

BECKER BROTHERS:

Clothier Of Champions Retire

BY SARA PIZZUTO

Apparel plays an integral role in the world of competitive sports. In the equestrian community, specialized riding attire is necessary to succeed at the highest levels. For over a decade, Becker Brothers has been the clothier of choice for champions in the show ring. Dale and Michael Becker have dedicated their careers to dressing world champion riders and drivers—ensuring that they entered each horse show properly turned out with correct, well fitted and fashionable attire. After over 40 years of service and commitment to the industry, both Dale and Michael have chosen to retire, closing the chapter on their impressive clothing careers at the helm of Becker Brothers.

Dale and Michael Becker were born into the horse community, coming from a family of horse-men. Their father, Dave Becker, was a prominent horse trainer who spent his career developing both great equine competitors and successful exhibitors. He won the prestigious Five-Gaited World's Grand Championship aboard CH Callaway's New Look in 1992 and was inducted into the World's Championship Horse Show Hall Of Fame more recently in 2015. Dale Becker recalled his early childhood, growing up around horses.

"We would go to horse shows every summer," he said. "That was our vacation."

Despite Dale Becker's family's involvement within the equine community, he quickly realized that a career as a horse trainer was not his calling.

"I just knew at an early age that I did not want to be a horse trainer but I wanted to do something in the industry since I grew up in it," he said. "I was then approached by Carl Meyers when I was in between jobs. I started there with him and a couple years into it realized that I could do this for a living and there we went."

Carl Meyers guided Dale Becker in his early equine apparel career. Becker spent 17 years working under Meyers' direction and credited Meyers in reshaping equine riding attire.

"Carl was the innovator, making the industry more fashion oriented instead of just a uniform," Dale said. "Back in the day there were just black, navy, and brown suits and a couple different colors

of day coats. That was it. It was more of a uniform versus the fashion that it is today."

After over a decade of working alongside Carl Meyers, Dale along with his brother Michael Becker, chose to purchase Meyers' business. They opened the doors to the Kentucky based newly named Becker Brothers in January of 2007.

The two brothers have worked together to develop Becker Brothers into the prosperous and successful business that it is today. Dale Becker explained that both he and Michael have separate roles within the business. Dale travels across the country to sell and fit each clothing item, whereas Michael stays on top of the shop in New York, works to ensure the alterations department in Lexington is in good order, and handles all shipping and financial elements of the business.



Dale and Michael Becker were born into the equine industry, with their father Dave Becker working as a prominent horse trainer. They have been at the helm of their Becker Brothers for over a decade.

"It has been an equal work load but a different work load," Dale Becker said. "Mike does things that he likes to do and I do the stuff that I like to do."

Dale Becker traveled 43 weeks a year at the height of his prime, visiting different barns, conventions, and horse shows. He explained that it is easier to meet

with a customer in person to measure them for new riding clothes and discuss their desired attire.

"There are a lot of factors that go into creating an outfit for someone," he said. "You definitely want to take the person's build, the person's color, the division, the horse's color."

When an outfit is designed, Dale Becker works to order the fabric, put it into work, and get it sent to the Becker Brother's New York shop that will then create each clothing item. The apparel will then be shipped to the Becker Brothers' Lexington location before being given to each customer. If an item needs to be altered, the Lexington shop has nine fulltime employees working on either new or used items in the alterations department.

Dale Becker said it is their dedication to their customers that has set them apart in the equine industry.

"I think it's the service part," he said. "I was on the road 43 weeks a year, trying to hit every horse show imaginable that was profitable so that our customers wouldn't have come to me. We started that with Carl Meyers and I extended it. Not everybody can drive to us or fly to us. Riding suits aren't getting any cheaper and sometimes it's a stretch for people to even get a new riding suit so I try to accommodate them."

The Becker brothers' commitment to their clients has enabled them to rise to the forefront of the equine clothing industry. They have been named the People's Choice Equestrian Clothier Of The Year for the past 14 consecutive years. Their suits and coats have been worn by a multitude of world champion riders and drivers in multiple breeds at shows throughout the county.

