

A FOUNDER'S

JUNE 2021

STORY - D PELTZER

The History of
Dressage in Tasmania

Created by: Mim Coleman



The Story of a Founding Member - Diana Peltzer

Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the
Dressage Association of Tasmania (DAT)

A wholehearted welcome to you from Mim Coleman, creator of
momentsbymimc and The History of Dressage in Tasmania Project

FOREWARD

ABOUT THE HISTORY OF DRESSAGE IN TASMANIA PROJECT

Mim Coleman's project to document the history of dressage in the remote island of Tasmania, will inspire you to explore your own connection with the sport of dressage wherever you happen to live.

In the fast paced world of instant gratification, real and fake news, scrolling, social media snapshots and podcast sound bites, the conversations and the memories can be forgotten and lost. Yet through the mediums as described, our collective experiences can easily be captured and remembered for generations yet to come.

Mim's project endeavours

to capture the treasured moments, the jewels of the bountiful and colourful equestrian history that abounds in Tasmania. If you have a curious mind you can explore further to uncover the secrets and mysteries that exist.

Mim rode her first pony in Berlin at the age of 4, on a bright sunny Sunday afternoon, her father leading the black Shetland pony through the inner city forest along shady paths softened by fallen leaves. It was a family excursion that



paved the path for Mim's future with horses.

Decades later the passion remains true. Over time the first ride progressed to riding at all levels of dressage through to the pinnacle that is Grand Prix.

Mim is no stranger to writing about her equestrian passion.

Her pursuits include, creating an online buzz with her blogs capturing the incredible 2015 Dressage World Cup Final in Las Vegas live from the grandstands, multiple articles for Australia's

leading equestrian magazine Equestrian Life and her very popular blog "The Road to Grand Prix" shared on Equestrian Life's blogger page.

The series of e-books in progress are Mim's expression of love and joy that the sport of dressage has given her, and each of you who have fallen under the spell of the magnificence that is Equus caballus, the horse.



PREFACE

ON A BLUSTERY DAY

The **History of Dressage in Tasmania Project** (the Project) emerged as a creative itch to capture the deep, rich history of the sport of dressage in my home state of Tasmania also known as Tassie or Tas. If you plug in the coordinates 42.8821° S, 147.3272° E you will find it.

Several years ago, at the end of a DAT meeting, in the dark, late at night, in the colloquial centre of Tas, a number of large storage boxes were migrated from the boot of one car into the boot of my 4WD. It was full to the brim. I was entrusted by the committee of the day with a fair chunk of DAT documents to help me scratch the itch and get underway.

The following morning, the heavy boxes were transported

one last time and carefully tucked away in the home office, stack on shelves, away from light and moisture.

Patience the stories that were captured within the boxes waited for the lids to be lifted.

Some time later, on a rainy, blustery Tassie day, I pulled the boxes out, one by one. Sitting cross legged, on the floor, I sighed at the mountain before me and I reached into the plastic tub directly in front of me.

Like a prospector, anxiously hoping to strike it rich, yet fully expecting dust, what I discovered was that the mountain was abundant with unimaginable jewels and precious gems. The dressage

history contained within the pale yellow pages was bountiful, ledger books and folders, note pads, envelopes, a kaleidoscope of words and images.

The buzz from the discovery was incredible, even so, the mountain looked too high and too steep to climb at the time. Gathering the precious jewels and gems together returning them as they were discovered, I

replaced the lids atop the stories.

Many years have passed since that moment, when I blew the dust off the plastic lid and wondered “what’s in here?”

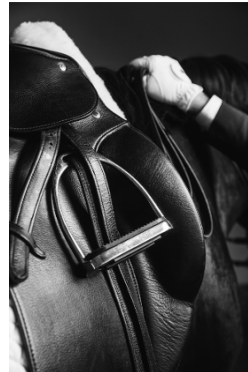
During the 2020 lockdown thanks to the COVID-19 Pandemic that paralysed the

world, I again stood at the foot of the mountain. This time determined to climb, small steps, tiny steps, any steps, and I once again lifted the lid and exposed the treasures within. Stories fluttering, teasing, dancing before me like winsome fairies encouraging me with their joy.

The plan is to create a series of short stories on the influencers that shaped the sport of dressage in Tas.

The coaches, the breeders, the dreamers, the riding schools, the competitions, the events that brought us together. There is so much to tell.

