



Grayson-Jockey Club Remembers Dr. Jack Robbins

NOTE: The Oak Tree Racing Association announced that it will match donations made to Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation in honor of Dr. Jack K. Robbins. The pledge will cover donations up to a total of \$100,000 that are made through December 31, 2015.

Donate at: <https://www.grayson-jockeyclub.org/default.asp?section=2&area=DONATE&menu=1>

Dr. Jack Robbins, who passed away at the age of 93 on Nov. 29, was a longtime stalwart of Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation as officer, director, and director emeritus. The Foundation reveres this association and offers condolences to his family.

As a race track veterinarian, farm manager, breeder-owner, and racing association president, Dr. Robbins devoted his career to efforts in concert with the basic tenets of Grayson-Jockey Club---to support, protect, and cherish the horse.

“Doc Robbins was a true horsemen who happened to be a veterinarian,” said Dell Hancock, present chairman of Grayson. “Racing has lost a person who was a great friend to the horse and all who love the animal and the sport.”

“Jack wore many hats and all of them properly,” said longtime friend and colleague Dr. Gary Lavin, vice chairman of the Foundation. “He was involved with the early days of the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP),” which stressed ethics in the veterinary profession. “I’m not sure, though, that his involvement with the founding of Oak Tree isn’t at the top of his contributions.”

“Jack Robbins was the racetrack veterinarian everyone wants,” said his longtime colleague, Dr. Rick Arthur, currently medical director of the California Horse Racing Board and a director of Grayson. “He was professionally talented, highly ethical, and understood horses and racing in and out. He was concerned owners received fair value for his services and was just as happy when a horse performed well without any veterinary care as he was when a horse won after he was able to diagnose and resolve a difficult case.”

Born in Michigan, Jack Robbins studied veterinary medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, where he graduated in 1944. Migrating to a race track practice in California, he found himself entrusted to care for such Calumet Farm champions as Citation, Two Lea, and Ponder. Over succeeding decades, his clientele involved him with Majestic Prince, John Henry, Native Diver, T. V. Lark, Rahy, and many others. That clientele included such Hall of Fame trainers as Charlie Whittingham, Horatio Luro, Ron McAnally, Bobby Frankel, Buster Millerick, Gary Jones, and Richard Mandella.

Dr. Robbins’ advocacy for, and living example of, ethics and professionalism in all aspects of veterinary practice led to presidency of the AAEP, which later named him a Distinguished Life Member.

Uniquely well rounded in his own activities and in the respect he engendered in various aspects of the Turf, Dr. Robbins owned major stakes winners; was a partner in the selling of Honeys Gem at auction for \$137,000, a broodmare record at the time, and served as managing partner for Laguna Seca and Conejo Ranch during their phases as leaders in California breeding. He was a member of The Jockey Club as well as a director of the California Horsemen’s Benevolent and Protective Association and University of California-Davis Center for Equine Health. He was a member of the California Thoroughbred Breeders’ Association for some 50 years.

In the late 1960s, Dr. Robbins was among the leading California horsemen who conceived and established Oak Tree Racing Association, which added a meeting of the highest quality to the state’s and nation’s annual racing calendar. Established with high aims on behalf of racing, Oak Tree over the years has nurtured various charities connected to the Turf.

In their personal lives, Dr. Robbins and his late wife Maggie instilled respect for racing in their four sons, all of whom became contributors to the industry: Tom, executive vice president, racing & industry relations, at Del Mar; Don, former president of Hollywood Park; David, an attorney with clients in the business, and Jay, trainer of two-time Breeders’ Cup Classic winner Tiznow, Horse of the Year in 2000.

When the Thoroughbred Club of America honored Dr. Robbins at its annual Testimonial Dinner in 2002, the scroll presented him paid tribute to his “lengthy and far-reaching service to the highest standards of the sport and business of racing [and] his dedication to the hands-on, charitable, and administrative aspects of equine health and science..”

The Robbins family would appreciate donations to Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation in memory of Dr. Robbins.