

Foreword: Dick Dady was kind enough to share an email address for Dr. Ronald (Ron) Dow...and Dr. Dow was kind enough to share an email address for Stephen Kinney, a long-time friend of the Dows. Stephen credits *OVC with his inspiration as a one-time horse trainer. Stephen Kinney has shared the photos you will see in the article below and has also shared some of his thoughts about Dr. Dow and *Oran Van Crabbet in an article he recently wrote for the *Arabian Horse Times* entitled “*Oran Van Crabbet—A Love Letter”. He has trained or owned a number of *OVC get.

“Hey, look at me!”

Memories of *ORAN VAN CRABBET and The Dows

By Dick & Barbara Dady

A few months ago, Virginia Kelsall contacted me and said the ECAHS was honoring the Dow family at their Awards Banquet this year and asked if I might write a short history of the Dows and *ORAN VAN CRABBET (*OVC). I first met Dr. Ronald Dow approximately 55 years ago, and, with my memory being what it is, I may not remember all the details. However, Barbara and I will do our best to share our memories of the Dows and their remarkable horse.

Dr. Dow, or Ronald as his mother (Emma) called him, is now 86 and living in Belfast, Maine, but when we met in 1963, he and his family were living in Perham, a small town in northeastern Maine, just a few miles from the Canadian border. He was a professor in the English department at the University of Maine, Presque Isle and taught for 29 years before retiring in 1991. He had degrees from the University of Maine and Boston University.

Ronald’s grandfather was a blacksmith his whole life, shoeing mostly work horses. He also owned Standardbreds, the most notable being Sister Express. Ronald’s father was also a blacksmith for 13 years. In 1958 Mr. Dow, Ronald’s father, purchased a colt from Sun Shadows Arabians, and, in 1960, he purchased the Crabbet mare *Shorana (Oran x Sharlina). I only met Ronald’s father one time.

We met Mrs. Dow, Ronald’s mother, three or four times, and we really liked her. A typical hard-working Maine woman, she was known for telling it like it is and pulling no punches. My friend, Pete Onley, who purchased ORANIANA, an *OVC daughter, from John and Vickie Stroh, was at the time a potato farmer on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. He would travel to Northern Maine to purchase seed potatoes, and one bitter winter day I went with him. While they were loading his tractor trailer, we borrowed a pick-up from one of the workers and went to the Dow farm only a few miles away. The temperature was well below zero with at least two feet of snow on the ground. Ronald was teaching at the time and was not at the farm. When we arrived, we found Mrs. Dow in the barn trying to thaw frozen water pipes to no avail. She said she had been carrying water from the house to the barn for *all* the horses. Pete and I found it remarkable how this small woman could be so cheerful under the circumstances. We both kind of took pity on her, but she simply



Emma Dow & Ron Dow

said, IT HAS TO BE DONE, end of conversation. Barbara recalls Mrs. Dow once telling us about a time she broke her leg or ankle, we can't remember which one, while in the barn doing chores. She went on to finish the chores before getting medical attention. IT HAD TO BE DONE. A remarkable woman.



***Oran Van Crabbet as a weanling at Crabbet Park, sent by Cecil Covey in 1960 to the Dows**

The Dows purchased *OVC in the Fall of 1960 from the Crabbet Stud. *OVC's sire was ORAN and his dam was SERAFINA, she being a tremendous broodmare producing 14 foals.

Her first, *SERAFIX, was born in 1949, followed by *SILVER DRIFT, *SIYAMA, *ROYAL CONSTELLATION, *SILFARINA, *ORAN VAN CRABBET AND *BRIGHT GOLD. They all foaled in England and were imported to the U.S. or Canada. Four of the sons, including *OVC, became champions and sired champions.

*OVC was a weanling when the Dows purchased him, and he came to this country by boat. When they got him home, the first thing he did was kick Ronald in the hip. Ronald admits they were green and ignorant at the time and didn't know much about Arabians. Soon *OVC had them all buffaloed. He gave them fits for a couple of years before being sent to a trainer in Western New York State in 1963.

He made his showing debut in 1963 at the New York State Fair in Syracuse, New York. I was showing at the same show and that was the first time I saw *OVC. He made quite an impression on me. We were both in a 3-gaited (now Park horse) qualifying class. It was his first time in the show ring and he acted up and didn't place. I won the class and we met again in the Championship Stake class. He had a different rider and this time he looked and acted like a new horse. The Judge (Larry Thornhill) called for a workout between the two of us and my horse had a bobble. *OVC looked and acted even better, and he was named Champion.

After the class, I went to *OVC's stall to get a better look. He looked more like a saddlebred than what the average Arabian looked like at that time. He had a high set neck and long sloping shoulder. He also had a way about him that said, "look at me." In addition, he was one of the first Arabians with knee motion and good hock action. It was there that I first met Ronald Dow.

In 1964 the Dows made the best possible choice they could have made in sending *OVC to Bob Hart for training. It was a match made in heaven. Bob's expertise and quiet ways were exactly what he needed. He became one of Bob Hart's special horses. He was not an easy horse to train. At the Hart's, every bad action became known as "pulling an *Oran Van Crabbet."

Despite the training challenges, I don't believe he ever placed less than second in any performance class and was named National Champion Park Horse in 1966. After winning the



At the first Arabian Horse Fair demonstrating the ideal Arabian park horse

National Champion Formal Driving and National Champion Formal Combination in 1969, he became the first Arabian to win three National Championships.

