

GARY T. HOLT

Gary Holt, 81, passed away peacefully at home in Somis, California, on July 9, 2020 after a long illness. He was born and raised in Beaverton, Oregon. A prominent trainer of American Saddlebreds, Hackney Ponies and Andalusians on the west coast for nearly 45 years, Holt had been semi-retired since suffering a stroke in 2002.

Although he didn't ride again, Holt couldn't be kept completely away from the horses, despite some paralysis. He and his wife, Colleen, resided several years at Barbara and Al Rotter's Rancho Sol Del Pacifico in Malibu, with Gary consulting for their highly successful Andalusian breeding and training programs. He was especially proud to also have the opportunity to teach his youngest granddaughter her first riding lessons since she lived nearby.

Holt began his career working in Oregon for Joe Biles, who had some American Saddlebreds, ponies and walking horses, then he went on his own, taking in all types of horses to train in the 60s. Barbara & Bill Blacklaw brought an Arabian for him to train, which was the start of 10-year relationship as they transitioned to American Saddlebreds and road horses. Holt helped reconstruct their Singing Hills Farm in Oregon City, developing it into a prominent American Saddlebred training/breeding stable, while managing their stallions Plainview Commander and Prim Style. He also started many other notable Saddlebred owners over the years, such as Joanna Kuehl Shine, Harry Chapman, Jennifer Sandefur Foster and Peggy Kelber.

Gordon Wilson then hired Holt for his barn in Salt Lake City where they showed all over the country with several horses, including the reserve world champion harness pony, Debbie's Fashion and Starheart Ballerina,

who later was crowned world champion juvenile five-gaited horse with new owners.

He opened his own Gary Holt Stables in Scottsdale, Arizona, where he spent the next two years training for the Kuehl family, Jackie Tanner, Jeff Couch, Shirley Chartrand, Dave & Coey Coats and others. Some champion horses and ponies from that time were Cabachon Emerald, Over The Waves, Sweet Street, Dutch Uncle, Drumbeater's Genius, Northern Wind, Country Swing, Kimberland's Wild Selection, and Dream Dream.

GHS moved to southern California for the next 15 years, first in San Diego at Bernice Neil's Kenalbee Farm, working such notables as Delilah and Geneva June. In the LA area, notable west coast champions in many divisions were What a Thrill, Longview's Genius, Fancy Trick, Rolls Royce, Gold Lane, Slick City, Stealth, Royal Inheritance, Night Idol, Wing's Fame, Late Nite's Mighty Fine, Half Time, Preferred Moment, Storm Lord, Commander's Gaylord, Winter Love, The Kaiser's Falcon, Bounty Chips, Blackberry Danish, The Windhover, Northern Model and many more. Holt also contributed training services for Dr. Gene Scott at his L.A. ranch and Michele Macfarlane's Scripps Miramar Ranch. There was a move back to Oregon to show in the northwest for some years, resulting in great success with High Tail Super Spirit, his home bred I Am, Ivana, Casino Lites, road horses Possee Man and Shalimar, among others. Donna and Jay Hecht of J Don Farms brought Holt back to Moorpark, California, to train and manage their prominent breeding program, boasting such champion Andalusians as Dejanera and Macario.

One of the last show ponies he trained was a pony owned, bred, and raised by Barbara and Al Rotter. Holt also broke and introduced Pacifico's Standing

Ovation with his daughter, Meghan Holt at the whip, at the Seaside Horse Show in 2001. Pacifico's Standing Ovation famously went on to win multiple world and national titles in his prolific almost two-decade show career.

He also gave back to the horse show community. He saw a need for a local, fun schooling type show that could possibly also be good practice just before the world's championships. He founded the original Seaside Horse Show in Ventura, California, in the mid-80s and managed the show until he moved to Oregon in 1992 when the UPHA took it over. His unique concept for the show was to run the same schedule on Saturday and Sunday, using a different judge, some knowledgeable amateurs as well, each day for the many diverse daytime classes in a fun, schooling show type of atmosphere. Exhibitors were treated to a tri tip dinner with the fixin's and thrilled to ride horses in the surf and sand after showing under the beautiful palms each day.

Surviving are wife Colleen O'Malley Holt, daughters Meghan Holt of Somis, California, Desiree Holt of Marietta, Oklahoma; sons Brian Holt of Los Angeles and Mark Holt of Oregon; grandchildren Destiny Andrade of Somis, California, Shawna Holt of Victor, Montana, Chelsea Otten Holt of Reddick, Florida, Cale Holt of Los Angeles; and sister Shirley Hiatt of Tillamook, Oregon.

Many of Holt's former customers and friends have donated the beautiful Gary T. Holt Memorial Perpetual Trophy to the upcoming 2021 Charity Fair Horse Show. It will be presented in Del Mar, California, on Thursday, June 10 during the matinee performance when he will be remembered and honored in a Celebration of his life.



The Gary Holt Memorial Perpetual Trophy will be presented for the first time at the upcoming Del Mar Charity Fair.



photo by Howe Schatzberg

Stealth was among the many champions he trained and showed throughout his career.



The west coast icon introduced many riders to the show ring over the years.