

A Little History of Equestrians Institute

By 1974, a group of western Washington State parents who'd started a Pony Club chapter back in 1960 were "so enthralled" with the Pony Club model, says original EI member Suzy Moery, "that we thought, 'Why not have something like this for grownups?'" --to teach adults what was then called "horsemastership." Says Moery, "Few people had horses in professional stables then; we needed to learn about horse care at least as much as we did about riding." Mary B. Dodd and the late Bobby Coffin founded EI; other early members included Marge Beardsley, Judith Piper, and Deena McClain.

USDF founder Lowell Boomer got word of EI's existence and "sent out a lot of notices; Mary B. wrote back." EI soon became a charter USDF GMO. A favorite memory of many members is the Christmas party and parade of decorated horses, ponies, and carriages through neighborhoods—an annual feature during EI's early years.

Early on, the challenges stemmed from the GMO's remote location. Help came from the USET's Capt. Jack Fritz, who knew and loved the area and "understood we couldn't afford to bring people in," says Moery; he encouraged top trainers planning California trips to swing north and do clinics in the Northwest. Beyond such visits, teaching "horsemastership" happened largely through the EI newsletter "and members tagging along to kids' Pony Club functions." EI also started doing "dressage and CT camps because nobody else was doing them."

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Editor's note: Lowell Boomer died in November 2011 at age 100.