

September 22, 1997

Dear Orin:

For you, mere hurrahs and congratulations are insufficient. If I could arrange an ovation, with fireworks, I'd do it.

For the Bird Dog Foundation, a question: Why did it take so long to put Orin Benson right where he belongs, in the Retriever Field Trial Hall of Fame?

As Dave Duffey's nominating letter demonstrates, the Hall of Fame was utterly undistinguished without Benson.

Perhaps because he was unaware of it, Duffey did not touch on your generosity which, to me, was the most amazing aspect of your career.

Other trainers wouldn't give the time of day to an owner who was, let us say, less than affluent.

I didn't even fit that description. I was broke when I had Tar. So was the original owner of Black Panther. Yet that didn't stop you from helping me get the most out of Tar or training Panther to the pinnacle of field trials.

Truth to tell, your fame was a matter of fact years before your long-overdue elevation to the Hall. Out here, a while back, I invoked your name and that of Panther to silence local experts critical of small Labradors.

"Some little dogs, like Black Panther, do fairly well in trials," I said, in a vast understatement of Panther's winning record.

"What Black Panther?" sneered a honcho in a Montana retriever club.

"The Black Panther, trained by Orin Benson," I said.

"Oh, well, yeah," muttered the critic. "I guess that's right."

Case closed.

Cheers and best,

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