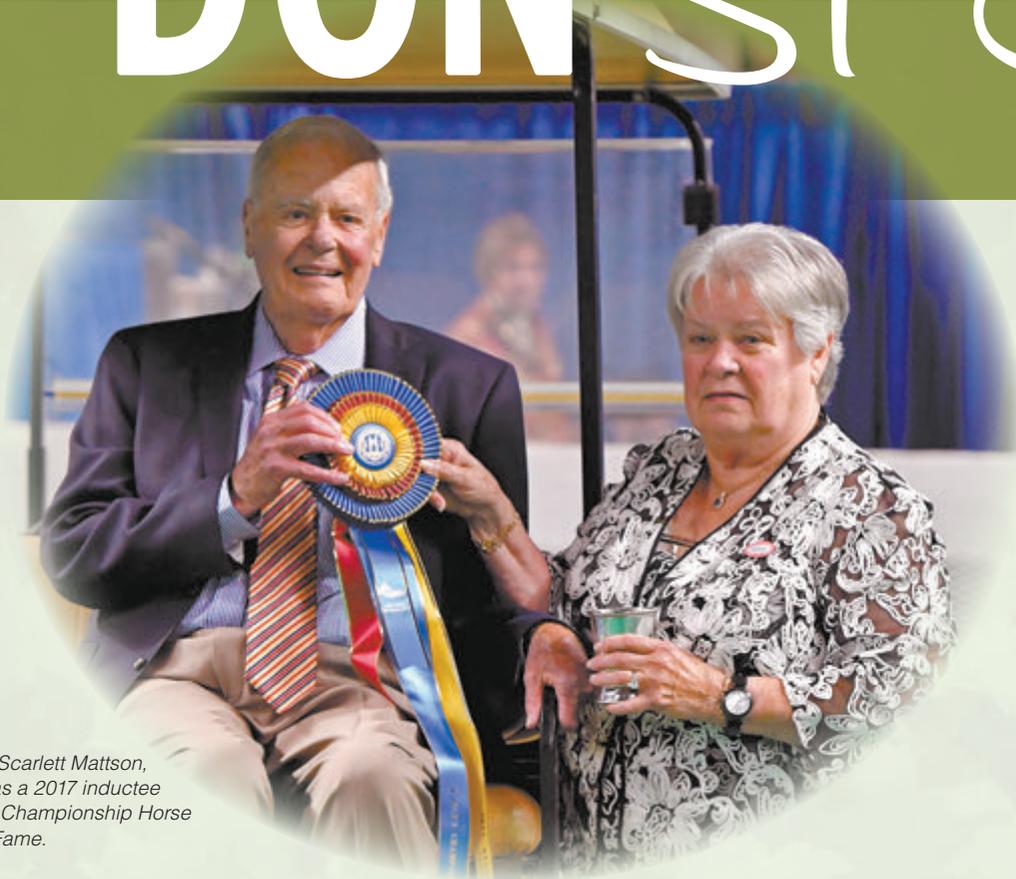


DEVOTED TO BREEDING BETTER HORSES

DON SPEAR



Presented by Scarlett Mattson, Don Spear was a 2017 inductee to the World's Championship Horse Show Hall of Fame.



Sired by their own Stonecroft Masquerade and out of Ladybird Command, Stonecroft Trilogy was ridden to the 2009 World Champion Park Saddle honors by Jenny Taylor for Stonecroft Farm. Trilogy adds to the depth of top producers in both breeds for the farm.

by Bob Funkhouser

An American Saddlebred owner at the age of 17 and a breeder at 22, Don Spear spent more than 50 years striving to breed top of the line show horses. Through an understanding of pedigrees, much research and many conversations with fellow successful breeders, Spears and his partner John Schedit made their share of contributions to both the American Saddlebred and Morgan Horse worlds through their Stonecroft Farm.

A 2017 inductee into the World's Championship Horse Show Hall of Fame, Don Spear passed away Thursday, January 25 at the age of 74. He had earned great respect throughout his years as an owner/breeder as well as an active and vocal participant in the breed associations, serving as an ASHA Director and member of the Kentucky Saddlebred Owners and Breeders Association.

Born in Springfield, Massachusetts, he grew up on a farm in nearby Brimfield and was first exposed to Morgans but soon fell in love with American Saddlebreds. In addition to being an entrepreneur with his Borders Unlimited, a producer of private-label wallpaper borders and home accessories for the likes of Liz Claiborne, Dayton Hudson Corp., Kmart Corp., Sears, Roebuck & Co., J.C. Penny Co. Inc. and Wal-Mart, Spear made animals a way of life. He would breed, show and sell champion American Saddlebreds, Morgans, Silky Terriers and Cavalier King Charles Spaniels over the years.



