



JOHN HARRIS

CTBA DIRECTOR AND PAST PRESIDENT

Remembering Buddy

The horse world lost a wonderful, essential, vibrant friend and compatriot on May 5, 2015, when Buddy Johnston passed away at his home in Claremont early that morning. He always seemed invincible to me, and we all mourn his loss greatly.

I first got to know Buddy when I was asked to join the CTBA board back in the 1970s, and he was on the board. At that point Cal-breds were not nearly as respected or rewarded for their successes as they are today, but Buddy was a vocal and effective advocate to change that. Without Cal-breds, California racing today would be struggling. The long-term incentives to breed and own Cal-breds have been key to keeping the sport alive here.

Breeding and racing horses has many ups and downs, but just being around Buddy at the races or at his farm, which is just across the Kings River from mine east of Fresno, was always an upper. He probably bred more top-notch horses over the decades than anyone else in California history. His style was not to go out and pay some huge amount for a horse or stallion, but to develop them on his own; he was consistently successful.

Buddy was a great judge of conformation and had a fantastic mind, which helped his appreciation and memory of pedigrees. He had bred several generations of most of the mares in the pedigrees of his top horses.

It was so well deserved for Acclamation to win the Eclipse Award, and a wonderful acknowledgement of all the work that Buddy and his family put into the game. It was a further tribute to his faith in California that he turned down several attractive out-of-state

offers for this champion and instead stood him in California, where he joined other major stallions such as Vronsky (by Danzig) and Cyclotron (by Grand Slam).

I think that will pay many dividends for both Buddy's family and the many others who have bred and will breed to the horse. I have supported him every year he's been at stud and feel he is a sensational stallion prospect. Every Acclamation foal I have seen has been most attractive, and I feel he will be a leading sire in California and the country for a long time, once his progeny start running. I wish Buddy could have stayed around to see that happen, but he'll be watching from above. His love of his family and racing and breeding good horses were always unquestionable.

Buddy was a firm believer that California, especially the San Joaquin Valley, is a great place to raise horses. He proved that with his many homebreds, as well as many other top horses bred and raised at his farm for others.

I still find it hard to believe that Buddy has left us, and I still expect to see him at the track or around the farm. I hope his family keeps the operation going. He has a fine team of employees, and his grandson Jonny Hilvers is extremely capable and hard working. Let's all do everything we can to support them, and I hope we see those red and white silks in the winner's circle for many years to come. **CTB**

FOR MORE TRIBUTES TO
BUDDY JOHNSTON
SEE PAGES 12-13