

WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP HORSE SHOW HALL OF FAME

William Shatner

Editor's Note: Announcer Peter Fenton read the following speech Saturday Aug. 27, 2016 at the World's Championship Horse Show.

Cowboy Bill - William Shatner, Champion Horseman & Breeder. How a boy who love horses fulfilled his "Beautiful Dream". William Shatner has loved horses for as long as he can remember. Growing up near Montreal, Canada in the 1940s, a young Billy was drawn to a rental stable near his home, spending long afternoons with the horses and bonding with them as he cleaned their stalls in exchange for riding them. So began Billy's life-long fascination and connection with horses.

Over the next two decades, William Shatner's acting career took off, but the thespian also continued to grow as an equestrian. He would continually seek ways to combine his passion for horses with his work as a film and television star. In 1968, when he was cast for the leading role in the film *Alexander the Great*, Shatner dedicated his time to learning how to ride bareback. An increasingly busy actor, Shatner still managed to find opportunities to ride; during a break from *Star Trek*, he traveled to Spain to mount up in the Western film, *White Comanche*.

Despite his characteristic drive to combine his two great passions, it took an event outside his control to finally fulfill little Bill's dream of owning a horse. In 1978, it happened. With no forethought whatsoever of buying a horse that day, Shatner was sitting with a local horse owner and his young son when the boy suddenly pointed at a particular gelding and said to Shatner, "that's the horse you should buy." Shatner raised his hands in mock horror at the suggestion and then heard the auctioneer announce, "Sold!" So, he now found himself the proud owner of a horse that he had no plan of buying... but he was too stunned to say so... and that was the day his interest in Quarter horses began. In a fateful twist, however, he had recently purchased some land in the Sierras, and the caretaker suggested that he put a few horses on it. Mission accomplished! Over time, the ranch has become a beloved sanctuary, with family memorials and an understated Belle Reve sign swinging lazily in the breeze on a private country lane, all under the Sierra Mountains and Central California's big sky.

The internationally recognized American Saddlebred breeding program at Belle Reve Ranch was first developed and managed for Shatner by Donna Moore, an acclaimed trainer and member of the World's Championship Horse Show Hall of Fame. Belle Reve's offspring have since won in almost every division and have been continuously represented in championship shows across the nation. Today, the Belle Reve Ranch breeding program partners with Willowbank Farm, the premier American Saddlebred Breeding farm in the country. Shatner, along with his family, enjoy breeding American Quarter Horses, American Saddlebreds and American Standardbreds; all breeds dating back to the era of the American Revolution.

In the last four decades, William Shatner has had the opportunity to work with numerous talented, award-winning horsemen and horsewomen. Bill's acting career once again synergized with his equestrian interests on the set of the TV show *Rescue 911*. While filming at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center, he noticed the most beautiful horse he had ever seen, an American Saddlebred in the barn of accomplished Saddlebred trainer Royce Cates. Royce introduced him to Donna Moore, and the rest is history.

Currently, Bill trains with some of the top Saddlebred and roadster trainers in the country: Raymond and Lillian Shively, Bret and Susi Day, Steve and Tiffany Wheeler.

In the Quarter Horse reining industry, Bill's Belle Reve has a formidable show string of all ages, ably guided by Danny Gerardi of Gerardi Stables in Moorepark, California. Bill is currently riding and competing on five reiners himself. He was named Pacific Coast Year End Horse of the Year All Around Amateur in reining in 2009.

In 2010 he participated in the opening ceremonies of the FEI World Equestrian Games at Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Ky., with Call Me Ringo. He loaned three world's champion horses to the event's opening ceremony production: He expertly drove his World's Champion breeding stallion Call Me Ringo to the fine harness buggy; his roadster All Glory was catch-driven to the sulky by Merrill Murray and his wife Elizabeth teamed with his World's Champion three-gaited horse Boston Legal.

His dedication has taken both him and his horses to the winner's circle in almost every division in Saddlebred and roadsters. Bill currently teams with his American Saddlebred World's and UPHA National Champion Fine Harness stallion Belle Reve's Medici and his new young top USTA Champion Standardbred roadster, Trek Star. The offspring of Bill's Belle Reve breeding sires have earned their own World Championship and show-ring honors for others, too. Sultan's Great Day, Belle Reve's Renaissance Man, Revival, and Call Me Ringo are all sire names that breeders consider in the Saddlebred business. Now, Bill's Belle Reve's Medici has his



Wife Elizabeth Shatner and horse show manager Scarlett Mattson joined William Shatner for his World's Championship Horse Show Hall of Fame induction Saturday night.

first promising offspring on the ground, possibly carrying the Belle Reve torch for the older and deceased sires.

As a seasoned rider, Bill's relationship with horses has only deepened with time. "Whether I win or lose," says Shatner, "In the show ring each horse brings the exhilaration that comes from total concentration, from getting inside the horse's head and riding to the edge of our ability, to the edge of wildness, of becoming one with my horse."

William Shatner has always been an active philanthropist. For the past twenty-six years he has chaired the Hollywood Charity Horse Show, an event he founded to create an evening full of both entertainment and fundraising. William Shatner has used his love of horses to help make a difference and touched the lives of thousands of children and military veterans in the Los Angeles area and beyond.

Billy, the young boy who loved horses, has evolved into the man who shares his love of horses with his family and the world. Married for the last fifteen years to equine judge and lifetime horsewomen, Elizabeth Anderson Shatner, they share their passion for horses by competing and raising their three breeds while introducing their grandchildren to their love of horses and the equestrian arts and sciences. William is currently juggling a full schedule of riding and work events that take him around the globe.

Talking to Shatner it becomes clear to anyone that he has suffered "challenges" in his many decades in the horse business. He will even say he has been, "treated unfairly at times." "Through all of the horse business trials, it was always the love of the horse that kept me coming back." The horse and his love of it are constants in a world of changes. He says: "It used to be all about winning, now it's about a spiritual connection with my horse, the journey". The thrill of reaching a willing and respectful dance of partnership, that's when horses become a means of spiritual fulfillment, of love. That's winning.

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