

Jeff Moore, Deborah Harrison and Laurel Bruun on the History of the KWPN-NA

By Liz van Woerden on May 28th, 2022, at Osierlea in San Juan Bautista, CA, USA.

In May 2022, I went to California for the KWPN-NA to interview Jeff Moore, Laurel Bruun and Deborah Harrison. Jeff and his partner at the time, the late Elizabeth (Liz) Searle, were the founders of the KWPN North America. The KWPN was then called: the 'WPN', which stood for 'Warmblood Horse Netherland'. The 'K', which stands for 'Royal', was added in 1986, so before then, the KWPN-NA was called NA-WPN. Deborah and Laurel were involved from the start too, as they were working with Jeff and Liz in San Juan Bautista, California, where they all lived.



Group picture at the first American Keuring, in the fall of '84.

The picture posted above has become quite 'iconic', because all the people involved with the first years of the KWPN-NA are in it. Laurel: "I think this picture was the first Keuring, because Jeff was dressed in white. He was probably running some horses in hand. The two people in riding clothes were doing the Ibop." The picture was taken in the fall of '84, at the start of the Keuring tour. "They came here the first couple of times, at Osierlea," Laurel explains. "It was Gert van der Veen, Rolf Brinkman and Hans Kingmans."

Before that was all organized, Jeff and Liz had come up with the idea of approaching the KWPN to negotiate if they could run a North American branch. Why did they want that in the first place? "OK, so we got Taxateur in 1981," Laurel explains. "Or HUI, that's the group of people, that bought him for Jeff. He was the main owner there, trainer, rider. Everybody wanted him to be, you know, on top and

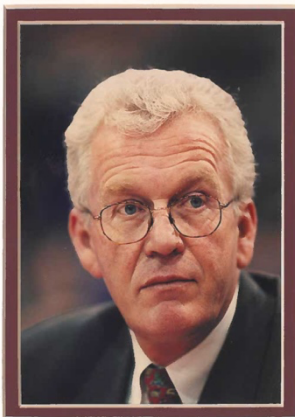


Elizabeth (Liz) Searle

successful with this stallion. They also bought the stallion because he would cross well with Thoroughbred mares and other great mares that lived in California, in other words, not something too dissimilar. It would be kind of a safe cross, something that would blend well with our lighter breeds here. They started to breed him when I first came in '82."

The fact that Taxateur, this 'new' breed, Dutch Warmblood stallion, was breeding mares in California, made them want to be able to get official registration of his offspring. "We thought, what to do now?" Laurel continues. "If we're breeding these mares, what to do with registering the foals? How can we give them legitimate papers? Because there was no American Dutch Warmblood breeders association. Everybody else had one: Holstein, Hanoverians, Oldenburg, Trakehners... All these breeds that were already here and were more well-known than Dutch Warmbloods at the time. Swedish Warmbloods were kind of a big thing too then. And they all had breed organizations, but they were American breed organizations. They weren't the original organization. So, you give papers to a foal, and it has nothing to do with the Trakehner association in Germany or the Swedish organization. And Jeff didn't want that. He wanted the foals from Taxateur to be registered somehow, be recognized, and have papers through the original registry from the Netherlands. And that had not been done before in all the US with any of the Warmblood breeds that had come from Europe."

"Yes, they all just started their own clubs here," Jeff adds. "They would just decide: 'We Hanoverians will have our own club.' 'We Holsteiners will have our own club.' But nothing was recognized by the original registries in Germany." Laurel: "That's where it would get crazy because there might be good horses brought over, but there was nobody watching out for the quality of the mares especially, as well as who's deciding to breed a stallion standing at stud. In the US, anybody can be a breeder. It isn't controlled by any government or organization." Jeff: "At that time there were even two Hanoverian associations in the US that had nothing to do with the Germans." Laurel: "But watching this and watching one Holsteiner organization fight with the other one, to say which one was the original and better... We didn't want that. We wanted the overseeing and the control that the original Dutch breeders had established already."



