

Trudy's Legacy Of Love



From the Executive Corner

by DOUG BURGE

On the morning of Feb. 12, I received the phone call that I had been dreading. Our friend Trudy McCaffery had lost her battle with cancer. Being the fierce competitor that she was, she fought hard to the end. I first met Trudy in the mid to late 90's when Free House was on the Triple Crown trail. She showed such enthusiasm, class and love for the industry, that we unanimously voted to extend her an invitation to the CTBA board. I am so grateful she accepted as that began our wonderful friendship and ongoing working relationship for the betterment of California breeding and racing.

Trudy was extremely generous with her time and resources. If it was for a worthy cause benefiting the horse or the industry, she was always there. This was evident in the number of organizations, both in California and nationally, in which she was a director.



It was her charitable organization the Kids To The Cup, however, that gave her the most satisfaction. One time when I was with her at the University of Arizona Race Track Industry Program (RTIP) Symposium, I noticed that various students kept making their way over to speak with her. She turned to me, full of pride, and said, "Do you realize that all of these students started in the Kids To The Cup and now they are getting their degree to work in racing?"

That year the RTIP presented her with the Distinguished Clay Puett Award, as given to a select few who have given so much to the industry. Those in the audience clapping the loudest were those students whom she had touched and filled with her passion for horses and the racing industry.

Trudy was very special to many people. Following, we have included some quotes from those in racing who knew her well. 🐾

I found Trudy to be what we have all come to know as a very open, warm humorous and practical lady. She felt very strongly about giving back to the industry, which had provided her with so much joy. She served with enthusiasm and devotion. We have all lost a true friend, who will not soon be forgotten.—John Barr

Trudy will be difficult, if not impossible, to replace in the horse industry. She was intelligent, fearless in her opinions, and a warm and gracious lady. It is one thing to think of an idea, it is another to carry it into being. Kids To The Cup is one example. She was a valued Oak Tree director for all these reasons. We will miss her suggestions and her energetic presence.—Sherwood (Chilly) Chillingworth

They say (and this may be the single occasion in which 'they' ever have been correct) that we are fortunate if, in our lifetimes, we are blessed with a few close friends. Trudy was such a person to many people. Our lives will be dimmer without her vitality, energy, guidance and style—John De Santis.

She was the best. She loved all her horses. Bien Bien was the first of many good horses we had together. Free House, she loved him the most. She was very fun. She always enjoyed seeing her horses work out, and then she'd go back to the barn and give them kisses. She loved all her horses.—Paco Gonzalez

The quintessential Trudy: Unflinching passion and loyalty to her friends and horses. She and Eddie Gregson were eternally devoted to the extended family of horse racing and all the people who keep it afloat. And last but not least, she kept the standard for horses, people and clothes where it belongs, at the apex.—Gail Gregson

Trudy was a very special person and her untimely loss leaves a very big void in the sport of racing and breeding horses. She truly loved the game and loved her horses as much as anyone I have ever known. Her sense of humor, sparkling personality, enthusiasm and willingness to get things done will be long remembered.—John Harris

One of Trudy's many special qualities was that she celebrated the success of others as if it were her own. Her support of my career as a sculptor was immeasurable. What started out as a client/artist relationship developed into a treasured friendship. I'll never forget that enthusiastic "Oh Really!!!" that greeted every bit of good news one shared with her. We'll miss her so much.—Nina Kaiser

Trudy was such a bundle of energy—and moved at full throttle every day that she could. She was also a very generous person and, for us, her kindest act was after our Jack Russell died, she gave us one of her Jack Russells. "Dilger" is now eight years old. He is in constant motion just like Trudy was. Racing has lost a true advocate and friend.—Jon and Sarah Kelly

It was a distinct pleasure for me to get to know Trudy and a privilege to have ridden so many wonderful horses for her. Trudy was a knowledgeable horsewoman and a tireless advocate for horses and for racing. She will be sorely missed—Chris McCarron

Trudy set an example of dignity and grace throughout her illness. When I spoke with her shortly after the death of Free House, she said, "It is like losing my child."—Rosemary Neeb

Free House was her boy. She'd come out and visit him quite often. She was instrumental in keeping that horse in California. She was bullish on California Thoroughbred breeding. She was one of the very unique ones. I respect people who give of their time for something that has given so much joy. She would raise her hand for so many things.—Frank (Scoop) Vessels

She was racing's best friend. Her biggest thrill in racing came when she was named to the Oak Tree Racing Association board. She would come up here every weekend during the Oak Tree meeting, leave first thing in the morning, and then go down to the track. She would then get back to my place, get dressed, make-up just perfect, then go to her Oak Tree board meeting. Even though she was going through chemotherapy, she felt it was her duty to go and she'd present trophies and mingle. She brought people together, like with Kids To The Cup, and lived for that. And she would follow through with her horses. Del Mar Dennis became a jumper, and she would go to shows to watch him compete. She loved racing more than anything. —Jenine Sahadi