

HUNTER/EQUITATION
HORSEMAN OF THE YEAR

KAREN



(Diana De Rosa Photo)

HEALEY



Molly Sorge

Karen Healey joked that during the fall equitation finals, “I didn’t get the Academy Award, but I got a hell of a lot of nominations!” Healey’s students occupied three spots in the top 10 in the USEF/Pessoa Medal Finals (Pa.) and the ASPCA Maclay Finals (N.Y.), capping a year of success in the equitation, hunter and jumper rings.

“Second, third and fourth at [the Medal Finals] was pretty extraordinary. I’ve been fortunate to have had, through the years, top-placed finishers at the finals, but I’ve never had so many that were top contenders,” Healey said. “At that level, if you’re in the top 10, a little here or a little there, and you’d have been the winner.

“They just rode so well. Earlier in the year, I’d wished, ‘If these kids can just ride as well indoors as they are now.’ And they did.”

“I worked for Karen for 8½ years, and I often remark that if I had the chance to do it again, I would in a heartbeat,” said fellow trainer Archie Cox, who was her assistant. “I learned so much about training horses and teaching and about giving back to the business that’s given us so much.”

Healey cut her teeth as a young professional in New Jersey, and she worked for George Morris for many years. “I fall back on George’s teaching constantly,” she said. “He was such a strong influence on me, because his teaching is so pure and so correct. I think that I very closely adhere to those principles.”

Since moving to California in 1981, Healey has become a dominant force not only as a rider and trainer but also as a supporter of the sport. She works tirelessly on committees and behind the scenes to improve the sport.

“I think there were 10 recognized horse shows in the state of California,” Healey recalled at her arrival. But she helped nurture the West Coast show scene into the thriving, successful circuit it is now. “California was ready for me, and I was ready for California.”

Healey made her mark as a professional rider as well as a trainer, but she hung up her show boots five years ago. She still rides four or five horses a day, but her focus is on teaching.

“I love to teach, and I love to watch the progression of the horses and the riders. I really enjoy watching a horse like Shelby Wakeman’s San Francisco, whom we developed from a young horse. And I’ve been teaching Michelle Morris since she was very much a beginner, quaking in her boots at the Onondarka Finals, and she won ribbons at the finals,” Healey said.

And while her headline accomplishments came in the equitation division in 2007, “I hate the label of equitation trainer,” she said. “I train horses, and I train riders, and I train them in all three rings. I’ve had top horses in every division, and I don’t think there’s a big difference.”

Tina DiLandri has ridden with Healey for two years. “Both my

horse and I have changed so much. She brings out your true colors,” DiLandri said. “She encourages you, and if you give her 120 percent, she’s going to give you double that back because she knows how badly you want it. She’s definitely tough—she expects a lot out of you.

“She can teach you so many things in one day; I never thought I could learn that much. We do some pretty intense flat classes, and I have to say, her courses at home are probably more difficult than any course I’ve ever jumped at a show. We do bizarre things at home, but it prepares us so well, so we’re not surprised by anything in the ring,” DiLandri continued.

It’s not just technical riding skills that Healey imparts to her students. “Her students are always polite, determined and focused. They have great attitudes, and that has a lot to do with her influence,” Cox said. “Karen taught me about good ethics in the horse industry. And I learned that with determination, you can do anything.”

“Determination” is a quality Healey values above all. “I know I’m very good at taking people who don’t have enormous talent, but

PERSONAL PROFILE



(Randi Muster Photo)

Home: Westlake Village, Calif.

Family: Married to Fred Bauer since April 2002.

Dogs: Three Corgis, Delilah, Dickens and Travis.

Hobbies: Cooking, reading and theater. She and Bauer love to travel and have been to Italy, Africa, China, Bali, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Administrative Roles: Healey is a U.S. Equestrian Federation R-rated judge and has judged USEF Pony Medal Finals, USEF Show Jumping Talent Search Finals-East, Devon (Pa.) and the Hampton Classic (N.Y.). She’s serving her fourth year as chairman of the USHJA Equitation Committee and serves on the USHJA Open Hunter Task Force, the USHJA Officials Education Committee and the USHJA Trainer’s Certification Committee. “I think that if you have a vision of the way you want this sport to proceed, you need to become actively involved in the process. Or shut up,” Healey said.

Current Students: Juniors: Tina DiLandri, Shelby Wakeman, Michelle Morris, Hannah Selleck, Carly Anthony (co-trains with her mother, Cara), Navona Gallegos, Hannah Bibb, Katie Hallmark, Holly Dickinson, Jocelyn Neff, Samantha Harrison, Haley Harrison, Skylar Nelson, Tiffani Weeda. Amateurs: Yvette Lang-Einczig, Yvette Harris, Elizabeth Dickinson, Kristi Siam, Katie Gardner, Jamie Barge, Tammy Chipko, Carol Bird, Yasmine Abdallat, and 1990 ASPCA Maclay Finals winner Lauren Kay.

Support Staff: Melissa Jones, her barn manager and assistant trainer for 21 years. “She’s absolutely indispensable in organizing everything and teaches when I’m gone,” Healey said. Kasey Ament and Amanda Ballew are riders and also assistant trainers.

2007 COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS

USEF/Pessoa Medal Finals (Pa.)—2nd – Hannah Selleck, 3rd – Tina DiLandri, 4th – Shelby Wakeman.

ASPCA Maclay Finals (N.Y.)—3rd – Shelby Wakeman, 4th – Carly Anthony, 6th – Michelle Morris.

Tad Coffin Washington International Horse Show Equitation Classic (D.C.)—2nd – Tina DiLandri

USET Show Jumping Talent Search Finals-West (Calif.)—2nd – Tina DiLandri, 3rd – Alison Lajoie, 4th – Michelle Morris, 5th – Carly Anthony, 8th – Shelby Wakeman.

WCE Junior/Amateur Medal Finals (Calif.)—1st – Tina DiLandri, 2nd – Yvette Lang-Einczig.

CPHA Adult Medal Finals—1st – Yvette Lang-Einczig.

USEF Adult Equitation National Standings—1st – Yvette Lang-Einczig.

have enormous drive, and really working with them and getting them to succeed way beyond expectations,” she said.

She leads by example, since Healey’s dedication to her horses, students and sport is absolute. “She gives it her all; she’s out there from morning to night, teaching and riding,” DiLandri said. “We realize that she does all of this for us, and that we need to give back to her. For her, to see us perform and do well is the biggest reward I think she could get.”