

National Western Stock Show Salutes Martin Cockriel

In the state of Colorado when one hears the name Cockriel, they almost automatically think of horses. For nearly 70 years Martin Cockriel has forged his way into the horse business making himself a virtual icon in the state and throughout the country. 89 years young, Martin is probably the best known and respected horseman in the state. He will attend every horse show, no matter how small, as well as traveling across the country and representing Colorado with pride. He is always willing to take horses to an exhibition, welcome school children on field trips, as well as serve on several professional and breed boards.



Martin Cockriel, with wife Barbara by his side, was saluted for his dedication to the Colorado horse show industry at the National Western Stock Show in Denver. (photo by Casey McBride)

Horses became familiar to Martin growing up on a Missouri farm, it was on this 120 acre farm Martin learned the trade of being a horseman. His father died when he was 12, and he stepped up and continued to run the farm. When he was 13 he sold the first American Saddlebred he trained to legendary horseman Sug Utz, and he was officially in the horse business. Although he has never had a riding or training lesson, nor worked under another trainer, in his 76 years in the horse business he has trained hundreds of local, national and world champions. Among the most notable of these horses are the American Saddlebreds he is so well known for, Murrays King, Spellcaster, Bettys Glorianna, Sultans Golden Age, Private Eyes, and more recently High on Champagne and Catalytic. He drove the great road horses Captain Easy, Mr Zip, Greentree Mary Jane, and the great So Lovely. Some of the famous Morgans that have been under his banner include Monte Vermont, Serendipity Storm B, Evenmist April Magic, Serendipity Gaelic B, Pinehaven Fireglow and Yellow Iris Jaybe.

Martin has been supported by and helped for 65 years by his wife Barbara Cockriel. Together they ran a 52 stall barn on 15 acres, raised 6 children, traveled to dozens of shows a year, served on countless boards and committees. Barbara is in the stands, and stood at the rail for every class Martin and her children participated in, at every horse show. These two are truly a beloved Colorado institution. Martin has developed countless assistant trainers who are now successfully trainers in their own right all across the country. In addition he has coached numerous champion riders, as well as his own 6 children, 3 of who have followed him into the business, filled with the passion to continue the Cockriel legacy. Martin spent 30 years as a USEF judge, judging horse shows all across the United States and Canada. It would be safe to say that there are few people in the Colorado horse industry who have not been helped by this man, he has either bought them a horse, trained their horse, shown their horse, sold their horse, loaned equipment, given advice, or stepped in in some way to help solve a problem.

Martin began exhibiting at the National Western Stock Show in 1951, and continued to do so until last year, 66 years exhibiting before the people of Denver and Colorado. All these years he has been a driving force behind the show horse industry in Colorado. In addition to attending shows, he was a founding member of the Rocky Mountain Horse Show Association, a local club that approves shows and presents year end awards to encourage and reward owners and exhibitors for their hard work. He has been a member of the United Professional Horseman Association, and inducted into their Horsemen's Hall of Fame, he founded the local UPHA club and successfully ran the club for many years. He has also been a member of countless clubs supporting show horses. The Colorado American Saddlebred Association, Circle J Morgan Horse Club, Colorado Arabian Horse Club, Colorado National Show Horse Association, USEF, ASHA, AMHA and IAHA. Martin served on several committees instrumental in the building of this very arena and complex, considered by many to be the finest in the state.

Martin Cockriel has not only left his mark on the horse show industry locally and nationally, he has left his mark on others. He is hard working, he still rides every day, and supports shows in Colorado and across the country. He shares his wealth in information and knowledge with anyone interested, he shows maturity, integrity, self-discipline and professionalism. He truly enjoys what he does, and injects fun into events, and is ready with a smile or joke. Martin Cockriel has given us so much in the past that we would like to pay our respects top him for all he has done to keep the Colorado horse show industry strong, THANK YOU MARTIN!!