



Progressive Show Jumping

# The Progress Report

Issue 1

July - September 2008

**Dear PSJ Members:**

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter entitled, "The Progress Report." We hope that you will find its contents to be informative, helpful and beneficial in keeping you apprised of the various shows and events. Your support has been invaluable to us and we appreciate the commitment of the riders, trainers and families. Without you, we would not have been able to achieve the success we have today.

We welcome your comments, feedback and insights on how we can continue to foster a healthy environment in which we can compete and embrace the spirit of true sportsmanship.

Again, many thanks for your active participation.

Regards,



Photograph: Shawn McMillen Photography

*Rick, Cathy, Celia and Liza Cram*

## Celebration Show Highlights



This year's Celebration Horse Show series provided a festive and fun filled weekend. Congratulations to **Annie Walters** on winning the first annual Ride a Buck class on Rembrandt. We'd also like to thank those of you who participated in warm up classes throughout the weekend. Proceeds from those classes are helping **Penny Elliot** as she recovers from her recent accident. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with her and her family in the loss of her mother. Water balloon fights, a slip and slide, hot dogs and soft drinks were enjoyed by men, women, children, horses and even dogs of all ages.

### Future's Inherent on Foundation

*Interview with Ray Francis*

Cheryle and Ray Francis, each iconic in the world of hunter judging, breeding and handling, recently judged the Celebration Shows at Highfields. PSJ had the opportunity to spend some time with Ray and captured his insights:

**PSJ: How long have you been judging and how did you become involved in the world of horses?**

*RF: I've been judging in the United States for 48 years and another 10 years prior to that in England. As far as involvement goes, both of my parents were in the horse business and I was literally born into the sport. My father died when I was 7yrs old and I helped my mother carry on the business.*

**PSJ: What are some of the biggest changes you have witnessed in horse shows throughout your career?**

*RF: The absence of the outside courses has changed horse shows dramatically and the death of the Thoroughbred horse. Fortunately, Warmbloods are being bred with Thoroughbreds to compete in the hunter discipline. I often wonder why so many people rush off to buy horses in other countries when there are so many fine horses here in the United States. The use of a tape measure has also changed the competition dynamics. 30 years ago a jump would be built where the wagon stopped. The rider would have to judge the distance to the jump from his or her eye. Much training focused on how to ride to these jumps based on their approach as opposed to today's instruction of this line is a 6 and that line is a 7. I am glad to see popularity growing in the Hunter Derby classes. It is a good way to bridge the traditional hunter courses with the more modern; however, it is limited due to the amount of entries that can participate.*



[PSJ Website](#)

[Show Calendar](#)

-

[2008 Summer Series Prize List](#)

[September Prize List](#)

[Horse Show Results Online](#)

-

[More About PSJ](#)



**PSJ: Economy seems to be one of the buzz words these days. What are your thoughts on the economy during the past 20 years and its impact on horse shows?**

*RF: Frankly, the overall economics of this country has allowed enormous growth in the ability to own a horse and the number of horse shows. I believe that so many of the shows today cater to mediocrity. What I mean by that is there is horse show just about every day up where we live in Pennsylvania. Many of the B and C level shows average 350 entries whereas most of the A area shows average less than half of those totals. Show producers are being forced to offer lower level shows which yield higher numbers to compensate for the lower numbers participating at the higher rated, more expensive shows. And most recently, the price of gas has created a regionalism of shows, i.e. people are traveling closer to home to show their horses and ponies.*

**PSJ: You have a stellar reputation in hunter breeding and handling. What are some of your most memorable accomplishments?**

*RF: Breeding has its challenges in that typically one has to wait until the horse is about 3 yrs. old for sale, which can be a long wait for the return on investment (ROI). I do really enjoy showing on the line. I now show mostly for others and currently have one entry of my own. Typically I receive an average of 35 calls to show various horses at Devon and participate in each of the breeding classes. Devon is very special to me in that I've bred two of the Best Young Show Horse award recipients, received overall breeding champion awards 18 times and awarded Leading Handler 5 times.*

**PSJ: Ponies seem to be growing in numbers both in divisions and in throughout the country. To what do you attribute this popularity?**

*RF: Pony breeding in general has exploded. They are usually less expensive to maintain ship and buy. The variety of divisions that are available at all levels of showing and the zone awards have also helped to popularize it. Qualifying for the pony finals has become an integral component of yearly goals and achievements.*

**PSJ: Since you've spent over half of your lifetime judging, you must have some favorite places and/or shows, what are they?**

*RF: Actually, I enjoy judging all types of horse shows at all levels. My wife, Cheryl, helps me tremendously. She has a great eye for a horse. We enjoy going to Wellington, Canada, Connecticut, New Jersey, Florida, and practically all over the country.*

## **Highfields Improvements**

**New Water Pump**-fills the water truck in 10 minutes and doesn't compromise water pressure at the barns;

**Tent pads** to accommodate 700 stalls;

**New water and power** to all tent pads;

**New permanent manure bunkers** by barns 2 & 3;

**Upgraded footing** on outside course

**New bank** jumping element

**New landscaping** and irrigation system

**New 50 amp** plus camper hook-ups

**New North Entrance** (for Tent A & Barns 2 & 3)

(original main entrance now referred to South and the back entrance referred to as East)

**PSJ: Thank you for your time and for sharing knowledge with us. Any closing comments you'd like to make?**

*I am concerned about the evolving absence of the 'true horseman.' The era in which young individuals work their way up in the ranks through training, riding and overall management is dissipating.*

*In the Northeast particularly, we are seeing many junior riders aging out and hanging out their shingles so to speak. We call them 'mini trainers.' While there are still many good trainers in the business, those of the likes of Gordon Wright, Sally Sexton and Dave Kelly are few and far between.*

*I don't want us to lose sight of the founding principles that made us successful.*

## Giving Back

**PSJ** takes an active role in philanthropic initiatives both in the local community as well as the overall horse community. Recent projects included providing [The Child Advocacy Center](#), [Aiken County's Help Line 211](#) and [The Free Medical Clinic of Aiken](#) with a venue to host their fundraising events during the Aiken Spring Classics (ASC); donation to [Ron Danta/Danny Robertshaw Save R Strays](#) calendar; and the proceeds from the warm-ups held during the Celebration Shows to benefit **Penny Elliot** from her recent accident - *direct donations can also be sent to:*

*Penny Elliott Fund  
c/o Rhett Taylor  
540 Red Fox Rd  
Camden, SC 29020*