

REMEMBERING A TRUE GENTLEMAN

GEORGE ROBERTSON

{Editor's Note: The following text was written by Vicky Holston honoring George Robertson at his retirement in 2012. He joined his wife Maggie in heaven on January 6th.}

There are very few people in the Saddlebred industry today in the Midwest, young or old, that don't know George Robertson. The young ones may not know his name, but there is no mistaking his presence in the ring. If you've ever dreamed of winning a blue ribbon and you fulfilled your dream, George Robertson was probably at your side when it happened.

George was drafted into the war his senior year in high school and left for the army the day after graduation. There he spent four years, earning two Purple Hearts, one Bronze Star and a Medal of Valor. After being discharged, George went to college and started to work at Pineroft Farm, then owned by R. N. Crawford, as Bob Holts second trainer. While attending college in Minnesota, George also worked for the likes of Phil Parker, Ori Ward, and Mel Slutton. George knew and befriended people like Tommy Moore, Mark Dickie, Chester Caldwell, Earl Teater, Lloyd Teater, Dick Durant and Ray Pitman. Tommy (Moore), Dick (Durant) and George were all grooms at the same time in the Midwest area. George has worked for Don Brockman, Jerry Wozniak, W. R. Brown, Ross Drake and Rick Wallen. Oh the stories that could be told.

Bill Matton always bragged that he introduced Maggie and George. Maggie was still in college when she and George got engaged, but finished college with George's help. After they were married it was decided, by George, that he needed to use his education and get a real job, as at the time horse trainers were

at the bottom of the pay scale. He went to work at the electric company and Maggie became a school teacher. After a year the couple was married in 1952. However, they remained active in the horse industry throughout their marriage. They have been married now for 60 years. George has earned a medal for that feat alone. They have four children, four grandchildren and one great grandchild.

A little known fact about George Robertson is he used to be a USEF Show Steward from 1952 until roughly 1998. When asked how he started to ringmaster, which is how most of us know George today, he says "I was the show steward at the Wisconsin State Fair in 1960 and the ringmaster that was hired showed up drunk. I offered to do his job because it had to be done, and that's the truth." From there, George has ringmastered at most of the major horse shows in the Midwest. He brags he's been with the ASAW Summerfun Horse Show and the Wisconsin Futurity Horse Show since they started. Other shows George has ringmastered are:

- Wisconsin State Fair
- Illinois State Fair
- Oklahoma
- Milwaukee Spring
- Madison Classic
- Midwest Charity
- Kankakee Horse Show for the Wheelers
- Great American Horse Show

He has ringmastered at several other small horse shows that were held in the Midwest area that are no longer in exist-

ence. He fulfilled a lifetime dream of ringmastering at the Kentucky State Fair on stake night in 2010. Scarlet Mattson shared that he did a wonderful job and always enjoyed him and Maggie. One of her fondest memories is the time she spent with George at the Milwaukee airport one year while waiting for a flight.

He is a life member of the UPHA and one of the earliest members. George served as President of the Wisconsin Riders & Exhibitors Association for many years. This organization was the sponsoring group of the original Milwaukee Spring Horse Show. He was honored in 1988 by the American Saddlebred Association of WI as Horse Person of the Year. In 2008, the American Saddlebred Association honored both Maggie and George with the Meritorious Service Award.

The people that George has helped in the ring are too numerous to list. You always knew that George would be there for you if you were in need. He's been our protector when we needed him most. Just think of how many (and with whom) blue ribbon pictures George has been in over the years. It would be a history of the Saddlebred industry in the Midwest for sure.

Nelson Green says of George: "George has added a large element of class, integrity, common sense, and horsemanship to the show horse industry and horse shows! I appreciate and honor his friendship."

He will be missed by all the lives he has touched through the years.



▲ George proudly wore the suit as ringmaster and watched over exhibitors for decades.

▼ George and Maggie Robertson were iconic figures on the Midwest show circuit.

