

# THE GEE WHIZZ MEMORIAL

Words: Samantha Watson Photo: Libby Law



Winner of the 2011 Gee Whizz Memorial, Dorothy Lennard & Glentullock, pictured here with Samantha Watson and steward Shayne Govsky.

It is always fascinating to learn the history behind the person or animal for a memorial event. In between officiating classes at the 2011 New Zealand Horse of the Year Show, I caught up with steward and show rider, Shayne Govsky. He let me in on a few secrets about his former ride Gee Whizz, the stunning and monumentally successful show hack, whose name lives on through the prestigious Gee Whizz Memorial Equestrian Turnout class, where riders get points for the details of their costume as part of their overall result.

'Gee Whizz was known as Whizz and was an impressive chestnut thoroughbred gelding standing at 16.2 hands,' explains Shayne. 'He kicked off his show ring career with Christine Beatson, the combination going on to win his first Hack of the Year Title in 1992. Whizz was sold to Shona Duncan and then on to Bruce Holdaway after Shona started her family. Whizz and Bruce were hugely successful winning most titles within New Zealand and taking the 1996 Horse of the Year Title. 'Bruce kindly loaned Whizz to riders for their riding and turnout classes, namely Erin McFadden and Karin Shooter who rode him to wins in major rider classes and to success in the Sue Yearbury Memorial Turnout event held annually at the Royal Easter Show. Vaughan Cooper also claimed numerous titles with him in rider classes.'

'I personally rode him to countless champion and supreme awards and won the Captain Cholmondeley-Smith Slaver (thoroughbred class) at the Royal Easter Show.'

'For all who rode Whizz, you soon learned he was a hot horse with a sense of humour,' laughs Shayne. 'He appeared on occasion to enjoy entertaining himself by unceremoniously dumping his riders! However, on his day, with his faultless conformation and the impeccable work he was capable of, he was very difficult to beat. 'Whizz peacefully passed away approximately three years ago in his retirement paddock at home on Bruce's farm.'

## Horse of the Year 2011 Gee Whizz Class

On the whole, competitors were beautifully and correctly attired and being a past competitor in these classes myself, I understand and appreciate the huge undertaking in ensuring everything is as perfect as possible. My husband and I term these classes, the "divorce" classes, such is the pressure to appear not only utterly immaculate, but to ensure the horse is performing just as immaculately. It can certainly push one's relationship to the furthest degree!

It was suggested the judges make comment and suggestions after the class, which I was more than happy to do, to assist competitors for further formal turnout events.

In my previous article on the Diana Rainey (SC October 2009), I expanded in detail on what is and what is not correct for a formal turnout class. Here I would like to outline the main points where I feel competitors can refer to and make improvements. Not many can remember the statements made in the heat of the moment of success after the class at Horse of the Year. There were areas that require some improvement, so here goes!

**General cleanliness:** If practical, have someone else to groom and tack up your horse and certainly NEVER give your horse a final brush over yourself whilst dressed in your finery if at all possible. Some jackets were covered in horse hair, some cuffs were far too long exceeding the sleeve of the jacket and many were dirty with horse makeup.

**Lapel flower:** For a memorial event, a SMALL white flower only should ever be worn. Preferably fresh devoid of excessive greenery.

**Hair:** Tidy hair is a must. Hair should be pulled back cleanly into a neat, tight bun, without a hair out of place. Or very short hair can be combed

neatly into place. Huge, thick slumber hair nets are not appropriate. Look for fine hair nets to match your natural hair colour as closely as possible. Heaps of bobby pins are also a no no. An immaculate style can be achieved with a little hair wax smoothed over your hair, your hair is then brushed into a pony tail and a small, neat bun created from this. If the bun is floppy, a pin may be used invisibly at the underside, to the back of the head to ensure it sits. Strong hairspray or lacquer should then be applied. A false bun can cleverly be used to perfect the look if your hair will not quite stretch into a bun. Practice makes perfect. A fine hair net firstly twisted over your bun, then pulled to the top of your head will ensure all is neat and more importantly will ensure nothing will move at the most inopportune moment. Place your well brushed hat on your head and then don't touch it again.

**Makeup:** Please ensure that this is very subtle.

**Jewellery:** No jewellery except for what is required to be worn for the class. Definitely no earrings of any type.

**Stocks:** I saw many stocks grotty with makeup. Tissues and more tissues tucked in and around your stock. You will look as though you are about to star in a clown role, but this will ensure nothing touches your immaculately pristine, starched stock. Remove these at the last possible moment. Your stock pin should be polished and shiny and attached straight and through your stock and your shirt. Not an easy task with shaking hands! Naturally ensure your hands have no traces of horse makeup or anything else which may stain. The stock pin should sit halfway between the knot and the V of the vest.

**Breeches:** Many dirtied by oil from the saddle. Some minus buttons on the knee. Dirty breeches are just so obvious, so my suggestion is that you where over pants until before you enter the ring.

**Spurs and garter straps:** Garter straps should be finely stitched and are to sit between the second and third button of the breeches and should be lined with a lighter colour leather. The spur straps should be finely stitched and the underside black leather. The buckle should be rounded as opposed to square. Ensure any excess strapping once through the buckle is trimmed so that this is not flapping. Garter straps should be white lined, the buckle of the garter strap should sit in line with the spur strap buckle both slightly situated off centre toward the outer.

**Gloves:** Some very grotty palms and crochet backing, some missing the pearl button and crochet closure. My suggestion to keep gloves clean, is to get a pair of the fine rubber gloves to wear over your turnout gloves until the last minute, this will ensure that no grease or dirt is on the fine cream leather.

**Jackets:** Many dirty with horse hair and stains from horse makeup. Many too tight or too loose. Many cuff buttons were not able to be undone. Some had double vented jackets as opposed to the correct single vent. Please ensure that jackets have the correct black buttons.

**Top boots:** Many absolutely grotty with sweat and many just unpolished. Some filthy on the soles. Yes, I understand your horse must be worked, however, a pair of socks and someone with a towel nearby can assist you greatly. Gaiters and short boots and zips in the rear of top boots are incorrect for a formal turnout class.

**Spurs:** Most of the class had unpolished spurs.

**Cane:** Should be plain and unadorned, either plaited or stitched leather covered. These should be clean, match the tack and measure exactly from the crook of the elbow to the point of the middle finger.

Most of these points have nothing to do with spending up big on your attire to ensure success. All these small improvements to ensure points are not thrown away and cost very little or nothing except a little elbow grease and care.

On a brighter note, it was an absolute pleasure to see such good entries to such a difficult and technical class, for me, this class was one of my judging highlights at Horse of the Year 2011.