



Jimmy and Helen Robertson

The Couple Few People Truly Know

BY ANN BULLARD

‘What you see is what you get,’ or so ‘they’ say. If that’s true, then people looking at Helen and Jimmy Robertson need to look quite closely, for there is a lot of depth beneath those two usually-smiling surfaces.

They come from opposite ends of the show horse spectrum. James Blount “Jimmy” Robertson, II, grew up among Saddlebred royalty. His father, the late, legendary ‘Jim B.’ had horses, ponies, drivers and riders that contended in and, in some cases, dominated the Saddle Horse scene from the 1950s into the 1990s.

Helen’s family moved from Alabama to Washington, to Florida and other states where her mother and stepfathers trained during her childhood. Yet despite their quite different upbringings, they found one another and have brought a level of professionalism – and more importantly – kind and giving spirits – that keep them among the best-liked and most-admired professionals in our industry.

Jimmy credits his maternal grandfather, a Kentucky horse trader, with installing the love for Saddlebreds and showing in his father. The late Jim B was an accomplished junior exhibitor, starring in equitation and performance. He won the Goods Hands class at Louisville four times – before he was 13-years-old. An early publication described Robertson as “one of the smartest walk-trot contenders in the show ring. In 1937, Jim Blount Robertson showed this grand mare (Airy Fairy) 13 times, winning 11 firsts, including the Minton Memorial Challenge Trophy.”

Jim B served in the cavalry during World War II. After he mustered out, he worked for Minton Hickory Farm in Barbourville, Ken. He married a local girl. Their oldest son, Walt, was born in Kentucky; shortly thereafter, the family trekked across the country to California.

Jimmy started life in in the Golden State while his father worked for the late Lurline Roth at her Why Worry Farm in Woodside, Calif. However, to paraphrase a Texan’s line, he may have been born in California but he got to Kentucky as fast as he could. The Robertsons rented a barn in Mt. Sterling, Ken. They spent several years at Rock Creek before purchasing their own place on Tates Creek Road in Lexington.

Helen’s equestrienne roots go back to her grandfather, Bill Hutson, who trained world champion walking horses and a few Saddlebreds primarily for the R.S. Barnwell family in Shreveport, La. Unlike Jimmy, who spent most of his life in Kentucky, she and her younger brother, Jerry Hutson, moved with their mother across the country.

Jerry and Helen’s equestrian abilities shouldn’t be surprising. Not only did their grandfather train, their father and mother, the former Pat Moulton, were quite successful with horses of all breeds. A native of Mobile, Ala., Pat was part of that close-knit saddle horse community which included Helen’s godfather, the late Nick McGowin. And their uncle took care of World’s Grand Champion CHThe Lemon Drop Kid.



Jimmy was voted UPHA Horseman Of The Year in 2012. Gary Garone made the presentation at the 2013 Convention.



Carol Reams carried roses after the 1977 NHS Good Hands Finals. Jimmy and Jim B coached her to the win.



Jim B and Jimmy Robertson were a formidable father and son team.



Helen's mother, Pat Close, led her in an early leadline class.



Helen showed equitation on both Tennessee Walking Horses and Saddlebreds.

"Helen was like any older sister; we leaned on each other growing up," Jerry said. "She always was a natural instructor, and began teaching when she was very young. She's a good sister ... and a good friend."

Jerry has had an outstanding career in the Saddle Horse World. Among the young horses he helped bring along: World's Champion of Champions CHSwish. His daughter, Dylan, has enjoyed showing under saddle, to the road cart and in pleasure driving. Today, he heads the training operation at Happy Valley Stables in Rossville, Ga.

In Helen's freshman year in high school, Pat and Richard Close moved to Kentucky. When they prepared to move to Illinois, Helen elected to finish high school in Shelby County.

Helen cherishes those memories. "Mom did a lot on her own, raising us kids. I remember her working hard and always wanting us to have the best riding suits," she said, adding she usually had hand-me-down riding suits. "She did the best she could with what we had."

Helen was an accomplished equitation rider. Among her memories: her and her mother's trailering a horse to New York for Helen to show in the Good Hands Finals. The next week, they loaded up again and headed for The American Royal.

Sarah Byers remembers "Helen showing equitation against our kids. I knew she was a trainer's kid; our riders had to be on their toes and pretty doggone sharp. If they made a slipup, no matter what she was riding, Helen could beat you."

"I did great in County Fairs," Helen said, recalling earning a reserve in the Kentucky Riders class at Louisville her senior year.

