

# FRANK VESSELS, SR.

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*In 1947, Frank Vessels, Sr. built a racetrack behind his house for personal use, but in a few short years, thousands of people were flocking to his track to hear the sound of pounding hooves.*

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Vessels' involvement with Quarter Horses began in the mid-1940s. Although new to the racing game, Vessels left an influence on the industry that is still felt today.

He was a director for AQHA from 1947 until his death in 1963 at the AQHA Convention in Tulsa. He helped form the Pacific Coast Quarter Horse Racing Association and served as its president for several years.

Around 1945 or '46, Vessels and Huntley Gordon of Chino, California, traveled through Texas and Oklahoma buying railroad carloads of good mares. The need for a stallion was solved when Vessels bought Clabber for \$5,000 dollars and shipped the "Iron Horse" from Arizona to California.

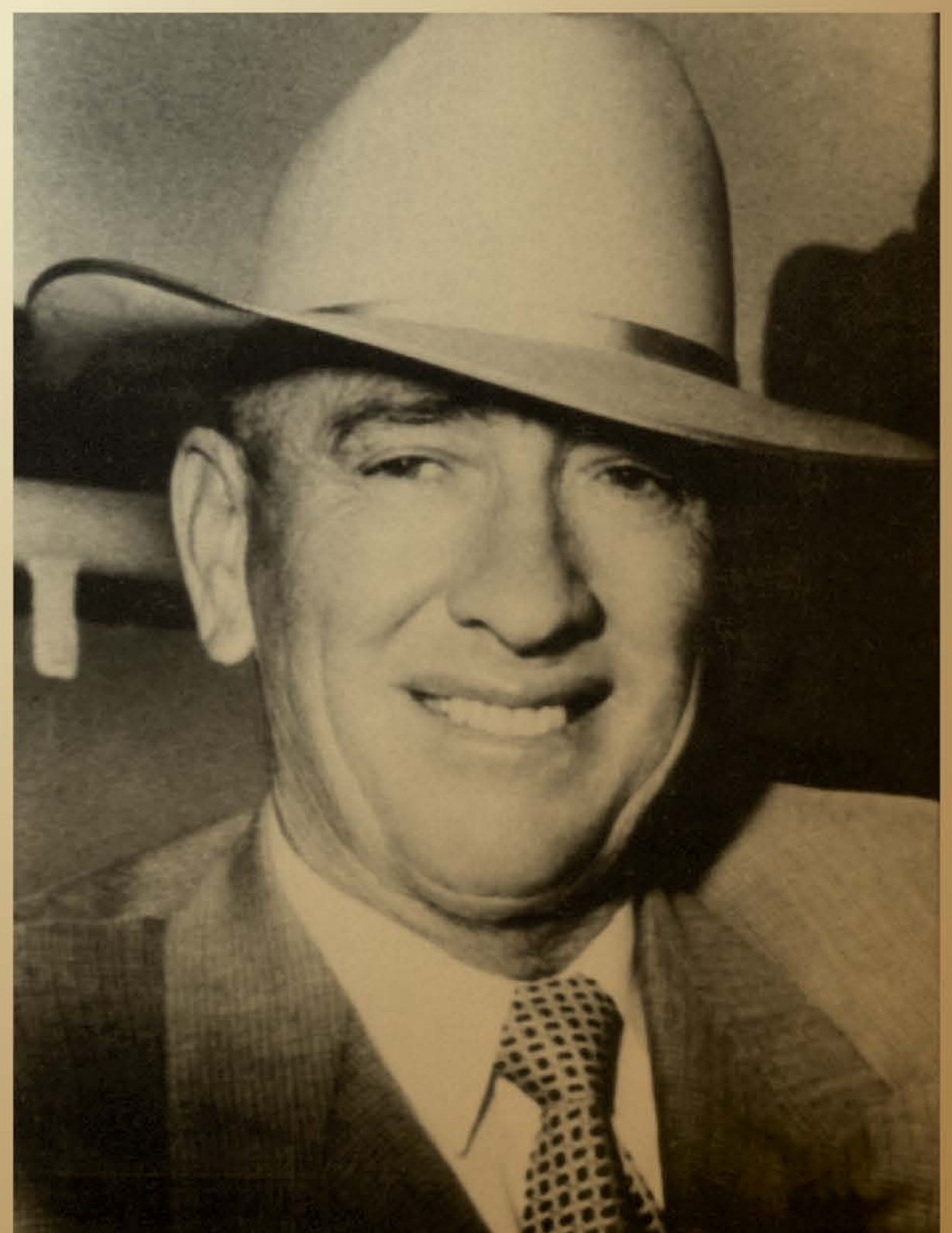
Never doing anything halfway, Vessels built a track in his backyard in 1947. It first was used for training and match racing, but friends were soon urging him to card a full racing program. Needing no encouragement, Vessels hosted a race on Sunday, August 3, 1947.

The races soon became a weekly event, and Vessels traveled to Sacramento, California, to lobby the state legislature for pari-mutuel wagering on Quarter Horses. In 1950, California approved pari-mutuel for Quarter Horses and an 11-day season starting on December 4 of the following year. Vessels decided to move the track a short distance to the northeast.

The new track-Los Alamitos-opened in 1954 and soon became the premier Quarter Horse track in the country.

Besides owning the track, Vessels also owned Vessels Stallion Farm. Two of the prominent stallions the farm stood were Clabber and Go Man Go.

Vessels died at 63, and was inducted into the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame in 1989.



**INDUCTED INTO THE AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE**

*Hall of  
Fame*

**1989**