

Dr. Herbie Burns named Monticello-Goshen USHWA's Good Guy

by Chris Tully, for Monticello-Goshen USHWA

Goshen, NY --- You can't help but like a guy like Herbie Burns. He is just fun to be around.

Whether you are standing on the outside rail cheering for your horse, or stuck out in a field chasing a mare, Herbie will always make you laugh. He just has that way about him.

Don't get it wrong -- he is a serious veterinarian. But one that is more likely than not to crack a joke when things seem to get too serious.

It is that affable charm and devil may care attitude that puts him on the top of many successful people's list of people they call friends.

That is why Burns will be honored with the 2017 Monticello-Goshen USHWA's John Gilmour Good Guy Award when the chapter hosts its 59th annual awards banquet this Sunday (Dec. 3) at the Fountains at Walkill Golf Club.

His success at business, and in life, could perhaps be attributed to his working philosophy: "I only do business with people I like!"

It sounds simple enough, but in the Standardbred industry, not everyone is of the same mindset. Herbie's however, comes from his humble beginnings, and prospered out of his keen sense of horsemanship and his pleasant bed-side manner.

Although born in Chicago, Ill., Dr. Herbert J. Burns III was raised in Tamaqua, a sleepy town in Eastern Pennsylvania, and got his start in the horse business as a caretaker for his father at Pocono Downs. Burns started working with his Dad in the late 1970s, training horses around the likes of Billy and Frank Popfinger and Larry Dumont. By 1980, he had worked his way up the harness ladder and was driving horses at Pocono and eventually earned a full "A" USTA driver's license. In fact, Herbie the driver had reached the winner's circle 32 times in his relatively brief career.

When asked why he stepped away from driving, Burns was quick to say that "a more secure income stream became very attractive."

While training and driving, he also honed his horsemanship skills as a farrier, which led to his interest being piqued by veterinary medicine. Burns decided to take the plunge and enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine. While there, and still very much in love with the harness game, he met Dr. Michael Ross, a renowned surgical vet at New Bolton Center and also an owner of Standardbreds.

Those two struck up an instant friendship and professional relationship that revolved around their mutual fondness of harness horses and how to treat them.



Chris Tully photo

Dr. Herbie Burns will be honored with the 2017 Monticello-Goshen USHWA's John Gilmour Good Guy Award.

Herbie recalls, "Dr. Ross kind of took me under his wing and introduced me to a lot of great people in the industry during the early '90s."

At the time, Dr. Ross was providing a lot of services to trotting guru Ron Gurfein and was himself immersed in the happenings on the Grand Circuit and the Meadowlands.

Upon graduation Ross introduced Burns to Orange County icon Doctor Howard "Doc" Gill in 1992. From there on out, Herbie was on call 24/7 for Doc Gill, performing rounds at all the farms and training centers in the area. Some could say it was baptism by fire, but for Herbie it was just the beginning of great things to come.

Five years later, Herbie bought Doc Gill's practice and then proceeded to build a brand new equine clinic, on land he also bought from Doc Gill. Pine Bush Equine Clinic was re-born and has now grown to five associate vets, one intern and 13 employees. Eventually, as the business developed and grew, a 13-stall barn and a full surgical suite were constructed to accommodate the demand.

Herbie's specialties include reproduction, surgery and lameness and he is also the staff veterinarian at Blue Chip Farms.

"My relationship with the Brown family has been strong since the 1990s, but I developed more of a permanent place with Blue Chip in 2003. That is when I started going to the farm on a daily basis. I absolutely love it."

From mare booking meetings with Tom Grossman, to evaluating stock from birth to sale, Herbie is involved with every aspect of a Blue Chip horse's life.

In his not-so-spare time, he enjoys spending time with his daughters, playing golf and watching his Standardbred horses race. An avid Steelers fan, Burns takes his two daughters to NFL games at Heinz Field in Pittsburgh. With Ashley (20) and Amanda (18), it is an annual ritual that they keep private. "No boyfriends," he exclaims. "That is my time with my girls."

Quite fond of bass fishing, Burns has now added striper fishing on the Hudson to his repertoire of weekend warrior activities.

'Work hard and play hard,' may be another one of his mantras.

And although he hung up his colors long ago, he did come out of retirement to drive one race at Goshen Historic Track in 2006. With a young pupil trained by Paul Doherty, he drove his own horse, Chippewa Street, that he co-owned with Ray Schnittker. A 2-year-old daughter of [Credit Winner](#), Herbie left among breakers from post five in a NY Fair Stake and never looked back. Tripping the timer in a pedestrian 2:10.1h, the mare went on to become a multiple stakes winning earner of \$232,000, that is after Herbie bravened her up.

But his success with horse ownership certainly didn't start or end there. He was "brought in" on a [Credit Winner](#) colt originally named Dag Hanover. Ray purchased the horse at Harrisburg in 2003 for \$47,000. Turns out he was the first foal from D Train, whose second foal was an [Andover Hall](#) colt named [Donato Hanover](#).

As the story goes, Deb and Ray were waiting for their friend Dr. Burns to arrive, and upon his grand entrance, a phrase was coined. And it stuck -- '[Here Comes Herbie](#)'.

[Here Comes Herbie](#) (1:52, \$365,541) went on to win an elimination heat of the Hambletonian and was a world champion. Now standing in Indiana, his foals have earned nearly \$10 million.

Herbie, however, is outstanding in his field and has earned the admiration of all those that make his acquaintance. Always larger than life, that's why the Monticello-Goshen Chapter has honored Herbie Burns with the 2017 John Gilmour Good Guy Award.

In addition to the year-end awards for horses and horse people from the local tracks, the Monticello-Goshen chapter will also honor Ray Schnittker (Lifetime Achievement Award); Dave Hanson (Excelsior Award); Crevani Farms (Cradle of the Trotter Breeders Award); Tim Masters (Amy Bull Crist Distinguished Service Award); Joseph Lee (Amateur Driver); Brandon Parker (Rising Star); and Carole Macedonio (Award of Appreciation).

Tickets for the gala event are still available and can be reserved by contacting Shawn Wiles at 845.794.4100, ext. 458 or email swiles@empireresorts.com, or contact Chris Tully at 845.807.7538 or email tullytrot@yahoo.com.