

VETERINARIAN - GENIUS - HORSEMAN -

*Friend*

DR. SCOTT

SB

BENNETT

by Bob Funkhouser

In our tightknit show horse community, the passing of extended family members is met with widespread sadness, but then there are a few of those departing souls who literally leave an impact on the **ENTIRE** community. Dr. Scott Bennett, age 66, was one of those few.

On June 4, 2020, he lost a most valiant battle with cancer. When diagnosed he was never one to complain, never one to ask, "Why me?" He rolled up his sleeves and continued to work like he's always worked: helping his fellow horsemen, friends and most of all, the animals that connect us all together.

"Today, the show horse industry and the veterinary profession mourn a great loss," said former UPHA President Smith Lilly when learning of Dr. Bennett's passing. "Only a very few make it to the top in their chosen field of endeavor, and only a very few of those change the definition of greatness in their profession."



Joined by (l-r) Rob and Sarah Byers, Terri and Sean Travers, Linda Bennett, Scarlett Mattson, Brennan Bennett, Bill and Kris Knight, and John Conatser, Dr. Scott Bennett received a Louisville tricolor along with his 2017 induction into the World's Championship Horse Show Hall of Fame.



In addition to saving everyone else, the good doctor also just enjoyed being Scott – the proud owner and horse show husband to Linda (c) and good friend to Kris and Bill Knight.

"Dr. Scott Bennett set a new standard for innovation and excellence in the veterinary profession. He helped thousands of horses in so many ways, helped owners achieve their dreams, and helped many trainers become better at their craft. I will miss his tenacious pursuit of excellence, his sense of humor, and his friendship. May his wife Linda feel all our love and support and may Scott rest in peace."

That powerful message was echoed time and time again from coast to coast and many points in between. While his passing was not a surprise, it still punched everyone in the gut, left a hole that can't be filled. We just knew the man that had the power to advance veterinary practices, helping everything from lameness to reproduction, would overcome overwhelming odds to beat that terrible disease. It wasn't because of a lack of will or effort.

Growing up in Lebanon, Tennessee, Bennett attended the Castle Heights Military Academy where he was a top student and athlete. Upon graduation he headed to the University of Tennessee where he began his pre vet studies and played football. With early admission, he attended the Ohio State University School of Veterinary Medicine at 19. His eye and instincts proved to be as instrumental as his knowledge and that combination is what started his path to greatness as a veterinarian at the age of 23.

photo by Howie Schatzberg

It was just a few years later when he established Equine Services Hospital in Simpsonville, Kentucky, and it became a destination for leading horsemen in all regions of the nation for the latest in diagnostic imaging services at the hospital's nuclear scanning, MRI, and video endoscopy facilities. Dr. Bennett also became a pioneer in the use of embryo transfers in the American Saddlebred world.

He advanced the world of equine medicine, especially in the field of lameness, yet always stayed grounded with the trainers and owners he worked with. "Even though he was a genius, he never tried to speak Greek," said Smith Lilly. "Scott spoke our language. I had a horse once that had a problem and we could not figure it out. I asked Scott to look at him and I worked this horse for him. After a few passes Scott said, 'Yea, his whole ass-end is out of joint.' He didn't use a bunch of big words we couldn't understand and he fixed the horse."

It was a combination of his down to earth demeanor and imposing presence that gave everyone great confidence in his evaluation, prognosis, and treatments. He was a great teammate to many a trainer and a great friend to many an owner, giving them hope where it was warranted and comfort when the situation was beyond even his powers.

"The reason Scott was so loved was he made himself available to us as a show horse community," added Lilly. "It didn't matter if you were on the west coast, the east coast, New England, West Virginia, or Simpsonville, Kentucky, he would be there for you. It didn't matter whether you were a trainer with a barn full of world's champions or an up and coming young trainer, if you called, he would come and make your horse better.

"Another part of Scott was he put his heart and soul into Alliance Stud, standing several stallions for himself and others and raising world's champions. He took a lot of pride in producing foals for people, especially with problem mares. You'd be with him at a show and he would say with a smile, 'I remember pushing that one around in a petri dish.'

"He was also really proud of Linda [Bennett] and loved watching her in the ring, especially if it was on an Alliance-bred star. He really loved her and was so happy with their relationship."

If all of the above wasn't enough for Superman status, there was yet another element that came with Dr. Scott Bennett being a part of the show horse community - the role of friend.

"If he worked on your horse he was your friend," said Lilly. "It didn't matter where you were in your training career, big or small, he was your friend. And as an industry, he had our back. For many years he served on the USEF Drugs and Medications Committee and always had our back there as well as with the USDA."



Dr. Scott Bennett worked with many of the greats, including world's grand champion Marc Of Charm. He is pictured with Lionel and Georgia Ferreira and Lucy Moore following Marc's 2010 Lexington Junior League Junior Five-Gaited Championship.

Thankfully, Dr. Bennett got to feel the love of many before he left us for a better place. Among his accolades were the 2009 UPHA Sallie B. Wheeler Distinguished Service Award, induction into the 2017 World's Championship Horse Show Hall of Fame, the 2018 ASHA Lifetime Achievement Award, and the 2019 Castleman Award.

For all he did for the show horse community the UPHA Executive Board just approved a new award in Dr. Bennett's memory. The UPHA Dr. Scott Bennett Professional Service Award will be presented to a professional who has aided and given greatly to the industry but who is not a trainer. A fitting tribute indeed!

Dr. Scott Bennett leaves behind his beloved wife Linda, a son Brennan who made him very proud, and a community that adored him on so many levels. Adapting to the times due to Corona Virus restrictions, family and friends gave Dr. Bennett a great send off on Thursday, June 11. They lined the drive at Alliance Farm as the hearse carrying his body was driven through the farm one last time, with his favorite stallion, Delirium, all dressed up and standing proudly in a paddock next to the drive.

Farewell our friend. Our community and our animals both benefited from your greatness and from you being you.