

## Gerhard Politz Carries Forward An Educational Legacy



Gerhard with Darios, Pandur & Anstand

German born and trained Gerhard Politz has been a fixture in American dressage training and instruction since he moved here in 1987. He travels almost every weekend to give clinics to professionals and amateurs throughout the country. He maintains a stable of 10 horses, including three of his own, at the Flintridge Riding Club in Flintridge. Gerhard has many West Coast Grand Prix victories to his credit, and his students continue to be a force in higher level competitions. The sales and importing aspect of his business uses his

European connections and knowledge to locate everything from weanlings to grand prix mounts. For the last several years, however, Gerhard's main emphasis has been on helping professionals learn riding, teaching and training techniques used to great effect throughout Western Europe.

His commitment to education is reflected in his extensive work with the United States Dressage Federation. Gerhard, who will be 60 in January, is involved with the USDF's instructor certification program and serves as an instructor's examiner. He was a board member for the USDF's instructor's manual, and he serves on the USDF's test writing committee.

The first and last chapter in any rider's manual, Gerhard says, should be a good, balanced seat. "There is a tendency for people to want to school and train horses before they've acquired a good enough seat to do it," he observes. "In the process, good horses don't come to their full potential because they are restricted by a poorly balanced rider. If there was more focus on the seat in American riding programs, it would benefit both the rider and the horse."

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# GERHARD POLITZ

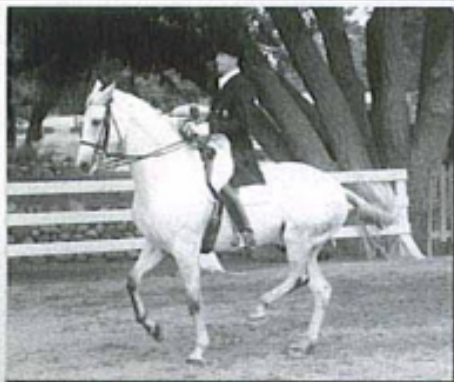
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## Gerhard cont'd

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Lunge line work, lunge line work and more lunge line work is the key to developing a good seat. Gerhard says he often gets complaints when making this point to clinic participants. "The typical amateur feels it's a put down to be asked to work on the lunge line. They perceive this as purely for beginners. It just hasn't sunk in that their riding will improve tremendously if they achieve balance and learn to use their hands independently of the rest of their body. This is also often the case with professionals."

Before moving to the States, Gerhard ran a 45-horse training and competition stable in Germany, with the help of six apprentices. In their three-year program with Gerhard, these aspiring professionals worked on the lunge line every single day. As a result, Gerhard says there was no mistaking his students at shows: their solid seats said it all. He brings up the late, eight-time Olympic medalist Dr. Reiner Klimke as an example of how the best riders avail themselves of such basic techniques. In Dr. Klimke's case, he was often seen riding without stirrups while warming up his mounts at big competitions.

"The purpose, of course, is to get a longer leg, a closer feel of the horse and a more balanced seat," Gerhard explains. "If someone of his caliber does that, it should make others think that that kind of work is important."

In his extensive work with the USDF's various education-oriented programs, Gerhard has been at the forefront of bringing about dramatic improvements in the quality of instruction and training in America. He is pleased with the progress he's seen in his 14 years here, yet still frustrated. "The progress is still too damn slow," he says. "We need to get a unified philosophy about training and using certain time-proven techniques." Compared to Europe, America is lacking in dressage tradition and in systems which require professionals to prove their worthiness of that distinction. "It's very easy here to get a business card and call yourself a professional," he says.

Not surprisingly, Gerhard's meticulous approach to education was shaped by some of the world's finest instructors and horsemanship schools. He holds both the

British Horse Society Instructor's License, as well as the German Reitlehrer FN. In Germany, Gerhard worked with Egon von Neindorff and General Albert Stocken. He credits Willy Schultheis (coach emeritus of the German Olympic team) with teaching him the art of upper level movements. General Kurt Albrecht, the former director of the Spanish Riding School and an "O" FEI dressage judge, was also a teacher and mentor. "They were all crucial in forming my ideas and they made me the rider and trainer I am today," Gerhard says. "I owe a great deal to them."

In running a super successful training center near Stuttgart for many years, Gerhard was unique in his ability to succeed as a teacher, trainer and competitor in Germany. He competed many of his own horses up to Grand Prix, both in Germany and in the States. Just two years after to California, Gerhard won the CDS championships at Intermediare I and II and had earned his USDF Bronze, Silver and Gold Medals.

*Gerhard Politz' next clinic will be held Nov. 10-11 in Northern California's Milpitas. To reach Gerhard, please call 818 566 9722.* 