

WILLIAM LOWELL "WL" MILLER

Cattle buyer, horse trader, Quarter Horse owner, and Paint breeder. These are just a few of the adjectives used to describe William Lowell Miller, one of the founders and promoters of the Iowa Quarter Horse Association

WL Miller was born October 26th, 1922 on a farm near Shell Rock, Iowa, one of two children born to William H. and Marie Miller. WL inherited his love of horses from his father. Working with the family's farm horses, and with his father to guide him, WL gained a priceless knowledge of horses – an education that would stand him good stead for the rest of his life.

After graduating from high school in the late 1930's, WL enrolled in college in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Shortly thereafter, he enlisted in the Navy Air Corps. Miller was stationed in Corpus Christi, Texas for part of his four year duty, and during that time, he found a way to continue his involvement with horses.

As his father did, WL began to buy and sell horses. He would procure a 72 hour Navy pass, and travel throughout the Southwest, purchasing horses and mules. The animals would be delivered to San Antonio, and from there, be shipped back to Iowa. Among those were some of the first Quarter Horses ever brought to the state of Iowa.

Shipping horses from San Antonio to Iowa meant loading them on stock cars. At one time, WL's shipment of horses were at one end of town, and the Rock Island Lines railhead was at the other end of town. To make it easy on himself, Miller simply drove the 39 head of horses down San Antonio's Main Street to the railhead and loaded them on the train.

In 1945, WL returned to Iowa from his stint in the Navy, and started up an aerial spraying business. Three years later, he went into the feeder cattle business, operating a sale barn south of Cedar Falls. During this time, Miller was always involved with horses.

In the fall of 1950, WL Miller and a number of other Quarter Horse enthusiasts from Iowa met for an informal meeting in Waterloo, Iowa. The meeting was held during the National Cattle Congress All Breed Stallion Show. Joining them in the coffee shop was Ralph Morrison, Executive Secretary of AQHA, who convinced the group to begin the process of chartering their own state Quarter Horse Association. The first meeting of the organizers of the Iowa Quarter Horse Association – WL Miller included - was held on December 13, 1950 in Des Moines, Iowa. The Iowa Quarter Horse Association was organized and chartered in 1951, due in part to the efforts put forth by WL Miller.

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In the mid 1950's, VWL and John Bowling put on the first Quarter Horse sale in Iowa. Approximately 125 head were sold at the sale, well bred quarter horses from such famous ranches as the Triangie, the Four Sixes and the RO in Texas, and the NT Baca and the CS ranches from New Mexico. Some of those horses sold at that first ever Quarter Horse sale are now the ancestors of a lot of modern-day Quarter Horses here in the mid-west. Sue Ayres, a Quarter Horse member from the 50's, remembers LVV's horse sales. "My father, Joe Cunningham, purchased one of those wild ranch yearlings from LVV. I remembered he gave \$100 for her, with payments of twenty five dollars a month!"

VWL Miller met Ariys Norcross at a dance in Cedar Falls while he was on Navy leave. They wed in February of 1945, and had three sons, Kimm, Jeffery and James. In 1967, VWL moved his family to Spring Valley Ranch, located in the hills of Volga, Iowa, where Miller continued to build and expand his horse operation.

VWL Miller was an enthusiastic promoter of the American Quarter Horse. Horse shows were held at his sale barn, and he raised some of the first Quarter Horses bred in Iowa. He was an AQHA judge for many years, and contributed to the growth of the Iowa Quarter Horse Association.

As a showman, sales promoter, auctioneer, announcer and ring-man, VWL helped establish the trends and markets within the early-day Quarter Horse industry.

VWL was a shrewd businessman, and a savvy horse trader. His friend of many years, Don Clark fondly reminisces. "VWL was a horse trading rascal. In spite of the sad tale he told with the sale of each horse, never doubt that he made money on every trade he made!"

As a Quarter Horse owner and breeder, he was active within the Quarter Horse industry all his life, breeding and raising Quarter Horses well into the 1990's. In 1986, VWL Miller received the Roy Low Memorial Award for the significant impact he made within the Iowa Quarter Horse Association.

VWL Miller was deeply involved with Quarter Horses, but the crop-out quarter horses he saw during his many horse buying trips out west nurtured an interest in Paint horses. Miller always had a liking for these loud colored horses, a fondness which stemmed from childhood. When VWL was a boy, he learned to ride on a Paint horse named "Frosty", and the gelding's splashy markings sparked Miller's life-long interest in Paint horses.

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WVL Miller is responsible for breeding some of the Paint industry's greatest individuals. He purchased crop-out Paints from some of the best ranches in the southwest, and gathered a herd of Paint mares with the best bloodlines he could find. He stood the Paint stallion Painted Robin, along with a number of others, all who made their mark in the Paint horse world.

WVL became involved with the American Paint Horse Association in its formative years. He hauled and showed extensively to help promote Paints in different areas of the country. Miller was a member of their executive committee, was an APHA Director and judge, and in 1970, was elected as the ninth president of the American Paint Horse Association. WVL Miller continued to breed, raise and show Paint horses well into the late 1990's.

WVL Miller is also responsible for forming the American Paint Pony Registry. Seeing the need for a smaller breed of paint horse, WVL started with an outstanding young paint pony stallion he purchased in Texas. The registry was formed in 1972, and "Trailer" became the foundation sire of the APPR. Since that time, the registry has grown with members throughout the United States, Canada and Europe.

William Lowell Miller passed away on August 28, 1998. His circle of friends within the horse world has stretched from coast to coast, and his impact on the two breeds of horses he loved has spanned a lifetime. Thank you WVL, for your many and varied contributions to the equine industry.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am honored to announce the induction of William Lowell Miller into the Iowa Quarter Horse Hall of Fame.



A Tribute to W.L. Miller
One of the IQHA Founding Members

When I was young, and in my prime,
I worked my tail off all the time.

Now that I'm older, and I've got more sense,
I don't do windows, and I don't do fence!

I'm past the days of ridin' bogs,
So I hang around the corral and train my dogs.

I don't flank calves or pitch no hay,
Just sit on that horse, day after day.

I've got grass to find, and rivers to cross,
There's no one around, so I pretend I'm boss.

I don't fix windmills, or prime no pumps,
I don't dig postholes, or pull out stumps.

I don't plow sod or put up hay,
I just straddle that old pony 'til the end of day.

I don't sleep on the ground with the snakes I dread,
I'm at home at night, in my waterbed.

So if some of you punchers, still in your prime,
Are scared of being caught by old Father Time,

I'm here to tell ya', it's not all bad,
When you turn back the pages and see the fun you had.

And now that I've gotten long of tooth,
And there's no callin' back the days of my youth,

I've got my degree in wrecks and spills,
It's good to relax and just ride in the hills.

'Cause I've earned that title of Good Buckaroo,
But there's some things left I still want to do.

But I ain't gonna rush, I'll just take my time,
And do 'em all from the back of that old horse of mine.

By Dan Jarvis

