

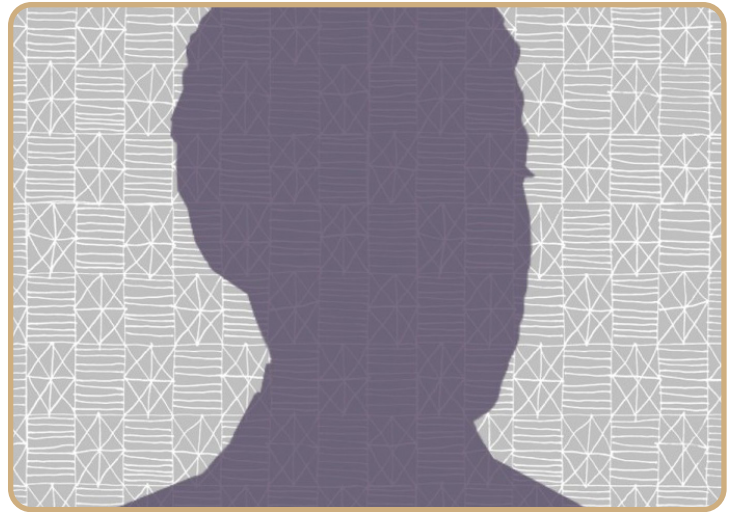
Charles McMahan

Author: Michael Phelps,
Graduate Student Intern

Places: Vinton and Opelousas, Louisiana;
Ruidoso Downs, New Mexico; Cypress,
California

Birth: August 12, 1961 **Death:** N/A

Professions: Jockey



Childhood and Family

Charles “Dink” McMahan is a retired jockey from Louisiana. He married his agent, Sandra Calais, who represented McMahan before taking a job in the racing office at Evangeline Downs in Opelousas, LA.¹ Their son, C. J. McMahan is a notable Thoroughbred jockey who has received international press on his quest to make it to the Kentucky Derby.²

Thousands of Races

Between the late 1970s and late 1990s, McMahan participated in over 2,000 Thoroughbred races. However, the bulk of McMahan’s career and success came as a Quarter Horse jockey where he has over 1,500 wins and \$9.⁸ million in winnings. McMahan has twenty-four graded stakes wins as a Quarter Horse jockey. His best years both in earnings and wins were 1999 and 2001.³ Notable wins for McMahan include the All American Derby at Ruidoso Downs and a third place finish in the Champion of Champions at Los Alamitos.⁴

Overcoming Racism

Although his wife and son have largely avoided the racism older generations have faced, Charles McMahan faced racism throughout his career. His wife/agent Sandra recalls, “When my husband was riding, there used to be a jockey challenge at Remington Park [in Oklahoma],” she said. “And they would never invite him to be in it. One year I just questioned them, because he was one of the leading riders in the country. They finally ended up inviting him, and he won it in 1994. That, for me, was an accomplishment.⁵”

Legacy

McMahan’s career hit a rough patch when his jockey license was suspended for three years. The Louisiana State Racing Commission alleged he used an electric shocking device

in a 2002 race at Delta Downs, Louisiana.⁶ After the suspension, he returned and continued to competitively jockey Quarter Horses throughout Louisiana for a total of thirty-five years until his last race in 2015 at Delta Downs.⁷

Sources

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Footnotes

¹Genaro, "C. J. McMahon and the Rise and Fall of the Black Jockey."

²Genaro.

³Buchanan, "Jockey C.J. McMahon."

⁴Buchanan.

⁵Genaro.

⁶Cannizzaro, McMahon vs. LSRC.

⁷McMahon Racks Up Ten Wins To Get Jockey Of The Week Title."