

An Example of Energy

by BJ Heuvingⁱ

It was October, 2004, and I had been leading the graying gelding around the parking lot and outside the arena for at least 45 minutes. At first, just to warm our muscles, since it was fairly cold, then to give us something to do as we were waiting to go into the arena. Horse events often do not follow a strict time schedule, other than an "order of go" and we were "just about to go". You know, Hurry up! And wait...

A spectator who had been watching us on and off for awhile finally approached me and asked if I was leading "a Semper Fi Marine Horse". I was quite astonished to realize that this man, who was not local, had recognized the horse I was leading by his similarity to one he owned, also a Semper Fi Marine Horse. Most breeders strive for a breeding that has "thick blood", in other words, breeding the same mare and sire to produce relatively similar offspring, reliably. The gelding I was leading, and the gelding owned by the inquisitive man, were both grandsons of the same mare. Both are registered Holsteiners, but the "founding" mare was an Arabian. That mare was owned by a remarkable gentleman named Eugene Dueber, who currently resides in Port Orchard, Washington. But I am getting ahead of myself.

Let me start at the beginning. I met "Colonel Gene" (as I've always referred to him) while braiding his mare to prepare for the Holsteiner Mare Approvals in 1987. He named her "Boedicca", and smiled, adding "after the Celtic queen who gave the Romans such a hard time". Known to all as "Bo", she was purchased as a dressage horse for \$600. This was his first horse. Gene had been interested in horses since boyhood, but school, military, career, and family all had contributed to a lifestyle without them. However, while living in Maryland, Gene was taking his granddaughter for riding lessons at the Potomac Horse Center. Actually, he had paid for a series of lessons, and the granddaughter didn't use one. So of course, he did. That, as you all know, was that.

Gene was hooked. Upon moving to the Port Orchard area, Gene found an instructor who had graduated from The Potomac Horse Center, sold his MGA sports car and bought a horse, the aforementioned "Bo". Unfortunately, Gene couldn't ride for one

year, so "Bo" was bred to Karen Reids' (Fox Fire Farm) stallion "Constitution". This led to a fine filly, "Colonel's Lady", called "Nellie". The foal was to be registered as a Holsteiner, but, before that could happen, her dam needed to go to the Holsteiner Inspections, where Judges would evaluate the mare. "Bo" showed well, but she was an Arabian, not a Warmblood or Thoroughbred, and could only be placed in the Provisional Holsteiner Mare Book.

Did I mention that Gene Dueber was a United States Marine? In fact, the Marine motto of "Semper Fidelis" means "always faithful". So, along with faith (and stubbornness") Gene began his next goal of proving Arabians to be capable Sporthorses. His ambition was to get "Bo" moved from the Provisional Mare Book into the Main Holsteiner Mare Book. To do this, he needed to breed two generations of Holsteiners from "Bo", and get them inspected and approved. Quite a tall order, but Eugene Dueber is quite a person.

Let me explain how interesting Colonel Gene is: Gene was born on May 16, 1916, in Portland, Oregon. He had two sisters, only one of them still living, now in California. His early school in Portland led to two years at the University of Portland, then to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, for a four year degree. Graduation in June of 1940 produced a commissioned Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps.

During World War Two, Gene was two years overseas in Guadalcanal, and New Caledonia. He also spent two years in Korea. His peacetime duty was an assignment in communications and supply, and during this time he lived in many states. His last post was in Washington, D. C. where he worked in the Pentagon, in the guided missile division in the office of Chief of Naval Operations as a Lieutenant Colonel. He retired in Santa Barbara, California, in 1961.

Retirement, though, was not all that it was cracked up to be. Oh, what to do ... retirement is soooo boring...

Genes' next diversion was to work at the University of California as a Facilities Planner. That took him and his family on to Cleveland State University, in Ohio, where he worked as the Director of Facilities Planning. Not quite done, Gene then worked for Montgomery College, in Rockville, Maryland, as the Director of Facilities. So, Gene Dueber finally retired (again) in 1980, and, let's see ... Maryland...

Now back to our story, where we find Gene's "Horse Phase" taking root in Maryland, with the granddaughter's missed lesson at the famous Potomac Horse Center. After retirement- twice- Gene and family moved to Port Orchard, Washington, where he currently resides. Naturally, he bought a horse-"Bo"! And...

"Bo" sent Gene on a new journey. His research into pedigrees and keen eye for horses led to his remarkable ambition. Breeding "Bo" to local stallions "Constitution", and later "Cicero", began the long road to fulfilling Genes' next achievement.

He went about this the scholarly way. Gene has read and researched as much about horses and history as any of the widely published authors and is always willing to share his vast knowledge. He named his horse business "Semper Fi Horse Marines" and in an effort to get Arabians recognized as Sporthorses, donated a perpetual trophy called the "Tripoli Cup" to Equestrians Institute. Presented annually since 1993 to the owner of an Arabian or Half-Arabian horse with the highest average dressage score, the "Tripoli Cup" commemorates a battle which started in 1805. American ships were attacked by Pirates of the various governments around North Africa, and one-fifth of the American national income was being paid as ransom for safe passage of all American Ships. In a bold venture, and here I quote Genes words: "a motley force of Arabs, Greeks and Turks, and nine United States Marines" crossed the desert to make a successful, surprise attack on the Pirates stronghold of Derna, in Tripoli, North Africa. The Marine leader of the attack was so impressed by the horses that he brought two Arabian stallions back to the United States with him in 1806- these stallions were used to develop the Standardbred horse in the United States.

Gene continued to ride and own horses and was active in many equestrian organizations. After he joined the Kitsap Saddle Club in 1982, he served as President for three years. He was a founding member, and first President, of the Lower Puget Sound Dressage Club, a board member for Gig Harbor Horsemen, a member of Washington State Horsemen, Arabian Horse Association, Equestrians Institute, Holsteiner Association and the Peruvian Paso Association. And I don't mean member like most members, you know, a card and a number. Gene was active, and participated in at least one meeting every week, and wrote articles, energetically worked on committees, and attended conventions, all the while breeding very fine horses. I'm

leaving out countless other conventions, meetings, and reunions from his school days, military days, facility planner days or family reunion days (three kids, five grand kids, and six great grand kids).

In 2001, Gene was 85 years young when he rode 16 year "VP Medley", a horse he had owned, sold, and borrowed. He was riding a dressage test on her in a recognized show to become the first in Washington State to be a member of the U.S.D.F. Centurion club. The Centurion Club is only accepting members who by birth certificate and breeding papers can provide the human and horses ages combine to make at least 100 years.

He just can't keep away from horses and riding. He has at least twice sold his "last riding horse", mostly due to the arthritis in his hands that make keeping a horse difficult. He had sold "Llamerada", (not an Arabian, she is a 10 year old Peruvian Paso with smooth gaits) however, Gene ended up buying her back and until late 2007, continued to ride three times a week; although he had boarded her and doesn't do the daily care. The last baby he's raised (how many "last babies" have I seen ...) is now eight years old. "Alejandro," a Holsteiner gelding by "Ariadus", is well started, and has been sold. It was this horse I had been leading which the man at the Holsteiner Inspections recognized as a Semper Fi Marine Horse.

"Bo" was indeed moved into the Holsteiner Main Mare Book, and Gene Dueber did complete another life ambition!

And, a "final note": the day he sold "Alejandro", a truck and trailer arrived on the farm and delivered "Nellie" (his first baby from "Bo"), now 18 years old, still beautiful, sweet and sound!



Alejandro and BJ at the Northwest Sporthorse Breeders' Classic, September 11, 2004

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