

Not only did Gene make his mark as an owner and a trainer, but he began to take on youth kids from the local vo-tech school for internships. They trained countless youth kids in horse care, training, and for showing in POA, AQHA, 4H, and Palomino circuits. Gene saw it as his duty to help the youth, to mold them and shape them into responsible and successful competitors who were a reflection of his passion. Somehow he found the time to not only work as a truck driver, a horse trainer, a coach, a member of countless saddle clubs, the MN Palomino club president, and a husband, but he began to look to gathering his judging cards.

This goal of his to begin his career on the inside of the pen gave Gene his introduction to the IBHA. He had begun to collect his cards, but Irene stated that it was his first time at the IBHA judge's seminar in 1989 that he met Rich Kurzeja, the founder of the IBHA.

Gene had earned his IBHA card at this judges seminar, and Rich Kurzeja sat down with him at breakfast that morning and asked him if he would like to be the equipment judge at that year's world show. He would be the first ever equipment judge. He was shocked and humbled that Rich would ask him, a "nobody", to come out to do such an important job. He took it.

From there Gene's relationship with the IBHA grew. Many may argue that his most important role was that which he did every year, ruling the holding pen as the equipment judge and back up world show judge for over 20 years.

He became the face everyone knew, the voice we all heard, and the smile that could make you feel like even a bad trip through the pen was ok. Ann Grotzke remembered meeting Gene at her first world show in TN stating, "when I fell off during the hunter hack warm up and came up the ramp, Gene was one of the first people there to ask if I was ok. He helped brush the dirt off my coat, told me to take a deep breath and continue on. He never treated me like I was not meant to be there." He was that person who never treated anyone any different, no matter if you were a first timer or a returning rider.

He was there to lend a hand, hold a horse, answer any question about rules and regulations on classes, and he did it all without ever complaining, and even after long, sometimes 12-16 hours days, he would stick around when the show day was over and watch all the "fun stuff". He never wanted to miss anything, and always wanted to see the IBHA succeed.

It's because of his time as equipment judge that hundreds of competitors have passed through the ring and came to know Gene as the grandfather of the holding pen. He saw exhibitors start their youth careers, turn into amateurs, and come back as adults-- even those who then brought their kids along for the next generation. He was always there, always ready to lend a hand or a piece of advice, and always ready

to step in when needed. He genuinely loved every minute of it, because Irene said, he simply loved the IBHA people. They made it all worth it for him.

From his time in the pen to his time on committees, Gene was a constant force to be reckoned with. He grew from the equipment judge, to the head of the IBHA judges committee. He took that role extremely seriously and thought it was his job to mentor young budding judges like Dan Grunewald and Butch Watson. Butch said, "He was always available at a phone call to assist a young judge or person that had questions".

Judge Mike Adams also remembered Gene from his time as an IBHA judge and said, "The first time I judged with Mr. Zimmermann was at an IBHA show, and that's the association that I will always think of first when I think of Gene. The IBHA always came first for him." One of the best things said of Gene was judge Dawn Taylor who said, " Though he was on the judges committee, he never once made me feel as though he was superior to myself as an applicant nor condescending as a superior" Dawn summarized Gene's influence on the judges committee by saying, "He was a guardian and promoter of the IBHA for many years and was one of the best spokesmen the IBHA could have asked for." Gene held his IBHA judging card for a total of 28 years along with ABRA, Pinto, POA, Mule, and both miniature associations.

From his spearheading of the judges committee, Gene soon found himself drawn into multiple other committees for the IBHA. He served as the executive vice president, the executive liaison to the queen's committee, the amateur committee, and the convention committee, the illegals and abuse committee. You name it, he was on it.

From these many committees Gene stood a constant calm, determined, progressive member of the IBHA family. He constantly looked for ways to promote and grow the IBHA as a whole. His love of youth and mentoring led him to his role in the queen's committee where he was always coaching the girls, lending advice, and of course, proudly escorting us into the ball. Although they never had children of their own, Irene stated that they felt they had raised hundreds of teenagers. In their barn, across the country, it didn't matter. Gene was a mentor, a guide and always just a phone call away.

The final committee that Gene was truly passionate about was the miniature horse committee. He promoted the addition from the start with the foresight that it would help grow the association and its membership. As Bob Beckel stated, "Gene drafted much of the first rules for the division and actively passed a hat to get jackpot money for the first exhibition classes ever held at the world show.... The greatest contribution he ever made was going to the mat for the minis singlehandedly wrangling support amongst the higher ups in the IBHA to push through the equity of honor roll and national awards enjoyed by the big horses in the IBHA." He championed this movement and promoted the IBHA all over the mid west. The

induction of this division to the IBHA led Gene to promote it from within. In 2016 he bought his first miniature mare, Tappin Hot Tillie. He picked her out of a lot of horses and knew right away she was special. Gene had long dreamed of winning a buckle at an IBHA show, but because of he and Irene's role on the inside of the pen, he never thought he could do it. He asked me to show Tillie for him at the 2017 IBHA world show where she did in fact win the miniature mare halter division. It was one of the proudest moments of my life to be able to hand Eugene that buckle and see the tears of joy running down his face. This experience was one of the highlights of Gene's showing career and his delight at the success of the program was infectious. Today, the miniature division is a fan favorite at the world show. When the minis come out to run in their liberty class, we should all smile, and thank Gene again for the addition of such a wonderful program.

In all, Eugene was in this association for the people. He loved the IBHA with all his heart and only ever wanted to see it succeed. Through his own contributions, personally, socially, economically.... he helped make this association what it is today.

I think each of us carries a piece of Gene with us. I carry him with me when I judge, as countless others do. I put his show halter on my gelding, so he will always be in his favorite place- the ring. I see him when I see a miniature horse. I hear his voice of calm and reason when I'm in a heated conversation, and I see his heart in all of you in this room.

Tonight, It is my very great honor to remember Eugene Zimmermann with you all, and to formally induct him into the IBHA hall of fame.

Thank you