While Helen and her family were moving about the country, Jimmy and his older brother, Walt, grew up helping their father. As Jimmy told Kentucky Oral History Project interviewer Kim Lady Smith about his working with horses in his childhood, "Well just all the time. I mean when I was old enough to... I didn't have any summer jobs."

Rather, he honed his natural skills around such horses as world's champions such as World's Grand Champion CHTashi Ling, World's Grand Champion CHForest Song and World's Grand Champion CHPlainview's Julia. Robertson riders and drivers included the late Sallie Wheeler, the late Julianne Schmutz and numerous equitation stars. A young Kenny Wheeler enjoyed the Robertson home and farm. While Jim B trained the Wheelers' fine harness horses, Jimmy trained Kenny's ponies.



Jimmy showed in many divisions, including Parade.



Sarah Cronan won the Senior Equitation World's Championship title in 1996 under Jimmy and Helen's direction.



Jimmy and Helen married in a quiet ceremony in 1999. Rob and Sarah Byers 'stood up' for their friends.



Bob Ruxer and Jimmy have been friends since childhood. Helen joined the friends to view the Supreme Sultan portrait.



Jerry and his daughter, Dylan Hutson joined Helen for a family picture.

"I grew up with Jimmy; he looked out for me. He was in charge of me from May through December; he can be credited with some of the good and a lot of the bad. I drove my first road pony with Jimmy and won my first world's championship with him," Kenny said, pointing out that Jimmy trained the road ponies under his father's supervision.

Perhaps the best of those: Speed Limit. Kenny won four Junior Exhibitor Roadster Pony World's Championships with the pony; one year, Jimmy brought the pony back for the Roadster Pony Stake, and won his first World's Grand Championship.

"Jimmy was [and is] quite the character – and a lot of fun. Deep down he's a very good person; he made sure we always knew right from wrong and never let things get out of control. He was [and is] a good person to teach your kids," Kenny added.

Jimmy honed his natural skills. However, he "didn't get involved in showing himself until the ninth or tenth grade."

After high school, Jimmy enrolled in the University of Kentucky. His goal: to become a veterinarian and attend Auburn University. Even while he was at UK, he was working back in the farms when not in class.

"I said I wanted to go to vet school, but didn't spend enough time on my grades," he said candidly. "I wasn't a bad student, but there were some diversions. I always ended up at the farms and doing stuff like that, so, I don't know if I really wanted to be a vet or not deep down."

Malissa Shirkey recalls the summers she spent with Jim B and Jimmy. She spent her entire 14-17 equitation years with the Robertsons.

"The greatest part of riding with Jim B is that he and [his sons] Walt and Jimmy were incredible family men. For Jim B, the sun rose and set on those two boys," Malissa said.

She recalled "racing with Kenny on mini-donkeys named Jack and Jill, and showing with Virginia and Bess Cable and other Robertson performance and equitation stars. I felt like I was a member of an exclusive club when I got to ride equitation with them."

Both Jim B and Jimmy taught the equitation riders. Malissa says, "Jimmy had the softer side."

Jimmy worked alongside his father until the late 1980s. He had married, divorced and was raising twin daughters, Jennifer and Chris. Jennifer reveled in the horse world; Chrissy proved to be allergic to the animals.

"Growing up as a Robertson, horses were my passion," Jennifer said, explaining she lived with her father after her parents divorced. "I told Dad I was staying with him. Growing up with him was fun. He was very strict, but not mean-strict. I knew at an early age that I was Daddy's girl. He was like the father every



The Robertsons coached the winning U. S. World Cup of Saddle Seat Equitation Three-Gaited Team in 2010.

little girl wants, soft and tender. But the looks he could give you ... I knew I was cruising for trouble. I didn't have the fear of God; I had the fear of Jimmy. He likes to teach people about life, about how to deal with things."

With both being part of the Kentucky Saddle Horse scene, obviously Jimmy and Helen were acquainted. In fact, Helen often showed against the Robertson riders – and held her own.

Helen still was in high school when she worked with John Biggins.

"I think she first came here in 1979," John said, reflecting back on the days his barn was behind Premier Stables in Simpsonville, Ken.

Her first job: cleaning out the hayloft – by herself. She also learned John's way of working horses and had lots of opportunities to ride. She left there for a while, returning to work at his new – and present – barn in 1982.

"Helen worked for me until about 2 p.m. and then went to Frank McConnell's in Louisville to give lessons in the evening," John said. "Helen was a naturally gifted and talented rider with generations of talented horsemen in her background."



