

## CLAUDIA COJOCAR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



### **Claudia Cojocar receives Lifetime Achievement Award**

The Lifetime Achievement Award is given to an individual whose contributions to the Canadian equestrian community are considered exceptional by their peers, and whose long-term service and dedication have contributed directly to the ongoing growth and development of Canadian equestrian sport and industry.

Congratulations to Claudia Cojocar as this year's recipient and for her unwavering commitment to horses, sport and the community and industry over seven decades!

Claudia became a highly skilled and successful rider at a young age and won silver medals at the US National Open 3 Day Championship Team Selection Trials in the late 1950's. She turned professional in 1961 and ran Ridgeview Equestrian Center, a successful hunter jumper show barn in Oregon before her move to Canada.



When she moved to Pinebrook Ranches in Calgary, Alberta in 1974, she immediately started to increase the level of riding and horsemanship in the area. The vast knowledge and lengthy experience she received growing up in California under the guidance of Dick Collins helped her achieve this.

Her “back to basics” approach to training horses and riders, along with her patience and enthusiasm quickly made her a highly sought-after coach and clinician. Claudia developed many young riders who went on to be extremely successful and respected professional riders and coaches. She produced and showed many top hunters and jumpers herself until she was forced to retire from riding, due to old injuries.

Claudia moved her business to Juniper Hill Farm in the Lake Country of British Columbia in 1993. She continued her high level of coaching and development of riders and horses, producing more top professionals in the area. She also brought in other top-level coaches from other parts of Canada and the US to help further these developments. Using her classical teaching style, Ian Millar describes Claudia as the ultimate horsewoman.

Claudia moved to Hope, BC in 2003 to semi-retire, but she can hardly be called retired. She is always available to offer her assistance and knowledge wherever it may be needed, whether it is by mentoring a coach, filling in teaching students for a coach that is away, giving advice on training exercises or helping at shows. The list is extensive!

Claudia’s knowledge has been sought after in helping in the development of some of Canada’s top equestrian facilities. In 1974, Claudia was honoured to be contacted by Ron Southern. He asked her to come and meet with him at Spruce Meadows in the large, empty field to help envision how to turn the open space into a show park. When Thunderbird Show Park in Langley was being developed, Claudia was a keen resource and advisor to George and Diane Tidball.

Claudia is an excellent observer. To this day, after every horse show held there, she provides feedback to management on what worked well, what might need to be improved upon and offers solutions on how to correct or improve those situations to make the show run smoother and better the next time.

Claudia attends all the Thunderbird shows and wears many hats, including looking after the reservations in the RV park, aptly named, the “Cojocar Executive Area.” She is most beloved by everyone at Thunderbird.

Claudia’s expertise and influence also led to an improved level of organization and quality of Hunter Jumper shows. Not long after moving to the Okanagan, Claudia’s clientele grew substantially and soon she started to travel with many of her students to larger shows in BC, Western Canada and the US.

She noticed the smaller, local shows in her area started to suffer from fewer entries when she was away. She knew these types of shows were important, and would be very beneficial to riders who wanted to improve, and to prepare riders and horses that eventually wanted to travel. There were plenty of keen volunteers ready to help organize the shows, but some lacked the knowledge required. To assist them, Claudia reached out to her network of professionals and experts. She asked them to contribute their knowledge to help her put together a workbook on how to run a successful horse show. They readily agreed to help.



The workbook produced in 2000 was named, “On with the Show! A Guide to Small Competition Committees” and was made available through Horse Council BC. It included a chapter for each horse show position with a detailed job description and helpful hints. The workbook was a very useful tool and helped committees host quality, local shows which were well organized, raised the level of classes offered and attracted many entries.

Claudia is most proud of her students, many of whom went on to be successful coaches themselves. She is always happy to give her support to them. She continues to mentor coaches and riders and is highly respected in the equestrian community throughout Canada, the US and internationally. Claudia has a talent for bringing the best out in riders and their horses through instilling confidence and teaching problem solving skills. During her professional career spanning over six decades, she has passed on her knowledge to literally hundreds of riders.

Claudia is known locally as “the Ultimate Fill-in”, as every winter she will take over the teaching of students at a variety of neighbouring barns, while their regular trainers are away horse showing or on vacation. This demonstrates how respected and trusted she is by her peers.

Claudia is always happy to give back to the industry by sharing her extensive knowledge. She also encourages others to do the same, as well as the importance of sharing what is learned. She has led and helped to organize many educational clinics and symposiums on a local, Provincial and National level and been a tireless volunteer on committees for both rules and jumping.

Claudia is a valued member of Canada’s equestrian community and very worthy of this lifetime achievement recognition.