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The Dancing Stallions of Lipizza - Part
II

Lead: Bred as royal horses of the Austrian emperors, the beautiful and graceful Lipizzaner stallions were the subject of a spectacular rescue at the end of World War II.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: The Hapsburg emperors bred the Lipizzaners for their strength and intelligence. With the end of World War I, the empire was no more but the white stallions, in their home at Vienna's Spanish Riding School,

continued the tradition of the precision riding originally developed as battlefield maneuvers against enemy soldiers.

Between World Wars I and II, the School stayed in business by charging admission for public exhibitions but with the Anschluss, the Nazi takeover of Austria in 1938, the School and its horses became part of the German Army and the swastika replaced the Austrian national flags hanging above the dirt floor of the main riding hall at School near the former royal palace in Vienna. In late 1944 the Allies began to bomb the city and it became clear to the Director, Alois Podhajsky, that the horses had to be removed. The German High Command did not want

the horses moved as it might undermine Vienna's civilian morale as the Soviet and western armies gradually drew close to the city.

With regular bombing posing a threat to the School and the horses themselves, the Director finally prevailed upon the Germans to allow the horses to be taken out of harm's way to the small village, St. Martin, 200 miles north of Vienna. Gradually, in small groups, the horses were transferred by train to their place of refuge. The problem was, to whom would they surrender, the Russians, whose taste for horse meat was well-established or the American Third Army led by George Patton. Fortunately, advanced units of the

Third reached St. Martin before the Soviets arrived and claimed it and its horses.

On May 7, 1945, the Lipizzaner Stallions performed for General Patton and he was so impressed that he placed them under his protection. After the war the Lipizzaners' popularity grew and world-wide tours became a regular way of life for the Dancing Horses of Vienna.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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