Helen picked up pink and blue ribbons aboard The Lady Sings The Blues. They won the Ladies Five-Gaited Championship in the American Royal's 2010 Pink Ribbon Class.



Robertson Equine Sales have become a 'must' for many saddle horse people. Peter Fenton does the announcing with Walt Robinson as auctioneer.



Helen (far left) leads the Ribbons Of Service Program. A group of equestrians joined her for the 2011 presentation to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. To date, the program has given almost \$400,000 to the Memphis-based hospital.

"I really grew up showing horses for John," Helen said. "When he heard Rob and Sarah [Byers] were leaving Rock Creek and Jimmy was going there, he told me I needed to apply for a job with Jimmy. I think he was kicking me out of the nest. I'd have been very comfortable going to work at John's every day."

Whatever the reason, the move was a perfect one for both Helen and her new employer. She was ready and able to step up after Jimmy's fall from a horse. During that six weeks, Helen was trainer, instructor and part-time nurse. In time, that trainer/instructor relationship became something much more permanent.

"We lived together for seven years," Helen said, adding they married in 1999.

"If ever two people were meant for each other ... they're perfect for each other," Nancy McConnell said. "He has encouraged all the wonderful things that she has gotten into. And I wouldn't want anyone to forget what a wonderful teacher and rider she is and how well she can show a horse."

Helen and Jimmy had the fun of introducing Tiffany Wheeler to the Kentucky bluegrass. The Idaho native had just finished her freshman year at William Woods. Professor Gayle Lampe thought the Robertsons would be a good fit for her first internship.

"Gayle said theirs was a nice place; that they would be nice to me and bring me along," Tiffany said, acknowledging that she was so new to saddle horses she knew nothing about tail sets. "During spring break, I went down to interview. I walked in the barn, where Jimmy was driving a horse; Jimmy looked at me and said, 'Get in.' I'd never sat behind a horse before; I acted like I knew what I was doing."

"They were wonderful to work for. Both gave me a lot of opportunities to ride and to learn, to make my own mistakes. And I taught a lot of lessons; that was good."

Jimmy and Helen made two moves from Rock Creek before setting up at Kris Price's [now Knight] Pleasantview Farm. They named their business Infinity Stables. Why the name?

Helen explained, "When we left Rock Creek, we were trying to figure out a name. At that point, we had a kid in every age group. Kris Price said, 'It's like you're infinity. You'll go on forever.'"

Kelsey Price began her equestrian career with the Robertsons. In 1997, the petite blond earned her first Louisville ribbon aboard Something Tasty in Seven and Under Walk and Trot Equitation competition.

"We've been blessed," Jimmy said. "One year at Louisville we had riders in the 17, 16, 15, 14, 13, 12 and 11-year-old qualifiers and Kelsey Price in 10 and Under. They all did very well; most were second at least."



Helen assisted Nita Isgrigg at an Eastern Kentucky dental clinic as part of a mission program.

Andi Bittner joined the Infinity group during these years.

"I was Helen's first adult student," she said. "I didn't know if I'd like it there. The kids were doing things I knew nothing about."

Infinity kids showing against each other didn't faze the riders or parents. Andi says, "Jimmy and Helen taught that kind of sportsmanship: it doesn't matter who wins, be true to your horse and to your friends."

That's one reason she stayed. With the exception of a few years she retired her first horse in Florida, Andi has been part of Infinity ever since. She says Jimmy and Helen's riders remain part of the Infinity family no matter how long they've been away.

The Robertsons shared the barn with Kris Price. It wasn't long before both needed more space. In 2002, they purchased their farm on Anderson Lane in Shelbyville. They describe it as "a piece of heaven."

Living practically next door to Rock Creek Park, it's not surprising that Sarah Cronan Spurlock began her riding career at those stables. She began riding at Rock Creek when Rob and Sarah Byers and Renee Biggins were there. Although she left for a brief time, she came back to the Robertsons to enjoy an outstanding equitation career, including Lexington's Equitation Championship and the Senior Equitation World's Championship in 1996.

"Being part of that barn was like being part of a family. Jimmy and Helen always approach their work with such positivity and energy; that helped make it a rewarding experience for all their clients. Even when we competed against each other, they kept a spirit of support rather than competition within the barn," she said.

"They both played a role in shaping my teenage years and helping me grow into the person I am. They were teachers, mentors and friends who helped shape my life in a positive way." She said, calling the Robertsons' methods "the whole person theory."

