

REDD



C R A B T R E E

by Bob Funkhouser

You've done something right if you can spend more than 60 extremely successful years in a highly competitive industry and still have legions of peers and opponents who have nothing but the utmost respect for you. Such was the life of Charles "Redd" Crabtree who left us at the age of 79.

His presence reached far beyond our small community. The name Redd is known far and wide among horsemen of many breeds, professionals of many industries, people from many walks of life. And, it wasn't hard to figure out what separated the adopted son of Hall of Famers Charles and Helen Crabtree from his peers. Integrity, character and a true concern for his fellow man outweighed the decades of world's titleholders he crafted from the training barn and the breeding shed.

We've lost heroes and legends before, as recently as this past year, but in most cases we've had time to prepare. Redd's January 19 passing at the hands of pancreatic cancer was all too sudden. People are still trying to imagine horse shows and board meetings and conventions without his competitiveness, his smile, his words of wisdom. Just the week before he was in his barn doing what he loved most, rackin' and trottin.' Redd faced his diagnosis the same way he did everything, straight up and head on. His concern was that his family, Nancy, Casey, Sabra, Susan and Ann didn't have to see him suffer. It was the way he did everything, with dignity.

"When we arrived home from the Convention in Savannah I planned to go to the hospital to see



Family was the world to Redd and he was surrounded by Nancy, Sabra and Casey Crabtree for his 2014 induction into the Kentucky Athletic Hall of Fame, the first show horse trainer to be recognized.

Redd," said ASHA Vice-President and longtime Crabtree friend, David Rudder. "Alex [Rudder] was determined to go with me to see him, but Marie and I were pretty reluctant to let her go due to his condition. After explaining this to her she said she would be okay and she accompanied me to the hospital to see Redd.

"Well, to say the visit was an inspiration would be an understatement. We had a beautiful visit, something I will always remember because even in the state he was in, Redd somehow made both of us feel very good about our visit and we left the hospital that evening with our hearts filled with love. That was Redd....he seemed to always have the unique way of making you feel like you were the most important person there was, even in his final hours. Truly remarkable!

"Everyone knows how talented he was as a professional trainer, the record speaks for itself. What is not as well known is what a dedicated and good man he was to so many people. If we all had more friends like Redd we would all be much better people.

"There are so many good memories of Redd that it makes it difficult to talk about just one," added Rudder who has also been a catch rider for the late legend. "He truly was a remarkable man, especially when you think of his life from a little boy to the man he became. I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to get to know Redd closely and I have reminded my daughter that she too is very fortunate to have become close with him. Alex called him 'Pops,' he and Nancy have been like grandparents to her."

January 19 is becoming a historic date for American Saddlebred lore, as that was also the date the legendary World's Grand Champion CH Wing Commander died in 1969. How fitting is it that Wing Commander was one of the earliest horses that inspired Redd to be a horse trainer? He was also the horse that most will credit with siring the greatest gaited horses, the division Redd loved most. In fact, it was Wing's son, Callaway's Johnny Gilen, who sired CH Will Shriver, the horse Redd developed and rode to the 1976 Five-Gaited World's Grand Championship for Callaway Hills. In turn, Will Shriver is credited with putting the rack back into the American Saddlebreds of the past three decades. His sons and grandsons are still siring the top stars.

Betty Weldon once said, "there wouldn't be a Will Shriver if it weren't for Redd Crabtree and there wouldn't be a Callaway Hills if it weren't for



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Will Shriver.”

Early life events made Redd the man he developed into. Born September 5, 1935 in Aberdeen, Arkansas, to Poland Jones and Susan Goodwin, times were tough as the country was trying to come out of the Great Depression. His mother died when he was nine so Redd and two younger siblings went to a Catholic orphanage when their father remarried and home life was not good. The young man thrived in the setting and also found his way to the people who would introduce him to the American Saddlebred and become his parents.

“I was in a place called Uncle Max Home and I

went over and applied for a job at their stable, which was my mother’s stable, which was almost next door,” said Redd in a 2007 University of Kentucky interview of meeting Charlie and Helen Crabtree. “And I tell people I did that to keep from going to vacation bible school.