This story of Diana Peltzer is one of courage, vision and a deep passion for horses. I hope you enjoy it. Mim Coleman



By 1942, the tides of war had shifted to Australia's doorstep and roles changed out of sheer necessity.

Australian women entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers and were even allowed to take on 'men's work'.

These were jobs for the war, not for life.

Women were paid at lower rates than men and expected to 'step down' and return to home duties after the war.

Source: Australian Government Website. Women In War

DIANA PELTZER

INTRODUCTION

Diana
Peltzer, or

Diana Wolfhagen as she was recorded in the Minutes of the first Annual General Meeting of the Dressage Association of Tasmania (DAT) is a founding member.

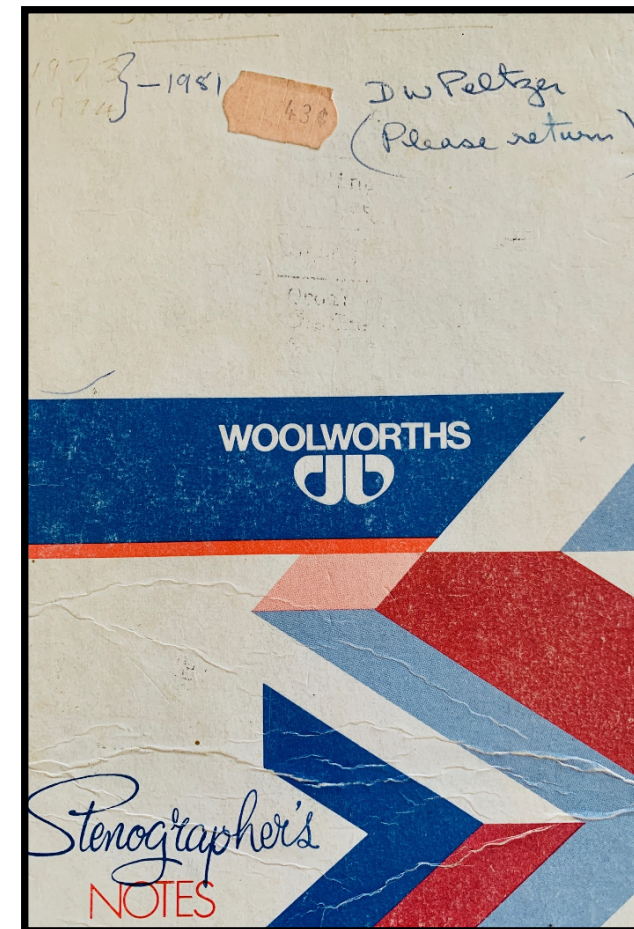
DAT, is the first pure dressage organisation in Tasmania that was formed in January 1971.

The memorabilia of the past 50 years that sits safely in storage, while fascinating, does not hold a candle to speaking to someone who was actually there. At the table, making decisions, creating a world of "firsts" with friends, who sadly are no longer with us to share their memories of this exciting time.

Diana is one of two living foundation members. The other, is the well known, loved and revered Brenda Atkinson.

It was after lunch with a friend talking about the golden years of dressage, that I came to have in my possession the contact details for Diana.

So I sent an SMS and waited



8TH MARCH 2021

DIANA PELTZER

I am driving up the Midlands Highway. It's the 8th of March, International Women's Day (IWD).

I have always been partial to a long drive. It releases the creative "right side" of my brain from the distractions overbearing, dominating and noisy analytical "left side" that takes care of the task of driving.

I am on my way to meet with one of the Founders of the Dressage Association of Tasmania (DAT). DAT was formed in the Summer of 1971. At the time she was known as Diana Wolfhagen, and now as Diana Peltzer.

We agreed to meet at her property not far out of Longford, more North than South in my home of Tasmania. A gentrified part of the State with a bountiful history of agricultural endeavours, with a dash of convict spice and what was a meeting place for the traditional owners of the land.



WHISPERS SWIRL Old homesteads made of ancient stone, creaking wood, dotting the expansive landscape containing within their walls conversations lost for all time. Within the walls the ancient stories of the land swirl, an under-current of a culture truly embedded deep within the essence of the earth on which I drive. The landscape whispers ancient sounds to a primal core within, a knowing, a feeling of the earth on which I travel.

