

ROBERT M. DENHARDT

It started with a mystery, and ended with an association.

Robert M. Denhardt met author J. Frank Dobie while researching Spanish horses in a university library. The two became friends, and Dobie started telling Denhardt about Texas and its horses. Intrigued about these tough, little cow horses, Denhardt thought it would be interesting to research the so-called Steeldusts.

In 1937, Denhardt accepted a teaching position at Texas A&M University. After arriving in Texas, Denhardt met Lee Underwood, a rancher from Wichita Falls who was an enthusiastic supporter of the Steeldusts.

Wanting to learn about these horses, they traveled to Colorado to meet Coke Roberds. Roberds was the first person to show Denhardt and Underwood tangible information on the Steeldust horses.

Excited about these horses, Denhardt started doing more research. He traveled to different ranches throughout Texas, Colorado and Arizona, and soon found that most of the horses traced back to Peter McCue, Traveler, Old Fred and Weatherford Joe Bailey.

Dobie put Denhardt in contact with George Clegg and Ott Adams in South Texas, and the two men introduced Denhardt to the "Billy" horses. Denhardt kept finding that all these quick cow horses traced to the same stallions.

This information led Denhardt to the idea of a registry for this hardy horse. Denhardt first sold the idea of a registry to Bill Warren, Jack Hutchins, Lee Underwood, Jim Hall, Jim Minnick and Helen



Michaelis. A meeting was held during the 1940 Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show in Fort Worth, Texas. Together, the group formed the American Quarter Horse Association.

Elected secretary for the Association, Denhardt received an annual salary of \$1,500, plus traveling expenses. He resigned from this position at the outbreak of World War II in 1941 when he went to work for the U.S. government. Years later, Denhardt wrote books in cooperation with AQHA about the foundation sires of the breed.

Denhardt and J. Ernest Browning were the first inductees into the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame. The two men were the only surviving members of the original founders. They were inducted in 1982. Denhardt died in 1989 at 77.

INDUCTED INTO THE AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE

*Hall of
Fame*

1982