“Riding didn’t come easy for me until mom gave me a few lessons. They invited me to come live with them at the end of the summer.”

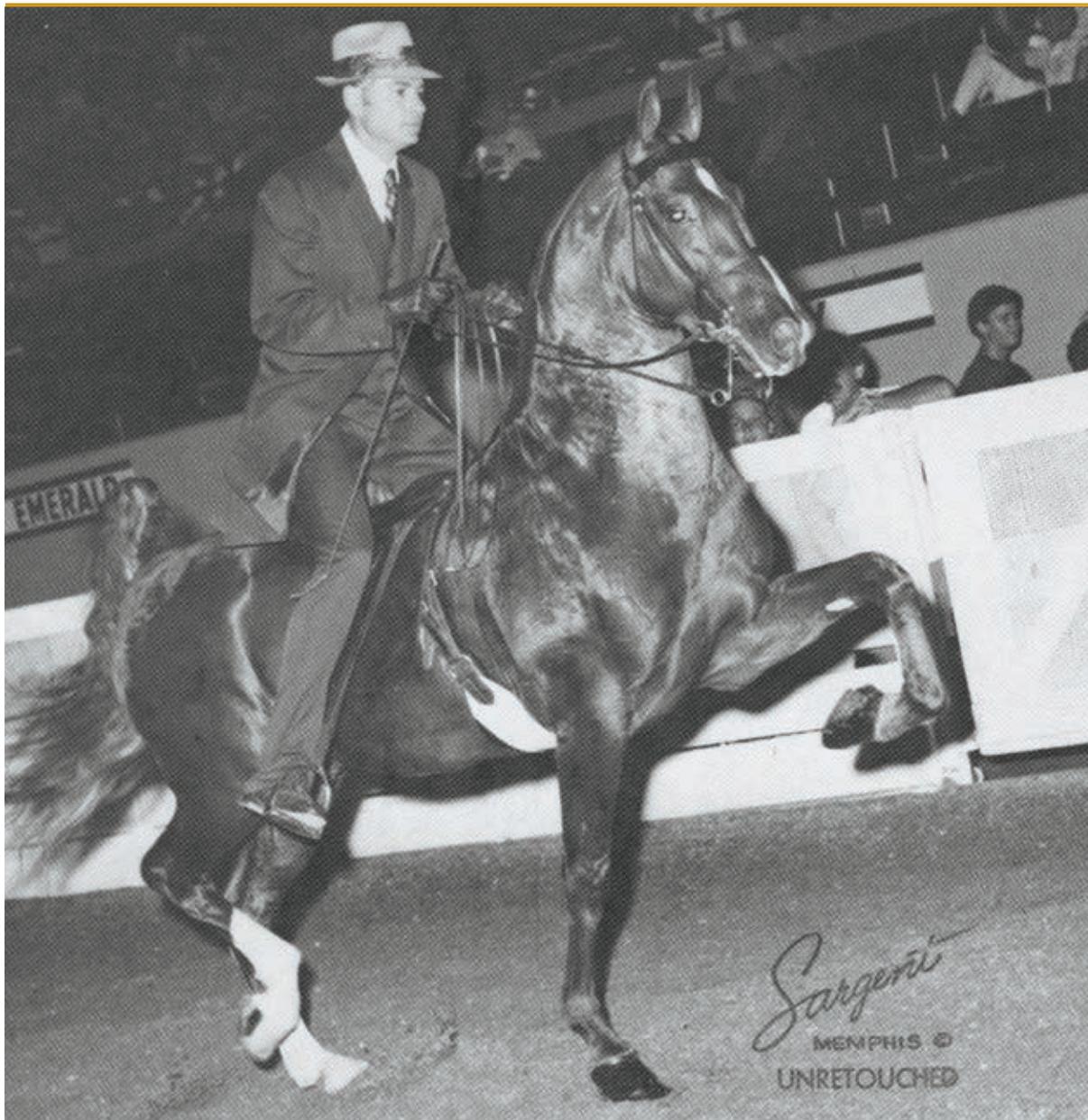
Charles “Redd” Crabtree was smitten with the horses and absorbed everything from his newfound parents. From Arkansas the training family went to Tennessee and then on to Louisville, Kentucky

Redd Crabtree will forever be remembered as the man who brought World’s Grand Champion Five-Gaited CH Will Shriver to prominence, defeating every horse they ever showed against at one time or another.

at the Rock Creek Riding Club. It was at that time that his dad told him if he wanted to do this he should work for someone else for a while.

