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Gaming Commission Statement on the Passing of Marylou Whitney

The passing of Marylou Whitney is a sad day not only for the sport of horse racing but also to the State of New York. Her life and work reflected her passion for the sport of horse racing and support of the racing community. However, her devotion to racing did not end on the front side of the track but included the community's backstretch workers – the heart and soul of a racetrack.

Her support was not confined to racing as she was instrumental in providing invaluable financial support to several philanthropic events and causes including the 1980 Winter Olympics which was experiencing financial difficulties. Ironically, her death comes at the start of the Saratoga Meet. She was instrumental in supporting Saratoga and the Saratoga Race Course.

For over six decades, Marylou made New York her home with homes in the Adirondacks, on Fifth Avenue, as well as in Saratoga Springs. In 2018, Mrs. Whitney represented three generations of Whitney's who were inducted into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame as Pillars of the Turf.

Marylou was well known for hosting the Whitney Gala, an extravagant event conducted every summer the night before the Whitney Stakes. Marylou began hosting the gala in the 1960s, when she arrived in Saratoga Springs for the first time as the wife of Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney.

She was an "an irreplaceable ambassador" to not only thoroughbred racing, but to Saratoga and the Empire State. There is no doubt that the 2019 Saratoga Season will be different, as she will not be present for the 92nd running of the Whitney Stakes. The race, however, will provide the racing community an opportunity to reflect on her life and devotion to Upstate New York that she called home. The Meet will provide an opportunity for all to come together and honor her for the decades of advocacy for the sport and the people of Saratoga.

Mrs. Whitney was 93 and is survived by her husband John Hendrickson and her five children, Louise (M'Lou), Frank (Hobbs), Henry (Hank), Heather and Cornelia.

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