

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH HENRY CLAY AWARD 17 SEPTEMBER 2008

HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein

President and Members of the Henry Clay Society,

When I was a child I lived in a Palace in the heart of Amman. It was a big palace but a small home full of love and laughter. My childhood did not differ from that of many in my region or indeed in yours now. It was punctuated by war and violence between nations.

I remember most clearly waiting up for my father to come home from his missions of diplomacy around our Middle East and refusing to sleep until he had come in to say goodnight no matter how late it was.

My refusal to sleep came from the fact that, at school, one of the kids there - I remember he was called 'Garrett' - told me that my father's plane would be shot down.

My night time antics were not looked upon kindly by my Governesses and my father asked me what I did while I was waiting for him and I told him.

My sisters had given me a collection of badges with unicorns on them. They had little lights on their faces at the tip of their horns and I would sit under the window in my room waiting for my father to come home and with the dim light of the badges, I would read my favorite collection of books - The Black Stallion series. I read and reread those books for hours.

Those were some of the happiest times of my life and I used to live in the world of those books. Reading them over and over again, I used to dream about Kentucky and although it was a million miles away, even from Jordan, I could picture that Kentucky was horse heaven. It was my escape and the place I dreamed of.

It would have been normal to have started my speech by telling you all that I am truly honored and humbled to receive an award that carries the name of a statesman as great as Henry Clay. But I hope that by sharing the memory of those books with you, you may realize that to me, being here is truly a moment in my life where I have to pinch myself and wonder if this is real. Nor can I adequately find the words to tell you what an honor it is to me that Kentucky reached out to me in this way and how much this means to me.

In my life I have been privileged to study the art of statesmanship in the shadow of three great statesmen: my father HM the late King Hussein, my husband HH Sheikh Mohammed, and, my brother HM King Abdullah. And I

have come to learn from all three that it is not loud rhetoric and expansive actions which make strong leaders, it is thinkers - men of vision - whose humility and inner peace comes from their desire to put the welfare and happiness of their peoples above all else.

I have understood from them, and, from studying the lives of men like Henry Clay, that there are many skills required to act in a statesman-like fashion but negotiation and compromise are key amongst them for it is these two sisters of politics that bring about change in a peaceful setting.

However, Mr. Long may agree with me, that although I have observed and understood these traits, I have yet to personally perfect them myself!

But by honoring me with this award you are really honoring the memory, legacy, and ongoing actions, of those who are my mentors and whose visions I seek simply to enact. Therefore I accept this award in their name as well as my own.

I have been asked to speak tonight about the question of how the horse can help assist in the art of statesmanship and compromise between people of all nations and religions. I will not even attempt to hide the fact that on the face of it, this did seem like a very daunting subject.

But in fact, it brings together two vital strands of my life which I am sure I share with all of you. The first being an inherited need to wrestle with the iniquities of life that are suffered by others in societies around the world, and, the second being the love of horses.

There is a famous quote which I am sure you will all have heard which is, "*Wherever man has left his footprint in the long ascent from barbarism to civilization we will find the hoof print of the horse beside it*".

When we look at that ascent from barbarism we see in our societies a commonality in our use of the horse. But our populations have looked upon the horse in very different ways and in addressing the question, it is important to recognize the differing historical and cultural perspectives.

For example, if I can share with you the distinctions as I see them between the West and the East. In the West, the horse literally carried man through the pages of history, the rise and fall of empires, developments in agriculture, turned the wheels of industry, and somewhere in that evolution around the time of the Greeks, the horse also provided sport. To the peoples who form the land mass we now know as Europe, the horse was a fully functioning mode of transport and agricultural and industrial development and this was an outlook that was exported by Europeans as they developed their Empires.

Although the horse was broadly viewed as machinery, there were of course great affections between individual horses and their owners, running throughout history between Coligula and Incitatus, Alexander the Great and Bucephalus, Wellington and Copenhagen, and indeed, George Washington

and Nelson.

In the Arab Region we have the same practical and spiritual connection with horses, believing that horses are a gift. For us, horses are a part of our living heritage and we are as proud of its originality as other races and creeds. Those qualities are its elegance and suppleness, speed and courage, and incredible powers of agility and endurance.

