**The ACPS 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, Oct. 3, 2019, heralded the arrivals day for members and guests of the American Connemara Pony Society’s long weekend of Annual Meeting and special events. The Berkeley Hotel in Richmond, Virginia, was the headquarters for the meeting. The organizing committee of Region III was delighted with the number of members attending (approximately 65 with additional guests for the Awards Banquet), and Thursday evening’s Wine and Cheese reception set a very welcoming tone.

Early Saturday morning, the meeting of the Board of Governors was combined (by approval of a motion) with the annual meeting of the membership. The change was necessary to get important decisions made before the 3 p.m. start time for the classroom session conducted by Philip Scott of County Mayo, Ireland, on the topic of Linear Profiling.

The meeting was called to order by president, Cathy Blackmon, at 8:51 a.m., and as the roll was called, members of the Board and members in the audience were asked to tell how many years he or she had been associated with the Connemara breed and the Society. Enamel pins, with small emerald-hued “jewels” in each corner to designate length of membership, were given to those who had been members for more than, or less than, 10 years. The group ranged in years of membership from one to more than 40.

Reports from each of the Standing Committees were presented, with discussion on how to improve, or appreciation for the work done, or suggestions for revisions.

The list of motions approved and suggestions for solutions to problems in short were:

* Membership- Kate Denton reported that the membership is at 546 with 12 magazine subscribers only. Regional membership breaks down to 84 in Reg. 1, 51 in Reg. II, 124 in Reg. III, 70 in Reg. IV, 57 in Reg. V, 16 in Reg. VI, 36 in Reg. VII, 16 in Reg. VIII, 24 in Reg. IX, and 68 in Reg. X, and 6 in Non-US locations. The non-renewing members for 2019 was 112, which was discussed. New members were at 117.
* Treasurer – Cathy Blackmon reported for Stephanie Fenton-Hickey that the Society was in good shape, being fiscally responsible with a healthy balance in the bank.
* Registrars – Marynell Eyles reported for the Purebred and Halfbred registries that the foal crop was moving up, and that 40 foals were registered last year. 2019 should be higher than that. The first 33 lifetime USEF horse recordings were completed. Megan Harris reported on the Connemara Sport Horse registry, with 30 CSH registrations in the book, and three foals on the ground.
* ICCPS – Linda Haines reported for Scott McGuffin that the ICCPS meets two times a year, and there is discussion about who will replace Susan McConnell as the Secretary of that group.
* ACPS Foundation – Deb Norman reported that she was asked by Susan McConnell to manage the Foundation funds. Stephanie Keen will also be a part of the ACPS-F, and will be the accounts manager. Deb Norman said it was an honor to be asked, and that the motto Susan McConnell left the group with, “We Can Do Better’ will be upheld Additionally, the philosophy that Susan used in helping us to help others, will be continued.
* Committee Reports – Arbitration – Fonda Eigel – explained the procedure for the Hardship Policy. She outlined the steps to take for that action. She also said, “We want ponies registered but have to maintain the integrity of the Society rules.”
* Awards – Sally Oxnard, Marilyn Cheek, Donna Miller, and Megan Harris chaired the breeding and Performance parts of the committee’s works. A motion was approved to include the new Modified Division in the McKenna Award given by the USEF for Eventing successes. An additional motion was approved that the Owner or the Rider of a USEF award must be a member of the ACPS. Other changes to the Awards policies will be highlighted in a subsequent article. Kathy Sparks volunteered to fund the Crestwood Awards, which had historically been paid for by Susan McConnell.
* By-Laws – Scott McGuffin worked with the Arbitration Committee on the Hardship Policy.
* Inspections – Gloria LaCroix – said there were no inspections in 2019, but that 2020 should have quite a few sites. The possible locations were Region III, Region IV, Cool Springs Farm in Ohio, Region VI and VII. Nominations were due soon. A decision was made to select a “Site” champion for each inspection in the upcoming year.
* Internet – Amy Plavin – the group was reminded to send news and reports to her at whconnemaras@gmail.com
* Magazine – Marynell Eyles thanked the group and all the members for submitting such great articles throughout the year, and for supporting the publication with ads.
* Nominating – Sally Oxnard, chair, said her committee had invested much time in finding and selecting very good candidates for the Board. She will revolve off the committee, which will be chaired in 2020 by Joanie Webster, with members Deb Norman and, Bonnie Reid.
* Promotions – Melanie Trimper sent her report which included the successes of promotions at Dressage at Devon, magazine ads, ribbons at many shows for top scoring Connemara, and at the Pony Cup. Jill McNicol explained how the algorithms for Facebook works, and reported that the Facebook page was very well liked and used.
* Region Chair Liaison – Sally Oxnard said there were representatives from Regions 1,3,4,6,8,9, and 10 at the Region Chairs committee meeting. Becky Jordan in NC is the contact for insurance for events in each region. Region chairs want information on new members in their areas. The group was told they can apply to the Foundation for financial help with clinics.
* Youth Programs – Sally Eyles Goldfarb and her daughters have been managing the work, and suggested a new person be appointed since the girls are all in school. They have been providing high score Connemara ribbons at US Pony Club championships, and other shows, as well as finding news to share on Facebook and in the magazine. Sarah Thrasher suggested that Sophie Tullar be the new administrator.
* USEF Connemara Committee – Chris Knox and Cathy Blackmon has been the liaison to the USEF governing committee, and were invited to continue. Cathy explained the need for the BOG members to complete the Safe Sport training.
* Ad-Hoc Committees – Genetics – Maureen Loughman Abel sent her report for Joanie Webster to read, on the Un. Of Cal. Davis progress on the Melanoma research which has used the Connemara breed as their sample, and for which the ACPS had donated money. It has been a 7 year study to date, and much progress has been made. The program has included 90 ponies, all of whom have been recognized by a letter from Maureen Abel.
* Old Business – Strategic Planning – Kate Denton chaired the original committee and the report was made last January by Christina Keim. Liz Platais will be the new Chair of the committee and will help take the lead for the way forward with a 5-year plan for implementation of the work done.
* Dual Registration for Connemara Sport Horse – in a discussion carried over from January 2019, when a request for double registration in the Purebred and CSH registries was received in the registrar’s office, the final decision of the Board, after much discussion was a motion made by Sarah Thrasher and unanimously approved, that the Registry will not be changed but will continue as is done presently with Purebreds in the Purebred book, Halfbreds in the Halfbred registry, and any offspring of Halfbred parents will be recorded in the Connemara Sport Horse Registry. Donna Power suggested the Society should not try to “slice and dice” as other breeds have done, and that “Perception is the Reality.”
* History Book – Sally Oxnard – remarked that the book is still an ongoing project.
* Region Reports were given and will be published.
* There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned, with the plan to reconvene the newly elected Board after the classroom session.
* The newly elected Board of Governors were welcomed to the governing body of the ACPS, as the meeting of the Board and Regional Governors was called to order by Sally Oxnard, chair of the Nominating Committee. The new and returning Board members are Donna Duckworth, Nancy Kilcrease, Karen Laden, Donna Power, and Raelin Schenck. The slate of officers was presented, and nominations were invited from the floor. There being none, the slate of Cathy Blackmon, President, Linda Haines, Vice President, Fonda Eigel, Vice President, Stephanie Fenton-Hickey, Treasurer, was unanimously elected. Marynell Eyles,

