

PIONEER OF THE MORGAN INDUSTRY MOURNED

DR. S. ROBERT ORCUTT

BY BOB FUNKHOUSER

When I think of him I think of a great horseman, a great vet, and a great friend. He was good at everything he did," remembered Hobby Knoll Stable trainer Ann Anderson. "Dr. Bob was a hard working, conscientious, diligent kind of person. He used common sense and didn't have a lot of gimmicks. He was an old New England, down to earth kind of guy who worked hard, cared about the business and knew the extra effort that it took to do things right."

Dr. Orcutt died April 8 at the age of 92. He was preceded in death by his wife of 56 years, Phyllis (Marshall) Orcutt who died in 1996 and his second wife, Pat (Tataronis) Orcutt who died this past year. Dr. Orcutt was indeed a pioneer of today's industry. Morgans were a part of Orcutt's every day life on the famed family's Vermont farm. He watched and helped the Morgan Horse go from a means of working the land and transportation to a versatile and popular show horse enjoyed by the masses from coast to coast.

Earning his veterinary degree from the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Orcutt was drawn back to his New England roots, namely the Morgan Horse. He spent half a century practicing equine medicine and breeding and training Morgans at the highest levels.

This task did prove to be more than one person could handle, however. Pat Tataronis joined the operation and the two made for an unstoppable team. Under their Burkland Farm banner they produced and turned out champion after champion for the Rowley, Mass., farm. As if his dedication to the Morgan Horse through his training barn and veterinary practice weren't enough, Dr. Bob also gave his time and intelligence to the Morgan community. He was included on the original panel that developed the Morgan judging standards.

Family was also an important part of Orcutt's life. His daughter, Dr. Helen Noble and his son, Dr. Robert M. Orcutt, both became a part of the practice. Another daughter, Mary Jane Wahl and her husband Larry are involved with several shows in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. The love of horses has remained in the genes through the generations, as Orcutt's grandsons Josh and Caleb are also part of the horse show scene.

"We continue to try to improve our broodmares," said Joshua Noble referring to continuing the legacy. "Gramps always said, 'if you're not changing, you're not going to evolve and get better. If you think you know everything, you should quit.'"

"He said he never stopped learning and he stopped working horses when he was 89. We had bought (Grand Cru) Margaux's full sister Stonecroft Flammable, as Gramps loved the Trophy bloodlines that are behind her that have lots of heart and go. We ended up leasing

Margaux and breeding her to Astro, and later bought Margaux.

"We are trying to breed nice horses. We do this as a family. My wife, Melanie is the one who keeps everything organized and running smoothly. There is no way any of this would be possible without her dedication to studying the breeding with me. She loves it as much as I do. Gramps said every horse should have a job. We'd like to breed performance horses – nice, useful horses and always improve. We have mares that are good producers. We have done our due diligence –not only researching bloodlines but what the mare lines are producing and pick the brains of other breeders and horsemen who have the knowledge. I enjoy learning and listening and hearing old stories. History is so important – we can all learn a lot. We are proud to keep it old school. We have an appreciation of where we come from."

Like most individuals who have made an impact on a certain industry or sport, Dr. Orcutt was a stellar person in addition to being talented at his trade(s). That character and inner spirit are what separated him other horsemen.

"When I first started training horses professionally they sent me a horse. I was 20 years old and they [Dr. Bob and Pat] wanted to give me a helping hand," said Peggy Alderman. "They were superstars. They didn't have to help me. He was kind to people and animals; there wasn't a nicer guy. He always put everyone else ahead of himself."

In addition to the numerous lives he influenced along the way, Dr. Bob will always be known for his association with such luminaries as Westwold Dona Resa, Gay Cavalier, Ulendon, Orland Leader, Vigilda Burkland, Gay Dancer, and many, many others



Dr. Bob Orcutt and Pat Tataronis made a great team for more than 50 years.



Gay Cavalier was one of Dr. Bob's early stars.



Morgans were a part of Dr. Bob's life in every way.