

## 2007 Mother of the Year – Mary Powell

Dear OHJA,

This year I would like to nominate my Nana, Mary Powell, for the Mother of the Year award. She was an unbelievable mother, grandmother and friend to anyone and everyone, and was like a second mother to me. My Nana moved out to Oregon from Florida a couple of months before I was born, so that she could have an active part in the lives of my family. My mom grew up riding, so my Nana was no stranger to having a horse lover in the family, and she became an integral part of my success as a rider. From the first day that I sat on a horse to my most recent horse show this past September, my Nana was always there to cheer for me; to boost my spirits when I had a rough day, and to congratulate me when I won. She also, sometimes to my mom's chagrin, was a big believer in serious shopping at the tack stores!

All through elementary, middle and the beginning of high school, my Nana would pick me up from school and drive to the barn for my lessons. She always stayed and watched, no matter how cold the winters, or how hot and buggy the summers. Before we moved into town, my Nana would drive out to the country to get me, drive forty-five minutes to the barn, forty-five minutes to take me back upriver, and then back to her home in town.

When I was eight, my Nana went to Arizona with my mom for the winter circuit. While she was there, my trainers found Mac A. Roany, who was for sale at the show. My Nana brought him home for me to be my first pony, but she and my mom didn't tell me. They wanted to first see me work hard at school-horse lessons, and show them that I was serious about riding. Everyone at the barn was curious about who owned this cute little pony, but my trainer, Mike, did a great job of keeping the secret. After that, my Nana did everything in her power to encourage my growth as a rider. Not only did she help with sending me to horse shows, but she always made sure that both my pony, and then my horses, and I were always outfitted with everything we needed. She was always there to lend a kind word to her horse show friends, and was always ready to strike up a conversation with passersby.

In 1999 my Nana was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer that required surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. She fought valiantly, and beat it. Even through this extremely difficult time for her, she was still there to make sure that I was happy. Besides the enormous amount of energy and attention that my Nana gave to me, she was a huge part of the lives of my mom and brother as well. My mom is an avid rider also, and my Nana gave her unimaginable support. My brother was also very close with her, and she rarely missed his various baseball, soccer, football and basketball games. She was our entire family's cheerleader. Even outside of our family, my Nana was always willing to help. She tutored underprivileged children, funded music, art and language programs in local elementary schools, and helped many people who needed a hand to get back on their feet.

When I outgrew my pony, my Nana was right there to continue my riding career with a new horse; when I was ready to move on from him, she made my dreams come true with my current horse, Luminous. Her generosity was so incredible, and it extended to so many people. She truly found great joy in making others happy.

My Nana has always been a big part of the horse show world. For the past fourteen years, she has hosted the Mothers Day Brunch, an event that I, along with many others, greatly anticipated every year. She always put her heart and soul into the brunch, even the past two years, when she had to come in a wheelchair and on oxygen. This past May, she was the first recipient on the "Mother's Day Horse Show Mother of the Year" award. She was SO thrilled with the award, and proudly displayed the quilt that she was given.

In January of 2006, my Nana was diagnosed with advanced abdominal cancer. She and my mom got the diagnosis the day that I was going to leave for Arizona to show for two weeks. They came straight from the doctor's office to pick me up to take me to the airport, but didn't say a word, acting as though everything was fine. My Nana wanted me to have a good time and not worry about her. For the next twenty two months, she would undergo six different types of chemotherapy. Despite the incredible amount of pain that she was in, I never once heard her utter a single complaint, and she always maintained her wonderful sense of humor.

By the spring of 2007, the chemotherapy was becoming less successful. She underwent numerous procedures to drain the fluid that was being pushed up into her lungs and making breathing difficult. Once again, I never heard her complain. This past summer, she underwent a different procedure that we hoped would help. Unfortunately, one of her lungs remained almost completely collapsed. The fluid from the tumor in her abdomen was pressing on her functioning lung, and she had an incredibly hard time breathing, even on the oxygen she was forced to wear twenty-four hours a day. Despite all of this, she showed more grace, pride and courage than I could have ever believed possible. At her first diagnosis, her doctor gave her less than a year to live, but she simply refused to accept that. She wasn't done with her life yet.

Throughout her long battle with cancer, my Nana never stopped fighting. This past October, however, she finally lost the fight. I had spent that day with her, ironically, watching horse show videos. She had talked with my brother, who is studying in Italy, on the phone. She told him that she was tired and had to go, but ended her conversation with him as she always did, by telling him to, "Make us proud." My mom went to her home a few hours later, and she was gone.

Losing her was a huge blow to me, for she was my friend as much as she was my Nana. I will always remember her as someone who epitomized bravery, perseverance, generosity, and most of all, unconditional love. She lived her life to the fullest, and helped everyone in her life to do the same. She inspired me to keep working my hardest for what I love, and to make her proud. For this, and so much more, my Nana, Mary Powell, deserves to be honored. Please help me in honoring and remembering her, by recognizing her as the 2007 Mother of the Year.

Thank you so much,  
Julia Butdorf