It was at the St. Louis National Horse Show where the impressionable young man had witnessed a duel between Wing Commander with Earl Teater and The Replica with Lee Roby. At that time he thought The Replica was the better horse because he was “prettier.” Years later Redd would reverse his decision saying Wing Commander was a rare horse, being a superstar in the ring and as a sire. Following his father’s advice and remembering that class, Redd went to work for Roby for a summer.

“When I saw Lee Roby with The Replica I thought he had a different way with a horse,” said



Bred and raised at Crabtree Farms, Supreme Heir (Supreme Sultan x CH Supreme Airs BHF) won world's champion blues as a two and three-year-old in the three-gaited division. He would then dominate the sire ratings for years for Hallston Manor with offspring like six-time Fine Harness World's Grand Champion CH Callaway's Copyright and three-time Three-Gaited World's Grand Champion CH An Heir About Her.

Champion Two-Year-Old Five-Gaited CH Yorktown, another of those great Wing Commander sons.

When Redd joined the family operation he was more interested in the young horses. That's what he loved and what he was really good at. He won World's Champion Two-Year-Old Five-Gaited titles in the early '70s with Burning Tree's Good Omen, Dow Jones and Burning Tree's Big Country. He also rode Dow Jones to the Three-Year-Old and Junior Five-Gaited World's Championships, only the second horse in history at that point to win the two, three and four-year-old titles. Years later, 1999 to be exact, he won the two-year-old title again with one of his all-time favorites, a horse he bred, raised and developed, Swish.

"He was more proud of those two-year-old world's champions than anything," said his son Casey. "He said it took an exceptional horse to win it as a two-year-old and then go on and sustain that greatness."

Gradually Redd began getting a few of the amateur and junior exhibitor horses and before he knew it, he had a string full. Mrs. F.D. Sinclair, her granddaughter Mary Lou Gallagher (Doudican), Randi Stuart (Wightman), Mary Gaylord (McClellan), Linda and Carrie Lowary, Kathy Olson, Nancy Catworthy, Sugar Hardin, Ruth Anne Lewis, Barclay and Laurence Smith, Michelle Moss, Ann DuPree, the list of top amateurs and junior exhibitors spanned the decades.

"I moved Bandstand to Redd in '78," said Mary McClellan who already knew him because of an earlier stint with Helen. "He and Nancy immediately took me in as family. He's like my second dad. He taught me everything. He taught me to ride, to compete, to win and to lose. His favorite saying with us back then was 'go in and lead the parade!'"

"We had a lot of success together. During the '80s there were only two years we didn't win the ladies gaited championship at Louisville. That was with Popular Time, Bandstand, Admiral's Mark and Santana Lass.

"He changed my riding immediately. He pushed me to be a good rider, pushed me to compete hard. Redd had signals where he would point or nod, he didn't have to scream and yell. We knew what he wanted when he looked at us. He was also the one that got me interested in breeding horses. It's what you did at Crabtrees. I wasn't there any time and I had a broodmare."

In that 2007 University of Kentucky interview for part of the Kentucky Oral History Project, Redd explained the philosophy that his father used when it came to the Crabtree customers.

"Dad always had a feeling that people that owned show horses ought to also put something back in the industry on a broodmare," explained Redd. "So, he encouraged them to do that. It made it look better for the IRS and it made them a little more involved in the horse industry if they owned a broodmare or got in some part of the breeding business. And to tell you the truth, every one of them that ever did that with him was successful."



He called them mom and dad and Helen and Charlie Crabtree were that and much more to Redd. Son Casey (center) is a third generation trainer at Simpsonville, Kentucky's Crabtree Farms.

Redd in that 2007 interview.