COURAGE TOWARDS EQUALITY

On the front seat next to me I have Diana's competition records from the early 70's. The 43c note pad from Woolworths has written across the top DRESSAGE RESULTS in faded capitals. Below, in blue pen and in upright cursive is written D W Peltzer (Please return). After almost 50 years it is being returned as requested. The deep green Minute book that records where it all began is placed snugly in my black leather bag.

When speaking with Diana to arrange our meeting, she was of the view that she had nothing of great interest to share and had little memory of those days. I hoped that sharing the aged documents with her may help unlock the memories.

Four days prior I attended a virtual IWD event, the event was to recognise the contributions of women in the public service and local government.

The guest speaker was Australian of the Year Grace Tame. Grace spoke to us, sharing the intimate horrors of her early childhood that followed into her teenage years. It was gut wrenchingly horrific. Each word like a punch in the chest, punch after punch after punch, knocking the breath from my lungs, the words from my mouth and bruising my soul. What is equally horrific is that Grace's story is not unique, what she described happens ALL THE TIME, not only to young girls and women but also to our young boys and men. As I drove the two hours towards Diana I contemplated Grace's speech and tried to make sense of it on IWD.

I couldn't.

I contemplated, how myself, a woman, had contributed to Grace's experience. How, by sitting back, enjoying the fruits of the struggles of women before me, had become comfortable.

Comfortable when there is still so much work to be done for there to be true equality. Women and men, equal. Not better, not superior, not women vs men, or men vs women, simply equal.

FEEL THE FEAR AND DO IT ANYWAY



The car's GPS guided me to a tree lined driveway that leads me towards the house. Gravel crunching beneath the tyres as they slowly turn and take me closer to the next story.

Turning the engine off, I see the sign on the gate to the house

“Beware of the Dog”.

I groan inwardly, visions of a snarling, hackled raised hound of doom that would tear me from limb to limb as I made way towards the door. flashed before my eyes.

My fear is well founded having been attacked as a child at the impressionable age of 9. Well maybe I wasn't attacked but bitten...

by a miniature poodle.....

that was blind

I have a scar...

ok perhaps my imagination has taken the upper hand here.

So with a bag of sweet treats in one hand and my bag of dressage treasures in the other, I step out of the car and toward the gate.

I waited for the snarling, teeth baring dog from

hell to come towards me, my imagination doing cartwheels of delight in trying to out psyche me.

I was saved by Diana who emerges from behind the carport before I reached the gate.

With greetings we step towards the gate and running towards us is the dog to beware of.

A tail wagging, smiley faced Border terrier delighted to see her owner and a new person to beg for pats.

Take that 9 year old childhood memory !

WHERE DID YOU FIND THAT?

SUZIE WONG, I REMEMBER

The kettle boiled, the tea made, the neenish tart halved, (we are both watching our weight), we sit on the sunny verandah for 90 minutes unlocking the past and discovering how it relates to the future

Diana is a no fuss, down to earth, get the job done woman.

Her response to my excitement at meeting her and discussing the foundation of DAT was of kind bemusement.

It was nothing extraordinary in her mind.

I discover that the association came about to formalise, what a group of like minded friends had been doing for many years.

The creation of the Dressage Association provided the governance structure, guidelines and rules that were already in place around Australia through the National body the Equestrian Federation Australian.

DAT provided an avenue to compete under the same rules on as other riders around Australia.



When I showed her the Minute book, Diana looked and shrugged, no surprise that they were well ordered and well considered, it was a strength of the Secretary David Nye she said.

Diana had no time for recording keeping, well Minutes of meetings that is.

She tells me they were all good friends and they all worked well together

What Diana did record were competition results and the grading points for each horse and rider combination.

Depending on your placing and score at each level you would accumulate points, thereby setting the scene for the combination's foray into the next level.

When I showed Diana the seemingly unremarkable note pad with her name written on it, she exclaimed "where did you find that?"

She took the note pad into her hands and opened the pages. "Suzie Wong, remember that one, it was a chestnut. 1973 it was very early."

THE HISTORY OF FIRSTS

We talked for a while about the horses as their names rekindled the embers of distant memories. Gretel, Hiawatha, Killawara, Macduff, Fiesta, Farewell.

Making our way through the minute book I highlighted the pages documenting the first association, the first competitions, the first newsletter, the first Judge Education Clinic.

