



Bonnie Jean Zubrod

A True Pioneer

by Bob Funkhouser

She took perhaps one of the most unconventional roads to the UPHA Helen K. Crabtree Equitation Hall of Fame, a road that was paved with necessity, grit, family and passion. Along the way she left lasting impressions upon hundreds of youth and families.

On September 28th her children, Cindy Boel and Art Zubrod, her grandchildren, Deveau Zubrod Kreutzer and Renee Zubrod Philpott, and their extended families suffered the loss of the renowned matriarch of Zubrod Stables, Prospect, Kentucky. Zubrod was 89.

Well thought of by her peers and customers alike, Zubrod's story began in South Louisville where a young Bonnie Tuggle loved going to the Kentucky State Fair each summer to see the horse show. With each visit her passion for all things horses grew, especially American Saddlebreds.

The family got a few backyard horses through her school-age years. The last horse during that time was a five-gaited American Saddlebred. At a time when many people had horses she would often attend group trail rides with the likes of Ellis Waggoner and the late Jean Nalley. She also had a boyfriend and

was engaged to Arthur Zubrod when she was 19. Her father told her it was either the horse or the husband and she chose the husband, although she held on to her horse until the very last minute. On her wedding day, as her father was walking her down the aisle, "Tony" the American Saddlebred was getting picked up and shipped off to his new owner.

The new Mrs. Zubrod was all about family as son Art was born a year and half into the marriage, followed by a daughter Cindy some nine years later. When Cindy was four, fate would have it that American Saddlebreds would find their way back into Bonnie's life.

When Jim B. Robertson was hired as the trainer for the famed Rock Creek Riding Club he moved in across the street from Bonnie's parents. Her father owned a lumberyard and Robertson needed shavings so Mr. Tuggle arranged some riding lessons for his granddaughter Cindy. A few years later, after saving \$75 from her weekly grocery money, Bonnie purchased Cindy's first pony.

"We kept the pony at a local boarding barn and eventually Bonnie started giving some lessons there to help with the board," said Cindy Zubrod Boel. "She loved helping the kids. It was always about helping kids."

Over the years the lessons grew and the Zubrods moved around to a few boarding barns. There was a cocktail party attending by Bonnie's parents with the people who had purchased the famed Plainview Farm (home of World's Grand Champion CH Plainview's Julia) to develop it. Mrs. Tuggle asked what was to happen to the barn and they told her nothing that it was empty. She then asked them if they her family could use the barn and they said yes.

It was a great area to establish a stronger lesson program. At the time Bonnie's son Art was working for Frank McConnell in the morning and then helping his mom at Plainview in the afternoon. They spent a few years at Plainview and in December of 1986, they hung out their sign in Prospect, Kentucky for the final time.

"My dad was retired by then but he thought this was a good investment," said Cindy. "We relied a lot on the kindness of others, especially Cecil Wheeler and Ronnie Graham. They gave Bonnie suggestions and taught her a lot about keeping horses sound."

The Carl Holden family and their daughter Carla (Ritzie) were among the first customers as were Ellen and AnneLuise Montgomery, Sally Falk, Beth Ann Gulick and April Fowler. Bonnie started a 4-H Club for American Saddlebreds and in addition to daughter Cindy, others who went on to longtime involvement with the American Saddlebred included Stan Harris, Reneaux Collins, Ava Whitmore, Diane Plamp Dorsey, Linda Herman Bennett, Chris Nalley and Amy Kaufman, among others.

"We put on a horse show and raised money for the club," said Cindy. "Bill Munford was the ringmaster and Don Harris would judge."

Bonnie turned out riders who enjoyed great success on both the local and national stages. In addition to granddaughters Deveau and Renee, riders like Jacqueline Beck and Maisie Benfield were among those with world's and national titles.

"For Bonnie, it was a love for the American Saddlebred and putting the kids with the horses," said Cindy. "She started in a different era. She was a '50s housewife who really wanted her own business."

"This is such a family oriented business and for us it's generational. What we always appreciated about Bonnie was family comes first. We started and learned together. We did it a little differently and eventually kind of separated with Bonnie teaching and me training. She had such a good eye for detail and was great at communicating with kids and parents."

"She was a visual person and really enjoyed the clothing part and turn out of showing horses. She also took great pride in the tack room and our presentation. I always said, 'she was the front of the horse and I was the back of the horse.'"



Donna-Petry Smith presented Bonnie with the UPHA Helen Crabtree Equitation Instructor Hall of Fame award in 2012. Bonnie's daughter, Cindy Boel (c) gave the presentation.

Bonnie not only left her family with great memories, she was also held in the highest esteem by her friends, customers and peers who inducted her into the UPHA Helen Crabtree Equitation Instructor Hall of Fame at the 2012 convention.

"Bonnie and her son, Art, were responsible for my family's involvement with the beautiful American Saddlebred horses," said Carl Holden. "In the summer of 1972 we relocated to Louisville. Our daughter, Carla, was eight and we had recently purchased her a Quarter Horse. Carla had taken lessons on the Quarter Horse for a short time before we decided to relocate to Louisville.

"It was my priority to let my daughter continue her love for horses and riding. I immediately started asking around where I could stable my Quarter Horse and was told there weren't many Quarter Horses in this area. I was told if your daughter wants to actively participate in showing you should consider English riding and invest in the beautiful American Saddlebred. This person told me she knew of a somewhat new Saddlebred instructor who had just opened a new barn in Anchorage. That person was Bonnie Zubrod and her son, Art. Carla started in the lesson program the next day.

"Bonnie told us about State Fair and that she had box seats for us at the World's Championship Horse Show. We were so excited and went every night and some daytime as well. We were hooked!"



The Zubrod team that has put winning combinations together includes Renee Zubrod Philpott, Bonnie Zubrod, Sarah Tompkins, Cindy Boel and Deveau Zubrod Kreitzer.

Bonnie Tuggle grew up loving horses before she put them on the shelf to raise a family.



The Quarter Horse was sold and Cara (Holden) Ritzie became Zubrod's first outside equitation rider other than her daughter Cindy, who was already successfully showing.

"Bonnie was an excellent equitation instructor and close friend for 45 years," added Holden. "She made every riding lesson fun for Carla and she improved with each ride. As a trainer and instructor Bonnie commanded a positive relationship and appreciation that is imperative in maintaining a success barn and competing successfully with male trainers in Kentucky.

"The most touching memory of Bonnie was the last hour of her life with Cindy, Carla and myself at her bedside when she drew her last breath. She was an elegant lady, tough negotiator, competitor and

Georgia's [Holden] best friend. To know Bonnie was to love her."

"Bonnie was a master at the art of equitation and she set her expectations high for all of her students," said Nancy Becker. "She was caring, compassionate, generous, kind, and a patient individual as well as being a great communicator. Bonnie gave her students the motivation to become lifelong learners and made a lasting impact that has followed her students throughout their lives. She was creative, engaging, and inspirational while getting her point across. She had the ability to make each and every lesson fun and energetic, which in turn made her students look forward to the next ride.



A graduate of the Louisville Girls School, Bonnie modeled swim wear before becoming a Hall of Fame instructor.

"Bonnie took many riders under her wing, treating them like her own children and in turn creating a family atmosphere at the barn. This environment built loyalty, confidence and a foundation of trust with her students and their family members. Her warmth, accessibility, enthusiasm, and caring nature were so endearing to all that crossed paths with her.

"Her legacy will continue to live on in her two children, Art Zubrod and Cindy Boel, as well as granddaughters Deveau Zubrod Kreitzer and Renee Zubrod Philpott, all of whom are involved in the well established family business of Zubrod Stables."