



Harry Christian Von Knoblauch Sr.

SEP 28, 1926 - AUG 9, 2017



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Harry Von Knoblauch was in his early 40s when he bought his first horse and embarked on a career in harness racing. A decade later, the self-taught horseman was a top trainer on the Chicago circuit, leading a stable that became known for its New Zealand-bred imports.

His success with Down Under stock continued the rest of his life, most recently as the owner of stakes-winning New Zealand-bred horses Bit Of A Legend and Mossdale Conner and Aussie import Mackenzie.

Von Knoblauch passed away Aug. 9 in Tucson, Ariz., at the age of 90.

"His favorite thing to do was watch his horses and talk about his horses," said Von Knoblauch's daughter, Ellen Kinser, who partnered on horses with her father and plans to continue racing with other family members under the Harry Von Knoblauch Stable name. "He was very proud, and he was very surprised that he was that successful.

"He led a very interesting life."

Von Knoblauch grew up in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and later moved to Long Island, where he lived across the street from Belmont Park. His interest in harness racing developed through trips to Roosevelt and Yonkers raceways.

He was not involved in the sport, though, until relocating to the Midwest because of his job as a manufacturer's representative for an audio/visual equipment company. He bought his first horse in the late 1960s and at the age of 43 decided to begin training his horses as a way to control expenses.

Von Knoblauch - who prior to working in sales spent time in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and also was a bus driver - learned about training horses through reading books, asking questions, and trial and error.

"He knew nothing about horses," Kinser said. "He learned just by hanging out at the barn talking to the old-timers. That's a testament to Harry's personality and his charm. I'm sure these guys didn't



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hand out information to everybody. Harry was very soft-spoken and nice and handsome, so he got along with them. He wasn't arrogant. He was humble. These guys shared their info with him and little by little he creeped up the ladder."

By the early 1980s, Von Knoblauch had won multiple training titles at Chicago-area tracks. He also started finding talent Down Under, with his first well-known New Zealand-bred horse, Jack Horner, winning 12 of 17 races and \$53,200 at ages 3 and 4.

In time, Von Knoblauch's stable was filled predominately by New Zealand-bred horses. He said the influx of horses from New Zealand was fueled in part by fewer racing dates Down Under coupled with a favorable exchange rate for the U.S. dollar.

"New Zealand horses have been successful in large part in the U.S. because we have received the cream of the crop," Von Knoblauch told the Chicago Tribune's Mike Kiley in 1983. "I also credit their strong broodmares, which seem to have a lot of toughness in them and pass it on."

Von Knoblauch said he trained his imports "New Zealand style."

"For 90 percent of them it works," Von Knoblauch told the Chicago Tribune's Neil Milbert in 1986.

"They're used to racing longer distances - a mile and a half to two miles is common - and they're trained accordingly. So, I keep on working them long."

Von Knoblauch and his son Charles, better known by his middle name Wayne, continued operating a training stable until Wayne's passing in 2013. Peter Tritton, a native of Australia who raced Von Knoblauch's horses on the East Coast, took over the complete training duties for Von Knoblauch's stable.

Tritton, who has lived in the U.S. for 15 years, had the same horse agent, Peter Larkin, as Von Knoblauch.

"If we didn't have the same agent we probably wouldn't have met," Tritton said. "It was good working with Harry because he understood the foreign horses. He was patient with them. He did well buying, racing and selling the foreign horses. We were on the same page.

"We became close friends. If Harry told you something, that was it. His word was everything, and he was a gentleman. Everyone liked him."

During the course of his career, Von Knoblauch owned more than two dozen horses from Down Under that earned at least \$200,000 lifetime. Topping the list is this year's Molson Pace and Gerrity Memorial winner Bit Of A Legend, who has earned \$1.10 million in North America and \$1.76 million overall.

Other top earners include New Zealand-breds Mainland Key, Texican, Sell A Bit, Second Wind, and Chris Riley.

In April, Von Knoblauch and his family visited Yonkers Raceway and watched Mackenzie win the Blue Chip Matchmaker Series championship.

"He was so glad he went," Kinser said. "They treated him like a celebrity. He couldn't get over it,



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that everyone was treating him like a celeb. That was nice."

Kinser, her sister Susan, brother Harry Jr., and Tritton plan to move forward with the Von Knoblauch Stable.

"I miss him; I miss him terribly," Kinser said. "We want to keep Harry's legacy going for as long as we can. God willing, we'll get some good horses. We still have great horses, but maybe we'll get more and we'll see how long we can keep it going."

Tritton is hoping for big things from the group, which might include more Grand Circuit stakes action in the future.

"It's just a shame Harry isn't going to be around to see it if we can do well," Tritton said. "I'd always ring him on the way home from the races and tell him how the horses did and what the drivers said. Every now and then I go to ring him on the way home now and I have to stop myself. It's hard to believe he's gone.

"He was a good guy. He will be missed. Hopefully we can do well in the next few years. They'll still be racing under the Harry Von Knoblauch Stable. His name will still go on. Every time the horses go on the track, he'll still get mentioned, which is great."

Kinser said a memorial service for her father will be held in New York in September or October. Details will be announced when available.

Ken Weingartner



Tribute Wall

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Corinne Howard posted:

Hello Family. My name is Corinne. My grandparents were Anna n William Vonknoblauch. I'm pretty sure Harry was Williams cousin. We also grew up in Poughkeepsie n moved to Orange City, FL in 1991. My grandfather received a box in the mail n come to find out, his code lived closed and had no idea. He was there racing horses. I remember going there. My email is Corinneh73@gmail.com If anyone would like to talk.

April 23 at 10:04 PM



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Media

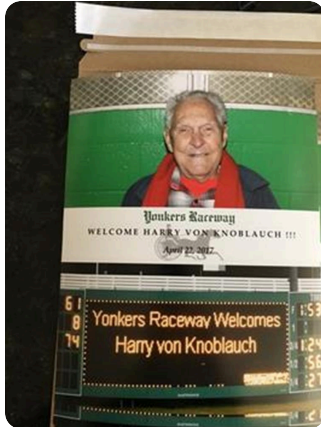
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