

2003 J. Russell Stewart Sr.



J. Russell Stewart Sr. was born in Albany, NY in 1926. He began riding at age 11, and though he had no formal training, he began showing successfully in the jumper divisions. By the time he returned to New York after serving in the army during World War II, he was well recognized for his riding and training abilities.

During the 1940s and '50s, Stewart continued to work on his self-taught riding skills and he made a name for himself in the jumper ring with such well known horses as My Play Boy, on whom he earned the 1941 AHSA Open Jumper Championship.

In 1961, Stewart took over the management of Coosaw Farms and Airy Hall Plantation in South Carolina for Mr. and Mrs. Albert Love of Atlanta, GA. While there, he continued to train hunters and jumpers into the early 1970s, having much success with horses such as Big John and Blue Plum.

Stewart had great success with Blue Plum, winning numerous classes, including a Puissance at Hot Springs, VA, and the Grand Prix at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show. Stewart's success with Blue Plum led Bertram Firestone to purchase the horse and then loan him to the U.S. Equestrian Team. Stewart also teamed with Grey Ghost to win the 1964 and 1965 Open Speed Stakes at the National Horse Show in Madison Square Garden in dramatic fashion.

It was during the mid '60s that Stewart accomplished the feat for which he is best known: three consecutive wins in the National Horse Show's famed Puissance Stake. Stewart first rode Airy Hall's 17-hand brown gelding, Dear Brutus, to capture the win in 1965. The duo followed up with another Puissance win in 1966, leaping to a then-record height of 7'1". To retire the Chrysler Imperial Challenge Trophy in 1967, Stewart and Dear Brutus bettered their previous year's jump by two inches, claiming victory for the third time in a row and setting National Horse Show and U.S. records. The record held until 1973.

Stewart moved to Christimar Farms in Santa Barbara, CA, in 1971. Two years later, he rode Grey Chief to win the AHSA Open Jumper Championship. Grey Chief was named Horse of the Year later that year. Stewart and Grey Chief also won the World Championship Jumper Class held at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, CA, in 1974. During his tenure, Stewart led Christimar's entries to victory in 14 out of 17 High Score Championships offered on the Pacific coast.

Besides his numerous show jumping successes, Stewart also had many great accomplishments in the hunter ring, winning multiple AHSA Hunter Championships throughout his career.

Because of his noted achievements in the various hunter and jumper disciplines, Stewart was selected as the AHSA Horseman of the Year in 1974. He was later honored as the California Professional Horsemen's Association Horseman of the Year in 1985. Stewart retired in 1986, ending his nearly half-century-long career. His legacy of success in the hunter/jumper world was carried on by his son, J. Russell "Rusty" Stewart Jr.

