



ZUBROD STABLES:

A HOUSEHOLD NAME IN KENTUCKY

BY SARA PIZZUTO



The thriving and accomplished Zubrod Stables, at its core, is an establishment centered on family. The Prospect, Kentucky, based stable has created an immensely successful and lasting legacy in the American Saddlebred industry, fueled by the determination, passion, and drive of one singular family.

"It's multiple generations of horse people in the Louisville area and I think that's one thing that we really try to strive for," said Zubrod Stables assistant manager and instructor, Deveau Zubrod Kreitzer. "That's what we really want to impress upon people. I think it's really important to us that we have been a staple in our community for so many years. The community knows the Zubrod name and the word of mouth gets around and for new people to get involved in the industry, that's important but it's also important that we are making my family proud, my grandma proud."

Deveau's grandmother, Bonnie Zubrod, was the matriarch and founder of Zubrod Stables. Her interest in horses was piqued after visiting the

"When I was 9-years-old, I got to go to Knolland Farm," Cindy Zubrod Boel said. "Tom Moore let me go in the stall with Bellissima and it was like a kid today meeting Justin Bieber. It was like meeting royalty. It was a different generation because we were fans of these horses like the kids today would be of rock stars or the Kardashians"

As their passion for the industry grew, the Zubrod family spent time with their horses at different boarding barns before the birth of Zubrod Stables in 1965 with Bonnie at the helm.

"I hope you can understand how a housewife in the '60s deciding she wants to open up her own business is quite courageous," Cindy said. "My mom was very courageous as were all of the women in the horse business. There were a tremendous amount of strong females like Helen Crabtree and Marilyn Macfarlane. They were all great role models for me."

Cindy credits both Cecil Wheeler and Ronnie Graham for their valiant efforts in assisting both

"I get my work ethic from her," Cindy said. "When we were just struggling to do this, she was quite the seamstress and would do alterations at a store until 9:00, 10:00, 11:00 at night to help pay the feed bill for the horses. She just was very driven and goal oriented and I don't think there's anything that replaces hard work."

Bonnie's grit and perseverance have also been instilled in her granddaughters, sisters Renee and Deveau. Their parents were involved with the Standardbred business, with their mother convincing their father to allow them to start taking lessons. Older sister Deveau began riding when she was just four-years-old, while younger sister Renee's introduction came at a mere 18 months old.

"Obviously once I was on a horse I got the bug and was really into it," Deveau said. "My sister started riding younger. I was always jealous and I would laugh because I was like 'Renee got to start riding when she was 18 months old. That's not fair. I had to be like six before I ever even showed.'"

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Kentucky State Fair each summer to watch the horse show. She would eventually begin riding lessons, before owning a few horses of her own as a teenager.

Bonnie's love of all things equine related was soon passed down to her children, as a then 3-year-old daughter Cindy was introduced to horses at Rock Creek Riding Club. Bonnie soon began teaching lessons at Rock Creek to help pay for Cindy's pony.

Cindy was quick to develop a passion for specifically Saddlebreds, obsessing over the great CH Bellissima, whom she had the opportunity to meet.

her and her mother on a daily basis with Zubrod Stables. Before long, the barn would move to its Prospect, Kentucky location, where it has remained for the past 35 years.

With Bonnie in command, Zubrod Stables continued with Cindy, as well as the welcomed additions of Bonnie's grandchildren Renee Zubrod Philpott and Deveau Zubrod Kreitzer. Sarah Tompkins also came on board as an instructor. Zubrod Stables established themselves as one of the Saddlebred industry's premiere stables before Bonnie's death in 2017. Cindy is quick to mention the lasting effect that her mother had both on their family and the horse community.

"Horses have always been a part of my life," Renee said. "If I wasn't at the barn riding myself, I was at the barn watching my sister ride or at the barn watching other people ride."

Both Renee and Deveau credited their special equine teammates who carried them to world's and national titles in their sensational junior exhibitor careers under the Zubrod Stables banner.

Deveau explained that equitation was her passion, yet her family didn't have the opportunity to buy finished equitation horses. Because of this, Cindy became an expert in finding prospects or young horses that weren't proven in equitation but had the potential to fare well in the division.

1 Horses have played a major role in generation after generation of Zubrod family members. Pictured celebrating Easter are (front row) Renee Zubrod Philpott, Leah Zubrod, the late Bonnie Zubrod, Cindy Zubrod Boel, and Deveau Zubrod Kreitzer (holding son Campbell), (back row) J.R. Philpot, Art Zubrod, and Mike Campbell.

