

Pat Osenga
IBHA Hall of Fame Inductee
March 16, 2024

“Do it right the first time for the right reasons”

This is a statement that Pat Osenga lives by, and I believe that those of us who have had the pleasure of working with him, either on the club or on the National level, we can all agree that this statement truly, describes Pat.

Pat joined IBHA & WBHA in 1985 and immediately made his presence known. He supported WBHA not only as an exhibitor showing his horses, but he also helped as a general “gopher” and a cheerleader for the youth. Basically, if someone needed it, Pat was there to lend a hand. When his showing days were over, Pat was the announcer for many years for the WBHA shows. Announcing was something he truly enjoyed and he was great at moving the shows along. He loved the interaction with all the exhibitors, but especially the youth. If he noticed a youth riding past the announcer stand looking a little tense or scared, he would often put the mike down and softly tell them to smile and the next time they came around toward the announcer stand, they would break into a big smile when they saw Pat. Many of those youth later told him that this simple comment helped them to relax a little more in the ring.

Pat worked as an ambassador for both IBHA and WBHA and promoting the Buckskin breed when he took his two stallions – Skipper Leo King and Cowboy Brass to the Midwest Horse Fair in Madison for 19 years. The stall area where he had the stallions were always packed with fair goers. Their color drew the attention of the crowd, but their disposition is what kept them coming back year after year. Pat took great pleasure in educating others on the buckskin breed and brought many new members into the IBHA family thru his participation at the horse fair. He also helped WBHA organize the Buckskin Breed demos at the horse fair with his stallions in them.

No story about Pat would be complete without talking about how he was always the one that was entertaining the crowd.

One show that WBHA had in July at Five O Stables was particularly hot. The air conditioner on Pat’s motor home had frozen up so he climbed up to the roof with a

chair, hose and a beer and began the process of trying to cool down the condenser with a pencil stream of water. This was an older motor home built with a strong roof to withstand people being on top of it. Soon after, Ed Anderson walked by to find out what was going on and Pat told him to grab a chair and a couple of beers and come on up. By time all was said and done, there were about 6 guys on the roof in with their chairs and every one of them brought a can of beer for each other.

And then there was the time at a WHBA show in Darien at the end of show season and Rich Kurzeja was the judge. This was the last show that Rich was judging as he was retiring. Pat and a few others decided that they needed to give Rich a proper send off.

Dun Factor was a class that was so very important to Rich. The ring steward kept Rich occupied for a few minutes as they waited for the Dun Factor horses to get arranged. They finally turned around to see a long line of horses waiting to walk into the arena. It didn't matter if these horses were dun, grulla or pink, they were all there. Rich couldn't understand why so many horses - that were not dun factor horses - were in the class. All 19 horses were led into the arena and stood head to tail. They were then given a cue to turn and face the in gate at the same time. Every horse had a letter on it that spelled out "Happy Retirement Rich". When Rich read what the message was, he put his hand over his mouth and was completely speechless. He was very moved by the fact that the exhibitor would take the time to do this for him.

One of my fondest memories ever of Pat and his entertaining ways was at the 2001 IBHA world show in Columbia. I remember being at convention that year, and the discussion of what to do for a fundraiser for the scholarship fund. Someone mentioned a "kiss the pig" contest and there were about a dozen people nominated to be a part of this. I just remember thinking at the time...Thank God I wasn't one of them. The idea behind the contest is that each person would have a jar in the registration area where exhibitors could go and drop money in it. The person with the most money would be declared the winner and would have to kiss the pig. As the time drew near for the winner of the contest to be named, Pat had an inkling that he would win based on what he could see in the jars. So, he and his accomplice - Bob Kaiser decided to go to the local Goodwill store and shop for "supplies". Both Pat and Bob figured that if Pat was going to win this contest, that he might as well put on a show! Anyone who witnessed this will probably never forget the Famed Kiss the Pig contest.

Now just about anyone of us here tonight would have just simply walked up to the pig, plugged our nose and with a quick “mwah”, kiss the pig and immediately take a step back. Everyone, that is, but Pat.

