



### **Jon Joseph Riker**

Jon Joseph Riker was born August 16, 1920, in Springfield, Tennessee.

Jon Riker, know to his friends as “Papa” married Marguerite (Marge) Norris, whose family owned the Detroit Red Wings. Marge became president of the team in 1952, and she was recognized as the first woman chief executive in the National Hockey League. She was also the first woman to have her name engraved on the Stanley Cup. The couple had two sons and two daughters.

Jon and Marge owned Westenhook Farms, Inc with operations in both Southbury, Connecticut, and WPB Florida. Along with being known for great horses, the Connecticut farm was also known for its unusually large 98 stall round barn. Having the round pen in the center was convenient for lounging horses, but the roof’s overhang into the round pen, made breaking colts rather hazardous.

Papa was the fifth generation of his family to breed Quarter Horses and was doing so before the registry even began. Although he

initially bred working horses, in 1964 he started breeding for competition, and would eventually breed many ROM, AQHA Champions and Superior horses.

Westenhook was among the leading breeders of American Quarter Horse numerous times, but in 1972, Westenhook garnered the leading breeder award in all four categories of performance horses!

Horses bred by the Riker's included 48 point earners with 536 performance points and 34 class winners with 144 wins. Interestingly enough, each year the entire foal crop would be named with the same starting letter, ie: all the names started with the letter A the first year, and had Riker in their name. By naming the crops alphabetically, it was easy to know how old each horse was just by knowing its registered name.

Through the years, the Rikers owned numerous stallions, including Kid Five and Leo Sandy Bar, who sired multiple champions.

Papa enjoyed driving horses and became a big promoter of cutter and chariot racing. In the early years, he was passionate about cutting horses, but over time he developed more of an interest in English events and began to breed accordingly. His horses found great success in the show ring, and the Riker children were accomplished competitors as well.

Known for his passion for performance horses, it's not surprising that Papa would be influential in Florida's show world.

The Florida Gold Coast was the first AQHA circuit in the nation. One of the early founders of the Florida Gold Coast, Papa first introduced English classes--including working hunter and pleasure driving -- in the early 1970s.

Papa did his best to promote the show series, including hosting a huge party each year under big tents with as many as 850 guests in attendance.

If fact, one year when rains had flooded the arenas, Papa hired helicopters to hover over the show rings to dry them out so the show could continue.

An early member of the FQHA, Riker enjoyed wintering in South Florida and maintained a home in West Palm Beach. Even though his breeding stock remained at the farm in Connecticut, each year in early November he would ship his show horses down to Florida for the season.

Jon Joseph Riker was 66 years old when he died in Durham, Connecticut, on June 2, 1987.