In 1960 the young trainer married a cheerleader from Finchville, Kentucky, and it wasn't long until they were off to Florida where his first job on his own was the Tampa Yacht Club Stables. Following that stint was a stop at Plainview Stables in Louisville and Greystone Manor in Pennsylvania. From '65 to '68 Redd earned six world's championships with the likes of Chief Of Greystone who won both the Junior Five-Gaited and Five-Gaited Stallion World's Championships in 1966 and the stallion stake again in '67. Greystone's Debutante and



Redd had an incredible run of World's Champions in the '70s and '80s, beginning with 1971 World's Champion Five-Gaited Gelding CH Glory Kalarama, a horse ridden to previous world's titles by Billy Cox.

Greystone's Conestoga combined for the other three world's titles.

The same year Wing Commander died, Redd and Nancy returned to Simpsonville, Kentucky, where he became the third member of Crabtree Farms. Saddlebred history has been made on that piece of bluegrass ever since. Charles and Helen had put Crabtree Farms to the forefront of the show horse industry; she with the best of equitation and he with great performance horses. Although dubbed, "Mr. Fine Harness," Charlie Crabtree had a great number of top gaited horses, including World's

Just as Mary Gaylord had a string of incredible gaited horses with Redd, Randi Stuart had a few that will be forever remembered as well. She and Mary shared time with Admiral's Mark and additionally Randi had the great Summer Melody, a full sister to World's Grand Champion CH Belle Elegant, which she won the amateur mare world's title with for three consecutive years and the Amateur Five-Gaited World's Champion Of Champions titles in 1976 and '77. Randi also rode CH Will's Bulletin to amateur championships in Freedom Hall in 1994, '95 and '97, in addition to being reserve in '96.

"I remember Helen and Charlie handing me off to Redd when I aged out and being a little depressed by that," recalled Randi Stuart Wightman. "But what a fabulous trainer for amateur riders he turned out to be! He trained the horse for his amateur, rather than expecting the amateur to ride like him. "When I had Summer Melody I couldn't get her to canter at Lexington one year and Mary Gaylord was having the same trouble. We complained to him that he wasn't giving leg aids like an equitation instructor. He learned how to do that for us.

"I was always arriving at the last minute for my classes. At the Royal one year I walked in for the afternoon amateur or ladies qualifier and he had Melody standing in the aisle. He said he had no doubt that I'd be there in time. I had driven up from Tulsa and literally tied my tie as I walked in from the parking lot. He trusted me and I trusted him. "Redd had a lot of faith in me as a rider and as a horsewoman and advocate for the breed," she continued. "He put me up for election to the ASHA Board and later supported me for President. We didn't always agree, but we respected each other's views. He was a dedicated advocate of the breed; some of his finest moments were with the Agriculture Department's witch-hunt.

"He was a gentleman, a family man. The state of Kentucky was well served by adding him to the Athletic Hall of Fame last year. I'm sure others will say it better, but no one can say that he influenced their life more than he did mine. My service here in Tulsa mirrors the commitment he gave the American Saddlebred and that's because he showed me how to be committed to a cause. My heart aches for his family."

Because of his character and his drive, Redd left a lasting impression on many. Another from the roaring '70s was Mary Lou Gallagher (Doudican) who showed such greats as CH Heathermoor's Lad O'Shea, the 1977 and '78 Junior Exhibitor Five-Gaited World's Champion Of Champions.

"We adored Redd," stated Mary Lou, granddaughter of Katherine Sinclair who had many greats with the Crabtrees, including World's Grand Champion Fine Harness CH Supreme Airs and CH Glenview's Radiance, a many times world's champion in the amateur and ladies divisions. "Crabtree Farms has been a part of my whole life. Redd was a very beautiful rider with such a passion for the breed. He was with me when I won the Good Hands in New York and I will always have that special memory.

"It's the end of a spectacular era in the horse world. They don't make them like the Crabtrees anymore! It was such an honor to be with him last year when he received the Kentucky Athletic Hall of Fame recognition."

