

ROYAL OCCASION



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GAYLENE LENNARD

HONoured TO BE INDucted INTO THE HORSE OF THE YEAR HALL OF FAME

The Horse of the Year 2011 Gala Dinner will be remembered by Gaylene Lennard for the rest of her life. She was thrilled, honoured and surprised to be inducted into the Horse of the Year Hall of Fame along with Olympic and World Cup show jumper Maurice Beaton as part of the dinner held on the Thursday night. "It was one of the best nights out I've had in a long time, and I would highly recommend it to anyone."

Gaylene made particular mention of David Ross, who gave his job description whenever he had the opportunity as 'Horse of the Year volunteer', which he felt looked far better than IHC trainee. A special tribute to David was made at the dinner, as sadly David passed away in his sleep in November last year.

It is typical of Gaylene to pay special attention to the others who contribute to the success of the sport in whatever way they can. As president of the Te Aroha A&P show she is more aware than most of the value of good volunteer assistance.

Gaylene inherited her passion for horses from her parents and her grandmother. The close family unit of mother Betty, sister Dorothy and Gaylene work together and share equally in the many successes they have achieved.

Based on a 240 cow dairy farm in Te Aroha, the family has a long history in horse circles. Gaylene's grandmother was the first person in New Zealand to plait a horse, and she also brought back from England a show bridle with studs instead of buckles, which caused some consternation in the show ring, when judges thought the bridle was inside out!

Dorothy and Gaylene's late father Laurie was well known on the hunt field, and also raced the successful horse Lou Rosa, as well as serving as president of the Te Aroha Jockey Club for five years.

Gaylene says she had become a little suspicious when her mother

and sister insisted on them all taking some going out clothes to this year's HoY – as it wasn't something they would normally bother with. Also she noticed a few photos had gone missing off the wall at home – passed off by Betty as having been sent into town to get the frames fixed! However, all of these little coincidences were long forgotten in the hurly burly of preparing for HoY.

Gaylene is the first to admit she is no good at blowing her own trumpet. Fortunately for the equestrian fraternity, others have kept an eye on her many successes over the years. Her six title wins in the Show Hack of the Year with El Sid (five consecutively), and Park Hack of the Year with Royal Occasion (also six times, four consecutively) have more than qualified Gaylene for inclusion in the select group of equestrians honoured by Horse of the Year over the years. Gaylene was especially pleased that the often overlooked discipline of showing was singled out and given this honour. She said it would do the 'dolly ring' a lot of good to have this recognition.

No one is more deserving than Gaylene to fly the flag for showing. Gaylene has been show riding since she was four years old. Her first pony was Bugs Bunny, who she shared with her sister Dorothy, before graduating to Blue Coral, the 13.2hh pony who could win the champion pony in the morning and the champion hunter class in the afternoon – a trend that isn't seen that much anymore!

Then there was Lyric the beautiful grey 14.2 gelding, followed by her first hack Red Haze, who was transformed into a saddle hunter when that division first became available. Gaylene's next horse was the lovely Easter Parade, bought from Barry Beatson, on who she enjoyed a lot of success and many champion sashes.

Always looking for that next star performer, the family was told about a young horse that Dianne White of Hobartville Stud in New South Wales was competing at the Brisbane show that year, so off they

went for a bit of a holiday. Needless to say they liked the horse and brought the five year old El Sid home. At that stage Sid had done a few local shows, and the Brisbane Show was his first major assignment. He wasn't even officially on the market as Gaylene recalled, but the rest, as they say, is history.

Virtually unbeatable throughout his career, Sid won everything there was to win and then some, including becoming the first and only New Zealand owned and ridden horse to win the Trans Tasman Champion Hack at Werribee in Australia in 2005. Sid has since been sold back to Australia.

Royal Occasion, the park hack was always meant to be theirs, Gaylene remembers. Mum Betty particularly wanted a park hack and had heard about him. Mark Todd had already turned him down for being too small, when Betty looked at him.

She was smitten, but Betty was due to go away on holiday, and as she really didn't want a new horse on the property while they were away, she didn't buy him. When she returned a month later, the horse was still available. Even better the price had dropped, so Midge came to live in Te Aroha, where he remains, in retirement now.

Gaylene has recently made the discipline leap to dressage in search of new challenges, and she assures us she has certainly found those!

After travelling to Germany with her trainer Clemens Dierks, they found the youngster Blue, whose German name translates into Dark Blue. The German version of his name didn't sound quite right here in New Zealand, so Donzello he is. Gaylene is currently working her way up through the ranks in dressage with her eye firmly on Grand Prix level, although she hasn't ruled out a return to the show ring if the right horse were to come along...

