

The background of the cover is a photograph of a sunset over a field. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that transitions into a soft blue sky. In the foreground, there are silhouettes of plants, including a prominent vine with leaves and tendrils on the right side, and bare tree branches on the left. The overall mood is peaceful and natural.

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Photos by Peggy Turbett

Eric Schneider, left, president of Schneider Saddlery, with his parents CEO Stanley and Karen Schneider, marks the 70th anniversary in 2018 of the family-run supplier of horse tack, supplies and riding apparel in Bainbridge.

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Schneider Saddlery remains vital family business serving Chagrin Valley for 70 years

By RYAN DENTSCHIEFF

When Milton Schneider began buying and selling equestrian supplies and equipment in the 1940s, it was unlikely he imagined an international business with the family name thriving for seven decades.

But that's the case with Schneider Saddlery in Bainbridge Township which celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2018.

Now run by Eric Schneider – grandson of Milton and son of Stan and Karen, who helped operate the family business for decades until their son took over in 2015 – Schneider Saddlery employs about 80 people, does wholesale and retail business across the globe, and operates out of an 80,000-square-foot space

on East Washington Street.

Long before a business model was established, things got started because of Milton Schneider's love for horses, Stan said.

"Dad was involved in horseback as a hobby

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Cover art for the 1988 Schneider catalog is one of the many catalog covers on display at Schneider Saddlery, a horse and rider supply store established in 1948.



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his whole life,” he said. “He loved it.”

In addition to helping his father with a separate family business, Milton would go to horse auctions with friends to buy and sell horses and used equipment. One year in the early 1940s, a place where Milton kept his horses went out of business and he decided to purchase all of the failed business’s used equipment to sell at auction. The auction was a success, Stan said, and Milton then began seeking out more used equipment to sell on a regular basis.

Eventually, the family sold the prior business and Milton began focusing on buying and reselling equestrian-related materials and horses full-time. From there, the business that would later be known as Schneider Saddlery was born.

That operation continued through the 1950s, and in the early 1960s, Stan’s brother Don, and then in the late 60s, Stan himself, joined the business.

“My brother brought a great deal of business acumen to it in terms of turning it from a hobby into more of a business,” Stan said. “He began starting to do more importation of products from overseas and expanded into a lot of areas we were not in at the time.”

When Stan joined his brother and father in the late 1960s, he sought an area where he could flourish.



Schneider Saddlery specializes in horse blankets and other equine protective gear available online and at the store in Bainbridge Township.

“I always assumed I would go to law school and be a lawyer,” he said, “but we went to our first horse show in 1966 and it was a great success not just as far as business, but more than that, I met some wonderful people and really enjoyed the weekend.”

At that first show, Stan recalled, he was asked about getting some specialty products that weren’t available elsewhere, particularly for Arabian equestrians.

“They asked, could I get them made? I

said yes, even though I had no idea,” Stan said with a laugh. But he was able to get the request filled and immediately began offering the new products across the country.

From that experience, Stan said he had found his niche in the business – product development and marketing. The business continued to grow into the company it is today.

One of the things that made Schneider Saddlery successful from the beginning, the Schneiders said, was Milton’s dedication

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“What was unique about what my dad did at these auctions that had not been done previously was twofold,” Stan said. “He sold goods at the auction with a money back guarantee, which never existed at auctions. It was always buyer beware. And secondly, he started selling new merchandise at auctions.

“Those two things had never been done before in this country and it gave him a real impetus. And people really fell in love with my dad because the service he provided.”

Today, Eric said the business is run with a similar mission.

“What we’re doing today really isn’t that different from what we were doing 70 years ago,” Eric, the third-generation Schneider said. “We may operate in different channels and at a different scale, but essentially it’s the same business, which is being totally customer focused.

“Whether that’s from Milt listening to people at auctions and understanding what they wanted, to us listening to people on social media, or in our store, or at the shows, we make sure that we have what they want. And we really pay attention to the details, because those details matter,” Eric said.

The business in 2018 spreads across the world with hundreds of dealers selling Schneider Saddlery products. In addition to selling products for horseback riding and competitions, such as saddles, bridles, blankets and more, they also sell a large selection of apparel and products simply for the horse enthusiast, such as toys, fashionable boots and attire, and home decor. The store on East Washington features 10,000 square feet of retail space.

Beyond the business within Schneider Saddlery, the family also is working to build on the tradition of horses in the Chagrin Valley. Prior to working at Schneider Saddlery, and later marrying Stan, Karen Schneider, formerly Karen Jackson, was always heavily involved in the riding and show side of the sport. She added that aspect of expertise when she joined the business and said continuing the local equestrian tradition was a big motivator for the family’s purchase of the 85-acre equestrian center Chagrin Valley Farms last September.

“In my era,” Karen said, “Red Raider (Stables in Russell) was the place to go and learn to ride. You could learn to love horses and learn to become enthusiastic about riding. You could take lessons, go trail riding, go to camp, all of the things that people grow to love.

“That’s been kind of missing in this area. So when Chagrin Valley Farms went up for sale, it either could have gone to a development, or maybe we could bring back that energy with lesson programs and camp and all of the different things. That’s the energy behind it.” ■







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