**A Tribute to Robert Lawson**

 Robert Lawson has been involved with gaited horses most of his life. As a youngster, he rode over the hills of Eastern Kentucky long before there were any Mountain Horse breeds. When he left home, he got away from horses. As a young adult he worked for an architectural pre-cast firm. He and his wife, Lyngle, lived in a subdivision with their two girls. It wasn’t until he moved to the farm and got a horse for his daughters that he discovered his true talent where horses are concerned. He began starting his own stock and it wasn’t long until other folks saw what a knack he had for training. As his ability grew, so did his workload. He hired an inexperienced high school student to help clean stalls and feed when he was out of town . . . Charlie DeAtley. When Charlie graduated, Robert moved him up to full time and he began riding under Robert’s supervision.

 As time passed, Robert developed his own unique style of training horses and instructing people. His Foundation First Mountain Horse Training TM methods not only produced International and World Grand Champions in conformation and under saddle classes but many versatile trail companions as well. Charlie grew and developed skill. Robert’s daughter, Erin, also gained skill and became an awesome trainer. Robert along with the other riders from Stoner Ridge Farm have enjoyed much success over the years. They became great communicators with both horses and people. Together they have won many special awards including the Ashley Hytry Award, the Junior Robinson Super Horse Award, the RMH Rea Swan Versatility Award, and the Sam Tuttle Memorial Award multiple times. They have received many High Point awards and honors in under saddle, western, and conformation classes. They have also won top honors in competitive trail venues as well as in gaited dressage. In addition, Robert has been the recipient of the KMSHA James Powell Trainer Award, Rea Swan Versatility Award, UMH Volunteer award, UMH Ambassador Award, and many other accolades. His ability to educate both people and horses has been unsurpassed.

 Robert has been an active participant in the Mountain Horse Associations. He was a member of the Rocky Mountain Drill Team for eight years and has been a frequent exhibitor and promoter of the horse at breed fairs. He has been a member of the RMHA, KMHA, and the UMH Board of Directors. He has been an active committee member for the KHBIF and RMHA Judging Committee. He also held a KMSHA Judge’s license.

 As an excellent speaker and clinician, Robert traveled from coast to coast and beyond to promote the horse. He has been a clinician at Rocky Week in CA and held clinics in IA, IN, KY, OH, SC, and NJ. In 2016, Robert and Lyngle traveled to Israel to assist RMH owners there with their gaited horses. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect with international RMH owners.

 Robert has also had a strong lesson program through the years. One of the most fulfilling opportunities came Robert’s way through the Make a Wish Foundation when he got to be Emma Deweese’s “Wish”. He has had so many wonderful opportunities to help kids connect to horses. With Barb’s Stormy Knight and Gaitway’s Jasmine Joy, Robert has taught many youngsters to love the Rockies as we do. The grandchildren will forever remember all those great times they shared (and continue to enjoy) on horseback. Robert has also had the opportunity to assist folks who feared their time with horses might be beyond them. What a joy they have had to realize the Rockies fill that void in their lives like nothing else can . . . whether they are young or simply young at heart. Many have come to love the show ring and others have come to love the trails with his help.

 After many years of working at Gate-Bluegrass Pre-cast and the 25 years of training, the time has come to turn the reins over to Charlie. He has worked side by side with Robert now for nearly 20 years. Following in Robert’s footsteps, he has become a great horseman. While Robert will continue with a few lessons, Charlie will be the full-time manager of Stoner Ridge Farm as of January 1, 2018. He will do an awesome job. Robert and Lyngle will continue to live at the farm. They will be able to spend more time with the grandchildren and travel. Robert will be spending more time in the woods coon hunting. It is with a grateful heart the torch is passed.