Gert van der Veen

With that thought in mind, Jeff and Liz planned on connecting with the Dutch registry. "They went to work to get a hold of who was the number one guy in charge there," Laurel explains. "They found out that was Gert van der Veen. At some point, they came to the USA and all had a meeting here in this room (at Osierlea). Liz and Jeff explained to them why they wanted to be a part of the original organization. And they thought that was a great idea that had never been done before. I remembered them go: 'Wow, what a wonderful idea! Let's do it.' So, they were all in favor of doing this that very day. But I don't think that was the day everything was organized and finalized. That was in the winter of '82."

There is a gap in the story now though, Jeff adds. Because getting them to California and agreeing with the whole idea was not easy to realize. Liz and Jeff first had to really convince them to work with 'the Americans'. "Let's go back a little and explain how we did that," Jeff

said. "So, Liz and I were going to Europe to buy a stallion. And of course, we were very 'Germanicly' oriented, so it was going to be Celle, and then the other fashionable place was Sweden. So we made a plan to go to Germany and then Sweden. We had a Swedish friend who lived in LA. We were at a show together and chatting away, when she said: 'Well, have you thought of Holland?' And I said: 'I am buying horses, not tulips, thank you very much.' And she said that they actually have horses in Holland. And I said: 'Really?!' I had no idea because none of us did in those days. So I said 'OK, we'll stop on the way'."

"Somebody put me in contact with a retired Spanish riding school instructor, Rochowanski, who was giving clinics in that country at the time," Jeff continues. "He lived in the Netherlands, and he acted as a kind of an agent between people. We contacted him and he was open to the idea that we would come looking for horses, and he set me up with Henk Leijser. And Henk Leijser was the most marvelous guy in all kinds of ways. I said to him: 'Show me horses.' And we trundled around the Netherlands and there was a horse I absolutely, desperately wanted that came out of a box stall by the side of the road. And I said 'I'll have that one, and he said 'No, it's already been sold.' I don't remember her name but it was a top British rider in 1981. He said: 'Well, if she doesn't buy it, you can have it.' She did buy it, and I said: 'But anyway, that's the kind of horse that I want.' He said: 'Really? THAT? Don't you think that's a little old fashioned?' And I said: 'NO, I think that's about right.' So, bless their hearts, they quickly adjusted and adapted to what they thought was an old-fashioned type and carted me around the countryside, it was great, and then took us to a Municipal Riding club of some kind in the Netherlands and the place was crawling with kids and ponies and stuff. Big indoor ring, and they drag out this three-year-old stallion, or 4- year-old maybe by then, and he just stood there gazing around with all these kids and ponies scurrying under his feet and I thought: Oh, this could be OK... and so I said 'Yes, I'll have him.'"



Chelsey Sibley riding Taxateur

That was Taxateur, which was then bought and exported to the USA as breeding stallion and Jeff's main Grand Prix horse. "I thought, what am I going to do with a horse like this?" Jeff continues. "I can't register the offspring and: who was going to breed to a thing like this? You know, it's like, it's like having a crossbred something... It's a nothing. And so that's what inspired us to go and approach the WPN." Henk Leijser took them to the WPN headquarters, where they do the stallion testing, what is now the KWPN station in Ermelo. They were then introduced to Gert van der Veen and Hans Kingmans. Jeff: "We sat down with them at the stallion testing place and said: 'Look, we are interested in having a chance to get our horses, the offspring of my horse, registered in the US. Can you do that for us?' And they said: 'No. No way. Not going to register horses in the US.' And I said: 'Well. What about if we make an arrangement between us to set up some kind of ... it could be called a 'registry', it could be called an 'arrangement', it could be called anything. And Liz and I will fund it for at least two years, and we will do or pay

for all of the work.' Paperwork mostly, of course. 'Will you let us have a go at it?' But they were very much not for it. Because they had been snowed by people who wanted to set up a Dutch registry in the US to make money off of it. And so, they were looking at us like, 'yeah, you and the guys before you wanna make a buck.' But when we said: 'If we do this, it is not allowed for any autonomy in the US. because we have all kinds of breed organizations in the US doing their own thing, fighting with each other. We don't wanna play, but if you will let us just be in a finger, if not an arm, of the registry in the Netherlands, we will fund it and we will do all the work. And if you like it, fine, if you don't like it, fine. And if it works, we'll figure out a way to fund it after that.' Then they said: 'Well, we'll talk to you later about it.' At least at that point they stopped saying 'I don't think so.'" Laurel: "I didn't have that background. I just knew that after that, Jeff was 'Gung Ho'! We've got to have these papers coming from the Netherlands!"

