young Riders Championships) in the 1970s is largely the result of his efforts. The eventing competition debuted first, in 1974, with dressage joining the NAYRC in 1981 and jumping, in 1983.

The USDF bestowed on Fritz its first honorary life membership, and in 2000 he was inducted into the Roemer Foundation/USDF Hall of Fame.

As a dressage judge and a member of the AHSA (now USEF) Dressage Committee, Jack Fritz had a keen interest both in the evolution of dressage judging and in reporting on those changes. For the March 1976 is-

sue of *Dressage* (later *Dressage & CT*) magazine, as the chair of the Dressage Committee, he penned an account of changes the committee had made to its then system of classifying judges. Read on for a look at Fritz’s methodical style of documentation and at the origins of the American dressage-judging system.

AHSA DRESSAGE COMMITTEE REPORT

More than two years ago, in 1973, the AHSA Dressage Committee under the chairmanship of John Winnett, at the suggestion of and under pressure from the growing number of local and regional dressage associations developing in all parts of the country, undertook a study of how to improve and standardize dressage judging in the United States. As a result, the Committee in 1974 divided the then recognized judges into four categories labeled A, B, C, and D.

Judges with a D rating were individuals with limited judging experi-

ence or those whose experience made them well qualified to judge horses at the Training, First, and Second Levels but who were less qualified to judge horses at more advanced levels of training. Individuals classified in the C category were considered more experienced as judges and more able, as a result of their experience, to judge horses at Third Level. B-rated judges were those whose experience made them more able to judge horses at Fourth Level, and A judges were those individuals in the opinion of the Committee with the greatest amount of experience, knowledge, and understanding to judge horses at FEI levels. The Committee did not at the time, nor has it since, ever said that B judges were not capable of judging FEI-level classes, that C judges were not capable of judging Fourth Level classes, etc. In fact, the Committee provided that judges could judge classes at a level higher than their classification automatically entitled them to do if organizers sought permission and obtained a guest card. In 1976 organizers will merely have to write for permission; a guest card will not be necessary.

What the Committee was trying to do with this system was to indicate to organizers which judges on the basis of the Committee’s study were best qualified at what levels; it had no intention of saying that because an individual was classified as a B judge, for example, that he was necessarily a better judge of horses at the Training, First, and Second Levels than judges with a C rating. The system has apparently not been fully understood. There has been a tendency to think that judges with a D or C rating were not as good judges as those with a B or A rating, and thus organizers have sought judges in these categories even though their shows offered only lower-level classes. As a result, many able judges have not been used to the extent they should have been.

The Committee late in 1973 also

From *Dressage*, March 1976. Reprinted by permission of Natalia (Mrs. Ivan) Bezugloff.

came up with a method by which the qualifications of those being recognized as judges for the first time and those seeking to be reclassified as being well qualified to judge horses at a higher level of training could be more properly evaluated for such recognition. The system also provided for a means to constantly evaluate all judges and a means to bring judges together with the aim of standardizing judgments and standards. At the time and since, the Dressage Committee has been commended by judges and competitors in other areas of competition—equitation, hunters, saddle horses, for example—for trying to tackle problems common to all divisions of competition and to develop a way of standardizing judging.

At the time the original classification of dressage judges was made, there were complaints that the Committee had made a number of errors in its classifications. Even some members of the Committee held that opinion. But in general the dressage community was reasonably satisfied with what had been done.

This past December was the first occasion when the Committee was faced with the problem of implementing its program by passing judgment on applications for initial recognition or for reclassification. Readers will note I have avoided using the term “promoted.” The use of this term in the Committee’s original plan has caused some of the misunderstanding of the system. Just as all American school children and their parents feel they should get A’s in school or be considered inferior, many dressage judges have felt if they did not get “promoted” from D to C to B to A everyone would consider them less good and therefore not use them. How wrong!

The Committee had for over a year been under pressure from influential elements in the USDF to evaluate its original classification of judges. As the Committee considered applications for reclassification, it seemed essential to review the whole list of judges

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The safe use of OSPPOS has not been evaluated in horses less than 4 years of age. The effect of bisphosphonates on the skeleton of growing horses has not been studied; however, bisphosphonates inhibit osteoclast activity which impacts bone turnover and may affect bone growth.

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Increased bone fragility has been observed in animals treated with bisphosphonates at high doses or for long periods of time. Bisphosphonates inhibit bone resorption and decrease bone turnover which may lead to an inability to repair micro damage within the bone. In humans, atypical femur fractures have been reported in patients on long term bisphosphonate therapy; however, a causal relationship has not been established.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: The most common adverse reactions reported in the field study were clinical signs of discomfort or nervousness, colic and/or pawing. Other signs reported were lip licking, yawning, head shaking, injection site swelling, and hives/pruritus.



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with the aim of determining who were best qualified to be called A's, B's, C's, or D's. The Committee decided at that meeting to reclassify a number of individuals. Some left that meeting not really sure all of the decisions made were justified, but all felt they had done what strong voices in the dressage community had asked be done and hoped they had done the correct thing.

It would have been desirable to further study the bases for the Committee's decisions before taking any action, but there was great pressure from the AHSA office to submit the list of judges because the Rule Book was in the final stages of preparation. So the Committee sent out letters informing a number of individuals of their reclassification. As a result, most members of the Committee received letters or phone calls or were personally asked to give their specific reasons why Miss Doe should be reclassified while Mr. Doe was not. This rightly caused the Committee to further consider its stand. A careful study was made of the records available to the Committee on all judges. As a result a majority of the Committee decided their action had been hasty and that until there was more and better concrete objective data available on all judges, classifications should remain as they had been for the past two years. So except for the addition of persons who have been given initial recognition, and except for reclassifying a limited number of individuals as being well qualified to judge horses at a higher level of training, the judges' roster remains unchanged in 1976 from what it was in 1975.

While some feelings have been hurt, while the Committee has been condemned by some and praised by others, lessons have been learned. The Committee has been trying to develop a system of rating and evaluation where none really existed before. It has been trying to do what the dressage community said it wanted done. Made up of humans, the Committee has perhaps (to paraphrase the

Book of Common Prayer) "done those things it ought not to have done." But I hope the dressage community will not say therefore, "there is no health in us." As a Committee we want to represent the dressage community and to tackle such problems that need tackling. We are anxious to hear from all quarters and will respond as best we can.

Another action of the Committee which caused some concern was the enforcement of the rule that has been in the Rule book for two years, that judges who did not attend a recognized AHSA Judges Forum at least once in a two-year period would be automatically reclassified from A to B or B to C, etc. Many who received such notices communicated that they had intended to attend a Forum but that the publicity on the Forums had been poor, dates were changed late in the year, and other problems. Feeling that it would not be just to forgive those who had a reasonable excuse without hearing from every person reclassified for not attending a Forum, and recognizing that the Committee had changed dates, had not given proper publicity to the Forums, and even that two Forums had been held with AHSA office approval which the Committee did not even know about, the Committee decided that all those who were subject to reclassification would receive a warning letter that their classification would not be changed for 1976, but that if they did not attend one of the recognized Forums sponsored by the Committee in 1976, they would be reclassified for 1977.

The Committee has taken steps to improve its methods of evaluating judges and to improve how its forums are conducted. We constantly seek suggestions on how to make the system better but feel that for all its faults, the system is better than anything that exists in other competition divisions. ▲

—John H. Fritz, Chairman