

IBHA Hall of Fame

Induction Speech: 2022

Re: Barb's Holly Buck

Once-in-a-lifetime horses are truly hard to come by. I think we can all agree that those special horses hold a place in our hearts and memories long after they are gone. For those of us who don't own them ourselves, we admire them from afar. We can all remember the names we hear over the show intercom repeated over and over again. There are those horses that you know by name and reputation, and you know that if they walk off the trailer at a show, you have to level up to match their professionalism and level of greatness- It adds a whole new meaning to "competition". Some horses earn this reputation and it's something that no one ever forgets, even long after they are gone. This is exactly the case in the life and legacy of the 1973 dun gelding, Barb's Holly Buck owned by the Silliman family of New Mexico.

Barb's Holly Buck was purchased by the Silliman family in 1978 from Gene Harvey Stables. The young gelding, who had been bred by Jack Kyle, was slated to be the next all-around mount for Vickie, then a youth. At the age of five when they purchased him, he had already attained 18 halter points and 10 performance points from showing in NM and CO. However, when they bought him and got him home, they ran into some unexpected setbacks with the new pairing. Folks who knew of the purchase said he would be too much horse for Vickie. Vickie was a teenager, but was not show ring trained and polished. She had grown up with another buckskin mare that she used around the farm and for gymkhanas. Buck was supposed to be her step-up horse, her real "show horse". When they got him home they realized that the big gelding was a lot of horse, and they were going to need some professional help.

The Silliman's quickly enlisted the help of trainer Dolly Wallace of Bosque Farms, NM. Vickie started taking lessons with Dolly, and in the summer of 1980 Vickie decided to train and work with Dolly full time. It was this time in the barn with Dolly that she credits to the matchmaking that took place with Buck that year from 1979 through 1980. The plan moving forward from there would be to have Dolly show the gelding in the open classes and to have Vickie show him in the youth events. This was also a special year for Buck with Vickie, as the two had become a wonderful team and he carried her to the 1980 Youth World Champion All Around Title. This year in 1980 was where they saw the real start of their many accomplishments begin to come to fruition. They won weekend high point champion at every show they entered together. After

campaigning the 1980 show season, Barb's Holly Buck competed in 10 total shows and racked up points in the youth and open to earn his IBHA Supreme Championship, only the fifth IBHA horse to do so.

When I asked Vickie what one of her favorite memories with Buck was, she mentioned their first Dunarama show they took him to in Des Moines, Iowa in 1980. It was their first "big show" together, and a long way from home. They had decided to drive and hit a show on the way in Colorado, but once they had him unloaded and in the stall, they realized he had pulled a hind shoe. In scrambling to find someone to get it tacked back on, they realized their best bet was to drive an hour to a friend's farrier back towards NM. This farrier tacked the shoe on, they went to the show in Colorado, and then they headed North to Iowa for the Dunarama. They then used that farrier for the rest of his career, even though he was 6 hours from their home. Her parents, even in his retirement, hauled Buck to the farrier religiously until the end of his life. Sometimes, as we all know, those we meet along the way with those special horses, also become life-long friends. This was one of those instances, and Buck was "that" horse.

Buck and Vickie showed so much in those few years from 1980 to 1986 that they became highway layover favorites at many different spots. Buck had a stall at the Colorado State Fair grounds that the manager kept ready for him at all times, because he knew the family would be coming or going to their next stop. Through all of the busy travel, Vickie stated that the big gelding was always docile, sweet, and willing. Even when he did 35 classes in a day between the youth and the open classes, he was the same horse, every single time you took him out of the stall. Vickie stated that Buck never got mad, he never got sour, and he never got tired, he just loved to show.

Barb's Holly Buck had become a regular weekend warrior. Show after show, in both the youth and open events, Buck amassed points in halter, dun factor, trail, western pleasure, western riding, speed events, and even roping. Dolly's husband used him as a head horse to rope and he seemed to enjoy it. It seemed like whatever he was entered in, he wasn't just competitive in it, he won it. Vickie described Buck well in saying, "he wasn't a peanut pusher like some you see nowadays with their heads too low. He carried himself level and smooth. He had big feet and a big body. When we weighed him he was about 1350 pounds. He was just a big, big, horse." By the end of 1982 the gelding had completed the 90 points needed to win the very first IBHA Superior Halter Gelding Title, and then in 1983, he achieved a Superior in Western Pleasure.

Knowing he was a great show horse, I asked Vickie to shed a little light on his personality and his real life outside of what everyone knew about him. She shared some stories that her family still remembers to this day:

- He hated being twitched for the vet or clipping- he would rear and try all he could to get away.
- The only thing he was scared of were the big Clydesdales that pulled cart- because it was the only thing bigger than him.
- The only trail obstacle he kind of hated was the water box, but he would begrudgingly do it.
- His smoothest class was western riding.
- The class he was least proficient in was reining, but he would do it because he liked it.
- And he was so willing, that once he was even stolen out of their field in the middle of the day by a young man who hopped on him with his blanket on and ran him miles from home with nothing but a rope on him trying to escape the police who he believed were looking for him!

After 1982, Buck was used mostly by Vickie in the amateur all around events and she focused on the English and trail events. With limited showing between 1984-1986, Buck ended his career in 1986 at the age of 14 with four Superior events and was named the **IBHA all time high point earning horse with 646 points**. A family friend told Vickie, "He must love you because he does everything you ask of him,"- this much we know was true.

Upon Buck's retirement from showing at age 14, he went to the Silliman family ranch in Miami, NM where he was used to herd cattle and cart around Vickie's then small son, Kyle. Vickie mentioned that her father, always the consummate horse show dad, would take Buck out on the ranch and trails. He took care of her father, her son, her nephew, and the entire family. He was truly a favorite and trusted friend to all who knew him.

When it came time for Buck to leave this earth, Vickie's family called her home and kept him comfortable until she was able to fly in that same day. She got there just in time to say goodbye and they let him go peacefully after an unforgettable life. Buck's place of rest was marked by a headstone on the family ranch, which now resides with Vickie in Colorado.

Buck set records and won saddles and buckles, yet Vickie stated, "I have, and always will, love him as my best friend."

Tonight, we share in this love of Buck and the legacy he left behind as one of the winningest IBHA horses of all time. Please help me congratulate Barb's Holly Buck as he is inducted into the IBHA Hall of Fame to complete his phenomenal legacy.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia S. Adams
IBHA Hall of Fame Vice Chair