

DRESSAGE ELIZABETH BALL *continued from page 00*

him next year.

Orion is a 12 year old Dutch Warmblood by Flemmingh, owned by Eckstein Farm, LLC. I have been riding him for about a year now. Originally we found him for a young rider, who is now very busy with college, so she generously let me start to ride him. Together we qualified and competed in my first USET Festival of Champions last June, and finished fourth overall. Next month we will start him at Intermediate II, then move up to GP as soon as he's ready.

Another horse that I currently own is Selten HW, a four year old stallion, also by Sandro Hit. I bought him about a year ago, before he was on the market. His owner/breeder Irene, of HW Farm, made it possible for me to buy him, after a friend introduced us. The situation was right for me as I was able to leave him with Michael Bragdell, who's done an excellent job with him from the start. They recently won national titles in Kentucky and at Devon. He is a very well bred horse and often receives 9's and 10's on all his gaits, and on overall impression. Currently, I'm deciding what's next for him between coming to California, and staying at Hilltop as a stallion. Or, given the challenging economic times, I may consider selling him at the right price, though it would be a difficult choice. It's been a very different but rewarding experience being an owner, as I have always been the rider. However, I am enjoying all of it, and could not be happier or more proud of Michael and Selten.

Sidelines: You have had a very successful riding career as a member of USET and winning numerous State and National Titles. Can you share your most cherished accomplishments and why?

EB: I have two main accomplishments that stand out in my mind. First, riding on 1995 Pan Am Silver Medal Team, including the qualification season for the Pan Am Team where we led the coun-

try to win all four qualification classes in Wellington, FL. Competing in Wellington was very intimidating as I had come from Northern California where I was pretty sheltered. Riding around so many of the big name people was just incredibly exciting. The whole time I was there I was just hoping that I would not end up at the bottom of the pack. Winning all four qualifications was an unbelievable surprise. Earning a place on the Pan Am team and starting a great friendship with Guenter is a very special memory.

In addition, this year qualifying for the Festival of Champions on two horses, both Orion and De la Frontera, was very special. It is every riders dream to have supportive owners and the fact that I had this opportunity with two was so fantastic. We were in excellent company, with a large and very enthusiastic crowd filling the stands. It was thrilling to perform our freestyle with so many special people there. Owners, trainers, friends, and family were all so amazingly supportive, making it an unforgettable experience.

Sidelines: What are your goals for the future?

EB: It would be wonderful to make another U.S. team, especially since I've got some lovely horses now. However, I truly enjoy the day to day learning and growing with each horse. I have the great fortune of having wonderful friends and clients who also share my passion and love for riding. I am so lucky, and I will continue to be grateful for my current opportunities. I want to learn as much as I can, and share with others what I've learned.

Sidelines: Can you share the secrets of your success?

EB: I don't really have any secrets; I just absolutely love what I do. I adore all of the horses, and feel that each one enables me to learn new and different things. My primary focus is to continually learn and evolve, as a rider and trainer, so that I'll have much to give back to my horses and students.