With two small children, one just months old, Sarah doesn't get to the barn as often as she would like. However, her daughter, Nora Cait, has enjoyed an Infinity pony ride – and riding in front of her mother on a five-gaited pleasure horse.

"She got to slow gait for the first time, and seemed to thoroughly enjoy it," Sarah said.

Jordyn Isgrigg used to watch 'the man in the green silks' when she went to Louisville with her family. When they decided to change barns, she went to visit that 'green man' and fell in love with Jimmy and Helen.

Jordyn explained. "I had watched Jimmy drive roadsters when I was growing up," the now 14-year-old said. "It was so cool. When we decided to move, Mom gave me the choice of two barns. I fit right in at Jimmy's; I felt at home there."

Nita Isgrigg has many fond horse show memories about the Robertsons, but it's who the couple are that has truly made the difference. Nita explained.

“My husband is a professional bass fisherman. He couldn’t take our daughter to a father/daughter dance. Jimmy not only took her to the dance, but bought her a little wrist corsage and took her out to dinner. He’s always been there for her and is a great second dad for Jordyn.”

Most recently, both Jordyn and Nita earned blue ribbons with their Show Pleasure Driving Hackney Pony at the Cleveland/Chattanooga Charity Horse Show. Jordyn drove Limited Edition to win the AHHS Youth Medallion Show Pleasure Driving title, while Nita won the Single Hackney or Harness Show Pleasure Driving Amateur/Junior Exhibitor championship.

Jimmy’s and Bob Ruxer’s friendship goes back to 1962, when Bob’s Uncle Alvin bought Anna Rooney Stonewall from Jim B. Today, they remain as close as they were as kids.

“We got together when I took lessons from his Dad,” Bob said. “Our first show was at the little county fair in Brownstown, Ind. We won the gaited stake and they presented me with a big tea service. Before Mr. Robertson could get in the ring, I tried to make a victory pass carrying that huge tray. I racked one-handed to the gate and all the silverware went over the mare’s head into the mud.

“I never had a brother; Jimmy comes about as close as anyone could. We talk every day. He’s as close a friend as I’ve ever had.”

Twice a year, Jimmy takes time from work to drive Bob to and from Arizona, where he spends the winters. Both are exceptional raconteurs; one could only wish to be tucked into a corner of that car to enjoy the story-telling.

Kayce Bell was established in the Saddlehorse business when she called Jimmy to inquire about moving to his barn, a long drive from her Alabama home.

“I had known him slightly as I worked on the ASHA Convention,” she said. “I knew he had some adult riders I could identify with and that one day I might want a road pony. His was a culture that looked comfortable for me.

“Jimmy did his best to talk me out of moving. I told him ‘I’m going somewhere; would you like to talk with me or not?’ I told him I basically was an academy rider and would like to learn to drive something. One day I might like to grow up and show at Louisville.

“He finally said, ‘Aw, come on. I’ve got a lot of ol’ hens like you.’ A year or two later some of us wore shirts reading ‘Jimmy’s Hens’ to the Shelbyville show.”

Today, the Bells and Robertsons are more than trainer and clients. They are good friends and business colleagues. Kayce and her husband, B.J., play an important role in Jimmy and Helen’s second business venture, a public equine auction business, with marketing and technology playing as important a part as hospitality, sales strengths and equine expertise.

There are many similarities between Jimmy and his father. Jimmy recalls Jim B as a “sharp businessman. He was involved with sales and got me involved with them as well.”

Actually, Jim B got both his sons involved in sales. Walt followed that as a career path, and recently retired as Vice President of Sales for Keeneland Sales. Jimmy and Helen follow in his footsteps with the Robertson Equine Sales, LLC.

“Dad had a sale every year,” Jimmy recalled. “When Don and Linda Johnson decided to do a dispersal, he wasn’t active so I had the opportunity to talk with them about it. We didn’t have classes on Thursday at Louisville then so we did something that



Jimmy and Helen love to entertain. He has the reputation of being a master-griller.



Time off often means horseback riding trips to Jackson Hole.

had never been done before: a major sale that Thursday. It was one of the best anyone ever had.”

At that point, Jimmy had no serious thoughts of hosting a sale.

“The Teaters have been a wonderful part of our business,” he said, complimenting Ed and Suzie on the way they handled Tattersalls and themselves. “Certainly there was a need for a sale in central Kentucky. I never had any thought of going into competition with them. When they elected not to have any more sales, I wondered what would happen when Tattersalls was gone. People asked me, ‘Are you going to have a sale?’ We talked about it and told the Teaters if they weren’t going to continue with sales we might have one. The minute Suzie called me, I called Walt. At a family meeting, we decided to begin our sale after the Teaters stopped. If they had kept going, we might not ever have gotten back into it.”