When it came time to announce the winner, all the contestants were pulled into the ring with Rosie, the baby pig. When Pat was announced the winner, he immediately turned and ran out of the far side of the arena. He even had the announcer CW Jones involved with his scheme, CW kept announcing for him to come back. After about a minute, as CW started to play a medley of songs that included “I’m Married to the Waitress and I don’t even know her Name” and “Love me Tender”, Pat returned. But this time he had on a suit coat, holding a blanket and picnic basket. As he got back to where the pig was, he proceeded to lay out the blanket, pulled out candles and wine glasses and pour some wine. He then put on a plastic pig nose, and laid down on the blanket, he pulled out a bundle of celery for Rosie. He proceeded to entice her to come close enough and managed to kiss her. There isn’t another person that I could ever imagine that would think to wine and dine a pig and give the audience an entertaining show.

Pat was named the WBHA Charter Delegate 1989. This was a position he proudly held for 25 years until he was named to the IBHA Executive Committee in 2014. IBHA had asked him to be on the Executive Committee in 2009, but he politely refused. He knew that if he was on the Executive Committee, he could not be the Charter Delegate at the same time. He told IBHA that he felt that he was still needed as the Charter Delegate as he needed to finish some work there. No truer words were ever spoken!

When WBHA was going thru their growing pains, started showing until midnight or later, it was apparent that we had to do something. This was a few years before we started the split/combined option for our shows. Our first solution to the problem was to bring in our Sunday judges and have them judge trail on Saturday afternoon and vice versa, we had the Saturday judges come back on Sunday to judge their trail portion of the show. Trail at that time would be held “at will”. Pat was given the task of talking to Rich Kurzeja about this proposal and at first Rich was very much against it. But after thinking about it, Rich called Pat the next day to talk more about this proposal and he finally decided to allow WBHA to do it. It was because Pat was the one asking; and after working with Pat for years, that Rich agreed. Rich told him that he trusted that Pat would make sure that this would be done correctly. It may not have happened if anyone else asked.

In the fall of 2011, during the time of friction going on with hostile takeover the Iowa Buckskin Club and the switch from IBHA to ABRA, the same situation was starting with the WBHA club. It was at a general membership meeting of WBHA that October, that some of the leadership of the club wanted to do the same – switch from IBHA to ABRA – right then at the meeting. Pat stood tall with Ann Grotzke and myself and refused to allow that to happen. It was a long, heated meeting at that point, but suffice to say, with Pat's leadership skills, we won that battle. A month later at our banquet, the entire board; with the exception of myself had resigned from their positions. But Pat was there to help lead the club and train the new board members. It is through his undeniable leadership that WBHA continued to flourish at this time and we came back stronger than ever.

Pat was on hand again to save another IBHA club. Late in 2016, IBHA removed the leadership of the UMBHA club and reinstated Megan Voss and Ed Anderson as the President and Vice President. Megan and Ed were elected at the Banquet in 2015 but were forced to resign at the subsequent meeting. A meeting was held on December 11 and a new board for UMBHA was elected. Todd Waldera, Charter Delegate for UMBHA then found out that the old leadership of the club – the leadership that IBHA removed - was planning to meet a week later, on December 17 to dissolve UMBHA and using the club's assets for their new ABRA club. He got word to IBHA and the new UMBHA Board about the meeting.

At that point, IBHA called upon Pat to show up at that meeting and be our spokesperson. You can just imagine the surprise on their faces when more than 25 UMBHA members showed up at their meeting - including Denise and Rick reminding them that they were no longer the leadership of the club and demanded all club assets and records. Because Pat is very good at diffusing difficult situations, he was able to keep a volatile situation from getting out of hand, even after they called the police. Once again, his leadership abilities saved another IBHA club.

Pat has served on just about every committee that IBHA has, apart from the Judge's Committee. But he said that the work he has done on the Youth Scholarship fund was what he is really the most proud of. He has served on this committee since 1991 and is very proud of the fact that to date, the IBHA Youth Scholarship Committee has awarded over a quarter of a million dollars. He loves that this committee in their own way has had an effect of the youth that received scholarships from IBHA. He commented to me that while the youth didn't get rich off of us, that he was proud to be able to touch their lives in some little way.

