

Barb Beckel

Inducted into the IBHA Hall of Fame, March 16, 2019

“Devoted to Family and Dedicated to Buckskin Horses”

This is what the tombstone reads for Mrs. Barbara Beckel, of New Hudson, MI. When interviewing her only son, Bob, I was struck by how much Barb had in common with so many people who are drawn to IBHA and buckskin horses. She was nothing short of extraordinary.

Barbara was however, anything but common. She was an excellent mother and wife, and inspiration to anyone who came in contact with her. She broke barriers.

Born in March of 1931, Barb was a child of the Great Depression. Her childhood included a mile long walk at age 5 to kindergarten. In those times a little girl begging her father for a horse was commonplace, but most horses were farm plugs who hadn't yet replaced tractors.

And yet, due to her persistence her father finally caved and was able to scrape together enough cash to buy an old horse for Barb and her brother to share. Her dad told her that the best way to ride was bareback, so that's how she learned.

Barb's love of horses grew as she grew, and so did the family involvement. Her inspiration led to her father investing in Arabians and starting his own Arabian breeding and training facility. Barb's father took this passion he had learned from his daughter and eventually became the head of the Michigan Arabian Horse Association and worked thirty years as the superintendent of the horse department at the Michigan State Fair.

All because Barb wanted a horse.

Barb's influence didn't stop there. It blossomed. As she grew into adulthood she shared her love of horses with her husband Bob Sr. and her only son, Bob Jr.

At the time Bob was born Barb was working for her father's insurance agency in the office. She quickly moved up the ranks in this business to become an agent and then office manager and owner. This was the start of Barb's work behind the scenes.

As Bob grew, so did Barb's role in the horse industry. She influenced his upbringing and once again shared her love of horses with her son. And just like any strong woman does, she multitasked to make sure her son and family would be wrapped in the arms of every opportunity and association she could.

She completed the Arabian Association's paperwork for her father.

She became an assistant 4H club leader.

She ran the local Shetland Pony Club.

And then they bought a buckskin.

The Beckel's had buckskins before there was an IBHA.

Their first buckskin they bought their son was a grulla cutting mare named Pretty Blue Lady. And it was all down hill from there!

Barbara and her husband Bob hauled to shows so their son could show their mare, and then her stud colt. At one point, their band of buckskin mares grew to be the second largest in Michigan. Bob excelled in the ring, and Barb found herself doing what she excelled at- being a horse show mom. AND working in the office. Barb became known as the Buckskin Office Lady. She served several terms on the Michigan Buckskin Board and by the mid 70's she was the Charter Delegate.

In 1974, when Bob was away in DC for a youth conference his mare passed away. It was Rich Kurzea of IBHA who stepped in to help find Bob Jr. a new horse.

This relationship with the IBHA only grew. Barbara found herself tied to IBHA because as Bob Jr. put it, the association was all about, "Good people trying to do the right thing."

And Barb was devoted to her family and IBHA.

She found herself memorizing the rulebook.

She became the rulebook "go to" person at every show, including the Dun-O-Rama.

Barb and her husband donated countless hours helping to put on the Dun-A-Rama, She ran the show from start to end before computers could do any work. Following that, they spent hours helping at the IBHA World Show.

Barb was also an active supporter of the IBHA Youth Scholarship program

As time passed, Barb was invited to serve on the IBHA Executive Committee. In 1994 Barbara became the seated IBHA Vice President. And then President Elect for 1995. She would have been the first ever-female president of the IBHA.

As stated before, this amazing lady was a multitasking queen. She would have made an amazing president. It was believed that at that time, she would have been only the second woman to ever serve on an American horse registry as president.

However, as any independent woman knows, you do what you want, when you want, on your own terms. In September of 1994 while in attendance at her Granddaughter's High School Equestrian team State Quailifying meet, Barb passed away, where she wanted, when she wanted, surrounded by her family, and her beloved horses.

The legacy of people like Barb should always be remembered and honored. She never wanted to draw attention to herself, but to promote something that was bigger than herself.

Service, honor, devotion. Those are adjectives all spoken about what Barb exemplified.

When she passed away, Bob Jr. imagined, after all those years, and all those hours, the end of the Cowboy prayer would be read true for her, "Ride in cowgirl, your dues are paid".

The IBHA Hall of Fame Committee is proud to present this 2019 Award to Barbara Beckel.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julia Adams