The Bells pitched in, helping develop sale materials and, most important, an impressive website and data handling system.

“I was always online,” Kayce said. “Jimmy gave me a tough time about it. He still carries

a notepad and pen in his left front pocket, but now he does almost everything on his iPad and iPhone. He and Helen have reached into the technological world, using tools to make their business competitive and efficient. You don’t see many people who haven’t needed to use technology over the years to embrace it like they do. And they cover it up with ‘We’re just Jimmy and Helen’ or ‘Aw, shucks.’”

The first sale was in the spring of 2012. They have built on that success and plan their Autumn Sale on November 20 and 21 at the Shelby County Fairgrounds.

Mary Anne Cronan’s horse experiences span the Jim B and Jimmy years. Mary Anne rode in equitation and junior exhibitor performance with the late Helen K. Crabtree. Her daughter Sarah rode equitation with the Robertsons; Mary Anne came back to the show ring driving Hackney ponies.

“I’ve known Jimmy since he was a pesky little boy, a few years younger than I,” Mary Anne said. “I think he and Helen are amazing. They’re wonderful people and take great care of and for their riders and their families, whether they rode long ago or do so now.

“Jimmy has the ability to instill true sportsmanship and values in their riders. If a kid goes in the ring and comes out with a fifth place ribbon, he’s the first one to say, ‘Look, you got a fifth place. You know we need to work on this or that. It took four people to beat you.

“He has this innate ability to instill the quality of sportsmanship and a good attitude. He has the ability to teach and take the very best care of his riders. He and Helen give them values that are critical for life. It’s great to win a blue, to do well at riding and other sports, but learning critical life values are so much more important. I don’t think there’s anyone better than Jimmy and Helen to set the right course for kids.”

Part of setting that course comes with the many things they do for others – in and out of the horse business. Kayce says, “Jimmy will surprise you with his strength and acumen. No one does a better job at people/relationship building than he does. He truly has a servant’s heart. Helen is as creative as they come, learns as fast as wildfire, and they’re both incredibly thoughtful. Although Jimmy’s known as the jokester, it’s Helen who is the imp!”

Andi agrees. “Their karma makes them special. They’re real, open – and funny. Helen opens the car windows in the car wash when the dryer comes on. It really messes up your hair.

“They do nice things, really nice things for other people. Jimmy doesn’t know the word ‘no’ to anything or anybody. The longer they’re together, the more alike they become.”

Avis Girdler has known Helen “forever (since her high school days.) She always was a hard worker and had this wonderful attitude.

“Helen is my hero. She tries to wake up every day with a smile on her face. She has such a positive attitude and always tries to do the right thing. I’ve seen her under all conditions. I appreciate her common sense. She always had a lot of good works in her.

"Jimmy is our go-to person when there's any type of crisis. No one makes better decisions than he does. He is the calm, level-headed, trustworthy person who can handle any crisis. He can say this is what we need to do and not piss everyone off. He is a genius at getting people to do the right thing without making them mad. He has a great way of telling you the common sense of what you're very emotional about. He can help you get perspective and be a man of action when needed."

Avis says Jimmy and Helen are "two people a computer never would have put together who are perfect for each other. They've both lived through a lot of pain and have had to grow up together. They really are so very, very fond of one another."

The Robertsons are among the first to respond in a crisis. When a tornado destroyed much of Tuscaloosa, Ala., in 2011, all communications were interrupted. Kayce says she "had taken cover and was shocked when my phone began ringing. Jimmy wanted to know if I were OK, and I wanted to know if the storm were over. He told me, 'I can be on my way pulling a horse trailer with supplies in about five minutes. He was waiting to touch base with me before he did.'"

Elizabeth Deknatel tells of Jimmy's boundless energy in helping people. One such action struck close to home for her. "Jimmy's assistant was living on our farm. World's Champion CHCallaway's Weatherman got into a frozen pond. I was on the road. I called Jimmy to ask who to call for help. It was just getting dark. Jimmy came out in the freezing cold. He waded in to get Weatherman out of the pond."

"That's Jimmy. If anyone needs anything, they know they can call him. I guess there are about 20-dozen of those stories. He tried to do it himself and figure out who else can help."

