

STEPHEN “TIO” KLEBERG

Stephen “Tio” Kleberg has lived and worked nearly all his life on the ranch his great-grandfather, Richard King, established more than a century ago. He continues to carry on the legacy of the King Ranch.

Kleberg is the son of Richard Kleberg, Jr. and nephew of Robert Kleberg, who was one horseman in a handful that founded the Association. Tio grew up on his family’s famed King Ranch in South Texas – where the Old Sorrel line began – and worked all day with the cowboys from an early age. In his later years, he managed several of the ranch’s divisions, comprising of 750,000 acres.

The King Ranch name has always been synonymous with outstanding Quarter Horse sires and broodmares, but Tio, who is an avid cutter, revived the ranch’s reputation in the mid-1970s when he purchased the phenomenal cuttinghorse Mr San Peppy. Subsequent acquisitions of Peppy San Badger (“Little Peppy”) and Dry Doc made the King Ranch the only ranch that stood three National Cutting Horse Association Hall of Fame sires. Kleberg consolidated the ranch’s expansive broodmare operations in 1974 and began breeding the best of the band to the stallion battery. The resulting foals further glorified an already rich history at the King Ranch.

Kleberg’s AQHA presidency in 1985 was a busy year for the Association. The AQHA Incentive Fund was established with the purpose to reward owners of enrolled Quarter Horses with cash incentive awards based on their horses’ performance in both show and race divisions. The payments began in 1986.



The economy was in a slump during Kleberg’s presidency and he wanted to keep the Association out of financial troubles. The AQHA Executive Committee made the formal decision to discontinue the “Stud Book” publication to help cut costs. Resistol Hats, Justin Boots and American Airlines all became corporate sponsors, helping to fund projects such as the AQHA and AQHA World Championship Shows.

Kleberg became an AQHA Director in 1974 and served on the equine research and Hall of Fame committees. He was also a Director of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and National Cutting Horse Association.

Kleberg was inducted into the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame in 1997.

INDUCTED INTO THE AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE

*Hall of
Fame*

1997