

The following is an excerpt from the presentation at the Hall of Fame Ceremony:

Richard E Kurzeja “Rich”

Not so sure if we could call Rich the Father of IBHA, but I think we could call him the ‘Founder’?



Rich grew up in Hammond, IN with a family that was not into horses. But sympathetic to his interest in horses, Rich’s Dad took him for pony rides when he was young. Ambitious Rich then started helping with the pony rides in exchange for being able to ride and be around them. Eventually he became a partner in the pony ride business. This was no ordinary business as Rich has pointed out, they traveled all over to supply ponies for many purposes – even the new Walt Disney Land in CA. During these busy times traveling back and forth to CA supplying ponies and sureys, he still managed to go to school at Purdue University. At one point and time he was just one test away from becoming a Certified Public Accountant, but decided that being behind a desk for the rest of his life was something he could not do. Horses were his calling.

One fateful weekend he was asked to stand up as a groomsman for a cousin’s wedding and met his wife Doll. Doll was standing up as a bridesmaid for her friend. Rich knew he had to see her again and the very next day he went and asked her out. After a few dates, Rich knew she was the right one and married her in 1957.

Rich was a very motivated young man. All the while he was also competing in Bareback and Bull Riding at the rodeo.

He sold the pony business and went out looking for a breed of horse. He attended the Arabian shows in Scottsdale, but decided that they were over priced. He bought his first quarter horse stallion and ended up selling him very quickly. He decided that quarter horses would be the way to go since they were not over priced and were easy to sell. And he was hooked!

Rich showed quarter horses, did some training, but mostly concentrated on breeding.

Then he heard of another association that was registering buckskins. He went to a few shows and decided to start a Charter club called Mid America Buckskin Association to bring buckskin horse shows closer to home, which came to be the largest association in the registry.

Shortly after another registry was formed and Rich went to CA to bring it home to IN, which we all know today as the International Buckskin Horse Association. Rich jumped in with both feet to make it a go. Rich was so determined to make this association a success that he worked for 15 years without collecting a pay check.

While working with the IBHA:

- He negotiated for IBHA to become an affiliation with AQHA.
- He negotiated for IBHA to become an affiliation with NSBA.
- He negotiated for IBHA's 'The Buckskin' painting to be displayed at the AQHA Museum – where some prints are sold to help support our scholarship fund.
- Worked as an IBHA judge for 31 years and is now retired.
 - When asked about rewards from judging all those years:
 - Liked the travel and the experiences
 - Liked meeting new people
 - He felt it was a privilege to be asked to come to a show – people trusted you for your opinion on their horse
- Founder of our Queen's Contest.
- Founder of the Youth Scholarship Fund.
- Founder of the IBHA World Show.
- Founding member and officer of the Color Breed Counsel.
- Incorporated IBHA in 1971
- Trained and exhibited horses for many clients to numerous IBHA Championships
- Bred and raised IBHA registered horses sold all over the United States and Mexico.
 - Stood the first registered Stallion Leo Reno
- Awarded Colonel-Aide-de-Camp honors for the State of New Mexico

When asked to put all of these accomplishments into perspective, this is what Rich had to say:

'It feels so good to be a part of something larger than yourself. And to have a place where you can raise your kids and keep them out of trouble.'

'I am so proud of my kids, Rick and Denise, and their accomplishments!'

'Come and learn with IBHA and be more than just a number!'

FOOTNOTE: Rich also has a daughter – Deanna.