

ration's *Advanced Techniques of Riding*, and the USDF Manual. She said that the USDF Manual is much improved since then, when it was really a compilation of unorganized notes. She also said that Kyra Kyrklund's book *Dressage With Kyra* was beneficial.

"To me it was intimidating because I'm pretty self-taught," she recalled. "I've learned

a lot here and there, but mostly from the horses.

"A big thing I had to do was get myself comfortable with the theory behind what I was doing. I felt like I was often translating from feel to theory, instead of being well-versed in the theory to begin with. I needed to learn why we do things in the

classical way and the reasons behind what we do."

Now, preparatory workshops are required before taking the examinations. But when Peterson got her certification, those workshops weren't mandatory. Luckily for her, years before she became involved with the ICP program, Peterson took part in two instruc-

Involved In Certification From The Start

Eliza Sydnor organized the first instructors' certification workshop in which she took part. Her mother, Cindy Sydnor, is an examiner, and the workshops and exams were held at the family's Braeburn Farm in Snow Camp, N.C.

"She's great at teaching them, but not so great at organizing," said Eliza with a smile.

Cindy, who became an examiner in 1990, started the workshops in North Carolina because instructors in the Southeast had no chance to prepare for the exams. Eliza was only 15 when she started organizing the workshops. Before long, she was organizing the exams too.

She actually participated in her first workshop at age 19, but you have to be 21 to take the test, which she took last year, a couple of days after her 22nd birthday. She's now certified to teach up to second level.

Eliza works in partnership with her mother. She has a number of horses in training, and she starts young horses for Hanoverian breeder Lucille Mulkey at Honey Locust Farm.

Eliza said that being involved in the workshops has paid unexpected dividends. "I've met people at workshops, even just auditing them. You get into conversations, and then six months later you get a call to take a horse in training," she said.

Unlike most of the certification candidates, she learned to teach in the program.

"It was like a college setting: 'This is how you teach a lesson,'" she said.

She also learned by her mother's example. "My mom really follows a plan and goes from A to B, and she summarizes the lesson at the end, rather than just standing in the corner screaming, 'half-halt!' now and then," she explained.

A lot of experienced instructors have to learn how to teach according to the U.S. Dressage Federation's preferred methods. "When people come into the certification program and have to watch a horse and rider and explain what's going on, it's a style that not everyone has learned," conceded Eliza. "Maybe this way isn't easiest

if you don't have an analytical style, but it's good for the students because they really understand the lesson when they leave."

She added, "Some instructors are good at 'riding the horse through the student.' Maybe the horse goes well in the lesson, but then they can't replicate that later. My students can go home and use what they learned."

Eliza and Cindy also went to Maui last year to conduct a six-day "Mega-workshop," since there is a limited amount of assistance available to instructors in Hawaii. Cindy did most of the teaching, while Eliza put together a few PowerPoint presentations for the workshops.

The workshop consisted of one day each of longeing the horse, longeing the rider, riding a familiar horse, riding an unfamiliar horse, teaching a private lesson, and teaching a group lesson. Next year they plan to return to conduct a pre-certification workshop and perhaps an examination.

In 2004 there were just two examinations held in the United States—one in California and one in North Carolina. Eliza helped organize the testing in North Carolina. "We had people from all over the country," said Eliza.

But some instructors don't believe it's worth giving up the income of several days' teaching to go to workshops or exams.

"It's definitely hard for some people to leave their business behind," acknowledged Eliza. "That's why we organize them in such a way that local North Carolina instructors can come for a day and go home in time to ride a horse or two."

Eliza thinks that the benefits of certification outweigh the short-term loss of business. "People need to look at it as continuing education," she said. "Doctors have to have a certain number of hours of continuing

education per year to keep their licenses. You may lose a couple of days, but you'll be a better rider and teacher in the long run."

Eliza noted that one instructor's students paid for her to attend one of their workshops. "They knew that she wouldn't go on her own, but they felt that it was worth it for their own benefit," she said.



The USDF instructor's certification program seemed like taking a college course to Eliza Sydnor.