"It is a sign of accomplishment," Dale Becker said. "I am proud of the finished product, especially if the customer loves it and gets compliments on it. That's something I am proud of."

Ceil Wheeler along with her family have been longtime customers of Becker Brothers. Dale and Michael and their staff have dressed the Wheeler family for many of their world's and national champion victory passes.

"My family and I have had the pleasure of working with Dale for the past 28 years, and became friends when he worked with Carl Meyers back in



The Becker brothers will soon close the doors on their Lexington based shop as they enter retirement. They have long been the clothier of choice for champions and have greatly supported all facets of the horse community.



David and Kristen Cater value the Beckers' opinions and guidance when outfitting their riders.

the day," Ceil said. "He's professional, supports all aspects of our industry and has stayed true to his craft throughout his impressive career."

The Beckers' rapport with their customers over time has allowed them to develop strong relationships in the industry. Many competitors consult the Beckers' opinion for every detail of their riding outfits.

"There are times when I am told what to do and there are times that it's left up to me what to do because people trust me," Dale said. "I am happy to get people to that point where they can't even pick out a hair bow or a tie unless I approve it. That is kind of an honor. 'Well if Dale says it's ok, then it is ok.' It has taken years to get to that point."

Kristen Cater recommends Becker Brothers as the clothier for all of her clients at Cater Stables. She has long valued both Dale and Michael's guidance when outfitting her riders.

"Dale and Michael work tirelessly to make sure their suit fabrics are the best quality, their fit suits each person's build, and the quality in every suit is unmatched," she said. "They have worked to give each personality a unique look while maintaining a traditional overall style. They have been a part of our team since the beginning and we are lucky to have their guidance, expertise, and friendship."

Many of Dale and Michael's customers are saddened to hear of their retirement from the clothing industry. Both brothers have grown tired of the travel and stress associated with their job and are ready to end what has been an incredibly prosperous career at the forefront of Becker Brothers.



The Wheeler family has been longtime customers and friends of Dale and Michael Becker. The Becker brothers have been responsible for many of the winning riding outfits worn by Ceil and Sallie-Mason Wheeler in the show ring.

"The main reason is that we are both tired," Dale said. "Everything has changed delivery wise and supply wise. We have had a couple suppliers die, we have had a couple suppliers retire and our shop is taking twice as long to get new stuff out. It is very stressful and it has made it to where it's not fun anymore. I enjoyed it but I think Covid kind of opened my eyes. Covid made me realize that I have a nice house and I enjoy it and why aren't I here more?"

Dale and Michael Becker have not only impacted the equine community through their clothing business, but also with their charitable contributions to the industry. They have supported many horse shows and equine events and consistently donated when needed.

"We have absolutely given back," Dale said. "It's a business that we grew up in and it was fun while it lasted."

It is a community that the Becker Brothers have long been a part of and one that they will miss as they head into retirement.

"I will miss some of the people," Dale said. "I will miss the social aspect of it. I will miss a few of the horse shows. There were a few that I loved."

Both Ceil Wheeler and her daughter Sallie-Mason are two of the many customers of Becker Brothers that have appreciated the efforts of Dale and Michael throughout their many years.

"Sallie-Mason and I will miss both Dale's and Michael's great service, attention to detail and of course their friendship," Ceil said. "We wish them all the best in their future endeavors."

As Dale and Michael end their clothier careers, Becker Brothers will be remembered as one of the premier businesses for equine apparel. What began as an initial family passion for horses has evolved into decades worth of excellence in the industry. Both brothers worked tirelessly not only to create top riding suits but also to support all facets of the equine world. Their efforts have allowed the industry to thrive and they have elevated fashion in the show ring for all exhibitors. Though the doors of Becker Brothers will close, the business will long be remembered.

"I want everyone to feel that they have gotten a good deal, a competitive price with us," Dale said. "We have catered to anybody that wanted quality. If they had a budget, we tried to stick to it versus just the people that had money and didn't ask the price. I want them to remember our service. I want them to remember our integrity."