2 Both the late Bonnie Zubrod and Cindy Zubrod Boel have been inducted into the UPHA Helen Crabtree Equitation Hall of Fame. Donna Pettry-Smith presented the 2011 award to Bonnie (far right), while Cindy received hers in 2008.

3 Like all the Zubrod women, Cindy began riding at an early age. This show ring shot was as an 11-year-old.

4 Inspired by the late Bonnie Zubrod (second from left) Renee Zubrod Philpot, Sarah Tompkins, Cindy Zubrod Boel, and Deveau Zubrod Kreitzer continue to make Zubrod Stables a Louisville area icon, as well as a major player on the national show scene.

5 Jacqueline Beck (Visser) is one of many National Equitation Finals Champions produced by Zubrod Stables. She was the 2006 UPHA Senior Challenge Cup Finals Grand Champion.

6 In 2005, Cindy Zubrod Boel pinned the winning ribbon on CH High Expectations, who Deveau Zubrod had ridden to the UPHA Adult Challenge Cup Finals National Championship.



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Cindy excelled at this task, training horses among the likes of Perdidta Rose, who then went on to be a successful broodmare.

Deveau's family was eventually able to purchase CH High Expectations for Deveau to show at the end of her junior exhibitor career. The famed equitation veteran carried Deveau to the reserve national title in the 1999 NHS Good Hands Finals in addition to a myriad of other honors.

"He was definitely the most memorable horse of my career because that was the first time I had ever had a horse that had ever shown in equitation before," Deveau said. "Every other horse we had had been something that we were trying to make. However, they were all instrumental in our process."

CH Baron Sabini was the mount that influenced Renee's riding career.

"He was my walk/trot horse and was probably one of my all-time favorite horses," Renee said. "We were undefeated in 1995. I won the world's championship on him, and I won the UPHA finals on him. He and I just clicked. He was a complete jerk in the stall but a wonderful walk/trot only horse. Baron Sabini and my 13 and under equitation horse Heir To The Throne are certainly favorites of mine."

Renee knew immediately that a career at Zubrod Stables was in her future. She started working for Cindy directly following her graduation from high school. Renee then spent two years honing her skills with Nelson Green before deciding that she wanted to take a sabbatical from her career in the horse industry.

"I decided I was going to go to school," she said. "I was going to go to college. But I realized

quickly that I had no business going to school and that my heart was definitely with the horses so I again moved back to Louisville with Cindy and started to help her with the training and the lessons. When I started to really help Cindy at the barn, my grandmother had kind of taken a step back. She was kind of retiring per say, so I kind of stepped into her shoes a little bit."

While Renee had firmly cemented herself as a trainer at Zubrod Stables, Deveau took an unconventional path to her current position. Following her participation on her first of two World Cup teams, she left the equine world and enrolled at Ohio University, graduating with a degree in journalism. She accepted a job with the United States Trotting Association and their publication. However, she soon yearned to be back in the barn.

"I realized I missed everything about the horses," she said. "I wasn't feeling like I was fulfilled doing what I was doing. I missed being around them and I was getting frustrated working in an office even though I was working with horses in some capacity and I liked that opportunity but I knew that that wasn't going to be a long time thing for me."

Deveau then joined her family at Zubrod Stables. She along with instructor Sarah Tompkins are charged with the lessons and academy programs teaching upwards of 50 lessons per week, while Cindy and Renee focus on the show horses and riders.

"I think it has been really cool and gratifying to start having kids that have come up from their very first lesson having never been around horses to competing on a national level," Deveau said. "The neatest thing for me is having my own kids,

I call them that, they are like my own kids, that started as 4 and 5-year-olds and sometimes older move into the show ring and win championships. It's been really neat."

Cindy and Renee primarily take over the instructor of a rider if they have progressed enough in their riding lessons and are ready for the next step of showing. Many of the riders involved with the Zubrod Stables lesson and academy programs thrive in the equitation division, as the Zubrod name has become synonymous with equitation excellence. Renee explained that she values a rider's mental preparedness as much as their physical preparedness. As Zubrod Stables prepares for the upcoming pleasure equitation finals and the World's Championship Horse Show, they have begun doing mental exercises with their riders including having riders perform workouts on their own, memorizing workouts, and going through their patterns without instruction so that they learn to think for themselves.

