



---

## PRESS RELEASE - AJAX DOWNS

### REMEMBERING NORMAN PICOV



**AJAX DOWNS, THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 2023** - Community, family, philanthropy, and his beloved horses.

These were some of the most important things to **Norm Picov**, a man determined to grow the sport and community he loved in his hometown of Ajax. Taking the reins from his father Alex Picov in 1952, one of the founders of Quarter Horse racing in Ontario, Norm transformed his family's farm, Picov Downs, into a state-of-the-art Quarter Horse track and casino known today as Ajax Downs.

Today, Ajax Downs' popular Quarter horse racing season attracts thousands of fans each year completing Norm's vision of bringing the community together to enjoy fast horses and family fun. It was important to Norm for fans to get up close to the horses and for the younger generation to engage in the sport at his new track. Through family events, he wanted to encourage the love of horses and benefit his hometown and community. The annual Family Fun Day at Ajax Downs raises funds for the local hospital, which has always been important to Norm, his wife Lynda, and the entire family.



Norm dearly loved breeding and racing horses, coming by his passion honestly as his father was well known for his horse business after arriving in Canada in 1931 and settling in what is now Ajax. Alex and Norm opened the Quarter Horse Racetrack in 1969 on his family farm with a couple other horsemen where they funded the purses for races themselves. Within a few years the track opened a horse complex, arena and tack shop involving community horse shows and stallion stations. Pari-mutuel wagering was added in the 1980s.

The new Ajax Downs racetrack opened with a casino in 2009, as part of the now defunct slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program, and Ontario Quarter Horse racing and breeding prospered.

Norm was honoured by the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame in 2016 with a special award for his “dedicated service and unique contributions” to Canada’s horse racing industry.

At the racetrack, Norm's Picov Cattle Company's horses, and those it sold, won hundreds of races and were a regular in the top five stables each season. In 2020 and 2021, Picov Cattle Company topped all breeders in the province. Picov Cattle Company also bred one of the richest Quarter Horses in the history of the track, Fiesty Icon, a son of Sugarman Perry, who was a two-time Horse of the Year and earner of over \$350,000.

Norm would rarely miss a race by one of his homebred horses. If he wasn't at the track, he was watching online from his office at the Tack Shop. In recent years, his homebred horses have been named in honour of Hanover Hill, where his farm is located, as well as various family and friends. Among those was multiple stakes winner Hanover Hill Chalsee, Hanover Hill Lynda, and Hanover Hill Teresa. Norm was also looking very forward to his namesake racing this year as a 2-year-old, **Storminn Norman**.

Norm passed away with his family by his side on Saturday, February 18 at the age of 86. Condolences poured in from the horse racing community and the Town of Ajax.

Ralph Pearson, also integral in the development of Quarter Horse Racing in Ontario, remembers the lengths Norm went to in order to bolster the horse population in the early days of Picov Downs.

“Norm went to the States and picked up a load of horses. There would be 20 to 30 horses and we’d sit and wait for the horses to come out of the truck. We’d buy them and race them,” Pearson said. “So that’s actually how it got going. It was a whole bunch of guys who just enjoyed it.”

The Ajax Pickering Hospital Foundation was quick to offer its condolences to the Picov family, noting that Picov’s support for the hospital went beyond the contribution to the MRI campaign.

In 2010 the family donated \$100,000 to Ajax-Pickering Hospital’s Image is Everything campaign – the largest cheque the hospital’s foundation had ever received – for the purchase of its first MRI



machine.

“Since 2010, Norm’s beloved quarter horse racetrack has hosted ‘Family Fun Day’ every August in support of the Ajax Pickering Hospital,” said a post from the Ajax Pickering Hospital Foundation. “Thank you, Norm, for your kindness, philanthropy and commitment to horse racing and our community.”

Ajax Mayor Shaun Collier said the Picov family and quarter horse racing have brought together neighbouring communities and “advanced the development” of the town. “Norm’s kindness, philanthropy and commitment to growing horse racing in Canada, and here in Ajax, will not be forgotten.”

Woodbine Entertainment's CEO Jim Lawson said “Norman will be dearly missed. Thoughts are with his family,”

Norm followed in his father’s footsteps in more ways than horses; he loved horses but also people. He was widely known as an honest and trustworthy businessman and would take the time to chat with anyone. He always wanted to know about his horses and about what was going on at the track. He religiously read the program before each race day and always knew when his horses were running. He spent his later years, just like his dad, in the tack shop, in his favourite chair, waiting to talk horses.

Norm was quoted once as saying 'every day is fun. I love it'; his enthusiasm for the family business always stayed true and infectious to everyone around him.

Norman Picov will be remembered for his love of family, horses, and his community. He saw himself as ‘just a farmer’ but was seen by the rest as a force to be reckoned with. He will be missed by many and remembered by all that crossed his path.

**Ajax Downs' 54th Quarter Horse Racing Season** is set to open on Wednesday, May 10, 2023 with a first race post time of 1:30 p.m. For information about our special event Sundays, stakes races, and news, please visit [www.ajaxdowns.com](http://www.ajaxdowns.com). For information on how you can buy a Quarter Horse to race, contact the Quarter Racing Owners of Ontario at [www.grooi.com](http://www.grooi.com).

**Live Like The Gates Just Opened**

Live Quarter Horse Racing May to October  
Wednesdays & One Sunday a Month &  
Thanksgiving Monday

Watch our website for all this seasons events [www.ajaxdowns.com](http://www.ajaxdowns.com)    