Through his work with the Scholarship fund, there is one event that stood out the most in his mind. The announcer from the World shows that were held in Missouri – CW Jones – had passed away the spring before the IBHA World show in 2006. His widow – Miss Ellie as Pat called her came to the Queens Ball after the show. She gave Pat a box of items that CW wanted IBHA to have for the Scholarship Fund. In that box was a cowboy hat. The significance of the cowboy hat is that it was one that Kix Brooks threw out into the crowd at the end of a Brooks & Dunn Concert and CW caught it. CW attempted to give it back to Kix during a meet & greet after the concert, but Kix told him to keep it and donate it to his favorite charity. The duo also gave CW a Brooks & Dunn hat with a certificate of authenticity for each hat.

The following year at the world show, an auctioneer donated his services to IBHA for the youth scholarship auction. However, he called Pat up on stage to talk about the hat and then had him auction it off. When all was said and done, they sold this hat for \$2,400! The auctioneer later told Pat that he would have never gotten that much for the hat had he sold it and said that the reason the hat sold for so much money was Pat's passion for IBHA and the Youth Scholarship Program.

What many of us here don't know is that the beginning of 2016 was a trying time for Pat. He lost his job due to corporate downsizing and while trying to decide whether or not if retirement was the best option for him at the time, he then suffered some personal losses him lacking in self-esteem and emotionally devastated. He felt as if he had hit rock bottom. As a result, he withdrew from everything and everyone. He even resigned from the IBHA Executive Board and the committees he served on that he dearly loved.

By the time World show rolled around that year, Pat made the decision to go down and watch the show because he was starting to miss his interaction with IBHA and its members. What happened when he got down there renewed his faith in himself. The members of IBHA did what they always do. They were so happy to see him and welcomed him with open arms, they helped pull him out of that dark place that he was in. At that point, Pat realized that he had the love and support of people that he respected. As we sat and talked about that experience he said to me – with tears in his eyes. "Michele, the IBHA members made me realize that I was important and that I wasn't Junk."

That sentiment of his importance was later echoed by his girlfriend Kathy. She made the trip with Pat to the IBHA World show in 2021. That was the year that Pat was so sick that he spent a lot of his time in a wheelchair. Kathy couldn't

understand why Pat insisted on being at the World show. It didn't take her long to understand just how important IBHA was to Pat and that he was just as important to IBHA and its members. She watched in amazement at how much everyone went out of their way to take care of Pat, get him what he needed and helped him move around by clearing the way for his wheelchair and when he wasn't in the chair, just being by his side to support him. She was also pleasantly surprised when several IBHA members included her when they just went out for lunch or supper or sat next to her in the stands to keep her company. She later told Pat that it was very clear that everyone thought very highly of him and respected him.

I remember sitting with Pat and Sue Duffy at the 2020 IBHA convention when then President, Mike Stadler, walked up and asked Pat if he could have a quick conversation with him. When they came back, Pat sat back down at the table with us and had tears welling up in his eyes. We just sat quietly and waited for him to tell us what happened. He was finally able to compose himself enough to tell us that Mike had asked him to be on the Executive Committee again and how honored he was to have been asked.

By time the 2020 IBHA world show rolled around, a new President of IBHA needed to be voted on. Ed Anderson & Ben Grandstaff asked him to be the President. When Pat questioned if he was the right person for the job at that moment, having just been appointed again to the Executive Committee, the rest of the members agreed with Ed & Ben.

Jan commented that she could not think of anyone better to lead IBHA and Sam echoed that thought by stating that everyone knows you Pat and what kind of person you are, and your creditability will carry you far in this role. The basic consensus was that Pat had the common sense and the ability to lead.

He remembers that shortly after being elected President of IBHA, that he decided to get in his car and make the long drive down to the ISBA show over Labor Day Weekend. As he got close to the show grounds, he suddenly started to worry that everyone would think that the office sent him down there to check up on them and even questioned if he should just turn around and go back home. But he decided that he was there so he might as well drive in and go see everyone. The reception he got from everyone, and how happy they were to see him, made him realize that he was on the right path in being the IBHA President.

Pat is a people-person and as a result, he really is a "People's President". He really makes himself accessible to all members of IBHA. He has taken it upon himself to

go to a lot of the charter shows and even go to some of the charter's banquets in the past couple of years. He is interested in the shows and seeing what works for each individual club. And he said that he has really enjoyed every moment of being the IBHA president for the last 4 years.

When I asked some people for their thoughts on what makes Pat so special, I got a lot of great comments and would like to read you some of them.