The '70s produced another trainer/customer, friend/friend relationship that left an imprint not



The bond between Redd Crabtree, Will Shriver and Betty Weldon was legendary. Redd and Will walked from the ring for the last time in his retirement ceremony at the American Royal with Betty looking on.

only on the two individuals, but on the industry as well. That was when Betty Goshorn Weldon called on Redd to take over the training of a young stallion that she believed the world in. He had his work cut out for him because while the stallion was gifted and willing, he wasn't exactly built to put his head high in the air.

Redd worked and worked getting his pupil to

CH Santana Lass won the Three-Year-Old Five-Gaited World's Championship, the ASR Futurity Reserve World's Championship, the Junior Five-Gaited Mare world's title and the Reserve World's Champion Of Champions Junior Five-Gaited title with Redd before Mary Gaylord took over. She would win four Ladies Five-Gaited Mare World's Championships, two Five-Gaited Mare World's Championships, three Ladies Five-Gaited World's Champion Of Champions titles and three Five-Gaited Reserve World's Grand Championships. And now she is the second dam of Mary's highly rate sire, Northern Vegas.

bend and flex and they started working their way up the ribbons. In 1973 they took reserve in the stallion stake at Louisville and returned for a fourth place finish in the World's Grand Championship. They would win the World's Champion Five-Gaited Stallion title the next three years, adding the title of World's Grand Champion that third year, 1976.

Will then went to the breeding shed and gave the show ring an incredible number of world class gaited horses, including his two greatest stallion sons, World's Champion CH Caramac and World's Champion Callaway's Blue Norther.

Decades later and the last World's Champion Redd personally threw a leg over in the show ring was rightfully a descendant of Will Shriver. At the age of 73 (he wouldn't be 74 until September) Redd won the 2010 World's Champion Five-Gaited Stallion title for Tony Weldon aboard Callaway's Bluesman, a son of Callaway's Blue Norther and the



In 1993, Joe Stopher inducted Redd into the World's Championship Horse Show Hall of Fame. Nancy, Susan, Ann and Casey were beaming in support of their husband and father.



Two years from his first World's Grand Championship Redd rode the CH Wing Commander granddaughter CH Cora's Time to the title for Vicki Scata. Previously the Ladies Five-Gaited World's Champion Of Champions with Vicki, Cora's Time went on to be the dam of CH Best Of Time, CH Times Best and Time Willing.

Broodmare Hall Of Fame CH Caramac daughter, Callaway's Carousel. It was Tony's greatest joy since she took over the reins to Callaway Hills.

"Redd's illness came as a huge shock to me. Before I had time to process the information, let alone plan a visit, he had passed away," said Tony

Weldon. Still hard to grasp, Redd Crabtree is gone? For some reason I'd never once even considered the possibility.

"The last time I saw Redd was at Jimmy Robertson's sale in November. The sale was over, but I was still seated talking with some people. He didn't interrupt the conversation or say one word. He simply acknowledged me by putting his hand on my shoulder, smiled and walked on. I can still vividly recall the few seconds. Redd gave me one of those smiles where his entire face lit up. Some people can do that and it makes you feel special because they seem excited and so genuinely pleased to see you.

Few places had the success in the show ring and the breeding shed like Crabtree Farms. The great New Yorker (CH Yorktown x Sandalwood Stonewall) was but one of the premier sires under Redd's direction. One of his daughters, Yorkshire Pudding, was a World's Champion in the National Three-Year-Old Three-Gaited Futurity with Redd but more importantly she was the dam of the world's champion producing breeding stallions Deep Blue, Northern Blues, Castle Bravo, and Reedann's Top Gun on the way to the Broodmare Hall of Fame.

A number of people have commented on how Redd made them feel special and that he was a class act. I think that's a very accurate description.

"Redd looked like and acted like a gentleman. From his dress, manner of speaking, what he said about others, to how he rode a horse. Even as a kid I noticed he looked different from most trainers in the ring, never hunched over or had his elbows sticking out. In 2009 and '10, I watched him a few times as he was getting on Bluesman. It appeared so effortless and graceful."

