

1996

## Orin Benson

April 15, 1914 - July 09, 2005

Orin Benson was a pioneer trainer of hunting and field trial retrievers. After working at the famous Boalt Kennels in River Hills, Wisconsin, he opened his own training facility in Eagle, Wisconsin. There he drew clients from coast to coast. Over the years he befriended a wide range of customers including politicians and movie stars. Some of the notable ones were: Roy Rogers, Gabby Hayes, Gene Autrey, Clayton Moore (the Lone Ranger), Joan Crawford, Clark Gable, Andy Devine and Prince Phillip of England.

Orin trained FC Black Panther who eventually accumulated 172 1/2 Open All-Age Points. Panther was a real "Cinderella Story" as he descended from ordinary hunting stock and not competitive lineage. Panther was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1997.

Orin was also influential in establishing the Wisconsin Amateur Retriever Club whose officers founded the Newsletter that became Retriever Field Trial News. Later, he was one of three men who established the Milwaukee Journal/Sentinel sports show where he and his dogs (along with otters, wolves, etc.) became one of the main attractions. Although he "passed the torch" years ago, the event remains popular with a similar show every year.

In 1997 Orin was inducted into the Retriever Hall of Fame.

My son Tanner and I, living in the same town as Orin, have spent many hours with him reminiscing about his past. He loved to tell stories about all of the people he worked with and places he had been. He would speak of training his dogs as well as the timber wolves, foxes, skunks, porcupines, bears, hawks, pheasants and animals he trained for movies, performances and even pranks on his friends. An author named Mel Ellis wrote a book based on one of Orin's wolves named Kepa and it was printed in many languages around the world.

A few of Orin's words of advice still remain with me. He would say "Jeff, always act like a pro whether on the line or in the gallery." He also told me to train only one breed of dog. From him I developed an enthusiasm and respect for the sport as well as the people and animals involved in it.

Orin Benson will be missed by many. His stories and words of encouragement to me and my family will be fondly remembered. Orin signed most of his keepsakes to me: "Gone to the Dogs!" ... Orin, you are now with your dogs.

Jeff Thiele