According to Jeff it was a wild idea in those days because everybody wanted to start a new registry. "But our idea was absolutely not to start a new registry," Jeff explains. "We wanted to be the channel to the guys in the Netherlands, even if they did things, which later happened, that we didn't like so much as policy. It was still worth it because we had the legitimacy. We were not being our own organization in the technical aspect, but just a desk that, you know, did the paperwork. That had never occurred to them, I guess, because they sort of looked bewildered, especially when we said we would fund it. They really couldn't figure that out. And also, their rules. Because in this country, like the Oldenburgs, they just made their own rules.



Rolf Brinkman, Liz Searle, Jos Sevriens, Faith Fessenden and Gert van der Veen

They made their own standards, all that kind of thing. The Dutch guys thought we wanted that too. So they were intrigued by the fact that we didn't. We wanted to have absolutely no control. And not allow anybody in our organization: if we had one to have control that would have to be straight from the Netherlands. That's when Gert and I became friends. Trust

was established because I didn't do anything without his approval. 'Can we do this with this person or that?' It took them a little while to decide to go through with it, they had to go to the board of the WPN and ask, 'Can we let these weirdos do this?' That took a year or two or three or something. But yes: this is the story of how the KWPN-NA started out."

Why did Jeff and Liz like the Dutch so much, more than the other breeds from Europe? Jeff: "Well, I loved their horses of course. But what I loved the most about the Dutch were the Dutch people themselves. I had spent a lot of years in Germany. And I was very Germanicly oriented: I

loved it. I rode in Germany 10 years before and lived a little while in Germany and it was just jolly and great. But if I would say: 'I have an idea. What if...' Then they would say: 'Das ist UNMÖGLICH!' Meaning 'that is impossible!' And I just got inured to 'das ist unmöglich'. So when I went on that first trip to The Netherlands, I was driving across the border from Germany to Holland and just on the other side of the border I met Henk and I said with no expectation of success: 'Is there any chance we could blah blah blah', whatever it was, and the answer was, 'of course that's possible' ... And I said: 'This is the place for me!' Laurel: "Out of the box!" Jeff: "Yes! I had not heard 'It is possible' ever in Europe all those years."



The first judges: Rolf Brinkman, Liz Searle and Gert van der Veen

After everything started rolling in the cooperation between the WPN and the WPN-NA, there was a group of people 'pulling the cart'. Laurel: "Jeff was the director and Liz, was like the co-director or something. There were more people involved, Faith Fessenden, Frieda O'Brien... we ran it the first years with quite a large group of volunteers." The first paid employee was Mary Giddens. Jeff: "Yes, I hired Mary Giddens. One of the people from our volunteer group. Mary got involved in '87, until 2004."

The organization didn't grow fast in the beginning, but it did get larger every year. "Yes, it didn't grow like crazy. But it kind of trudged along nicely." Laurel: "I think Mary came in, and then she moved up to Oregon. That was when it was starting to really gather some steam. She started out with a budget of \$16,000 a year and improving it to \$300,000 a year." Jeff: "We incorporated shortly after Mary came on the scene, in 1987. We weren't incorporated before that." Laurel: "In the very start, it was upstairs in some building, just Jeff, Liz and a few volunteers running it." Jeff: "Yes. And then, after I don't know how many years, we got a secretary. We had various secretaries. First volunteering and then paid. And then Mary found Sylvia Monas." Laurel: "She was a good find." Jeff: "Yes, a blessing. Then we bought a building in Oregon, so all of a sudden, we were big, big cheese. We had Sylvia Monas working in that building and that was the headquarters of the NA-WPN for some years." Laurel: "Before that, it was run out of Mary Giddens's ranch in Oregon." Jeff: "It was run out of her guest room. Her guest room and then expanded to her garage."

