

An Ambassador, Friend & Good Guy



by DOUG BURGE

“Hey Doug, Scoop.” That was the extent of the message that was frequently left on my voicemail. Typically there were no details, just Scoop’s way of letting me know that he was checking in and to call him back when I had a chance.

Whether it was to talk about the horse business or our kids’ sports, he always made it a point to talk, to listen and to care. Regardless of how busy he was with all that he was involved in, he was always available. He loved to talk horses, and he loved to talk family.

When Frank “Scoop” Vessels III passed away tragically last month, California’s horse industry lost an ambassador, and quite a few of us lost a good friend. Although I knew Scoop for more than 15 years, it was roughly 10 years ago that Scoop became extremely active with the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association (CTBA). After the passing of the late Eddie Gregson, Scoop jumped in to fill a void as leader, supporter and friend. He was initially the chairman of the Sales Committee, then Vice President and later President of the CTBA.

Although he had many other commitments in his life, he gave a considerable amount of time and energy for the betterment of the horse industry. He was not only highly respected, but one of the few individuals whom nearly everyone would describe as “a good guy.”

Racing is surely going to miss him, and so am I. The world could use a few more like him.

We asked the CTBA’s Board of Directors, Ex Officio Don Valpredo and Legislative Advocate Bob Fox to reflect on their friend Scoop. We have provided those comments below, as well as a tribute on page 15.

Frank “Scoop” Vessels III (1952–2010)—In Their Own Words

“I have been fortunate to have known Scoop for over 30 years, both as a colleague and a personal friend.

Having been deeply involved in both the Thoroughbred industry and the Quarter Horse industry, he was a dynamic force in the equine industry as a whole. Scoop was the organizer of the California Horse Council, which has been powerful in uniting all breeds and disciplines in California. Our loss is incomprehensible; our privilege was to have known him. He will continue to be a great inspiration to us all.”—

Leigh Ann Howard, President

“Scoop, I just want to say good-bye. Personally wanted to thank you for all you have done for the Quarter Horse and Thoroughbred Industries. It was an honor working with you on the CTBA board. I thought you were an outstanding President; your leadership and innovation will thoroughly be missed. You will always be in my prayers and thoughts. May god watch over you and your family.”—

Pete Parrella, Vice President

“‘Scoop’ was a very warm and extremely generous man who was devoted, number one to his family and then to the horse industry. His scope of influence in the Quarter Horse industry was nationwide and was his first love but in recent years he devoted time, energy and considerable financial aid to improving the Thoroughbred industry in California. He was always looking for positive ways to improve things and gathered industry leaders at frequent intervals to exchange ideas on how things could be made better. He loved life, adventure, horses and his fellow man. You cannot replace a man like this, you just treasure his memory and be glad you had a chance to know him. My heartfelt sympathies go out to Bonnie and his sons.”—

John Barr, Treasurer

“I will always hold dear my last memory of Scoop having a conversation with Doug at Del Mar about their sons and their activities

in sports, etc. He spoke with such pride an admiration for his sons’ accomplishments. Scoop was always an inspiration to me, as a horseman and a father. My deepest sympathy go to his wife and sons, their father/husband was a true champion.

Still can’t believe he is gone, so tragic! I hope that we are fortunate enough to find someone to fill his shoes, big ones to follow in for sure!!!”—

Sue Greene, Secretary

“It is indeed a sad day for all of us who served with Scoop on the board. He brought new ideas to the table, along with his sense of humor. Scoop had a great zest for life and a love for horses and the people involved in the industry. He will be missed.”—

Jeanne Canty

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Frank “Scoop” Vessels III, sons Kash, Bryan and Colt, and wife Bonnie (left to right).



From the Executive Corner Cont'd.

"It was an honor to have been considered on of Scoop's many, many friends.

When we first met Scoop, it was immediately apparent that he 'was a man of trust'... how true that was. A handshake from Scoop, a nod of his head meant a deal that was made and would not be broken. His smile and laugh were addictive... his positive attitude was always there. He was considered a really 'good' guy!!!!

We are going to miss the 'big' guy and will remember him always. Our love goes out to Bonnie and the boys and we look forward to many more years of business with Vessels Stallion Farm."—**Past President Keith Card (and wife Barbara)**

"Scoop, what a wonderful man. It is folks like Scoop who make our sport such a pleasure to be in. He woke up every day thinking how to make our sport better; he really understood from a horseman's perspective what needed to be done and was always an optimist. I will truly miss him."—**Will de Burgh**

"Scoop Vessels was one of a kind! He was generous to a fault, and I will forever remember his leadership and guidance when we were finalizing the establishment of the California Horse Council.

