

# Dedication to Excellence

By Hailey Harroun

## LEGACY AWARD WINNERS

### Joe Kirk Fulton Stonewall, Texas

BROODMARES GRAZE QUIETLY IN THE PASTURES OF JOE KIRK Fulton's Quien Sabe Ranch, a symbol of this horseman's lifetime of dedication to the American Quarter Horse industry.

Joe Kirk and his father, R.H., developed the original Quien Sabe Ranch, a 150,000-acre cattle operation in the Texas Panhandle that Joe Kirk owned and managed until he relocated to the hill country near Austin in 2004.

While at Texas Tech University, he started a tradition of his own, becoming the first Masked Rider mascot for the university's football team in 1953. A statue of Joe Kirk and his horse, Pretty Day Fulton, now stands in front of Texas Tech's athletic department.

When his days of mask and cape were over, Joe Kirk settled down to the serious business of breeding champion Quarter Horses. When he and Buster Welch put their heads together on the breeding of a Four Sixes mare and Mr San Peppy, the result was all-time leading sire Peppy San Badger. "Little Peppy," as the whole world knows him, won the NCHA Futurity and Derby and sired earners of more than \$21 million in NCHA earnings. The stallion was inducted into the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame this year.

Ranch horses might have been his foundation in the industry, but Joe Kirk found a new love at the racetrack in the late 1960s.

"I started out in halter and performance and got to going to the races and enjoyed it," he said. "I went out and bought a few race mares and bred them to some top horses like Jet Deck and came up with a few runners."

And there the saga began. To date, Joe Kirk has bred 827 starters that have earned \$14,994,674. Of those starters, 65 are stakes winners and 70 are stakes-placed.

Joe Kirk's pride and joy is Dashes Dream, a homebred daughter of Dash For Cash, world champion and earner of more than \$1 million.

"My most memorable moment, that's simple – it was when Dashes Dream won the Champion of Champions," Joe Kirk said.

Joe Kirk, who won the Champion of Champions with Dashes Dream in 1984, came back for a second win in 1991 with Special Leader, a son of Special Effort out of Dash For Cash daughter Miss Eye Opener.

In the last 50 years, Joe Kirk has bred and/or owned Quarter Horse stallions that have sired earners of more than \$60 million. He has also helped shape the industry that has been the springboard for his success.

Joe Kirk has served as an AQHA Director for 43 years, as well as a member of the AQHA racing and stud book and registration committees. He is also on the advisory board of the Texas A&M University Veterinary School and Los Alamitos Race Park, and is the director of the Texas Tech University Foundation.

Joe Kirk also has interests in banking, oil and beer distribution, but horses have captured his heart.

"There are several reasons I'm in this industry," Joe Kirk said. "First of all, it's the people I've met and enjoy in this industry. No. 2, I've had quite a bit of success in the Quarter Horse industry and No. 3, horses are my life. I love them. Some people love to play golf, but me, I'd rather look at my horses."



Dashes Dream