

2012 Jerry Baker



A highly creative, entrepreneurial force in the show jumping world for three decades, D. Gerald "Jerry" Baker played a major role in the development of American show jumping.

In 1953, he competed with the U.S. Army Team in Germany, winning Silver and Bronze Medals in Berlin. While stationed in Germany, he became impressed with European show jumping's striking contrast to what he had seen at home. When he returned home, he resolved to introduce U.S. audiences to authentic European-style Grand Prix and Derby competitions over longer courses that would include banks, ditches and water jumps, courses which were virtually unknown in the U.S. at that time.

The first competition he organized along these lines was the Cleveland Grand Prix at Chagrin Falls, OH in 1965, the first show jumping Grand Prix in the U.S. For that event, and most of the early events he started, Baker also served as course designer.

That first Cleveland course earned Baker and Laddie Andahazy, who co-designed with him, the American Horse Shows Association's 1965 Course Designer of the Year award.

Baker followed his initial success by helping to organize other Grand Prix including one at Oak Brook, IL (1966), the American Gold Cup in Cleveland (1970) and then a two-event California series at Santa Ana and the world-renowned Rose Bowl (1972). Baker also helped Gene Mische found the American Invitational at Tampa in 1972. He also created Grand Prix in Atlantic City, NJ, and at C.W. Post College on Long Island, and he helped organize the first FEI World Cup Final in the U.S. (1980 at Baltimore).

Baker also managed the noted show strings of J. Basil Ward of Gates Mills, OH and of Philadelphia's F. Eugene Dixon. In fact, Baker convinced Ward to become involved with the first Cleveland Grand Prix and to put up the \$3,000 prize money. His riders included eventual Hall of Famers Michael Matz and Joe Fargis. Ward's Mighty Ruler (later sold to Dixon) and Dixon's Grande (followed by Jet Run) were Matz's first mounts on the USEF.

Baker later served as the Mexican chef d'equipe and was helping to develop riding facilities in Mexico at the time of his death at the age of 60 in 1995.