

Drinking from a Well Dug by Others

The days grow longer, coats are shedding, and show season draws near. Soon entry forms will be posted and we'll be sending in our entries to the secretary. Before we know it, orders of go will be posted online and it starts to seem real.

We pull into the fairgrounds, horses bathed and tuned and ready to show. We quickly find the list that points us to our stalls. The stalls are marked and—YES!—they've been bedded. After settling horses, unloading tack and setting up tack rooms, we saddle up to ride. Who knows what went on in this ring last week, but the ground has been carefully prepared for stopping and sliding. A paid warm-up schedule is posted and when our name is called we go in and see what we've got.

Classes begin and the judge who was booked last winter takes the chair at centre. A scribe who will spend the weekend marking scores sits next.

We go through our drills in the warm-up pen, taking nervous second-looks at the patterns someone taped to the wall. The gate person makes sure we know when we're in-the-hole, and on-deck and then sends us in with a smile and an encouraging word, as the announcer calls our name. We walk to centre, do our best, then drop our bridle for the bit judge.

The scores are tallied and the winners among us are presented with prizes before lining up for win photos. After the last classes, we pack up and move out. Someone else picks up poop from the parking lot, takes down signs, puts away the tables, pays the judges, and in the weeks to come, pays invoices, collects sponsorships, calculates and mails payouts, and reconciles the books. And soon it's time to start again.

That's what I'm talking about when I say that when we show our horses, we "drink from a well dug by others." What I'm trying to say is that we have lots of enthusiasts lining up at the well, but fewer and fewer diggers.

I challenge each one of us to think about how much we gain from the reining show experience we enjoy through WCRA and its chapters, in contrast to how much we are contributing. Everybody needs to pitch in. There are many jobs that need doing, before, during, and after the show. Just ask your show manager or chapter executive. And if you don't have time, give money. Every show is strapped for cash, especially these days.

We all need to help with the digging, before our well runs dry!