

## DD TD

(posted 10-2-100)

It's a theme shared by neo-cons turned libertarian and by ex-hippie-fellow-travelers from the '60s—a certain disdain for, a certain distrust of authority. In my own wanderings across the national dressage landscape, I've encountered mitigating circumstances which, at times, have mellowed this personal aversion. Doing a clinic years ago in a rural mid-Ohio hamlet, I discovered a rescue squad whose ambulance doubled as the town pizza delivery wagon. Truly! And I foresee finding a traffic cop someday who vends Dairy Queen from his cruiser. The motto on his shield, I figure, will be "To Soft Serve and Protect." So authority isn't all bad when it is used for Good.

Which brings me to Technical Delegates. Having observed first-hand the chaos that ensues at Third World dressage shows where the infrastructure won't support a T.D., I am grateful for the expertise and order a good T.D. brings to our USEF competitions. Monitoring eligibility, enforcing the rules which promote safe and humane behavior, and seeing that classes are conducted properly makes the system work and keeps shows from accidentally somehow flying off the rails.

Once in a great while we run into a T.D. who, despite his or her best intentions, is more an impediment than a help. When the show management, the competitors, and the volunteers are all making references to "the Gestapo" and dreading the T.D.'s approach, you know you're in trouble.

It comes down, not to what the rules are, but how they are interpreted. I know of an S judge who recently was chastised by a T.D. for fraternizing with a competitor at the judge's booth at C. Never mind that she wasn't then a competitor at all but someone who had finished her last Sunday ride and (though in boots and breeches) was helping out as a volunteer running tests to the scorer. My quarrel is with the T.D.'s insinuation regarding the judge's integrity. Memo to anyone living in their alternate reality: it's a small world. People know each other. Someone I judge this week may have judged me two months ago. Or they're a neighbor. Not discussing "horse business" with a competitor or going off to discuss their day's ride at the bar makes complete sense. Barring the judge from making a moment's passing small talk in the hotel lobby or scolding him for a "Good morning, Have a nice ride" greeting as a competitor passes the booth is inane and NOT what the rule is about.



I pride myself—as do most other judges—on being able to judge fairly. Maybe I judge *well* or maybe not. That's another topic. But "fair" I can guarantee whether I like them, hate them, have no clue who they are, or recognize the glow from their past accomplishments. Everybody gets judged the same. There was an intimidating fireballer who pitched for the L.A. Dodgers years back—number 53, Don Drysdale—who was known for a toughness which he distributed fairly to all opponents. "I'd knock down my

own mother,” he growled once, “if she was crowdin’ the plate!” I never had to judge my mother who never got closer to a horse than the one that pulled the carriage around Jackson Square, but if I had, she’d have gotten the same equitable treatment that everyone else gets.

The notion at the Morgan Worlds that someone would be assigned to escort the judge through the stable area to the restroom so I wouldn’t be unduly influenced by a competitor is, pardon the expression, demeaning and absurd! (At least his assignment didn’t include having to help me with my zipper.)

It comes down to trust and that word again—integrity. If you can’t trust somebody to behave properly, you shouldn’t have hired them or certainly you should never hire them again. It IS a small world. Word gets around, and if someone’s judgments aren’t kosher, they won’t be long for the judge’s booth. That said, the same T.D. who wouldn’t let an “r” candidate ask the presiding show judge a “housekeeping” question unrelated to his judging or her riding till after her last ride on Sunday needs to rethink some of his interpretations. Enforcing a version of the rules which flies in the face of common sense devalues the rule and demeans its arbiter.

What's a show manager to do about such an official? This particular show was being held at a fairgrounds. My suggestion to the show committee was next time they hire this guy, be sure the show coincides with the State Fair. Then right before he arrives, buy about 80 tickets for the Tilt-a-Whirl, shove him on it, and tell the operator not to let it stop until Sunday afternoon.

[Let me add that FEI rules which make an individual declare whether in a given year that person will compete or judge in CDIs where million dollar horses and national prestige are involved is another whole issue. Father always said, “Son, if you’re going to steal, steal BIG!” My comments above refer to normal people, normal shows, and the expectations of civilized behavior that goes with them.]