

Linda Lewis Inducted Into Indiana Horsepersons Hall Of Fame

Editor's Note: Announcer Peter Fenton read the following speech Saturday, Sept. 12, 2015 at the All American Horse Classic.

Linda Lewis was every part a lady, always fashionably dressed and looking her best regardless of the place or time. She was also a woman with strength of character, courage and determination.

Her accomplishments were many. She was a self-taught gourmet chef and loved cooking for family and friends. She enjoyed working in her flower garden and was very knowledgeable about what to plant, where and when.

She was also a very hard-working business woman and in 1976 she started Createc, a very successful plastics company. She worked there until her retirement in 2010. Although Linda was a lady who could keep going when the going got tough, she was also a kind and gentle person who cared about others. She often extended a helping hand to those who were in need.

She was selfless in many ways and often helped many small businesses. She was a volunteer at the St. Joe Memorial Hospital in Portland, Ind. When she heard that the Culliver Military School was in need of another black horse for their equestrian team she donated a Friesian.

She served as a member of the All American Show Committee. She was the sponsor of the All American Trainers' Grand Slam and she often sponsored exhibitor's parties. She sponsored an AHHS Scholarship and that continues today. It is difficult to complete a list of Linda's support and contributions; due to the fact that she often did so in a quiet way, not sharing that information with anyone.

Linda loved anything with four legs. She always had dogs. In the past few years her dog of choice was the Jack Russell, however she once owned and showed Basset Hounds. She also at one time owned and showed Walking Horses.

She entered the Saddlebred world with the country pleasure mare Wisdom's Splash Of Color. One horse led to another and in 2000 she moved her horses to her Flat Rock Creek Farm. It was shortly after that when Linda discovered another four-legged creature, the Hackney Pony. As she would often say "I love those little critters."

Her first pony was Spirit's Easter Morn, followed by many others including her favorite one CH The Final Contender. In 2012 she was honored with the AHHS Anna Lee Spiers Judd National Amateur Exhibitor Of The Year award. Although she didn't understand why she was selected for this award, it was obvious that she was extremely touched and honored. She would no doubt have the same response to being inducted into this hall of fame. She didn't have a clue how truly great she was; she didn't know that she was special and a blessing to us all.

No matter how busy she was or what problems life brought, Linda always found time for important things; her family, her friends and her church. She enjoyed her grandchildren and perhaps her greatest gift is the legacy she left in their hearts. Her love for them is evident and echoes in the words written by her granddaughter Alexis Lewis.



Sandy McIntosh held the Hall of Fame plaque that was presented to the family of Linda Lewis for her posthumous induction into the Indiana Horsepersons Hall Of Fame.

In my favorite white dress, I stood in the hall of horse stables as the sun peeked through the cracks of the wooden beams. Lush bouquets of flowers adorned the stable doors with a description of each unique horse that was housed inside. It was a warm spring afternoon and everyone was just arriving. I took the time to reflect on all the wonderful memories I had created with my grandmother, Nonnie, in this wonderful barn. Now was the last quiet I had to myself before her memorial began. Our family thought having a celebration of life for Nonnie rather than a funeral would create a lighter atmosphere, one with color and bliss rather than darkness and melancholy.

The horse's barn, three months after her passing, was the perfect place and time to honor Nonnie because she would have despised mass amounts of people sobbing in a dingy room. Her humbleness was incomparable. Ironically, now the venue of her memorial, the horse barn, along with her presence, in the place that brings me the most peace and it is where I feel perfectly content.

It was in this very barn where Nonnie opened my eyes to the world of horse showing. I was nine years old when I first slowly made my way around the center ring under the watchful eye of my trainer Jim and Nonnie. I was no match for her National horse showing status, but little did she know I was on my way there. I returned every Saturday morning increasing my skill with different horses and ponies and four years later I was ready for my first horse show. Success at my first show got me hooked.

Four years after my first show, I still look forward to going to the barn every Saturday morning. As I approach the barn, my cell phone service gets worse, allowing me to escape the hustle of my everyday life. I enter the barn through a little room that once was an empty gathering area with only a few chairs and several

crookedly hung photos. Now it houses a collection of memorabilia from my grandmother's days of showing. Her beautiful hats, ribbons and gloves displayed in the glass cabinet comfort me before stepping into the sawdust-lined floors of the barn. Ribbons I have won and photos taken of me throughout the years have been added to the collection, giving me a sense of belonging.

The connection between Nonnie and myself becomes stronger the more I show. I know that I love the sense of pride I feel after showing just as she did. Unlike my swim meets and tennis matches based solely on my speed and physical strength, horse showing requires a strong focus on the relationship between the rider and the horse. It's the human and animal teamwork that makes showing so special and delightfully unpredictable.

Our combined accomplishments and her continued legacy is archived through the entrance highlighted by the picture of me winning the AHHS Youth Medallion National Championship in 2013. Every time I walk through this room it reminds me that these achievements take years of determination.

Down the steps and into the barn itself I walk to greet the trainers, Jim and Mindy. The horses and ponies nicker and raise their heads greeting me as I stroll past them. I take the time to pet their soft pink noses letting them know how thankful I am to have such a unique connection with each of them. I usually find Mindy in one of the stalls and she never fails to welcome me with enthusiasm.

I feel an overwhelming sense of comfort as we chat about our weeks while surrounded by the horses that have brought us together. In this barn I can spend time with loved ones and horses, refine my skills, and connect with my grandmother, which is my definition of perfect contentment. Alexis Lewis