

Tom Hennigh, Jr.



Inducted this year is one of the first IQHA members to be named as a 50 Year AQHA breeder. In 1956, Thom Hennigh, Jr. returned home to Effingham, Illinois, from U.S. Air Force service in Korea.

When a neighbor rode by on a beautiful buckskin American Quarter Horse, Tom decided he wanted that sort of athleticism and willingness to please in his own herd. “I started with a working farm, raising crops and Angus cattle, and, I owned five good broodmares,” Tom says. “It grew to 30 mares, my own stallions and 100 head of cows. I raised most of the corn I fed and baled my own alfalfa hay.”

The buckskin horse Tom admired was of Skipper W breeding, so that’s where Tom concentrated his efforts. His stallion, Spot Cash, was a son of Skipper W, and his other stallions, Skips Assist, BH Skips Assist and Skips Retreat have been of Skipper W breeding. The Hennigh family enjoyed team penning and qualified Lady Skip Seeker for the AQHA World Championship Show. As a breeder, Tom looks for beauty and the ability to reproduce, and he values the personal relationships he has developed with buyers whose horses become part of their families. “Pretty alone isn’t worth much,” he says. “They have to be able to produce as well.” Tom prized his foals, and to make sure buyers prized them equally, he started teaching them a trick or two.

One stallion, Skip Topkick, performed more than 20 tricks and got himself and Tom invited to many benefits and livestock shows around the country. “My greatest enjoyment has been our trick-training program, but my greatest achievement is Skip Topkick, a superior sire with an unbelievable personality and a very important addition to our family,” Tom says. “I will always remember watching people react to ‘Topkick’. Three things would make them smile, then start to laugh and then begin clapping. He is now deceased and is missed more than words can say. We forget a lot of things in our life, but Topkick will never be forgotten. It has been a great run.”

We welcome Tom Hennigh, Jr. to the Illinois Quarter Horse Association’s Hall of Fame for 2011.