Joining Scoop and Bonnie at last year's AQHA convention in Florida in March, when he was inducted into the AQHA Hall of Fame, was something that I will never forget.

Thanks Scoop, for all you did for horses and horse people!"—**Bob Fox**

"Scoop Vessels represented everything positive in life. As proven by his many achievements, he was a great horseman and off-road competitor. Scoop was a visionary and the most enlightened individual when it came to dealing with the all considerations of equine pursuits and the equine industry. He was a true friend who seemed always to go the extra mile.

Most of all Scoop was a wonderful father and husband. He spoke more about his family than about the horses. Those of us who were fortunate to have known he and Bonnie have been blessed. They have been a true inspiration in so many ways."—**Dan Harralson**

"Scoop was giant in the equine industry. He was a big man with a big heart and a wonderful outlook. His enthusiasm, knowledge, energy and genuine concern for horses and people are irreplaceable. He was a great friend and ally and always a joy to be around. He was multi-talented and excelled in every area he was involved in. His devotion to his family was particularly impressive. He was a gift to the equine industry everywhere, but particularly in California, and truly 'a man to match our mountains.' We will all miss him greatly and my prayers are with his beloved family and all others at this difficult time."—**Past President John Harris**

"I remember my first visit to Vessels Thoroughbred Farm early after Scoop became a director of the CTBA. He graciously gave me the "grand tour," and I was immediately impressed with the beauty and tranquility of his farm, and his continuation of the Vessels' family work that preserved the memories of his father and grandfather. He was a at one with his horses, his family and his friends. His knowledge and most importantly, his presence, will be missed."—**Myron Johnson**

"Scoop Vessels was a big man in every sense of the word. He had a big heart and he made big contributions to the industries he loved.

The Vessels family business is, and always has been, horses. Scoop

was an advocate for the horse beyond his business interests. He personally adopted and adhered to the Welfare Code of Practice of the American Horse Council which always 'put the horse first.' This is the idea that the welfare and safety of the horse is the guiding principle in the decision-making process for all segments of the horse industry.

In memory of Scoop and his interest and desire that we in the industry adopt this Welfare Code of Practice, I urge that every individual who makes a living with horses at least read the Commitment to all Horses and the Horse Industry as put forth by the American Horse Council at www.horsecouncil.org.

We have a rare opportunity to improve the way we do business and to improve the perception and image of that business as well. Adopting the American Horse Council Welfare Code of Practice, as Scoop requested, is a big step in the right direction."—**Mary Knight**

"Scoop Vessels said, 'I happen to live in California.' That sentence epitomized his attitude toward life. Along with his love of family and country, his honesty, generosity and goodwill; Scoop went to work to make things better for his neighbors and the horse industry. His optimism, gracious unpretension and energy serve as a model for all who continue his efforts, and, because of his death, are permanently grieved."—**Rosemary Neeb**

"I appreciate this opportunity to express my thoughts regarding the recent loss of Scoop Vessels. He was a man who gave generously of his time and talents to many organizations. Both the American Quarter Horse Association and the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association will struggle to find a person to replace him.

But as great as our loss seems, it is minimal when compared to the staggering loss to his wife Bonnie and his three sons. Scoop's energy and generosity were legendary, but what made him so unique was his total lack of pretentiousness. We miss you Scoop."—**Bill Nichols**

I have been very fortunate to have worked with Scoop on the CTBA's Board of Directors, to have been a client of Vessels Stallion Farm and to have been a shareholder in the In Excess (Ire) Syndicate.

Scoop was man to model one's life after:

He truly and unabashedly valued his family and his life;

He had a great sense of humor, often releasing a quiet sarcastic comment with a mischievous grin;

He knew his horses and knew how to surround himself with good horsemen;

He knew how to make a business deal that benefitted not only himself but was also the person on the other side; and

His priorities were always for the betterment of our industry and he worked hard to achieve industry goals.

Sometimes bigger than life, but always accessible, we have lost a true friend and industry leader.

Our deepest condolences to Bonnie, his family and friends. Scoop will be deeply missed by us all.

—**Past President Dan Schiffer (and mother Bay Schiffer)**

"Scoop was an exceptional motivator and mover in the simplest of terms.

He lived his honest life on the blue roads, as he and Bonnie always stayed in the Motel 6 in Maricopa when traveling through the San Joaquin Valley.

This year we sat together and enjoyed the Kentucky Derby at The Red Barn during Rancho Visitadores. We had a great time enjoying a glass of red wine while sharing laughs and thinking of new ways to make the world better.

He was a great friend, had a unique style and was always honest.

—**Past President Don Valpredo**