



It runs in the family. When trainer Bob Boggs was a child, he noticed that his friends were not always keen about gathering at his house, and it didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out why: a visit to the Boggs farm included working in the barn. Fast forward one generation, and Bob's wife, Janene, realized that their son Austin faced the same situation. However, as history repeated itself, at least it stuck to the facts—neither Bob nor Austin Boggs lost any friends or their love for horses. Like his father, Austin chose to pursue a career in Arabians, and he too began as a trainer.

Bob Boggs won his first national championship in 1980 (his first reserve had come in 1979) and his first top halter award in 1983, when he showed Arn-Ett Perlane to the title of U.S. National Champion Stallion. More would follow, an astounding collection as the years went on.

In 2006, Austin, who already had collected reserves and top tens, scored his first national victory when he led O O Ive Been Spotted to the Youth National In-Hand Stock/Hunter Type Gelding 17 and Under Championship. To date, he has accounted for seven national championships, six national reserve championships, and an array of top tens.

Horses, Arabians in particular, have always been a passion, says Austin, who began showing when he was 10 and is now 19. "I didn't think right away that I wanted to train horses, but showing was something that I enjoyed a lot," he recalls. "I decided that I really wanted to be a trainer when I was 16. I was coming up on 18, and had to decide if I was going to train or be an amateur and go to school."

It was his decision to make, he notes. "My parents always kept a positive attitude about anything I

Following in their Footsteps...

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This is the first in a series on young trainers who are following in their parents' footsteps as trainers. It is well known that a horse's quality and talents are passed from generation to generation—but the same can be said for the horsemen!
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Bob & Austin Boggs

by MARY KIRKMAN





wanted to try," he says. "If it was with horses, they were happy, but if it wasn't, they were still happy."

The time was right. His father, who had become well known for the family's breeding program and was in demand as a judge, was ready to cut back on training and showing. "He was always more interested in the breeding anyway," Austin notes. "It was an opportunity for me to start showing more and work my way into it."

That he was suited for the career seemed apparent. As early as 2005, at the age of 12, he had turned heads when he showed open for the first time. Everyone

Austin
with
Amenety
in 2001.

still smiles over DR Gilty Pleasures, the ultimate "family horse." At Scottsdale that year, Bob Boggs was unable to show the Half-Arabian mare known around the barn as Dotty. Austin showed her to unanimous wins in her Mares 4 & Over JTH and the Half-Arabian Fillies and Mares JTH Championship, while Janene accompanied her to unanimous titles in the adult amateur ranks. But—open? Janene recalls a barrage of "Can I show her, Dad? Huh? Can I show her, please?" She and Bob owned the mare, and at the end of the day, they figured, their horses were about having *fun*. So, yes, Austin could show her.

Bob and
Arn-Ett
Perlone in
1987.

"That was the first big 'wow' moment," she recalls. "He barely came up to Dotty's

shoulder. It was pretty exciting." With Austin, DR Gilty Pleasures nailed down the title in her Stock/Hunter Type Mares 4 & Over, a class of 18 entries that featured not only some of the breed's top halter showmen, but five national champions as well. Then it was on to a unanimous championship in Half-Arabian Senior Mares, and finally, the 4-year-old mare and her 12-year-old handler were reserve in the Scottsdale Half-Arabian Supreme Championship.

At 18, Austin closed out his amateur years with the APAHA Junior Halter Handler of the Year Award, which was announced in February 2011, just as he began his first year as a professional.

What is so alluring about what is, basically, a 24/7 job that can be unforgiving and pressure-filled? Some



Austin with DR Gilty
Pleasures at the 2006
Youth Nationals.





of it, he says, *is* that pressure—the sheer “you have to perform” aspect of the job. But it is not just the short periods in the show ring that draw him; it is the broad picture which has to come together. “For instance, the 5-year-old stallions last year, the first year I was a professional,” he says. “I’m showing in the open stallions at Scottsdale with a potential contender [WH York]. We’d purchased him [as a yearling] and resold him, and people had forgotten about him. He was kind of coming from nowhere; we were bringing him back out and it was going to be his time to shine. And it really was. He was unanimous second in the class.”

And at this point, he knows how the competitive pressure works. “On the morning of the classes, I’m not so much nervous as focused on what I have to do to make the horse look the best. It’s not up to us anymore; it’s those

three or five people in center ring. I’ve just got to go and give them everything I’ve got and show them that I have the best horse on that day.”