For those first couple of years, the original group funded the organization all out of their own pocket, without any financial return on investment. Laurel: "We had to pay WPN... Then they got the money for the papers, so no, no return on investment. Yeah, and that was our deal with the WPN, if they would let us do this, but make sure that they did not let anybody start using it for their own devices, we would fund it as long as we could." After the incorporation in '87, the

financial situation changed. Jeff: "Yeah. Then we got money. That was all Mary's doing. It was all very bewildering at the beginning because nobody's kept records."

Later on, a new agreement with the KWPN was made. The KWPN-NA then became an official licensee. Debbie: "Things have changed after Mary retired, Jeff, you don't know that probably. Mary was the head of the organization for quite some years after you retired in the early '90's. Then John Sanzo, was the head. With him as the head, they changed the agreement. I think that's when they became the licensee. They worked on a whole new agreement after Mary left." Jeff: "Looking back, I think the way we started it all up with the WPN was absolutely the best and only way to do it, because it was the only thing that's separated us from all those other organizations that just said: 'Oh, we're Hanoverian, yes, we're Oldenburg, and so on.'"

The KWPN-NA recently formed a new Board of Directors. One of our members sent in the question: 'Do the founders would have any advice to share?' Laurel: "Examine the history, because how it started and why it started is how and why it will stay alive and productive. It's easy for any organization to go off in left field. And lose track of why they exist." Jeff: "I think if you talk about the history of the WPN-NA, what really set it on its feet was Mary and Faith efforts and what really put it in the public eye was the efforts between the two of them. Without those two ladies, my efforts would have gone nowhere. Mary doing the brickwork and Faith doing the PR and exposure and promotion and all that. It was both of them that turned it into a viable, functional, moving organization. Faith was out there all over the country and in Holland promoting. She gave speeches, made and showed videotapes, she took pictures. Mary spent 17 years in her guest room and garage. Hour after hour, way beyond a normal day." Dedicated employees and volunteers are key to let an organization like this grow and blossom. And after 40 years of breeding KWPN horses in NA, many top performing North American bred horses prove that the quality of the horses has definitely grown as well.

Three important North- American bred stallions:



Isselmeer Ikepono (Vosmaer x Taxateur), born in 1991, bred by Deborah Harrison. KWPN-NA approved Gelders stallion, competing at FEI Grand Prix dressage level with Chelsey Sibley. Sired 20 upper-level offspring of which four Grand Prix dressage



Idocus Crown (Equador x Zonneglans), born in 1991, bred by Christine McCarthy. Grand Prix dressage level, approved KWPN stallion and Olympic competitor. Producer of approved stallions and top sport horses in multiple disciplines.



Judgement ISF Crown (Consul x Akteur), born in 1991, bred by Iron Spring Farm. Judgement was the first KWPN- NA bred and approved International Top Jumper and sire. He won nearly \$1.5 million in prize money and sired many top-ranked offspring in jumping, dressage and eventing.

THE ORIGINAL IDEA

The original idea, as conceived by Mrs. Elizabeth Searle and myself, and subsequently presented to Messrs. Van de Veen and Kingmans, evolved around a need and a paranoia.

We felt that the North Americans, who were importing and in some cases already breeding Dutch horses, would benefit from the administrative set-up, experience and guidance of the WPN.

The question immediately came up as to the advisability of a North American registry or breed society to promote the breed and to organize and acquaint the breeders with each other. We looked at once for an alternative which would, we hoped, forestall the kind of disasters which have plagued the Trakehner, Lippizaner and Hannoverian breeders in this country. I speak of the constant battling which is almost inevitable in such an incestuous situation, when the governing entities and policy makers are also the same people who have to meet with the approval of no one but themselves in licensing and approving the horses.

