

WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP HORSE SHOW HALL OF FAME

Don Spear

Editor's note: The following speech was read by announcer Peter Doubleday Saturday, Aug. 26, 2017 at the World's Championship Horse Show.



photo by Howie Schatzberg

Don Spear was joined by show manager Scarlett Mattson for his presentation in center ring as the first WCHS Hall of Fame Inductee of the night.

Don Spear was born in Springfield, Massachusetts and grew up on a farm in nearby Brimfield. He was drawn to show horses at a young age, and after his father took him to look at Morgans at the famed Waseeka farm, and encouraging him to become involved with the much more popular breed in New England, Don declared his real love was the American Saddlebred. His long career as an owner and breeder began shortly after as an owner in 1960. He bred his first Saddlebred foal in 1965 at the age of 22.

In 1969 he sent his first horse to Kentucky. A three-year-old mare he bred, by the name of Emily Starheart, was shipped to the famed trainer, Garland Bradshaw. Although her show career was not stellar, the Starheart's Decision daughter would have an impact on Don's early career as a breeder.

A move to Westminster, Maryland for work led to Don meeting Joan Lurie, who lived nearby. Joan moved to Kentucky to establish Willowbank Farm, and Don moved to Memphis to become Vice President of the Seabrook Company.

He continued his association with Joan, eventually buying part ownership in Willowbank Farm. In 1984 Joan took her first weanling to the Kentucky State Fair, winning the Breeder's Stake with Don Spear's Kaladar. Two years later, in 1986, Joan would show See the Sights to win the Weanling Breeder's Stake and Unattached to win the Yearling Breeder's Stake for Don.

In the fall of that year Don moved to Kentucky to start his own company in Shelbyville, and the following spring established Stonecroft Farm. He sold his part ownership in Willowbank the following year to focus fully on Stonecroft with his partner John Scheidt.

In the thirty years since, Don and Stonecroft have been the breeder and owner of over 30 World's or Reserve World's Champions, accumulating close to 100 world titles, as well as over 30 World or Reserve World Champion Morgans.

Show dogs have also played a part in his career as a breeder and competitor with over 40 champion dogs in the AKC, many winning All Breed Best in Show and National Championships, as well as breed wins at Westminster and Crufts.

He has also owned world's champion Hackney ponies but it has always been his love of the American Saddlebred that has been his primary focus.

He has served as a board member on the American Saddlebred Horse Association and is a charter member and current President of the Kentucky Saddlebred Owners and Breeders Association.

Some of the very special horses he has owned through the years are: WGC A Sweet Treat, RWGC See The Lights, RWGC Seaforth's Bonnie Lass, WCC Unattached, WCC Nurse Goodbody, WCC The Great Gaspar, WCC Callaway's Born For This and WC Vintage Lace

And a highlight of some of the American Saddlebreds he has bred through the years are: WCC Revival, WCC Stonecroft I'm Radiant, WCC Stonecroft Ringleader, WCC What's My Line, RWCC Stonecroft Verbena, RWCC Stonecroft Royal Reflection, WC Stonecroft Sincerely, WC Stonecroft Serengetti and WC Amusing.

His beloved stallion WC I'm First and the great WGC Five-Gaited winner Boucheron.