From Peg Kaiser:

Pat is Honest, dependable, and incredibly hard working. Beyond that, he is an impressive problem solver who has the ability to address complex issues strategically, confidently and with the upmost of kindness and care. Pat is always inspired by challenges, clearly wanting to make the best even better. With what seems to be a special calling to help anyone in need, he is a friend to all, a people person, and a true promoter of every aspect of IBHA. Along with his undeniable optimism and kindness, Pat has always been an absolute joy to work with, employing a remarkable sense of humor and storytelling. He is a true team player and always fosters positive discussion and brings out the best in those around him.

From Michele Zimmerman

I want to add to Peg's thoughts and say that Pat is incredibly gifted at knowing what to say and when to say it. There were times when I was serving on the WBHA Board that I just felt that I couldn't do it anymore and I was sick of being yelled at, having stuff demanded of me and just plain feeling like I was being underappreciated. And I am sure that anyone who has ever been on a club's board can relate to that that statement. Well, every time I would go to a meeting and think that this was it, this would be when I would turn in my resignation, Pat would be there, and with his incredible "can do" attitude, give such a tremendous pep talk that would literally lift your spirits so much so that you came away with the feeling that you could stay on and accomplish everything that needed to be done. And he didn't even know that some of us felt the way we did or what a profound effect he had on us.

From Kay Gray:

Pat demonstrated his love for the breed, but also for the organization of IBHA and WBHA in everything he did. He was always looking to better both organizations and always worked in a positive manner. He never criticized unless he had a

potential solution. He always listened to everyone's opinion and never forced agendas or created drama. He was always positive and encouraging.

From Niome

I Love Pat!! He does a great job at making new people feel welcome, especially when they are shanghaied to a committee. He is fun!

Ed Anderson told me that he started watching Pat when a new president needed to be voted on. Ed stated that he noticed that while Pat may have a thought about something, he took the time to listen to all sides before forming and voicing his opinion. This is what a good leader does. Ed also stated that there is no doubt in his mind that Pat's heart is 100% into IBHA.

Ben Grandstaff echoed Ed's comments and stated that Pat truly gives everything he has to make IBHA better. He is very good at encouraging the programs and exhibitor's growth.

From Sam Mitchell:

He is easy to work with. Pat usually sits back and listens to the rest of us talk before forming his opinion. We all love him, always have and always will.

From Laurie Kristoff:

I have known Pat for many, many years...from when he was showing his stallions to announcing shows with his unique sense of humor; especially when he turned into the "evil announcer" when it came to Discipline Rail classes! He has always been deeply committed to the IBHA on both the state and national level. I cannot think of a more devoted member of this association in his role as President, and he certainly deserves to be inducted into the Hall of Fame...congratulations Pat.....

From Deanna:

There are countless reasons why Pat belongs in the Hall of Fame, and you are hearing a few tonight. All I can say is that IBHA was truly blessed that day in July of 1985 when Pat Osenga became a member. He is very special to all of us!

Last year at the IBHA convention, when I first told Pat about his induction into the Hall of Fame, I walked up to him and told him that I needed to talk to him. In his typical Pat style with his sense of humor, he quickly said to me "Oh My God...you're pregnant!" After laughing with him and telling him that I was way beyond that point in my life, I hooked my arm in his and quietly told him that I was going to induct

him into the IBHA Hall of Fame next year. He was instantly overcome with emotion, tears started to well up in his eyes and he was speechless.

Pat told me that his involvement in IBHA was never with the end goal of being on the Executive Committee or President and he never dreamed of being inducted into the Hall of Fame. He said that it is the highest honor in the world to him to be able to serve an organization that means so much to him. He said several times when I met with him that IBHA is full of amazing people – and that he is blessed to be a part of this organization. Honesty and integrity is all a part of respect and he feels that he has the respect of so many of us in this room tonight. In all honesty Pat, I feel that there are many of us in this room tonight that strive to match your level of integrity and yes, you have our respect.

In closing, I want to quote Chrissy Gray in one simple statement she told me. Pat continues to live and breathe the Buckskin Horse and has made a forever impact on the IBHA, WBHA and me. He a true and passionate representative of the Buckskin Breed and IBHA.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it gives me greatest pleasure to present to you, IBHA Hall of Fame Inductee, Pat Osenga!

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Zimmerman
IBHA Hall of Fame Chair