As with many, Redd the man was even more impressive than Redd the horse trainer to Tony. "I never once heard him say anything nasty about anyone. He talked about Nancy a lot and each of his children came up at times in conversation. He always spoke of his family with affection. Sometimes it was just something small, but he never failed to bring up something they did that made him proud of them.

"Redd could also be intimidating. It often seemed it was Redd's way or the highway. He had a tad bit of a temper at times. I only butted heads with him once and it was mostly a result of a miscommunication. Not rude, but a very unpleasant experience for me. However, he didn't remain angry for long. In my experience Redd was not someone who quickly fell out with people and never spoke to them again. He had a kind heart and to my knowledge always the best of intentions."

Redd admitted he had more than a few scrapes as a youth who was teased about his red hair and freckles. It made him stronger, made him speak out when it was called for and gave him the ability to time and time again get over obstacles that might have taken a lesser man down. Character was some-

thing he would take with him throughout his life.

It was that character and his radiating smile that attracted friends from all walks of life. Outside of his family and horses, the thing that made him smile an awful lot was University of Kentucky basketball. An athlete himself, Redd was an avid follower of the game and had many friends with which he dissected the current team's season.

Another hat he wore was that of AA Sponsor. Redd was passionate about sobriety and was always there for someone in need without ever judging. Those thankful souls came from the horse industry and the local community. To those outside of our show rings they didn't know he was Redd Crabtree the show horse legend. To them he was Redd, the one person they could always depend on.

On a personal note Redd was always a great friend and supporter of this writer, this publication and our founding publisher David Howard and his daughter Christy. "Redd Crabtree was one of a kind...and I mean the best kind," stated David. "Highly successful in his chosen profession, he worked tirelessly for the horse he loved and gave his time, talent and treasure to the industry. Personally, he was a friend and confidante and whenever I needed some advice or support, particularly in the early days of Saddle Horse Report, Redd was always there for me.

"I read somewhere that a person never really dies until we forget them and I will never forget



"I read somewhere that a person never really dies until we forget them and I will never forget Redd...and I will smile when I think about him."

Redd...and I will smile when I think about him."

Friend is a word that many have used when describing Redd. It's a good thing he remained technically challenged and didn't get on Facebook because the ticker could not tally the number of friends he would have had.

"Redd has been a true friend to me for almost 40 years," said Fred Sarver. "I met him when I was UPHA Chairman when Keith Bartz was President. When I first met him I was surprised to find that this famous horseman, an icon in our industry, was not only approachable, but also sincere in making your acquaintance and appreciating your point of view.

"Redd was a friend to many. It is said that to have a friend, you must first be a friend. It was Redd's creed. It was his humble nature to make you feel comfortable and he would give you full attention in conversation. Redd was a generous man, helping people in many ways. He made time to help a friend, serve on Boards and Committees and went out of his way to commit an act of kindness.

"His contribution to our industry can be measured by the impact that he and Crabtree Farms have made in and out of the show ring. The World's Champions are numerous, the awards received for service equally numerous, and the number of top horses bred, raised and trained are remarkable."

Redd will be remembered for either personally winning or training the winner of every five-gaited class at the World's Championship Horse Show. Three times his mounts (CH Will Shriver, 1976; CH Cora's Time, 1978; SA Zovoorbij Commander

In Chief, 1997) wore the roses signifying the Five-Gaited World's Grand Champion. Nine times on six different horses he delivered the blue from the Five-Gaited Stallion World's Championship: Chief Of Greystone (twice), CH Will Shriver (three times), Callaway's Wish Me Will, Callaway's Gold Rush, (SA) Zovoorbij Commander In Chief, and Callaway's Bluesman.

We've mentioned he picked up his parents' affinity for breeding American Saddlebreds. Among others, two of the breed's great sires called Crabtree Farms home: New Yorker and Supreme Heir. He rode Supreme Heir to Two-Year-Old and Three-Year-Old Three-Gaited World's Championships before the stallion dominated the sire ratings. New Yorker blood remains some of the most sought after.

Redd will be remembered as a former President of the UPHA and a longtime Board member of the ASHA. He had the ear of those in Congress and those who made the laws at the World's Championship Horse Show, as well as those who took care of this industry's beloved champions. His care for his fellow man knew no boundaries.

