

John H. Adger

For John Adger, a deep passion to promote and preserve the rich equine heritage of Texas has dovetailed nicely with a long and successful career as an owner, breeder, and advisor on the international stage of Thoroughbred racing.

Though born in Miami, where his father was a captain for Pan American Airlines, John moved with his family to Houston at the age of three, and it has remained his hometown throughout most of his lifetime. Horses were introduced to his life early on, with summers spent at the Spring Hill, Tennessee, farm of his grandparents, Col. and Mrs. John Haynes. Among the Tennessee Walking Horses owned and showed by Col. Haynes was two-time World Champion Haynes Peacock. An uncle, Robert Lancaster, took John to Arlington Park to watch his first race at the age of 12, and to his first Thoroughbred auction, the Keeneland Summer sales.

After attending Louisiana State University, John bought his first horse. A visit to the Bluegrass in 1969 afforded John a chance to spend two days with the late A. B. "Bull" Hancock, scion of the famed Claiborne Farm -- an experience which helped shape his future path with advice he still finds valuable. He was also introduced to Mr. Hancock's son Arthur; the two have now been friends for fifty years, and have had many successful joint ventures in the bloodstock world.

It wasn't just Bull Hancock who reached out a helping hand to a young John Adger. He credits many others who freely gave him advice, or who took a chance on dealing with an untried newcomer. The late Lukin Gilliland, Sr., recommended John and the late Ted Keefer to Tom Tatham, who was putting together his Oak Cliff Stables. John and Ted suggested future Group 1 winner Trezieme as a weanling purchase for Oak Cliff, as well as the purchase of Bold Captive, who was carrying future Breeders' Cup Classic winner Skywalker. John also recommended the purchase of Wishing Well, later dam of Horse of the Year and breed-shaping sire Sunday Silence.

For his close friend, the late Joe McDermott, John advised the purchase of the Thoroughbred stallion Raise Your Glass, sire of Special Effort, the only horse to win the Quarter Horse Triple Crown at Ruidoso. Along with Valid Expectations and current leading sire Too Much Bling, Raise Your Glass turned out to be one of three leading sires in Texas that John would be

involved with. The former two stallions both stood at Will Farish's Lane's End Texas, and John credits the involvement of Ambassador Farish and his long-time manager Danny Shifflett with the stallions' successes, as well as the farm's contribution to raising many Texas-bred stakes horses for John and his clients over the years, most notably the Stonerside runners.

Other key clients John has worked with over the years include Josephine Abercrombie, for whom his recommendations included buying a half-interest in the successful stallion Sky Classic, and, more recently, the Speedway Stables of Peter Fluor and K. C. Weiner, which has become a rising star on the racing scene in a very short time, with runners such as Collected and Roadster.

However, John's work with Janice and Bob McNair in developing their Stonerside Stable will undoubtedly be remembered as one of his most noteworthy accomplishments. After meeting Bob McNair in 1993 via mutual friend Bill O'Connell, what was to be a very small racing stable grew into a major force in the breeding, racing, and auction arenas, not just in Texas but around the globe. As racing and bloodstock manager, John guided the McNairs' investments, from the key acquisition of the Elmendorf broodmare band to the purchase and development of a 2,000-acre Kentucky nursery and, finally, the eventual sale of the Stonerside equine empire to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai, in one of the largest transactions in racing history. The scope of Stonerside's influence saw the stable perennially rank among the leading owners and breeders in the U.S., race four champions (including one in England, where the stable was a leading owner, and one in Argentina). As well, the Stonerside silks were sported by more than 60 stakes winners, including 14 Grade or Group 1 winners and nine millionaires. Stonerside also bred or co-bred more than 100 stakes performers, including a Kentucky Derby winner and two champions, tallying a record of 23% stakes performers from starters.

On his own or in partnerships, John has raced graded winners such as Upperline and Willcox Inn, and this year is looking forward to racing a homebred filly from the first Texas-foaled crop of Congaree, one of Stonerside's best runners who is now standing at Valor Farm.

A Lifetime member, past president, and current board member of the Texas Thoroughbred Association, John was honored with the T. I. "Pops" Harkins Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2009. He has served on the Board of

Directors for the Texas Horse Racing Hall of Fame, and the University of Kentucky Gluck Equine Research Foundation; as a member of the advisory board of the Fasig-Tipton Company, and on the Breeders' Cup board of members. He was also an investor in the Thoroughbred Sales Pavilion at Lone Star Park.

In 2012, Adger was part of a three-man partnership who purchased the entire collection of famed equine photographer Tony Leonard, which included more than half a million negatives, encompassing many of the industry's most iconic images. The Tony Leonard Collection has since produced a calendar to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Secretariat's Triple Crown, a stallion poster, and arranged several exhibitions of Leonard's work, including one at the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame in Saratoga.

John Adger has one daughter, Bettina Adger Barrow, a film producer, and she and her husband Brian have two daughters, India and Wilhelmina. Barrow's latest film, *Sister Aimee*, premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival.