

Fred Thompson
IBHA Hall of Fame Inductee
March 14, 2020

Loyal. Accepting. Compassionate. Welcoming. Mediator. Dedicated. Proud. Quirky. Outgoing. And Kind Hearted.

When I asked everyone I talked to about Fred Thompson to give me one word to describe him, these are the answers I was given. I think that everyone in this room tonight that knew Fred would agree with these.

As I spoke to people about Fred over the past couple of months, there was a lot of emotion shared in some of the conversations that I had; tears were shed – some were happy and some sad and I must admit that I shed some of my own when I sat down to put this speech together. During these conversations, I came to realize just how much this man meant to those close to him, to those who were lucky enough to work with him in the Iowa Buckskin Clubs, and to those who served with him on the IBHA Executive Committee. Fred's impact on the lives of those closest to him and on IBHA was enormous. He is a man that is truly missed by so many.

Fred was born on July 4th, 1951 in Des Moines, Iowa and was the youngest of three siblings. His sister, Darlene, told me that when Fred was a young boy, he was so shy and that when someone he didn't know walked into a room where he was, he would just stop and cover his eyes because he thought that if he couldn't see them; then they couldn't see him! I had to stop and ask her if this was Fred we were talking about or someone else...as this sure wasn't the Fred we all knew!

Fred's childhood was like that of any typical child, although horses were not a part of it. He would tag along with Darlene where ever she went. Summer days were spent playing with the neighborhood kids...baseball, hide & go seek and even finding the nearest dirt pile to play with his toy trucks.

He had a lot of friends in school. Darlene said that Fred was a person that his peers would tend to gravitate toward. He had several friends from early childhood that remained good friends throughout their adulthood.

Darlene also said that Fred was a very tender hearted person...I think we could all agree with that – although she said, he was known to have his ornery side...and I think we could all agree with that too! He tried to take up hunting for a couple of years, but just couldn't bring himself to hurt any animals so he eventually just gave it up and that he never did shoot anything. Fred loved music, fast cars – the faster the better and motorcycles. And his sport of choice was Nascar. Fred joined the army after school and when his time was up, came back home to be with his family. He was married and had 3 children.

Fred and Jan went to school together and actually dated for a while in 7th grade before going their separate ways. They found their way back to each other and started dating again in 1979 and got married in 1980. It was at this time that Fred was introduced to the world of horses, horse showing and IBHA. Now the horse showing “thing” was Jan's hobby that Fred more or less tolerated, but he did love his horses. He was not a fan of showing himself, however, he did show several of their horses to ROM titles in Dun Factor because as he always said, there wasn't much to showing Dun Factor, all you had to do is stand there. He didn't like arena riding at all; but would be willing to join his barn family on trail rides. In his later years, he opted out of riding the horses to riding his Harley, which is something he really loved to do. Fred was fond of the kids that boarded at his & Jan's farm. They were all a part of 4H club and Fred would always attend the club's fundraiser shows and other club activities to support them. He was a like a father figure to many of these kids and would often check on them to make sure no one was getting in trouble and made sure that they all had rides home.

The word Quirky in the single word descriptions I mentioned opening my speech tonight came because Fred would never come to the shows with the horses. He always managed to come after the horses and equipment were unloaded and somehow managed to leave again right before it was time to load the trailers! And when it came to the World show, he never came with Jan, Lynn and the horses. His preferred mode of transportation was taking the train....thus getting out of unloading and loading the trailers!

Fast forward from his childhood where he would try to hide himself by covering his eyes, it is safe to say that Fred outgrew his shyness. Fred quickly became known as what many of us affectionately called the social committee (or PR person) of the Iowa club. He was the perfect ambassador for the Iowa clubs as well as IBHA. He was always easy to find (or perhaps he was finding you) and making sure that things were going well for everyone. It really was because of

Fred that everyone felt welcome at the Iowa shows and we all looked forward to going to them.

Mike Stadler and I had very similar memories of the first time we each attended the IBHA World Show when it was in Columbia, MO. Coming into the showgrounds for the first time...driving up that big hill and seeing ALL of those trailers at the top of the hill...well, for World show newbies the sight of that huge parking lot filled with trailers was somewhat intimidating. And I think we both wondered what what on earth we had gotten ourselves into! I believe that Fred took it upon himself to look for new faces, introduce himself and welcome everyone to the World Show. I was young and somewhat scared during my first trip to the IBHA World show and Fred made me feel more at ease with his outgoing, friendly nature. He was truly that guy that made everyone feel like they were important, no matter who they were and he made sure everyone was made to feel that they were welcome at the shows.

Jan told me that she would rarely see Fred at the shows. Even when he did show Dun Factor, he would show up dressed and ready to show, get handed the horse. He showed the class and then handed the horse back to Jan or Lynn and poof, he would be gone...making the rounds to check in with everyone. He would show up at the rail when she or any of the barn family were in the ring, silently cheering them on. And then he would be gone again, off to making more rounds and talking with everyone.

When I asked for special memories with Fred, three memories shared with me really stood out that really struck me as capturing the essence of what Fred was all about.

Lynn Dively, who is Jan's niece, told me about the time that they were at the World show in Memphis and she won not only Amateur English showmanship, but also Amateur Western showmanship. After returning from supper the night that she won her second championship, Lynn & Jason went to the barn to check on the horses. She got out her belt buckles to just sit and look at them. As she took them out of the box, the foam piece under one of the buckles fell out and there she found a note that Fred had written to her and stashed away to be found some other time. She opened the piece of paper and found Fred's words of Congratulations and telling her that he couldn't be more proud of her than if she were his own daughter. Lynn said that note is one of her most prized possessions to this day.

Michelle Manseau recalls her fondest memory of Fred, was attending her first convention in the 90's, as the new state delegate for Mile HI Buckskin Club. After hearing there was someone new from Colorado, Fred was on a mission to meet her, so that he could talk about his favorite Colorado destination. Can anyone guess what it was? Rocky Mountain National Park? The Royal Gorge? Dinosaur Ridge? Mesa Verde? Skiing in Vail? Did I hear anybody guess Casa Bonita?? Yep! A giant pink colored building in the seedy part of Denver, featuring mediocre Mexican food, but is loved by kids for Black Bart's Hideout, puppet shows , arcade games , palm trees and a pool with real live cliff divers! Michelle knew right away that Fred was going to be easy to get along with.

Jenna & Andie Vsetecka told me that when they went to their very first Iowa Buckskin Show, they were not quite sure what to expect. It was their first show on their own and they showed up, wandering the aisles, looking lost and arguing with each other about who had to ask for help from a stranger. Fred took one look at their lost, timid faces, laughed and from that moment welcomed them with open arms into the buckskin family. Since that first show, they both fell in love with the atmosphere and family that came along with showing buckskins and no one showed them more kindness and answered more questions than Fred Thompson. Fred was a go to person for anyone who had a question or just needed a listening ear. He was a true leader in both Iowa and at the national level, and the both felt fortunate to have known him and have had the privilege of showing with him. Both of these young ladies are former Miss Buckskin Worlds.

The Iowa charter went thru a very challenging time due to the hostile takeover several years ago. When the dust settled it was a simple question put to Fred from Katie Stout – “why can’t we just start a new Iowa charter club?” Inquiries were made and it was Fred, along with his wife Jan, Katie Stout, Anna Shoeman & Mary Cross, who made it possible for Iowa to continue to have a charter and continue being a part of the IBHA family. He stepped into a difficult role without hesitation because he knew what it meant to keep the Iowa charter going. That was the kind of man Fred was. Dedicated to the IBHA family and willing to take charge when people needed it most.

There is one message was a constant in many of my conversations about Fred. Fred LOVED IBHA. He was invited to serve on the IBHA Executive Committee in 2005, an invitation he readily accepted and was very excited about. In 2010, he was elected as the Executive Vice President and served in that position until 2015. IBHA was everything to Fred, it was a huge passion of his and he lived to be around it and involved in it. While Fred was not fond of competing in the show ring himself, he was proud to represent the horses and members at the administrative level.

When I asked Mike Stadler & Ed Anderson what it was like to work with Fred on the Executive committee, the comments I received were:

- Fred was easy to get along with and he was one of those guys that you could sit down and have a civil conversation with and even when you had opposing views with him, he would listen to what everyone had to say without arguing.**
- Fred was always looking for what was best for IBHA. He didn't let personal agendas get in the way. He was never selfish in his wants and he always put IBHA before his own interests.**
- He saw the good in people and saw the potential leadership qualities in others and was often instrumental in bringing new members onto national committees.**

One thing that Mike said to me in our conversation that really stuck with me and made me realize just how important Fred was to the Executive Committee. Fred was Mike's inspiration at the last convention he attended in 2015. Mike knew how sick Fred was and yet he was in the thick of everything. Mike found energy and strength thru Fred because he knew how important being at the convention was for Fred. Everyday Fred got up and participated in every meeting and never once complained about how he felt.

Fred served on several committees as the Executive Liason and he took this work seriously. He was one of the "founding members" of the Hall of Fame Committee and served on the committee for several years.

He was a very active member of the Abuse & Illegals Committee (now known as the Welfare committee) and was in charge of the drug testing that was done at the World show for several years, along with Ted Handel. This committee required a lot of work for him before and during the World show. Prior to the show he had to make sure that the class placing numbers were pulled from the random book of numbers and placed in a sealed envelope as well as an alternate number. What this meant is that we automatically tested the winner of each class and then a specific place finisher had to be pulled, such as the 5th place or 9th place, etc for each class. That is what was put in the sealed envelopes. Fred was diligent in getting these done prior to the show and in a sealed envelope for each class. Fred was also in charge of organizing the volunteers to escort the horses pulled for drug testing from the arena and stay with them until their samples were pulled. And he oversaw all the activity in the drug testing area. Thru all of this

work, Fred always managed to be ringside when Jan and Lynn were showing their horses.

Fred's true love, however, was working with the Queens! He thought the world of the IBHA queen program and he truly loved working with all the queens every year. He could not wait to get to convention each year to meet the new charter queens that would be competing for Miss Buckskin world. He was always encouraging them to be their best and making sure that they had what they needed.

Many of the queens I spoke with said that they could not have had a better role model and support system and that they were truly grateful for Fred's encouragement and advice. I truly believe that these young ladies felt more at ease because of Fred and his encouragement. He was often seen talking to these girls and giving them pep talks before the horsemanship rides or other parts of the queen's competition. Fred knew that being a queen meant more than having the perfect ride in a horsemanship pattern and that a good queen should have confidence, and passion for the IBHA family. As Julia Shaw told me, he was just instantly like a loveable, favorite uncle.

But I think Candy Munz said it best when asked about her experience of working with Fred during her time running for and being Miss Buckskin World. In her words – Fred was such a strong supporter of the IBHA Queen program. He was always friendly and willing to help. He never thought twice about giving trusted advice, giving you a ride, giving you a place to stay when coming to the Iowa Horse Fair...giving anything. In fact, his giving heart is likely what everyone remembers most about him – that and his big, warm smile. My year as Queen would not have been the same without his and Jan's generosity and no one is more deserving or a better representation of all it means to be a part of the IBHA family than Fred.

Even as Fred struggled with his cancer, he made sure to support his club. He was at the shows supporting everyone and helping in whatever way he could. Jan brought him to the June Iowa show just before he passed away because he wanted to see everyone. At that show he mustered up enough strength to join all the exhibitors at the pot luck. He talked about the association and the many people he came into contact with. Even then he promoted the buckskin breed to his fullest extent.

Sadly Fred passed away on July 2, 2015, just two days shy of his 65th birthday. A life cut way too short by cancer. His legacy of love, service and being the PR person of IBHA and the Iowa clubs lives on in the memory and hearts of those that were lucky enough to call him a friend and he is truly missed by so many people to this day.

I want to say a warm thank you to everyone who took the time to talk to me about Fred and share your memories. I have really enjoyed speaking to each and every one of you. I am truly honored to induct this very special man, Fred Thompson into the IBHA Hall of Fame!

Respectfully,

**Michele Zimmerman
IBHA Hall of Fame Committee Chairman**