The meeting of the New Board of the ACPS was adjourned.

And right on cue, Philip Scott was introduced to the group. He has a long history with the world of horses and their uses in Ireland. He competed in upper level show jumping, and eventing, and runs an equestrian center called Barnfield, with his son and daughter. The whole family is involved in Horse Sport Ireland, and Philip has helped the Irish Horse Board develop their inspection programs, using the Linear Profiling program. While he has no real connection to the CPBS of Ireland, he has bred and produced so many Connemaras, it was an easy choice for the Council of the Connemara Pony Breeders or Ireland to ask him to help them with their Inspection program also. For the last two years, the Inspectors in Ireland have been learning how to use the system, and this year, the group of Inspectors used it for their evaluations.

With the use of PowerPoint programs, Philip guided the group through the structure of the evaluation system. Along the way, he showed photos of his family and their many rosettes and many successes through the years on their competitive Irish horses.

His talk was very well received as the audience was rapt, and the explanations were easily understood. The concepts were to the point – and the illustrations complemented the descriptions. As the afternoon ended, the group left the conference room to prepare for the Awards Banquet that followed.

Always a highlight of the Annual Meeting, this year was no exception. Region III has many talented members, and one of them, Marian McEvilly, went above and beyond, and created more than 60 wooden ponies that she hand-painted in the many colors of the Connemara. Some ponies trotted, some bowed, some greeted a Jack Russell Terrier, and some were reclining, and all the tables looked festive with flowers and ponies.

The Awards Committee has for some years, used the graphics talents of Suzanne Antilla, who again this year, designed and produced a poster for each of the winners. Many of the award winners were able to attend the banquet, and some brought videos to share with the group. A lovely time was enjoyed by all. The Award winners will be highlighted throughout the year in the magazine. A list follows this article.

As is the custom of the Annual Meeting organizers, the Silent Auction brought out the best of the competitive spirit of the group! The Region Baskets were, if possible, even more impressive, and again, Region V walked off with the prized trophy, as judge Philip Scott declared their basket the winner.

Sunday morning dawned cooler in Richmond, which was a blessing since the temps had hovered near 100 degrees. The Hand’s On session of the Linear Profiling clinic was held at Balmullo Farm, home of Donna Duckworth and her ponies. Her daughter, Alexandra, and granddaughter Summer, were pony handlers, as were some of the riding students who call Balmullo “headquarters”.

Philip used a grey mare, and the linear profiling charts were handed out to all, to try their eyes and discernments on a live subject. For the first mare, Philip led the group through the points of the pony that were represented on the chart, and discussed each part, and its evaluation. The second pony was a daughter of the first mare, and for that one, the group was encouraged to evaluate her individually, and then discuss the reasons.

The third subject was an Irish Sport Horse, and again, Philip showed the group the good, and not so good. Donna Duckworth was a brave woman to let people nit pick and pull apart every piece of each pony. Following the two hours of learning, it was time for a picnic boxed lunch and delectable soups, enjoyed by all. Reluctantly, the ACPS members headed for their homes, down the road, or from the nearby airport, declaring the meeting to have been “well done” and filled with Virginia hospitality.

Respectfully submitted: Marynell Eyles, Secretary