Mrs. Searle and I explained to the WPN that a registry in the USA was inevitable (it's a national pastime!) and that the potential for problems, not to say disasters, was enormous if such a thing were autonomous.

We suggested, not to say pleaded, for some "parental guidance" from the WPN. We asked for support for a Foreign Office or Foreign Department in North America to act as a liaison directly between North American breeders/owners and the parent organization in Europe, the WPN. Such an office would be directly under the control of the WPN.

The prospect of European registry in the country of origin makes the whole point of registration enormously more meaningful and prestigious. The fact of control and management by the parent organization makes the problem of infighting and misdirection academic.

WARMBLOED PAARDENSTAMBOEK IN NEDERLAND
WARMBLOOD STUDBOOK OF THE NETHERLANDS
NORTH AMERICAN DEPARTMENT
Office of the Director



To: Faith, Mary, Debby, Liz, Sheryl Studley (attorney)
From: Jeff

Enclosed please find 3 documents:

1. What I originally sent to the WPN/Holland as a proposal to formalize and clarify the relationship between the WPN and the NA/WPN.
2. The WPN's counter-proposal (just received). It is wonderfully brief and simple, but perhaps not quite comprehensive enough?
3. My thoughts on the counter proposal. My changes are in caps.

Also please note my suggested name change for us. I think the name/initials are getting too unwieldy and don't register as relating to anything with Americans. My suggestion may have the advantage of clarifying through the name what we are, and the Royal may "officialize" us to the masses, and it has snob appeal. In case some malcontent(s) decide to form a "Dutch Warmblood Association" or "Registry", that may be useful in making it plain at a glance who is the "real thing". Name change would, of course, have to be OK'd by WPN Holland.

Please give me your thoughts.

Thank you,

Jeff

1.

AGREEMENT

This agreement is by and between the Koninklijk Warmbloed Paarden Stamboek in Nederland (Royal Dutch Warmblood Horses Studbook in the Netherlands aka KWPN) and the Royal Warmblood Studbook of the Netherlands/North American Department aka NA/WPN.

I. Purpose and Intent

The purpose of this agreement is to continue the activities, services, and functions of the NA/WPN in North America to promote the breeding of Dutch Warmblood horses; to provide services to support and educate the breeders; to maintain and, if possible, improve the standard of quality of Dutch Warmblood horses in North America in accordance with the breeding goals and under the continuing guidance of the KWPN.

The NA/WPN proposes to fulfill these purposes by providing and processing foal registrations; Verifying breeding stallions; holding Keurings; publishing a newsletter, stallion directory, and handbook; offering awards programs and incentives; providing advertising and promotional support; and other activities and functions as outlined below.

11. Structure

A. The NA/WPN shall have the status of an independent entity according to the laws of the the United States.

B. The NA/WPN shall be a separate financial entity from the KWPN, and the KWPN shall not be responsible for any undertaking of and by the NA/WPN.

C. The By-Laws of the ANA/WPN shall state that the KWPN has the right to propose and bind the executive director of the NA/WPN.

D. Duration of the term of the Executive Director shall be 4 years, reappointment is allowed.

E. The first Executive Director shall be J. Ashton Moore



NORTH AMERICAN DEPARTMENT
W.P.N.
 (WARMBLOOD PAARDENSTAMBOEK IN NEDERLAND)
WARMBLOOD STUDBOOK OF THE NETHERLANDS

DIRECTOR
 J. Ashton Moore
 334 Mission Vineyard Road
 San Juan Bautista, CA 95045
(408) 623-4446

SECRETARY
 Freda O'Brien
 6208 Reba Drive
 Roseville, CA 92028
(916) 791-1044

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
 Hap Hansen
 2530 Lone Jack Road
 Encinitas, CA 92024
(619) 436-0639

