

Clyde Pletcher
IBHA Hall of Fame Inductee
March 16, 2024

If you attended the world show between 2002 and 2020, you may remember seeing an older couple dancing (sometimes) quietly in their own space at the annual banquet at the end of the show.

Always a consummate favorite, Clyde and Judy Pletcher would enamour us with their sweet and genuine smiles and their enjoyment at simply just being at the show. I can hear him now, with his low and slow voice and see his twinkling eye as he'd smile and tell us how he'd taken Judy dancing every week for years and years, and that he loved every minute of it.

Clyde Pletcher passed away in April of 2021, but for those of us who knew and loved him, he was a fixture in our IBHA community for the last 25 years and will live on in our memory in many ways.

I want to take some time now to share some of those memories with you all, and to give credit to the man that Clyde was, as well as to impart some of his greatest and most meaningful memories from family and friends with you all.

Clyde really was a jack of all trades. He did a little of everything, but most importantly, he lived much of his life in service to his country, his family, and his horses.

Born in Ortonville, Michigan, and the son of a farming family, Clyde was a senior in high school when he met his wife Judy, only, in an odd turn of events, he was actually dating her older sister at the time of their meeting!

Judy laughed at this memory, but remembers meeting Clyde at that point in life and that at age 19 he felt the call of service to join the US military in 1959. Clyde joined the US Air Force and served honorably for four years as a medic in the Philippines and Germany. There, he treated US army members who were wounded in Vietnam.

Upon his return from his deployment, Clyde reconnected with Judy, his soon to be wife, and then took back over the care of Buddy, his childhood horse, and kept him until his death.

Clyde had owned Buddy when he was a kid. He had famously traded his first car for the gelding. Clyde's family kept him while he entered the service, and took care of him while he was overseas.

As a civilian again, Clyde married Judy in 1965 and soon after they welcomed their four children into the world: Bernie, Tracey, Barbara, and Kathy.

Clyde's involvement in horses grew alongside his young family with his return to civilian life.

As a newly married man he worked in a hospital in Michigan as a surgical tech assisting doctors during procedures. While there, these doctors, knowing Clyde's childhood involvement in horses and 4-H, convinced him to help them with their Arabian horses that a few of them had started to buy up to show. Clyde agreed, and soon was not just helping to train and show them, but he even bought a couple for himself. Naturally, thereafter, all of his children were introduced to riding and showing.

Clyde's involvement in the IBHA began years later in 2002 when he purchased a colored horse named "Smokin Smitty" that his grandson had started to ride and show in the speed and all-around events. Clyde even showed Smitty himself in the barrels and poles and won Reserve World Champion on him in 2008 in the open barrels. From this start, Clyde became involved in the Great Lakes Buckskin Association and later served as president for 12 years. His involvement and friendships in the IBHA blossomed. He always wanted to see the club- charter and national, succeed.

From that time in the early 2000s moving forward, the family was hooked on the buckskin horses, owning many different mares and geldings and even breeding a few at home to later raise and show.

Bernie, his son, remembers some of his father's favorite memories which included showing in dun factor with their mare Good Morning Blue Breeze and winning Reserve World Champion. Although he loved it, Bernie stated, "Clyde never really went to the world show to really show. He would go in a class or two, but he went to spend time with his family and his buckskin family, all the friends he had made. And of course to root on the youth. He was a major supporter of the youth. Something that not many people know is that when IBHA started the walk/trot classes Clyde and Judy donated the buckles for a few years."

Clyde was the consummate supporter. He loved the IBHA for all it offered its extended family members and he was most proud when watching the miniature division come to fruition, watching his kids show, his grandkids show, and his wide circle of friends enjoy their successes.

Clyde's granddaughter Lea remembers, "He was the biggest reason I started showing horses and IBHA. He was the one that always pushed me to be my best and was the biggest supporter in and out of the arena. If it wasn't for him & his love of the color/breed we wouldn't have started with IBHA & made so many amazing memories. My favorite memory with him was the summer of 2018 when we worked every single day getting Smokey ready for 2yr old in hand trail & winning the buckle at worlds & he was there every step of the way helping & guiding me to be better."

Clyde would meet you at the gate with a smile and a huge hug and would simply live for those moments he could sit in your success with you, and you knew that there was no place he'd rather be.

As a long-time IBHA member and committee member on the miniature and youth committees, Clyde also made friends with the kids in the extended IBHA family as they grew. Emily (Powell) Hiatt grew close to Clyde as she matured through her youth experience and when she ran for Miss Buckskin World she asked Clyde to escort her into the queen's ball where she won the title in 2016.

Emily stated, "Clyde was truly a grandpa to me. He was one of the most kind and genuine people I've ever met. From the first time I met him, he welcomed me into IBHA with such open arms and was truly one of my biggest supporters. My favorite memories of Clyde were watching him and Judy dance their nights away at the Queen's ball each year as well as at my wedding. The happiness everyone in the room felt while watching them will be a feeling I'll never forget. He is missed so dearly, but I am so fortunate to have known him the way I did."

Clyde was just one of those fixtures in the IBHA. Whether it was at convention with his hat on and his toothpick in his mouth, or at the side of the arena with his little dog Boomer in his lap, he made his quiet presence known and his good faith brought friendship to countless IBHA members.

After his passing, a void was felt by many. Julia (Shaw) Adams, remembers a significant story from her 2021 world show experience. This was the first world show without Clyde and everyone was already struggling. While dealing with

lameness troubles and having a 19 hour haul- in to the show, she was approached by Ben Grandstaff, another IBHA fixture, where she stood having her horse bemered. Ben put his arm around her shoulders and quietly said, "I had a dream last night that Clyde came to me and told me to tell you that it will be OK. He told me to tell you to stay positive and trust Houdini to do his job, he will take care of you" This exchange of course caused her to cry, but she took his advice to heart. They won the only class they were able to enter that year, and she knew Clyde was there the whole time, right by the fence where he would have been in person, smiling with that twinkle in his eye.

These memories are not meant to eulogize Clyde, but rather to show the effect he had on so many who knew him because of the IBHA and his involvement in so many different facets. As a father, a husband, a grandfather, a club president, a committee member, and friend, Clyde meant something to everyone, and his reputation was earned over years of dedicated service and love for the IBHA.

As a parting comment, I think it's necessary to mention something that struck home, especially in this time we are in, his son Bernie said, "Clyde was always very proud of his kids and grandkids, but he also believed that the youth were the important part of an organization- breed or 4-H. He enjoyed the youth. He enjoyed supporting the youth."

With this sentiment in mind, I want to thank Clyde for his years of dedicated service to the IBHA and its extended family, and to remind everyone to be more like Clyde. Support one another, be a friend, be a role model, and to set that example for the youth. Clyde is no longer with us, but his legacy he leaves is one to honor through action and dedicated service to ensure the IBHA survives for our youth to inherit.

I am pleased to present this 2024 IBHA Hall of Fame award to the Pletcher family in honor of Clyde Pletcher.

Thank you,
Julia Adams