A four-time world's champion and winner of the World's Champion Five-Gaited Stallion title in 2005, I'm First has represented Spear and Schedit at Stonecroft with another generation of world's champion performers.



Behind the vision of Spear and Schedit, Stonecroft Farm has also played a major role in the Morgan world. The popular world champion Stonecroft Masquerade has sired several world-class performers for the farm.

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Some of his earliest involvement was with a mare he bred named Emily Starheart. She was put in training with Garland Bradshaw, one of several noted horsemen Spear surrounded himself with. While living in Maryland for work, he met Joan Lurie and that relationship proved to be long and successful.

When Lurie moved to Kentucky, Spear moved to Memphis but kept the communication with Lurie going. Eventually he became a partner in her new Willowbank Farm and became really invested in the breeding world. In 1984, Lurie took her first weanling to the World's Championship Horse Show, winning with Spear's entry, Kaladar. In '86 she won the Weanling Breeders' Stake with his See The Sights and the Yearling Breeders' Stake with his Unattached. Both went on to be great gaited horses.

Selling his part ownership in Willowbank, Spear and Scheidt would establish their own breeding operation, Stonecroft Farm, in 1987, raising show ring greats in the American Saddlebred and Morgan worlds. Some of the other top horses bred by Spear and Scheidt include World's Grand Champion Five-Gaited CH Boucheron and world's champion of champions Revival. Some of the other American Saddlebred stars included world's champions of champions Stonecroft I'm Radiant, Stonecroft Ringleader and What's My Line, as well as world's champions Stonecroft Verbena, Stonecroft Royal Reflection, Stonecroft Sincerely, CH Amusing, Stonecroft Serengetti, Nocturnal and Stonecroft Nightlight, among others.

Currently, a handful of homebred stallions are representing Stonecroft in the breeding shed. World's champion I'm First is their Saddlebred headliner while world champions Stonecroft Trilogy and Stonecroft Masquerade continue to make an impact in the Morgan world as world champion sires.

Spear and Scheidt had a strong belief that the mares were so important to having a successful breeding program, so much in fact, that part of their advertising slogan was, "Never Underestimate The Importance Of The Bottom Line." Over the years they were known for some outstanding mares, including the American Saddlebreds What A Jewel, What A Jewel, Amazing Grace DSF, Concubine (BHF) and Majestic Jane. They also purchased twice world's grand champion CH A Sweet Treat for their broodmare collection. First, Scheidt won the World's Champion of Champions Amateur Fine Harness title with the daughter of world's champion Merchant Prince. She is out of one of the greatest producers of all time, Denmark's Radiant Society (BHF).

Their history making Morgan mare, Century Enjolie, was the first yearling to be crowned World Champion Mare. She went on to have many topnotch foals for Stonecroft, including world champions Stonecroft Shalimar and Stonecroft Byzantine. Through their association with Joan Lurie, Spear and Scheidt also acquired Ladybird Command, a full sister to leading sires Wham Bam Command and I Will Command, for their broodmare band. When crossed with their Stonecroft Masquerade she produced Stonecroft Trilogy, the 2009 World Champion Park Saddle titleholder with Jenny Taylor showing for Stonecroft Farm.

In addition to Bradshaw, Lurie and Taylor, Spear has been associated with trainers Nelson Green, Rob and Sarah Byers and Dianna Rannels.

Beauty in several art forms was what made Spear smile and many times that art was in the form of a finely chiseled foal bouncing across the serene pastures of Stonecroft Farm. The life he and John made for themselves was fine art, from inside the home to the landscaping to the pastures of Stonecroft. And most of all, he loved sharing the horse business with friends.

"I've known Don since the early '70s," said Joan Lurie. "We had Saddlebreds together in Maryland. He's been a longtime client and for a while was a partner in Willowbank with me.

"He was a terrific human being. He was the same whether it went well or it didn't. He understood livestock. Don was very smart and had an uncanny way with the mares he selected. He had a passion for this and God smile on him.

"What I'm going to miss about him most are his insulting birthday cards," she chuckled. "I could always count on one."



(above) World's Grand Champion Five-Gaited CH Boucheron is among the world's titleholders bred by Stonecroft Farm. Spear had been a breeder of American Saddlebreds for more than 50 years.



(left) Century Enjolie was the first mare ever to win the World Champion Mare title as a yearling. As a broodmare for Stonecroft Farm she produced, among others, the great world champions Stonecroft Byzantine and Stonecroft Shalimar.



For many years the partners used "Never underestimate the importance of the bottom line," referring to the dam's side of a pedigree. Keeping to that creed they purchased the blue-blooded CH A Sweet Treat, with whom Scheidt won a World's Champion of Champions Amateur Fine Harness title before she was retired to the broodmare band.