Shirley Johnson
 Route 1, Pohl 14
 Waller, TX 77484
(409) 372-2537

Dr. Richard Schmirkrath
 3403 Cardinal Lane
 Grand, TX 79701
(817) 697-5515

Don Shaw
 36750 Elm Avenue
 Greenfield, CA 93927
(408) 476-3772

Sandra Smith
 3059 103 Road
 Carbondale, CO 81623
(303) 963-3507

Barbara Steinhorn
 Route 1 Box 105B
 Aldie, VA 22001
(703) 327-4641

ADVISORY BOARD
 Elizabeth F. Searle
 334 Mission Vineyard Road
 San Juan Bautista, CA 95045
(408) 623-4446

CONSULTING VETERINARIAN
 Dr. Deborah P. Harrison
 P.O. Box 1340
 San Juan Bautista, CA 95045
(408) 623-2574

FINANCIAL ADVISOR
 J. Lee Brown
 P.O. Box 643
 San Juan Bautista, CA 95045
(408) 623-2137

BLOODLINE/PEDIGREE ADVISOR
 Faith Fessenden
 5975 Sierra Vista Way
 Reno, NV 89511
(775) 851-3654

EDITOR/WPN NEWSLETTER
 Cynthia Warren
 7540 Lovers Lane
 Hollister, CA 95023
(408) 637-8409

A NOTE FROM THE NA/WPN DIRECTOR, J.A. MOORE:

1985 has been an active first year for the NA/WPN. The amount of paperwork — registration, correspondence, documentation — has already become enormous. Our slaving secretary, Freda O'Brien, is inundated. It is only thanks to her efficiency that the inevitable growing pains of our group have been practically non-existent. Those of us who reap the benefits of our direct association with the WPN in Holland owe a great deal to Freda for keeping the machinery of communication and interaction well oiled.

Since the last newsletter, development has been considerable. A great deal has happened, and of course more activity and more ideas seem to generate even more of the same. Ties with the WPM/Bilthoven in Holland, the "head office," are stronger than ever and we look forward to receiving even more benefits from that close and mutually supportive association. We continue to realize and benefit from the wisdom or good fortune of our nearly unique situation as a branch of the European organization (WPN Holland), rather than an autonomous organization.

WPN/Bilthoven is offering us support in a number of ways: access to and assistance from their machinery of administration, access to their records and research in breeding, bloodlines, sport results, etc., inclusion in the keuring system for stallions, mares and geldings, special stallion breeding license to give us access to more good stallions, financial support for office administration and for publicity, advertising and public relations, and perhaps of most importance to North American breeders, credibility. Credibility of breeding organizations on this continent is very low (partly because a new independent one seems to form to satisfy every internal disagreement) each claiming to be the representative and protector of the breed.

We have the credibility of full European registration for quality domestic-bred horses, recognition and support of our keurings and membership for our members in the European parent organization. As you read through the newsletter, I hope you will be pleased with the efforts and accomplishments that 1985 promises.

J.A. Moore

MEETINGS WITH WPN/BILTHOVEN

In August last year I went to Holland and met with WPN president, Professor G. van der Mey at Bilthoven. We discussed the development and current situation in the North American Department; goals, direction and growth of the department and the continued support and cooperation of the head office.

In November, WPN director, G. van der Veen came to California to meet with me and several of our members to discuss plans and policies. Faith Fessenden attended to discuss publicity and promotion. Our plans in this direction seemed to be acceptable, as a stipend was offered for that purpose, funded by WPN/Bilthoven.

Dr. Deborah Harrison, consulting veterinarian, attended to discuss the future and technical aspects of shipping semen from the Netherlands. Elizabeth Searle also attended.

Two other major points discussed were, (1) the financing of the secretary's office, and (2) a North America Keuring in 1985.

Mr. van der Veen then went to Sacramento to meet with our secretary, Freda O'Brien, to discuss administration, registration and documentation procedures and communications with the WPN. The meetings were productive and encouraging. The financial support of WPN/Bilthoven was a gratifying vote of confidence in our department and its members.

In January, Faith Fessenden went to Holland to do research at the WPN/Bilthoven archives (and to spread good will on our behalf in Holland). While there, she also met with Director van der Veen to discuss general development and publicity and promotion.

In February, Elizabeth Searle and I met briefly in Holland with President van der Mey and Director van der Veen.

