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Going Home

Sam Savitt (1917-2000)



Courtesy of Mill Pond Press Inc.

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Sam Savitt

Sam Savitt, one of the world's most famous and best-loved equine artists, died on Dec. 25 after a long illness in a hospital near his home of North Salem, N.Y. He was 83.

Mr. Savitt was the author of 15 books, including short stories and books on how to draw horses, as well as his famous *Sam Savitt Horse Charts*. One of these charts, *Sam Savitt's Guide to Horses*, is in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Savitt had a long relationship with the *Chronicle*, where his work has appeared on the cover 31 times since first appearing on Nov. 30, 1956. A montage of his drawings showing a variety of horses in work and in sport was the cover of the Dec. 24, 1999, Turn Of The Century Issue, and his painting *Going Home* graces this week's cover.

The first book Mr. Savitt illustrated was *Gordon Wright's Learning To Ride, Hunt And Show (1950)*. Mr. Savitt enjoyed taking riding lessons from Wright, one of the *Chronicle's* 50 Most Influential Horsemen of the 20th Century.

Mr. Savitt's drawings also appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, *Equus* and *Practical Horseman*. He was the official artist of the U.S. Equestrian Team, and for many years he drew the tack and equipment advertised in the catalog from the Miller's Harness Co.

The North American Horsemen's Association presented Mr. Savitt with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 1998, the only time this award has ever gone to an artist. He gave many workshops on drawing horses and was a popular public speaker whose ability to draw horses while he was lecturing delighted audiences of all ages.

Mr. Savitt was one of the founders of the American Association of Equine Artists, in 1980, and he remained on the Board of Directors and gave workshops until shortly before his death.

"A lot of younger artists grew up reading his books and learning to draw from his posters, so they would eagerly sign up for his classes," said Werner Rentsch, an accomplished artist who's now the AAEEA president and was a close friend of Mr. Savitt's. "He was the only one who taught actual drawing workshops—truly drawing horses and teaching people how to do it was a real gift he had."

One of his many workshop students was Melissa Brown of Lexington, Ky. Brown remembered Mr. Savitt's generosity. She said he would set up paintings for students and take no credit for it, or he would draw corrections of students' work and sign them for them whenever they asked.

"He would always tell us, 'Put your hands on the horse,' and he would give us exercises to teach us to draw a horse correctly from memory, not just from sight," said Brown.

"To him, drawing the horse was the most important part. Sometimes he's looked down on as just an illustrator, but he was really an artist," she added.

Mr. Savitt always considered his lifelong love of horses somewhat of a mystery since he



COVER ART

Sam Savitt was one of America's best known equestrian artists. His paintings and portraits hang in homes and galleries throughout the United States.

Savitt once said, "The horse is beauty, strength, rhythm and action. To really know and understand him, to capture his magnificence with pencil or brush, will to me be forever challenging."

grew up in Wilkes-Barre, a Pennsylvania coal-mining town, and none of his family was remotely interested in horses. From the time he was a small child, he was fascinated with all kinds of horses, although the only ones he ever saw were those delivering coal or milk. He started out trying to imitate them and then began to capture their images on paper.

Horses became his life's work, and he drew them all over the world, from the wild mustangs on the western plains to England's Grand National Steeplechase. His love and respect for all horses shines in his work.

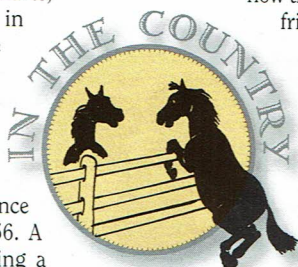
Mr. Savitt graduated from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, N.Y., and studied at the Art Student's League and the New School. He was also a disciple of Paul Brown, one of the leading American sporting artists of the first half of the 20th century.

Mr. Savitt served in the U.S. Army in the Pacific in World War II and married his wife, Bette, in 1946.

They moved to North Salem, N.Y., in 1956, where he hunted with the Golden's Bridge Hounds and indulged his love of trail riding. At the time of his death, he still kept a horse at home that he cared for himself.

Mr. Savitt is survived by Bette; daughter Vicky Savitt of Berkeley, Calif., and son Roger Savitt of Bedford, N.Y.; sister Sally Ross of Tamarac, Fla., and brother Al Savitt of New York City.

A memorial service will be announced at a later date. Donations in his memory may be sent to the North Salem Free Library, 276 Titicus Rd. North Salem, NY 10560 or The North Salem Open Land Foundation, P.O. Box 176, North Salem, NY 10560. J.M.



They'll Need "Cold Noses"



(Karen Kanitta Wenzel Photo)

The snow and the cold didn't daunt the Howard County-Iron Bridge hounds when Huntsman Allen Forney opened the kennel gate for the hunt's Christmas meet on Dec. 24 in Mt. Airy, Md.

GOLDING EARNS AHJF ASSISTANCE

"Of all my years working with horses, I'd never been in the hospital," said Karen Golding, FEI steward and former stable manager for Michael and D.D. Matz's Vintage Farm. "And then, to have such a bad time with an injury like this has just been awful."