The handwritten minutes and neatly typed pages stuck into the book with sticky tape document the forwarding thinking and like minds of the committee members.

Several pages show how

they planned for the first Judge Education clinic. Ideas including theory lectures and a film evening. It is exciting to read the newsletter and minutes after the event was held.

The success was outstanding. Over 50 people attended the clinic and more than a hundred attended the film evening. That was 1973, held at the Royal Showgrounds in Hobart in wet and gusty weather.

Having organised and attend many clinics over my own riding career I was curious to know how it came to pass that Franz Mairinger

happened to come to Tasmania.

Franz was an instructor at the Spanish Riding School, he was sponsored by R M Williams to emigrate to Australia.

OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME

Franz's story is well documented and I encourage you to learn more about a truly inspiring horseman.

His presence and willingness to share his knowledge in Tasmania will have been a wonderfully rare and exciting occurrence.

Diana remembers Franz fondly, she admired his training philosophy and

his way with the horses and riders.

Franz saw great potential in young Diana, and an opportunity to ride and train with Franz on the "mainland" was a real prospect yet was simply impossible with the responsibility of raising four young children on the farm in the midlands of Tasmania.



BACK TO THE BEGINNING

THE CHOICE

A horse obsessed girl, Diana grew up with horses that were a tool of trade and a mode of transport.

Riding ponies at Ag Shows and joining the hunt were a key part of her life and the environment of the day.

Her mother also rode at AG shows and hunted and they enjoyed riding together.

Just like many of us today, as a child and later as a teenager she read with great vigour the monthly equestrian magazine "The Rider" imported from the United Kingdom.

Such was her admiration for the riders on the

other side of the world she wrote to them and developed pen-pal friendships.

Once she finished her schooling Diana had the choice to either attend finishing school in Victoria or join family in the UK for a year to improve her riding and of course enjoy the hunting season racing across green fields jumping ancient stone walls.

Diana's passion for hunting is yet to diminish, a member of the local huntclub for over 70 years. Even cancer could not stop her from crawling up on to a horse to join the hunt.



A BREAK FROM TRADITION

Diana didn't go to finishing school.

Diana chose a 3 month journey by ship, unaccompanied, to the far shores of the United Kingdom, funded by a wealthy Aunt as her parents could not afford such an endeavour as they recovered from the impact of WWII.

At this time, it was the dawning of the 1950's where post WWII ideals saw women relegated back to the pre-war traditional roles, ceasing work once married to take on the role of home maker, mother and wife.

The undercurrent of change and the increase of women participation in the workforce was present however it did not become visible until the 1960's.

SOME LEADERS PUSH

A YOUNG VISIONARY

I was astounded by the idea that a teenager, in the 1950's, had the confidence to take herself overseas to pursue her deep love of horses.

Diana on arrival in the UK, with the help from her family in England, spent a month in a highly regarded riding school and immersed herself in learning how to ride correctly.

Diana also has the fortune to meet one of her pen friends in the wilds of Scotland.

The twelve months was spent galloping over hills and dales attending hunts in Devon, Somerset and

Lincolnshire, going to the amazing Dublin show in Ireland or skiing in Switzerland.

On her return Diana recognised that the riding skills of the time were in much need of refinement and improvement.

It was this revelation that formed the genesis of the Judge and Rider Education clinics to help build riding knowledge and skills in Tasmania.

Diana describes herself as the person in the background pushing for progress, improvement in the sport, she didn't view herself as a leader.

National Dressage Championships



TASMANIA 1996

EVERY MOMENT HAS A HISTORY

Diana's involvement in the sport of dressage expanded to Judging. Diana went on to become a highly regarded dressage judge, She speaks with pride about judging at the National Dressage Championships held at Hagley House in the 90's.

When you are next at competition, or at a clinic, and when you cast your eyes over the score recorded on faded, discoloured paper, note that how over the decades the improvement and success of our horses and riders.



The true value of Diana's courage to board a ship to far shores, and return with knowledge and insight that she shared to improve the sport of dressage, continues to influence administrators and riders decades later.

Great endeavours require us to challenge the status quo, to question and seek knowledge and understanding to develop, improve, gain awareness and enlightenment. To push and pull others to also challenge what they know and understand, question their version of the truth.T

This takes a great woman and I met her on International Womens Day 2021.

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