

Kentucky Association News

*He's not impressed with the fancy things, the glitter or the frill
a win on a home-bred horse, now that gives him a thrill.
He's had his share of success but does not forget his roots
he still works hard every day, you can tell by the soles of his boots.
Trophies and buckles, fancy horses and trucks,
for some it's a sign of good fortune and luck
But integrity, friends and a family to love:
if you ask Bennie Sargent, that's what the good life is made of.*



Mr. Kentucky Quarter Horse

Bennie Sargent is named 2006 AQHA Professional Horseman of the Year

Fine horses, customer service, hard work and integrity provide the cornerstones for Bennie T. Sargent's thirty-year career in the Quarter Horse industry.

It began with an early interest in 4-H and a love of showing ponies developing into a lifestyle that even his parents would not have predicted. Although William and Juanita were not active participants in horse showing they made sure that Bennie could follow his dream.

"We would haul kids and ponies to the local shows and play days," his father said. "Bennie Tom loved it and worked hard everyday."

It was that work ethic put to use over more than three decades that made Bennie the American Quarter Horse Association Professional Horseman of the Year last month at the annual convention in Houston. The association's most prestigious award was awarded to this Kentucky horseman who arguably has been the most influential and dedicated Quarter horse professional in the Commonwealth.

How Bennie Tom advanced from 4-H and pony showing to Bennie T. Sargent, AQHA, Judge, AQHA national representative, Kentucky's Outstanding Professional Horseman and volunteer extraordinaire is a winding road that

begins where so many success stories begin - with a teacher.

"Miss Bonnie Neville taught me the basics, lessons I still remember today," Bennie said recalling his formative years. From Miss Bonnie's teaching a career was launched. His ability with young horses was noticed. In fact Leroy Moore was so impressed with his ability that he encouraged Bennie to give up his amateur card and become a professional.

"The Moores were boarding their horses at our place. I would often lend a helping hand or offer some advice. Leroy was confident I could make a career of it and he pushed me in that direction."

In the late seventies Art Faulx, a trainer and AQHA Judge, moved to Kentucky and several horses to Sargent's farm.

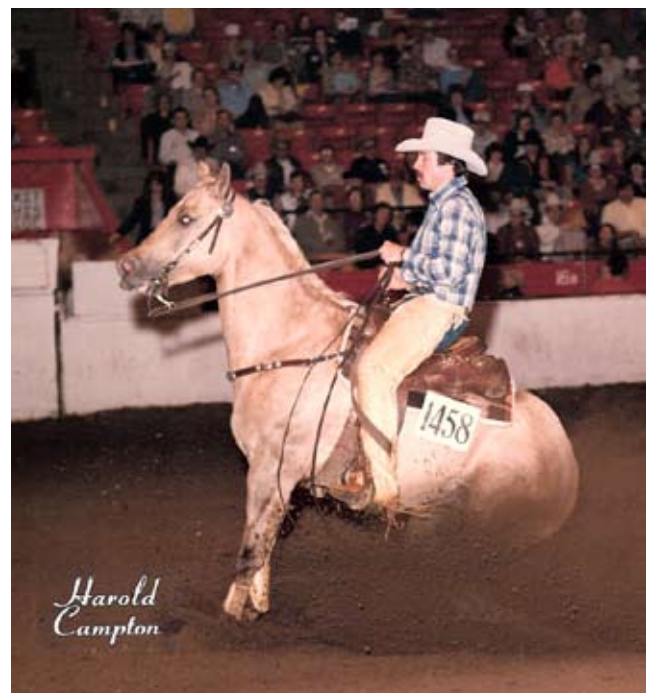
"He (Faulx) was talented, a real cowboy. I knew I could learn a lot from him. He kept three horses at our place. I cleaned his stalls and paid him \$200 a week. It was good deal for Art but a great deal for

Bennie," he said. "Art taught me so much, he was horseman ahead of his time and we became great friends."

To this day students often get lesson from Bennie based on Art Faulx's teachings.

It was those hands-on horsemen and women that have had a profound impact on his career.

"They made a difference in my life and I give them credit for any success I have had over the years. Clayton



Bennie on Mucky's Billy Cash

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Bennie with Clayton Woosley and Tommy Sheets.

Woosley always took time for me. He was a great horseman and a real gentleman," Bennie said.

Using those experiences, Bennie began accepting clients. And it was a palomino gelding, Mucky's Billy Cash that launched his career.

"There have been hundreds of horses over the years and they all contributed something to my story. I have been blessed with some remarkable ones," he said.

But as those who work with horses know, it takes a special hand to bring out the best in an equine. Bennie qualifies. He has trained and shown seven AQHA Versatility Champions and produced multiple AQHA Champions as well as Honor Roll Champions in halter, reining, working cowhorse and working hunter.

Meanwhile Bennie has been a mentor to hundreds of young horse enthusiast guiding his amateur and youth to multiple Congress and World Championships.

Recently he coached the University of Kentucky Equestrian Team stock seat performers to several highpoint awards. One student has qualified for the national finals. He says of the students. "It has been rewarding, they really work together and support each other."

Bennie's willingness to volunteer for

just about any task that might help the Quarter Horse industry is well known.

In the early years of the KyQHA it wasn't uncommon for Bennie to personally provide cattle, a jump course and trail obstacles for KyQHA shows.

"The association didn't have a lot of money back then so we all pitched in and made a difference," he said.

Bennie was also active in supporting development of many equine organizations.

Over the years he has worked with the Central Kentucky Reining Horse Association, Kentucky Palomino Horse Breeders Association, Mid-East Quarter Horse Association as well as serving for many years in various capacities with the Kentucky Quarter Horse Association. He has been an AQHA director for 10 years. He also serves on many state and national equine boards.

"Bennie is interested in the preservation and promotion of the Quarter Horse industry" said Barbara Linke, AQHA Director of Show Services. He earned his judges card nine years ago and has judged multiple World Championship Shows and the European Championships.

One of those organizations to which Bennie gives of his time and expertise is the Kentucky Equine Education Project (KEEP). Bennie serves on the board and as a member of the Grassroots Committee responsible for funding equine associations and educational institutions across Kentucky.

"Bennie Sargent is a horseman's horseman. He is hands on whether it's honing a young pleasure horse into a seasoned show prospect or lending his considerable talents to solving a public policy issue affecting the equine industry. He lives it 24/7. We are proud of him and his achievements.

We salute AQHA for recognizing his contribution to the industry. And we thank Cheryllee for sharing him with us," said Gene Clabes, KEEP Equine Director.

Perhaps Norm Luba, president of the Kentucky Quarter Horse Association says it best when acknowledging Bennie's work on public policy issues and on the Kentucky Breeder Incentive Program during its formative stages.

"Bennie gives tirelessly of his time, at his personal and professional expense, and far too often at the expense of his family," Luba said. "Everyone relies on Bennie, staff of AQHA, KyQHA members, board members of KyQHA. He is Mr. Kentucky Quarter Horse."



Bennie with wife, Cheryllee, and daughter, Sydney.

A demonstration of just how appreciative the Quarter Horse community is of Bennie's contribution as well as friendship came a few weeks ago when he was honored at a surprise reception following the announcement of his Horseman of the Year Award. About 200 well wishers, friends and admirers gathered to listen to a spirited "roast" of Mr. Kentucky Quarter Horse. And to say, "Thank You" for a job well done.