

Monticello Raceway legend John Manzi announces his retirement

from Monticello Raceway

Monticello, NY --- Having reached a 50-year milestone working in the harness racing industry (with 34 years serving as Monticello Raceway's publicity director), John Manzi announced his retirement, effective Dec. 19. Commenting on his retirement, Manzi stated, "Every race has to come to an end. And after five decades of answering the call to the post, the time is right for me to relax a little and enjoy my golf clubs and my grandchildren. After seeing so much being at the helm of the Monticello Raceway public relations office for many years, one thing remains supremely important to me. It's all of the good people I have met and the friends I have made."



While he is officially retiring, Monticello Raceway management and John Manzi have agreed that he will continue to write articles for the track and from time-to-time he will offer assistance to the racing operations office.

Laurette Pitts, Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer for Empire Resorts, Inc., owner of Monticello Raceway, stated, "John Manzi is simply an industry legend. Through good times and bad, John played a pivotal role in promoting the harness racing sport. Utilizing his unique brand of creativity, he generated an incalculable amount of good will and positive exposure for Monticello Raceway. While his booming laugh and friendly smile will be greatly missed, we understand his desire to enter this new phase of his life."

Monticello photo

John Manzi announced his retirement, effective Dec. 19.

Manzi began his harness racing career in 1958, three years before he would graduate from Monticello High School, when he began working as a trainer at the stables his family owned locally. Manzi consequently began his racing career when he won seven out of his first eight races at local county fairs.

In 1974, after living and racing all over the East Coast, he got a chance to come back home when he became the assistant Monticello Raceway Racing Secretary. Two years later, after a brief stint as Racing Secretary, Manzi was assigned to Monticello Raceway's office of publicity and public relations. In 1980 he was promoted to the position of publicity director.

From racing elephants, to camels, to elephants against camels, to having a former New York Giants football player race against a horse, Manzi built an impressive legacy of garnering attention for Monticello Raceway.

Monticello Casino and Raceway Assistant General Manager Shawn Wiles commented, "Everyone in our industry knows about John's uncanny ability to

generate positive publicity. What few people know is that apart from managing the big publicity events for our track, John is a universal ambassador for the entire harness racing sport.”

A tireless fundraiser, Manzi has helped numerous industry organizations offset day-to-day expenses through his benevolent efforts. He has been the impetus for money raised and donated to the Harness Racing Museum and Hall of Fame, the Goshen Historic Track, the Saratoga Harness Hall of Fame, the Standardbred Retirement Fund and the Harness Horse Youth Foundation.

As a driving force in the Monticello-Goshen Chapter of the United States Harness Writers Association, he runs its annual banquet that honors their local horsemen and then uses the proceeds to fund numerous other worthwhile causes throughout the year.

Besides his promotional work of the sport at Monticello Raceway, he has done publicity for the New York Sire Stakes and other New York State races and worked for Bruce Hamilton when he was the executive director of the Harness Horse Breeders of New York State. He is also the publicist for the Billings Amateur Driving Series and the North American Amateur Drivers Association. He is a former national president of both USHWA and the Harness Publicists Association.

Manzi's exceptional efforts have not gone unnoticed through the years. He is a member of the Communicator's Hall of Fame in Goshen and has received the Proximity Award from USHWA, the Pinnacle Award from the Harness Racing Museum and Hall of Fame, the Appreciation Award from Harness Horsemen International, the Laurel Award from New York City USHWA and was named USHWA's Person of the Year in 1992.

“I can’t thank Monticello Raceway management enough for all the wonderful years I’ve spent here,” Manzi added. “I grew up in the area, graduated from Monticello High School in 1961, and always had a special feeling in my heart for Monticello Raceway; like it was my own race track.

“Some say I’ve been good for the raceway, but I say the raceway has been good for me. I couldn’t have been more dedicated if I had owned the raceway myself.”

The entire Monticello Casino and Raceway management team and employees thank John for his years of dedicated service and wish John a long and healthy retirement.