An Arab proverb says that "God took a handful of southerly wind blew His breath over it and created the horse". It is that tradition and culture that surrounds the horse and provides a bedrock of belief for the people across the region.

I share these observations with you to exemplify the fact that the magic of the horse is, that whilst it has meant so many things to so many different peoples over the centuries, it has maintained the capacity to unite and to be relevant in whatever language or religion or century.

I am sure that I do not point out anything new to any of you here. But the part that I wonder about is this - The Information Age seems to bring us closer together. We all are able to speak with great authority about what is happening in the far reaches of the world and the stands that we take are based on the information and the communication that we have.

That invades every home, in every form. When you think about it, that is not really any different from ages that have past. Cleopatra probably suffered just as badly from the gossip in Rome as perhaps the legendry Helen of Troy did from news of Sparta centuries ago. So what has changed? Probably, only our values.

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed joins me in thanking you for this honor as he has long been a friend of the state of Kentucky. And having spent many wonderful days with him here, I know that he has many dear friends in this room.

I am always so grateful to see the effect that your hospitality has on him. To see him so truly happy, walking from barn to barn looking at promising horses for the future, and to be able to witness every time the way that he is able to shed his burdens for a few minutes and smile and laugh in the way that you canbut, only if you feel truly at home.

His job these days is demanding him to act as a bridge more and more between East and West. He is able to do so as an equal partner and by that I mean he is able to speak honestly and truthfully about the turmoil and future of the Middle Eastern Region because he has no personal agenda and needs nothing from anybody.

He has a dream of peace in our region that is truly of his own making, one that is based on being the first economically stable model in the region. He has given our people a haven and ownership of what he has built.

I have seen first hand that this, above anything else, is what gives you a peaceful people and creates that cultural change in less than a generation.

His dream is to educate the people of the Arab world through his new initiatives such as his recent endowment fund and also the Dubai Cares initiative.

He firmly believes in long-term change and feels he can offer the young people of our world the tools that they will need to continue to work for a peaceful middle east.

He works tirelessly and selflessly behind the scenes in the political arena to build bridges and promote understanding between our nations. He does so always avoiding the limelight.

In fact, it is pretty good that he is not here tonight because it does allow me to talk a little more about him to people who I know are his friends and perhaps do not see his many facets as clearly as I do.

One thing I can tell you is that through all of this if you were to ask Sheikh Mohammed in what environment he finds it most easy to build these bridges, he would tell you it is with horses.

I am incredibly fortunate to have a man of vision and compromise, a true statesman, as a husband and to have had a father who shared the same qualities.

My father saw in me the need to compete as an athlete and he allowed me the freedom to do so. Now that looks like an easy decision but at the time, it was a brave move.

In the 1980's no young girl from an Arab family would have been allowed to go to Europe alone to train as a professional athlete, let alone a member of a royal family. My father braved much criticism at the time in allowing me to do so.

Sport and horses are fundamental to this is the one thing that empowers and embraces women as one of its values both in management and in competition.

Horses and sport generally do far more for women in the Islamic world than politics ever could. I did it through horses and as a result girls all over the Middle East and the Gulf were encouraged to compete.

When Western politicians were talking about freeing women from the veil, sport, and in my case, jumping, was doing just that.

On a wider scale, when I announced my candidature for the FEI, people in my region felt strongly that I had made a mistake and it would embarrass the Arab world because I could not possibly win as there was so much anti-Arab sentiment in the world. And remember that the world was a different place two years ago - anti-Arab sentiment was running high. They also felt that the FEI was an organisation controlled by the European Federations.

It was thanks to people like those from the American National Federation who sat with me and listened to my ideas for the future of horsesport and believed in me, that I achieved my goal.

That belief in a shared vision - that horses belong to the whole world - has led to a strong partnership between us. Our collaboration in bringing that vision into being is also why I look forward so much to the World Equestrian Games here in 2010.

I have had the pleasure of working closely with David O'Connor and John Long and I can assure you all that they are preparing the best games the world has ever seen.

And I feel sure that the way that Kentucky has already touched me, is a gift that the World Equestrian Games will give to so many. It truly has the opportunity to be a bridge to a greater understanding of the world around us.

Through the work of organisations like yours, and events like the World Equestrian Games, we need to pass on the message of statesmanship and the legacy of men like Henry Clay.

Thank you.