

2001 Eugene R. Mische



Eugene R. "Gene" Mische has been a driving force behind the dramatic growth in the popularity of show jumping in the United States for more than three decades. He gained hands-on knowledge of the horse business as a rider, groom, trainer, judge, owner, farm manager, businessman and spectator. As a trainer, he was entrusted with the horses of some of this country's most noted owners such as Patrick Butler. As a horse owner, he provided opportunities to young riders such as Rodney Jenkins and Steve Stephens.

But it was as a promoter of show jumping that Mische made his most significant contribution to the sport. Mische saw the potential for show jumping to succeed as a spectator sport in the U.S. He saw what show jumping needed and he set out to meet those needs.

Mische began organizing shows in Florida in 1967, starting with the Sunshine Circuit and then bringing the first Grand Prix to a major outdoor stadium, Tampa Stadium, in 1971. He soon founded Stadium Jumping, Inc., which quickly became the nation's premier producer of hunter/jumper horse shows.

Seeing the need for top-quality facilities, Mische worked to develop Tampa's Bob Thomas Equestrian Center, and it was his vision and persistence that led to the creation of the Palm Beach Polo Equestrian Club, unrivaled as the world's best show jumping facility.

Mische saw the need for major corporate support to help show jumping grow further and he succeeded in bringing millions of dollars of sponsorship to the sport, negotiating contracts with the likes of Budweiser, Mercedes Benz and Cosequin. In 1978, Mische spearheaded the creation of the American Grandprix Association, a national circuit of show jumping competitions developed to give direction to the sport, organization to riders and spectators, and coordination for sponsors.

Over the years, Mische helped develop some of the nation's most successful horse shows, most notably in Lake Placid and Cleveland. His Cosequin Winter Equestrian Festival, heir to the Sunshine Circuit, grew to become the world's largest horse show circuit. Offering more than \$3 million in prize money, the Cosequin Winter Equestrian Festival features ten weeks of hunter/jumper competition, world-class dressage competitions and some of the nation's top grand prix events, several of which are shown on national television, such as the Budweiser American Invitational and the AGA Championship.

In 1991, Mische helped the United States Equestrian Team create its highly successful Festival of Champions. To further promote interest in show jumping, Mische brought international competitions to the U.S. including two World Cup Finals, the FEI World Children's Jumping Final and in 2002, the United States' first-ever outdoor Nations Cup.

In addition to serving as chairman of the American Grandprix Association, Mische also served as Chairman of the National Horse Show, and on the Boards of the United States Equestrian Team, USA Equestrian, the Washington International Horse Show and the Show Jumping Hall of Fame.

