

# Betty Mabee: In A Class Of Her Own



*From the Executive Corner*

by DOUG BURGE

The California breeding industry lost one of its biggest supporters with the recent passing of Mrs. Betty Mabee. Along with her late husband John, the Mabees famed Golden Eagle Farm was a fixture among the state's leading breeders for more than three decades. Their strong commitment to California through their investment in superior bloodlines and production of top horses, will continue to play an influential role in the future success of California-breds. She was truly a classy person and will be sorely missed. We have asked various individuals in racing to submit their own recollection of Mrs. Mabee. They are provided below:

*Not only has our sport lost a true matriarch but I have lost someone so special to me. It was not only my honor to have worked for her for so many years, but also to have known her so intimately and the sport she loved. I will miss sitting with her in the morning naming horses using the newspaper mixed with her favorite words over a cup of coffee and a cookie. I will miss her intoxicating laugh and her vast enthusiasm for the sport. She made me want to read through pedigree's and past performances at 3am because of the excitement of a potential mating not yet discovered. She told me once the most important thing in our industry was getting that special horse and enjoying the fans who followed. She loved watching her horses run and she loved every fan letter that came with a big win. Every newborn foal was a possible "Best Pal" and around Mrs. Mabee, you just thought that way. I miss her very much.*

Janine McCullough, Manager of Golden Eagle Farm

*She was a unique lady. She had a style and eloquence that often belied her humble mid-western upbringing. She and John were so much more than a married couple. They were true partners in business, racing/breeding and life. When asked by friends or reporters on what his future plans were, John would always reply, "Mrs. Mabee and I ...." Although John was such a great mentor to me and certainly the most driving force behind Del Mar, it wasn't until after Barbara and I became close friends of the Mabees that I realized his successes had Betty's fingerprints all over them. John was one of the smartest men I've ever known and the smartest move he ever made was convincing Betty to marry him.*

Joe Harper, President of Del Mar Thoroughbred Club



**Betty and John Mabee**

*Mrs. Mabee was one of the best people that you could have ever known in your life. Just let me put it to you this way: "Without the Mabee's in my life, no one would have ever heard of Gary Jones." I have always considered her, "The First Great Lady of Horse Racing."*

Gary Jones, Former Trainer

*She was the epitome of class. Always a kind word for anyone around her and she took the time to be generous to all. She made a dramatic impact on my life, not just from the job opportunity that I landed in but also personally, by just being around someone with so much insight and wisdom about life. I sorely miss her.*

Gayle Van Leer, Bloodstock Consultant

*Betty Mabee will long be remembered. She brought style and grace, and her genuine love of the game was always evident. She and John lived the American dream and it was wonderful to see them succeed so well. I particularly appreciated their long dedication to the California breeding industry. Despite being also heavily involved in the Kentucky industry, they kept California at the top of their priorities by developing Golden*

*Eagle Farm and constantly standing their top stallions in California and acquiring others to bring here. Their status as leading breeders in the state was unchallenged for years. I am very pleased that Betty and Larry kept the operation going so well after the loss of John, and hope it will long continue.*

John Harris, Breeder/Owner of Harris Farms

*I was so sorry to hear about Mrs. Mabee this morning and our condolences go out to everyone at the farm.*

*She was an inspiration to so many Thoroughbred fans, owners and breeders both inside and outside of California.*

*Just like there will never be another Best Pal, there will never be another Betty Mabee.*

Reed Ringler, Fasig-Tipton

*I will always remember Mrs. Mabee as The First Lady of Racing. They put me on my first grade I winner in the Beverly D at Hollywood Park and I will always be grateful for that. I was also very fortunate to have the opportunity to ride Best Pal. Mrs. Mabee was a class act; she always had a smile on her face in the paddock before each race.*

Gary Stevens, Former Jockey

*Bonnie and I had the good fortune in knowing the Mabees when they first entered the Thoroughbred business with Gene Cleveland as their trainer.*

*Mrs. Mabee had knowledge and a great love of the business and was known for her philanthropic work in San Diego, most particularly, her mentoring of others in fund raising.*

*One of the fondest memories we have of Betty was her incredible ability of naming horses for their stable. Each year, she would create names for more than 100 foals. The names were creative, positive and uplifting, and were often related to the matings of each foal. Just look at recent sales catalogues throughout the world to celebrate generations of her marvelous names.*

Rollin Baugh, Bloodstock Consultant

*I just wanted to express my most heartfelt condolences to the Mabee family and to Golden Eagle Farm's staff for the passing of Mrs. Mabee.*

*Years ago, I had the privilege to exchange a few letters with her about Best Pal, a horse so greatly admired.*

*Mrs. Mabee was a wonderful lady, very kind toward a fan who was based so far away from California and the horse we both so liked. The photo of Best Pal winning the Santa Anita Handicap she sent me still hangs from my bedroom wall, a perennial memory of a great, kind lady and a beloved horse who are now together again.*

*Thank you for the memories, Mrs. Mabee, this fan from Italy will never forget you.*

Ilaria Dotti (Italy), Best Pal Fan