

James S. Long

Author: Michael Phelps,
Graduate Student Intern

Places: New York, New York; Frankfort and
Shelbyville, Kentucky

Birth: 1954 **Death:** April 18, 2017

Professions: Jockey, Hot Walker, Trainer,
Steward, Clerk of Scales



Childhood and Entry into Horse Industry

James Long grew up in New York City. As a teenager, he worked in a newspaper printing plant in Brooklyn.¹ His boss invited him to watch a race at Belmont Park, and this set him on a new career path. Long had previous experience working as a hot walker and training yearlings in Florida. He noted that there was quite a lot to learn, "I'd ridden the horses in the trail park and on the merry-go-round. But I grew up in Brooklyn. There are not many horses there. We're talking about starting from scratch."²

Injuries and Winnings

Injuries slowed Long's career. Regardless, between 1976 and 2008, he made over 4,000 career starts, winning over 300 races and more than \$2,700,000.³ He won the 1975 Dwyer Handicap at Belmont Park aboard Valid Appeal.⁴ Long rode fewer races in Kentucky and Michigan in the 1990s and early 2000s. During that time, he often worked as an exercise rider for trainer Bernie Flint at Churchill Downs.⁵

Legacy After Racing

Long maintained his connection to the horse industry after he stopped racing. He served first as a clerk of scales and then as a state steward at Hazel Park in Michigan.⁶ Long also pushed for increased prominence of the African American horse racing legacy within American history. As a featured speaker for Lexington, Kentucky's Juneteenth celebration, Long noted, "The very first professional athlete in America was not a basketball player, not a football player, not a baseball player. He rode horses, the sport of kings, and he was African-American."⁷ Long died in a car accident outside of Louisville, Kentucky, after an event where he told the story of his work in the equine industry. His final presentation was recorded as part of the Louisville Storytellers Project.⁸

Sources

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Footnotes

¹Cheves, "Jockey Discovers History of Black Horsemen at Local Cemetery."

²Frakes, "Famed Jockey Long Remembered As 'Jovial.'"

³James S. Long Jockey Profile."

⁴Glowicki, "Famed Jockey, James Long, Killed In I-64 Car Crash."

⁵McGee, "Former Jockey, Steward Long Killed In Car Crash."

⁶McGee.

⁷Cheves.⁸Long, "CJ Storytellers: Former Jockey James Long."