

Riding in Competition

by Dr. Rodger Marion

I was seventy when I took up riding for the first time. That was three years ago. I have always ridden the same horse. His name is Dakota. He is seventeen years old and 14.3 hands high. He and I are a good fit as I'm a slow learner and he is quite patient.

I began in competition with Hunters and did two shows riding at cross poles. I concluded that I was not strong enough or balanced enough to progress to higher jumps. My age and some previous health problems had affected my strength and balance.

Working with my horse five days a week built strength and improved balance. I have a lesson a week, ride three days to practice and give him a lunging session once a week. Dakota is in better shape now too.



My instructor, Suzanne Warmack, suggested dressage as an alternative to jumping. This discipline requires excellent form and control and those requirements emphasize strength and balance. Further, dressage is an artistic expression of the collaborative bond between horse and human. It is a demanding and satisfying form of competition.

My first dressage competition was last December at the Dressage in the Hill Country Holiday Classic held over two days at the Dripping Springs Ranch Park. Dakota and I rode two beginner dressage tests each day. Each test had its challenges and faux pas but overall it felt good. We went home with several ribbons, one a second place.

I still have a great many areas in which to improve and am working hard to implement all my instructor's suggestions. We, Dakota and I, will compete in the upcoming Dressage in the Hill Country Spring Fling and the Summer Series. Through my daily work with Dakota we are becoming more of a team and that's the charm and challenge of equestrian activities... There is always room for improvement and I get to do it with my dear horse friend.



Marion competing at the December Dressage in the Hill Country Show