"We might have four or five riders in the same class so Cindy and I can't micromanage every rider's every step," Renee said. "They have to be able to maneuver the warm up ring and think for themselves. We try our hardest to help our riders make good choices and warm up well but if they aren't mentally prepared and they don't mentally have their head wrapped around what they are doing, just because they are physically ready doesn't mean that they are necessarily going to perform well."

In order for the Zubrod riders to be successful, they also need a well prepared equine teammate. Renee shared that choosing an equitation horse



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for a rider is done with an emphasis on the horse and rider's personalities.

"If you have a rider that likes to move quickly and doesn't need a lot of time to stop and think between transitions, then you can work with something that maybe is a little younger and not quite as settled in their pattern work," she said. "But if you have a rider that really needs to stop and process before they move on to the next step, something that is a little bit more mature and maybe a little further along in the equitating process usually seems to be a better fit for them"

Renee additionally explained that when equitating a horse, they try and refrain from repeating the same elements over and over.

"When we stop in the middle, we want our horses to be ready to move into the next gait that we ask them for, but we don't want them guessing," she said. "I don't want my horse guessing what's next. I want them to be patient and wait for the rider to tell them. We do a lot of stopping and walking. That's probably what we do the most around here when we start equitating horses. We teach them to stop and stand and walk at any given point in the arena."

Deveau stresses that regardless of the rider, horse, or division, she, Cindy, Renee, and Sarah come together as a team to create the success associated with Zubrod.

"There is still a lot of teamwork that goes into it," Deveau said. "If I still continue to teach a show rider in a weekly lesson then we are all communicating about what they need to be working on and whatever their hindrances might be and something that they need to be focusing on."

It is this dedication, professionalism, attention to detail by the Zubrod team that has allowed their riders to reach the pinnacle of success in the Saddlebred industry.

"I think your reputation goes a long way," Cindy said. "The stables here are not competitive with each other. To me, the more kids that are riding, the better it is for our industry. We all get along super well and encourage one another. If I get a call from someone that lives in another area of the city, I will recommend that they go to a stable that's closer to them. We are not competitive. We are encouraging. But I think one of the things if you come into our stable is that everyone is treated the same. Whether your goal is to be a weekly lesson rider, an academy rider, or a show rider, you feel like you are getting the same attention and the same enthusiasm from your instructor and the staff."

As both Renee and Deveau's young children continue in the family sport and begin their riding careers, they feel fortunate to have a positive environment for their children to be a part of. Renee, her husband, and her daughter moved into Bonnie's former home last year and are now able to experience life on the farm.

"It brings tears to my eyes talking about my daughter, but her and my nephew have been up here all day today," she said. "They've cleaned tack, they have ridden, they have played outside. Having them here and having this available to them is a dream come true for most kids. Most children aren't lucky enough to grow up with a horse or pony in their backyard."

Deveau echoed this statement.

"My oldest, Campbell is showing," she said. "This year for me to see him, I just remind myself that things come full circle and it's just really cool to see him following in our footsteps."

With now four generations of Zubrod's involved in the industry, it is clear that this accomplished training facility will continue to thrive thanks to the dedication of the entire family.

"I think it's really gratifying to have all of us doing something that we love for such a long time," Deveau said. "We all kind of found what makes us happy and what we feel we are really good at and I feel like we are able to really become a strong team because of that. We are kind of like a household name. There's not that many Zubrod's around so people know the name. I know that my grandmother would be super proud to see that their legacy is continuing on."

7-7A Deveau and Renee both had stellar junior exhibitor careers. Becky Elaine was Deveau's equitation partner taking her to many titles in the mid-90s. One of her favorite all-time horses, CH Baron Sabini took Renee to the 1996 UPHA 11 & Under National Equitation Finals Championship. She was also the 1995 UPHA 10 & Under Walk and Trot Equitation Finals National Champion.

8 Kaeley Arterburn went has gone from an Academy rider to the 2020 USEF Adult Saddle Seat Medal Finals National Champion for Zubrod Stables. Teammate John Stutts had the same story in 2019.

9 And yet another generation adds to the family legacy. Campbell Kreitzer and Reid Philpott worked their way through the academy division.

10 For decades Louisville area families have entrusted their children to Zubrod Stables. Among today's riders are walk and trotters Madeline Vinci, Kenlea Koenig, Stella Keith and Campbell Kreitzer.