It was a few years after this that we really got to know Ronald. It began when we went to Bob Hart's to pick up ARDONHALL BADIA, *OVC's first offspring born in the country. BADIA was at Hart's for training, but she wasn't considered sound. The plan was to use her as a broodmare, but we continued training her very slowly. Over time, she did become sound enough for our son, Tim, to show her under saddle and she did very well as a Park horse. Later BADIA went to David Bandy who used her as a broodmare. Ronald also sent us three *OVC daughters to market for him.

After *OVC retired from showing, Ronald contacted us to see if we would be interested in taking him to our farm and standing him at stud. We welcomed this opportunity, and *OVC became very popular in our area. John and Vickie Stroh owned nine foals by him. Many were successful show horses. One of the *OVC sons they kept just passed away this past February at the age of 36. Another, the gelding STORAN, was our granddaughter's horse throughout her teen years. He was quite a character like his old man.

Many people bred their mares to *OVC during the time he was at our farm, but I will include just a few here. Garvin Tankersley bred two mares and had two foals. Roi Hoskins bred a mare who produced a colt VANRAFF. He was the sire of COUNTESS VANESSA, who many believe was the best moving park horse ever. Judy Warner bred a half-Arab mare who produced a big beautiful chestnut mare. We had a client's mare at the time who we recommended be bred to *OVC. She had mostly Egyptian blood. David Bandy purchased the mare in foal, and she produced ORAN VAN BANDY, who has probably sired more offspring than any other *OVC son. *ORAN VAN CRABBET remained with us until his death in 1982. Gary Dearth wrote an excellent article in the October 2016 issue of the *Arabian Horse World* featuring *OVC. It is a must read and a testament to his legacy.

The interesting people we met and the great horses we got to work with as a result of our ties to the Dows and *ORAN VAN CRABBET, have certainly enriched our lives. Barbara has her own memories of our time with *OVC and recalls his last day vividly all these years later. The post script below is from her.

Post Script

When you spend your life working with horses, hundreds pass through your hands and it can be hard to remember them. Not so with *ORAN VAN CRABBET. I can see him as clearly now as ever. We were blessed to have him with us for his last years. Since he wasn't ever still, he spent serious time on the walker, but the one thing he never did was walk. He would prance and bounce up and down and announce his presence to any passerby. The "hey look at me" attitude that made him a great show horse made him a joy to live with.

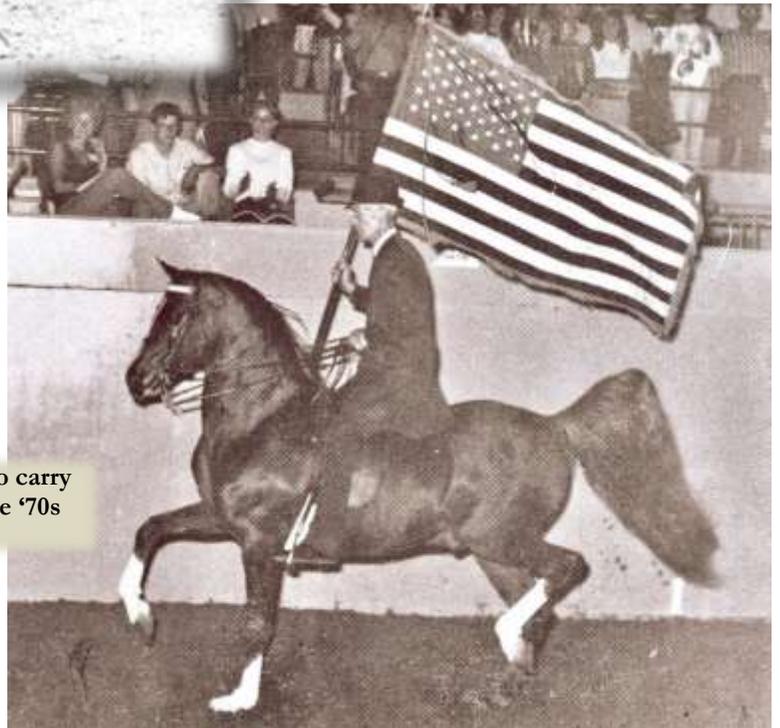
Sadly, *OVC's last day was a nightmare. At that time, he was living in a stall open to his own paddock. Until that morning, he was always at the fence to greet me when I arrived at feeding time, but on this day, he was standing with his head down and obviously in trouble. Our vet came quickly, but said his only hope was to take him to the vet clinic at New Bolton Center. Our only way to take him was a 2-horse trailer. I rode in back with him to keep him on his feet. He wanted to lie down, but, as always, did as he was told and stayed upright. When we finally arrived and got him off the trailer, he collapsed to the ground. He did manage to get up and walk in on his own power. It was devastating when the surgeon came out and explained that during the surgery *OVC had a perforation of the intestine, would not survive, and should be euthanized with the owner's permission. Having little choice, Ronald agreed to end his horse's life peacefully while still on the

operating table and to have *OVC's ashes sent to him. It was such a sad end, not only to the life of a truly great horse, but to a wonderful chapter in the lives of the Dow family and ours, and a chapter of Arabian horse history.

I loved that crazy beast and miss him to this day.



Photo by Polly Knoll at Wayne Newton's ranch waiting to be reunited with Bob Hart, Sr.



Bob Hart and *OVC were invited to carry the flag at the U.S. Nationals in the '70s