It is natural to assume that an already-well-known name like “Boggs” would pave his way, but in reality, he says, it has not made the process easier. For one thing, there is the natural expectation that he will do well no matter what, but that, he notes, is old news; it was the same when he was in amateur. He has learned to regard it all as one more motivation, not the least because his achievements reflect on his father. “There is always the thought that I have to be able to do it because he should have been able to teach me,” Austin says, and shrugs. “I try not to think about it much. You can only do what you’re able to do, and my parents told me that from the start.

“My sister doesn’t feel it,” he adds thoughtfully, “maybe because she shows in performance. But I started off showing halter, which is what my dad and uncle have based their businesses on. My personal thoughts were that those were huge shoes to fill—what they’ve been able to accomplish in their careers.”

Bob and Austin at the 2004 Ohio Buckeye Show.



Bob and PR Morisa at the 1984 U.S. National Championships.



The Boggs Family: Olivia Bob, Janene and Austin.



Austin at age 5.

Austin and
Brass Chief.



Austin in 2008.

So, at this stage of his developing career, how much input does his father have? “My dad has taught me,” Austin says, “but I’ve also been privileged to learn from other trainers and many people that we’ve showed horses for. As far as the business and trying to be a business person, I’ve learned pretty much all of it from my parents—the breeding, the pedigrees, everything.”

Asked if he still gives his son advice, Bob Boggs laughs. “Do any 19-year-olds go to their father for advice? Maybe it’s the other way around; maybe we go to him for advice. But, seriously, yes. Sometimes. He doesn’t know it all, but he tries hard. That’s a little bit of our character, to be diligent about what we’re doing and seek help when we need it to get through.”

This year, when Austin went to the Scottsdale Show, he carried a significant amount of responsibility. Bob wasn’t able to be there early in the week, so it was up to Austin to see that the barn met its own high standards. As the show unfolded, so too did memories that will last a lifetime.

“We’d brought down a 2-year-old gelding named TKS Oh My Gatti, by KM Bugatti,” he says. “Everything that has gone on with him has pretty much been

because of me. The people that owned him called me, I went out to see him, and I showed him the first time, when we got him qualified. I brought him home, conditioned him myself and trained him. And he was champion in the Scottsdale Signature Stallion 2-Year-Old Gelding Championship. That was amateur-to-handle, so I didn’t show him, but he won almost \$11,000 for the people. He was a product of what I was able to do in the past year—in one year, take a yearling gelding from the pasture to winning Scottsdale his 2-year-old year. It was a lot of fun.”

At U.S. Nationals eight months later, he led TKS Oh My Gatti to a top ten in the Yearling Geldings class. With his record growing each year, he now faces an annual schedule that takes no prisoners: Scottsdale, the Arabian Breeders World Cup in Las Vegas, the Egyptian Event, and an array of regional shows in addition to the Canadian and U.S. Nationals. And, when appropriate, international events.

For his parents, the fact that Austin has seen the real side of the business is critical. “There is a lot more that goes into this business, as everybody knows, than just showing a horse and being in a spotlight,” says

Bob with LH Garcia.





Janene, Austin and Bob Boggs.



Bob with Justify.



Janene Boggs. “Some days you’re very excited about it, and some days you go, ‘Well, are you sure you want to do this?’ At least growing up on a farm has allowed him to see different aspects of this business, what else goes into it. He’s not scared of hard work (if you are, this is not the place for you). And he knows, as Bob always said, if you’re scared to do something, you won’t get anyone else to do it either. So if you ask somebody to do something for you, you’d better know exactly how to do it, have done it yourself, and be prepared to do it again. There are long days, but there are rewards that go with it.”

“I think along the same lines as my parents,” Austin says of his approach. “So far, they’ve been successful. For me to look at it and say ‘I don’t think that would work’ would be kind of foolish.”

Bob smiles when he recalls the world in which he made his name. In 1984, when he led LH Garcia to the U.S. National Championship for Futurity Colts and PR Morisa to the title in Futurity Fillies, he was facing

classes of 80 entries—and both of his winners represented “small” owners who had bred their champions. Today’s smaller industry now allows less time and opportunity for a young trainer to develop his skills.

“This is a difficult business,” he observes. “You have to be a horseman and develop your horse sense; you have to do more than just train. You have to breed horses, sell horses, you have to learn how to judge and evaluate horses—you need to know the horses inside and out. It’s the breeding end that supports the training. There is no other way to say that. Our good broodmares took care of our father and mother before us, and we’ve done a lot training horses, but the breeding end for us is the foundation. And that’s where Austin’s foundation will be.

“There’s nothing like watching your child succeed, that’s for sure,” he adds, “especially when they work hard to get what they are after. That’s the best thing we can teach our kids—not necessarily success or defeat, but how to compete and play the game.” ■