With so much personal exchange, as well as considerable correspondence, communication with the WPN/Bilthoven continues to be extensive and productive.

J.A. Moore

Publicity

For the support of NA/WPN members and promotion of their product — Dutch Horses — a series of small advertisements and announcements is planned. Perhaps you have seen one of them in **The Chronicle of The Horse**.
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Stallion Directory

On very short notice it has been decided to put together a stallion directory for WPN stallions in North America. Documentation seems at last to be sufficient to allow us to identify WPN stallions here and their status.
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NORTH AMERICAN DEPARTMENT W.P.N. (WARMBLOOD PAARDENSTAMBOEK IN NEDERLAND) WARMBLOOD STUDBOOK OF THE NETHERLANDS

11/1984

Editor's note: In the early spring of this year, Jeff Moore wrote the following letter encompassing the need for a viable recognition of Dutch horses in the United States, (and their future registration) as well as, urging those that care to join this group. We feel that this letter is still pertinent and offer it, in its entirety.

Dutch Horses In America

After a successful meeting in November at Osierlea, San Juan Bautista, California, a North American Department of the WPN (Warmblood Studbook of the Netherlands) has been established to begin functioning in 1984.

After nearly 2 years of active correspondence and preliminary meetings in Holland, this meeting with Mr. Gert van de Veen, Mr. Hans Kingmans, and myself, was the final step in setting up a NA/WPN.

After much discussion of the advantages/disadvantages of a foreign department of the WPN compared to an autonomous North American registry or society, the WPN representative came to the conclusion that a Foreign Department would best serve the interests of North America breeders and owners of Dutch horses, as well as of the breed itself.

The first order of business is the setting up of the registry for Dutch horses in North America — imported as well as domestically bred. Registry will be in the Dutch Foalbook and Dutch Studbook — not in American ones. Within the next year or two a Dutch jury will be invited to this continent for keuring (testing) and mare and foal inspections, of which all members will be informed. Branding and details of registration and certification will be further dealt with.

The planned educational and promotional activities of the Department will further promote interest in Dutch horses on this continent. An educational newsletter is planned, as well as other services to members, including a record keeping system to keep track of performances of Dutch horses in all fields of equestrian sport here and abroad — useful information for advertising and promotion as well as for the general interest of owners and prospective owners of Dutch horses.

You are invited to join the North American Department of the Warmblood Studbook of the Netherlands.

Sincerely,

J. Ashton Moore
Director, NA/WPN
334 Mission Vineyard Road
San Juan Bautista, CA 95045

DIRECTOR
J. Ashton Moore
334 Mission Vineyard Road
San Juan Bautista, CA 95045
(408) 623-4446

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Hap Hansen
2530 Lone Jack Road
Encinitas, CA 92024
(619) 436-0639

Shirley Johson
Rt 1, B.I. 83
Waller, TX 77484
(409) 372-2537

Dr. Richard Schmickrath
3403 Cardinal Ln
Midland, TX 79701
(915) 697-5515

Don Shaw
2220 Glen Haven Rd
Fresno, CA 95073
(408) 476-3772

Sandra Smith
3059 103 Rd
Carbondale, CO 81623
(303) 963-3507

Barbara Steinem
Rt 1 Box 105B
Aldie, VA 25001
(703) 327-4641

ADVISORY BOARD

Elizabeth F. Searle
334 Mission Vineyard Rd
San Juan Bautista, CA 95045
(408) 623-4446

CONSULTING VETERINARIAN
Dr. Deborah P. Harrison
P. O. Box 1340
San Juan Bautista, CA 95045
(408) 623-2574

FINANCIAL ADVISOR
J. Lee Brown
P. O. Box 643
San Juan Bautista, CA 95045
(408) 623-2137

BLOODLINE/PEDIGREE ADVISOR
Faith Fassneden Phelps
E. Moana Ln
Fresno, NV 89502
(702) 851-3654



Dutch Warmblood enthusiasts meeting at San Juan Bautista, California with representatives from Bilthoven, Holland.