Both he and Helen are generous in giving back to the Saddle Horse industry. He has been tireless in working for the UPHA. He served as the group's president for four years, and as an officer for six more.

Elizabeth says, "Jimmy has really boundless energy to help people. He's supportive, as positive as anyone can be. Helen has made a unique place for herself."

"The UPHA Pink Ribbon program started in Jimmy's office," Kayce said. As a breast cancer survivor, Kayce was especially close to this cause. In 2006, Infinity Stables put together a team to walk at the Louisville Komen Walk (Against Breast Cancer.)

"They wore pink t-shirts with my name on them," she recalled. "I wasn't able to participate yet but was blown away by everything they had done. At the barn one morning, I asked why we couldn't do something like that at horse shows. Jimmy never answered; he just picked up the phone and called Sarah Rowland, who was leading the American Royal to new heights. When he hung up he said, 'We can do it now.'"

Kayce spearheaded the program. Shows across the country honored breast cancer survivors with pink ribbon classes. The program raised an estimated \$300,000 that was donated to national and local breast care organizations.

As soon as we started seeing the UPHA Pink Ribbon Program came to life, Helen said, 'Wait a minute. Our Equitation Committee wants to do something to prompt riders to raise funds for charity. How might we...' and the conversation took off," Kayce said.

"Helen realized that kids who show horses had a great opportunity themselves," Elizabeth Deknatel said. "They hadn't learned what it was like to not have reasonably easy lives. She found a grand way to direct those children to do something they loved and to help others."

That became the UPHA Ribbons of Service Program, through which riders from the Saddlebred, Hackney, Arabian and Morgan worlds raise money for specific charities. Most of the monies go to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, although a rider may choose to support another non-profit organization. They also must perform community service themselves.

Helen lends more than lip service to the effort. She created many of the Ribbons of Service videos by herself and devotes hours to challenging barns to participate. Almost \$400,000 has been donated to St. Jude since the program's inception.

In four years (through May 2014) Jordyn Isgrigg raised more than \$40,000 for St. Jude. She continues to ride for the children.

With helping run a successful saddle horse operation, teaching riders, working for the UPHA and being a devoted wife, one would think Helen has little time – or energy – for much else. However, when the opportunity came to accompany Nita and Jordyn Isgrigg on a medical mission trip, she jumped right in.

Three years ago, the trio went to the Andes Mountains of Peru with First Baptist Church of Mt. Washington, Ken. Nita operated a dental clinic while her daughter and Helen worked with the children. The following year, they returned, with Helen acting as her dental assistant. Between June, 2015 horse shows, Helen, Nita and Jordyn provided free dental services for patients in Eastern Kentucky.



Helen recently celebrated her 50th birthday with a large group of friends. (photo courtesy of Avis)

As hard as they work, Helen and Jimmy know how to play as well. "We've had lots of good times," Andi Bittner said. "Every other year, a group of 'us girls' go to Jackson Hole. Everyone wants to go with us, but we can only take seven or eight people."

Jackson Hole is a 'must' destination for Jimmy and Helen as well. Winters may mean ski vacations (something at which his daughter, Jennifer, says Jimmy excels) or joining Rob and Sarah Byers in the Cayman Islands. Rob has many stories about Jimmy's diving on shipwrecks.

Rob recalled one incident involving a dolphin. "A friendly one had been hanging around for about two years. We were the first humans to make contact with him. Jimmy couldn't dive the first day as his back was out. The next day we dropped anchor and started looking for the dolphin. Jimmy didn't see it ... it was right behind him."

Their newest avocation: target shooting. They practice at area ranges and have set up a range on their farm.

"They're both very good, but Helen is fantastic. I haven't seen her pick up a gun with which she couldn't shoot a bull's eye," Kayce said.

When looking at people in this horse industry, often one can put them in a typical 'box.' There's nothing 'typical' about the Robertsons. The younger Jimmy who usually wore bib overalls, has exchanged them for blue jeans and suspenders. Yet he definitely is a dapper gentlemen when he judges or when he and Helen go out on the town.

He hides a keen intellect and business acumen behind that 'aw shucks' manner. He's an avid reader – and is a puzzle fanatic.

"He loves the Jumbles," Kayce said. "He'll take a picture of the Sunday Jumble and text it to us. It often takes us two hours to come up with the answers. He can do that kind of stuff without a pen."

And Helen is a perfect match, from the intellectual and personal standpoints. Together, they present a picture of the best in the Saddle Horse world.



Jimmy and Blake Paxton strolled back to the barn. (photo courtesy of Avis)