

We are honoring with induction to the Iowa Hall of Fame, a horseman who has been an active part of the Iowa Harness Racing family for over 40 years. Paul Liles has done the whole thing, been a breeder (owning both mares & stallions), owner, trainer and driver. Like most horsemen of our age group, Paul & Evelyn started out slowly; buying an older horse to train or be trained by and racing on the fair tracks close to home.

Throughout the talk with Paul, we cannot tell you about Paul's horse history without linking him to Evelyn. It doesn't even sound right. Though we are honoring Paul, it will reflect on Evelyn and bring her feelings of great pride in what they, together, have accomplished.

Paul and Evelyn lived in Fairfield early in their married life and Paul worked in the factory there. He acquired an interest in harness racing from his older brother Dwight. In about 1967 he bought an older horse, Fleet Admiral, and began his education. Paul says Fleet Admiral never won a race while he owned him, so Paul wasn't overcome with "beginners luck".

The early years, before Paul and Evelyn acquired a farm and home track, were spent in trailering their horses to a fair track to train. Paul tells about coming home from his job, loading up the horses, hauling the horses to Eldon or Keosauqua, training into the evening and arriving back home at midnight or after. A routine many of us can identify with.

In the early '70s, Paul and Evelyn hit some "good luck". A mare they owned with brother Leroy, foaled a colt by Hargrave Hal, they named Hard Head Hal. This colt went on to become the Hawkeye Colt Stakes 2 & 3 year old champion pacer and was sold for a good price. The mare, Beach Gal's Filly, produced another colt the following year by the name of Little Albert, who also dominated the Hawkeye Colt Stakes in his 2 & 3 year old years. Using the money from the sale of these colts, Paul & Evelyn bought a farm near Libertyville, Iowa and built themselves a home track.

In 1983, at the age of 48, Paul decided to retire from his factory job and train and race full time. His career during this period included racing at pari-mutuel tracks in Illinois. He raced primarily at Quad City Downs, but also at the old Cahokia Downs and Fairmont Park in St. Louis and some at Balmoral Race Track in Chicago. Besides racing his own horses, Paul trained and raced horses for Junie Manatt, Chester and Frances Hess and family members Dwight Liles, Leroy Liles, and Bob Benda. Many Iowa horsemen were breeding and buying Illinois bred horses. The Illinois fair program was lucrative compared to the purses paid in Iowa and then there was the opportunity to sell the horses to owner/buyers in Illinois.

The Iowa Hawkeye Colt Stakes was "open to the world" which allowed Iowa horsemen to buy and breed out of state. And as the saying goes, "the rest is history". Paul and Evelyn traveled to Lexington to buy better-bred horses; they hauled their mares to Illinois to breed to better stallions; they raced at Springfield, Illinois and Chicago, Illinois tracks to showcase their colts; raced every summer at the Iowa and Illinois fairs and through the fall and winter at pari-mutual tracks.

Paul expanded his herd of mares along with some stallions through the years and raised his own stock to train and race. Sometime during his career, Paul added trotters to his stable, maybe influenced by Junie Manatt. He has had a great deal of success, as demonstrated by the accomplishments of the colts he brought to the circuit in 2011.

He is the Breeder: Boxcar – Morey – Summer Weight

He is the trainer: Boxcar

We asked Paul what advice he had for anyone getting into the sport of harness racing today. His answer: Buy an older horse to work with, they can teach you a lot about racing and are more likely to get to the races. He also believes that luck is certainly a necessary ingredient along with hard work. But possibly the most important attitude for a horseman is optimism - tomorrow or next week or month or year – we're going to have that winner!

Congratulations, Paul on your induction into the Iowa Hall of Fame!! And we look forward to seeing you at the races in 2012

Paul D Liles
Inducted in the Iowa Hall of Fame
January 14, 2011