

1998 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

IAN OLIVER FRANCIS OAM



The Australian Quarter Horse Association honours Ian Francis with induction into the Hall of Fame for setting standards of excellence across a broad spectrum in the Australian Quarter Horse industry by extraordinary personal example.

Ian has trained and shown Quarter Horses to become multiple winners in almost every competitive field in the Western tradition, and has been influential in the acceptance of Quarter Horse breeding as desirable in the campdrafting arena.

Ian's achievements include:-

- An NCHA Hall of Fame Inductee
- An NRHA Rider Legend
- A Mitavite Living Legend
- An International Reining Council World Cup Champion

He has trained:-

- 5 NRHA Reining Futurity Champions and 4 Reserve Champions
- 4 NRHA Reining Derby Champions and 4 Reserve Champions
- Equitana Asia-Pacific Masters Reining Champion
- 3 NCHA Cutting Futurity Champions and 2 Reserve Champions
- 1 NCHA Cutting Derby Champion
- 4 Reined Cow Horse Futurity Champions and 7 Reserve Champions
- 2 Cloncurry Stockman's Challenge Champions
- 3 Brisbane Royal Champion Station Hacks

The complete list of his successes with Quarter Horses is awe-inspiring.

Ian has always been an exemplary winner and philosophical loser – in either case, generous and helpful to fellow competitors. Top horsemen who were guided by and/or trained under him early in their careers and who went on to become rivals include Ken May, Mick Connolly, Raelene Higgins, Frank Greene, Melissa Rudd, Rick Tranter, Glen Wyse, Jedd Cameron, Paul Pownall, Dale Bennett, Shane Massingham, Gina Eddie, Damien Curr and John Arnold.

He has also helped encourage youth. His stables are always open and free to young people wanting to gain knowledge and experience. Ian has presided over 'umpteen' free youth clinics, including annual half-day clinics for youth at the AQHA Nationals. He has been generous in supplying horses for youth events and has trained a NZ Youth Team. Young AQHA riders helped by Ian include Melissa Deans (now Rudd), Fleur Falconer, James Hazeldean, Lani Fender, Zoe Wharten, Marie Albury, Christine van den Bosch and Nerida Cole.

An AQHA, HSAA and NRHA Judge, his services in the arena have been considerable.

Ian's contribution to the Quarter Horse industry has also included an on-going series of clinics on Horsemanship, Halter, Western Pleasure, Trail, Reining, Working Cowhorse, Cutting and Campdrafting in all the Australian mainland States as well as in the United States, Fiji and New Zealand.

He has promoted Quarter Horse excellence annually by the quality presentation of quality horses at the Rockhampton Quarter Horse sales, adding value to the breed by achieving very high top prices and consistently high averages. He is generally credited with lifting Rockhampton into its top place amongst Quarter Horse sales in Australia.

Apart from breeding excellent horses himself (The Equalizer, Hoodoo Voodoo – both out of the leading dam he also bred, Doc's Lyric) his advice to breeders, often sought, is always given with the benefit of the breed as his top criteria. His refusal to make recommendations to flatter or to further any other consideration has not always won him friends – but it has led to the production of horses which excel at the job for which they were bred.

Ian is a fine horseman and a great Australian, has proved you can start life with little and still make it to the top with hard work, high standards and a positive attitude.

Ian was born at Maryborough, Queensland on 28th June, 1945, the only son of a Maryborough carpenter, the late Snow Francis and his wife, Ella. He was educated at the local State Schools. He did not start riding until he was 11 years old when he got a part-time job helping out on a dairy farm. As a teenager he watched and worked with Barry Whitaker of Maryborough, whose style and feel for horses caught his imagination and made him aware that "there was more to horsemanship than basic transportation".

Ian graduated to Rodeo where, for 12 years, he made a name for himself riding bareback, saddle broncs and bulls.

While working on various Central Queensland cattle properties he moved on to Campdrafting. When the beef industry was in recession, he took the opportunity to manage John and Jenny Kingston's Kolora Quarter Horse Stud. There his knowledge and appreciation of the Quarter Horse breed was fine tuned. Ian credits much of his philosophy and attitude to life to John's influence at that time.

In 1980 he set up the Ian Francis Training Stables in a picturesque valley at Widgee outside Gympie, Queensland where, with Lexi Plath, he built and has maintained a reputation for presenting consistently well-trained horses in top condition for competition or for sale. Ian never fails to acknowledge the important role Lexi has played in the success of the outfit.

Among many others who have figured in his rise to fame, Ian lists four key men. Along with Barry Whitaker and John Kingston, there was Lee Reborse, a Nevadan who moved to Rockhampton ("an

excellent competitor specially in Reining and Working Cowhorse, a mild-mannered and very giving man”) and top Australian horseman, John Stanton (“his advice and attitudes to competition and life in general greatly affected my thinking”).

Ian Francis has made some several trips to the USA and Canada. Highlights were representing Australia at World Cups in both countries and winning the Open division of the International Reining Council’s World Cup in Toronto in 1992.

Among great horses trained and campaigned by Ian over the years have been King’s Gaiety, King’s Charge, Gold Astral, NBD King Poco Bar, Kings Gold, Dans Lady Cylip, Kolora Lunar Lady, D-Bar Paint Your Wagon, Kolora Classic, Murrumbo Fiona, BS Mingo’s Lucero, Vogue O’Lena, The Equalizer, Spindle, Doc’s Desert Rose, Doc’s Wild Orchid, Amaroo Rock n Return, Pillamindi Roc, Doc’s Kylie Anne, Riverholme Royal Oak, Doc’s Gold Dude, Nonda Tall Poppy, Donrice Conchite, Yarrango Reggae, Nonda Nightbird, Havenville Crackshot, Jaylo Bushman, Whisp O’Lena and Star Carousel.
