



## JOHN BARR, A TRUE FRIEND OF THE INDUSTRY

The CTBA lost another great friend and colleague with the Feb. 5 passing of longtime board member John Barr. Mr. Barr, as most of the CTBA employees would call him, joined the board in April of 1996, which was roughly six months after I had started. He was very instrumental in my early years with the CTBA, as we jointly advocated for all the current benefits that are now available for those who breed and race California-breds. As John only had daughters, he would refer to our frequent phone calls as “a father and son talk.” He had great business sense and was all class.

John contributed to all facets of the Thoroughbred industry. We saw the work he did for the CTBA, both as a past president and a member of the current board, and he was inducted into the CTBA Hall of Fame in 2019. Beyond that, however, he was only the third president in the long history of the Oak Tree Racing Association, taking that on when Dr. Jack Robbins stepped down in 2011. John also served on the Board of Stewards of The Jockey Club and for five years on the Board of Directors of Breeders’ Cup Ltd.

In every facet of his stewardship, John looked out for people and horses. He was rightly proud of his work

on The Jockey Club’s safety committee, where he pushed for changes in medication protocols and better safety conditions for horses and riders. When he heard that Churchill Downs offered free flu shots to people on the backside, he returned home and worked with the Oak Tree board to provide the same thing on California’s backstretches.

John’s service extended to the community as well. Up until the time of his passing, he was a member of the board of the Richard Nixon Foundation, which oversees Nixon’s presidential library in Yorba Linda. He previously served as treasurer until 2021.

Family meant a great deal to John, beginning with his wife, Betty. They were married 71 years and raised three daughters. John and Betty have four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. The Barr family loved to take vacations together, with Hawaii their favorite destination.

John is a native Californian, born in Riverside. He and Betty raised their daughters in Downey and moved to Orange County in 1977. John served in the Army and worked in the oil business for 14 years. He segued into commercial real estate, and with his

business success he and Betty were able to begin their Oakcrest Stable.

Under the Oakcrest banner, John and Betty bred and raised many good runners, most of them Cal-breds. Bountiful Dreamer won the 1998 California Cup Distaff, and Bob’s Lady

was a double stakes winner. Beverly Z. was a homebred stakes winner who then produced Waingarth, another homebred stakes winner, for them. Oakcrest homebred Bert’s Melody captured the 2016 Fran’s Valentine Stakes, and more recently, homebred Cassie Belle, a daughter of Lucky

Pulpit, earned more than \$200,000.

You could always count on John for a laugh, as he had an amazing sense of humor. Whether it was a joke he would tell or a daily e-mail, he would always put a smile on your face. One such memory I have is during a CTBA board meeting several years ago when we were discussing water issues, and someone mentioned the Delta Smelt. John stood up and said, “I need to go, but I want to leave you all with this old saying: Of all the Smelt I have ever smelt, I never smelt a Smelt like that Smelt smelt.”

He was one of the best and I will miss him dearly. **CTB**



John Barr

© BENOT PHOTO