Charles "Redd" Crabtree will be remembered by the masses and the stories that each person could tell would fill volumes. They would all be unique as that's how he saw people, as individuals, but they would all have a common thread involving respect, smiles and friendship. Danny Jenner seems to have covered it all with his memories.

"I went to work for Redd in the 'Glory Days' of Will Shriver, Summer Melody, Cora's Time, Happy Hour, Mandala, Bandstand, Popular Time, etc.



Redd Crabtree and CH Will Shriver were the model of excellence in 1976, winning Redd's first World's Grand Championship. Thirty-four years later he showed his last world's titleholder, 2010 World's Champion Five-Gaited Stallion Callaway's Bluesman, a grandson of Will Shriver.

and the hordes of Mrs. Weldon's foundation breeding stock," reflected Danny. "It was a time of steep competition and the pressure was constantly on. And yet, there was never a time that I can remember Redd being anything but level headed. He had his self-esteem, which was the best defense against envy, unfair criticism or petty gossip. He had the ability to laugh at himself and feel real pain when someone good was in trouble.

"He always appreciated the best in others and saw shortcomings in himself. I watched him enrich the lives of people by something he said or did and to this day there's not a decision that I make where Redd does not cross my mind. It was an amazing time in my life both inside and outside of the barn because along with being associated with these phenomenal horses, I found myself embraced by an even more amazing family. I have taken them all as my own and hold them dear."

Part of that family includes Redd's son Casey who now has the task of continuing a legacy of greatness.

"I'm going to do just what he taught me to do, just what he would want me to do," said Casey. "I'm going to get up and go to work every morning and if that doesn't work, I'm going to work harder."

Can't you see Redd smiling?

**CHAMPIONS TRAINED,
SOLD, AND BRED BY
REDD CRABTREE**



CH Admiral's Mark



Burning Tree's Good Omen



CH Will's Bulletin



CH Summer Melody



The Happy Hour



CH Stonewall's Sound Of Music



Chief Of Greystone



Burning Tree's Big Country



CH Gala Affair



CH Beacon Hill



CH Swish



(SA) Zovoorbij Commander In Chief

Pictures courtesy of Saddle Horse Report archives and the American Saddlebred Museum

- CH Admiral's Mark*
- CH Bandstand*
- CH Barbados Exit*
- Beacon Hill*
- CH Best Of Time*
- Burning Tree's Good Omen*
- Buttercup (harness pony)*
- Callaway Will Scarlet*
- Callaway's Bluesman*
- CH Callaway's Caper*
- Callaway's Claudette*
- Callaway's Gold Rush*
- Callaway's No More Mr. Nice Guy*
- Callaway's Wish Me Will*
- Candalight*
- CH Cedar Creek Cactus Flower*
- Chief Of Greystone*
- CH Cora's Time*
- CH Dow Jones*
- CH Dr. Something Special*
- Epic Hero*
- Faith's Magic*
- Footlights (road horse)*
- CH French Wine*
- CH Gala Affair*
- CH Glenview Mandala*
- CH Glory Kalarama*
- CH Great Big Country*
- Greystone's Debutante*
- Havana Hijack*
- CH Have You Ever*
- Ivory Coast*
- Ivy League*
- CH La La Success*
- Lady Coquette*
- Leatherwood's Hats Off*
- Leatherwood's Starlight*
- Madison Brown*
- Mardi Gras (road horse)*
- Manhattan Sound*
- New Yorker*
- CH Popular Time*
- CH Radiant Success*
- CH Royale Fortune*
- CH Santana Lass*
- CH Splashdown*
- CH Spencer County*
- CH Starlike Sultan*
- Stonewall Speculation*
- CH Stonewall's Sound Of Music*
- CH Summer Melody*
- Supreme Heir*
- Sweet Georgia*
- CH Swish*
- CH The Happy Hour*
- Tra La La*
- Yorkshire Pudding (BHF)*
- CH Will Shriver*
- CH Will's Bulletin*
- CH Wing Flame*
- (SA) Zovoorbij Commander In Chief*