

Good evening, everyone.

Tonight, we celebrate the life and legacy of a man who embodied what this award was created to honor—a person who earned his living serving the show horse industry, not from center ring, but from the heart of it. Someone who worked behind the scenes, often in the shadows, but whose presence made the entire show shine brighter.

This year's Dr. Scott Bennett Professional Services Award, presented by the United Professional Horsemen's Association, honors those who earn their living serving the show horse industry — not as professional trainers — but as the people who make everything else possible.

But most importantly, it honors those who give back — who dedicate their time, talent, and spirit to making this industry better for everyone.

This year, that honor is bestowed upon a man who embodied every part of that description — the late Mike Carlson.

Mike grew up in Springfield, Missouri, in a family where horses and hard work were a way of life. His father was a veterinarian, and his mother showed ponies. From the time he was six years old, showing at the American Royal, it was clear that horses—and people who loved them—would be the center of his world.

Over the next five decades, Mike became one of the most respected farriers in the country. His work took him from Maine to California, and to some of the biggest shows in the industry—the American Royal, the Morgan Grand National, the Missouri State Fair, St. Louis Charity, and countless others. But if you ask anyone who knew him, they'll tell you—it wasn't the World's Champions that defined Mike Carlson. It was the lesson horses, the everyday horses, the ones that needed an extra few minutes of patience or a gentle hand.

Mike believed that the measure of a good farrier wasn't in how many blue ribbons his horses won—it was in how sound and comfortable every horse in his care could be.

He had a gift with horses—quiet, steady, reassuring. He'd run a hand down a horse's neck, pat it gently, and if he knew one might bite, he'd muzzle it first... but never without dropping a peppermint in the basket. The horses knew him. The dogs adored him—because there was always a biscuit waiting in his truck.

He was, quite simply, the “Mr. Fix It” of the horse show world. Broken whips, spurs, tack, even a child's toy horse missing a leg—Mike could fix it all. And in true Mike Carlson wit, when that little girl handed him her broken toy, he studied it seriously, clamped it upside down in his vice, and said, “I think we might have to put this one down.” Moments later, he handed it back—good as new, no charge, and no shortage of smiles.

Mike's generosity wasn't something he talked about—it was just how he lived. He helped countless young farriers find their start, offering guidance, tools, and sometimes his own income

to help them through hard times. If another farrier got sick or hurt, Mike didn't just fill in—he'd rally others to help, and make sure the money still went to the person who was out.

He never cared about fame or fortune. He cared about people, horses, and doing the right thing.

And that's exactly what he did—over and over, for more than 50 years.

He received many honors over his lifetime: the UPHA/American Royal Horseperson of the Year in 2015, the UPHA Chapter 5 Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017, and induction into the UPHA Chapter 5 Hall of Fame in 2023. Kansas City even declared a “Mike Carlson Day” in his honor. But if he were here tonight, he'd probably shrug all of that off, smile a little sideways, and change the subject. Because what truly mattered to him were the horses under his care, the friends he made, and the people he helped.

Mike was an artist, a craftsman, a teacher, a storyteller, and above all—a friend. He could out-muscle a horse one minute and offer quiet encouragement to a young farrier the next. His hands were strong, but his heart was soft.

When he passed away last August, he left behind not just a legacy of skill but of kindness. He showed us that real success isn't about recognition—it's about how many lives you touch along the way.

It's been said that *“the measure of a life well lived is how many people love you when you die.”* By that measure, Mike Carlson was truly without equal.

He leaves behind his wife, Carol, who shared in his adventures and his laughter, and who continues to carry his spirit forward. Together, they were the perfect partnership—her steady wisdom, his unshakable heart.

Mike Carlson made our industry better, not through grand gestures, but through quiet acts of care, compassion, and craft. His story is a reminder that every shoe nailed, every horse comforted, and every person helped matters.

So tonight, as we honor him with the Dr. Scott Bennett Professional Services Award, we remember not just what he did, but who he was.

A farrier, a mentor, a friend—and a man who gave far more than he ever asked for in return.

Thank you, Mike, for every horse you helped, every life you touched, and every story you left behind. Your hammer may be silent now, but the echo of your kindness rings on in all of us.

Accepting on behalf of Mike are his wife, Carol, family, friends, and brother, farriers.