

## ***A jockey's death that has saved lives***

With Assiniboia Downs' Season 60 in the books, attention turns to another anniversary in Manitoba racing this month—a tragic one, but one with important consequences for all jockeys in North America.

Ninety years ago this month, September, 1927, jockey **Earl "Sandy" Graham**, 16, was trampled in a race at Polo Park race track after his colt, **Vesper Lad**, stumbled, throwing him to the ground. Jockeys carried him off the track but he lay injured in the tack room until after the races were over because no one was available to drive him to the hospital. He later died.

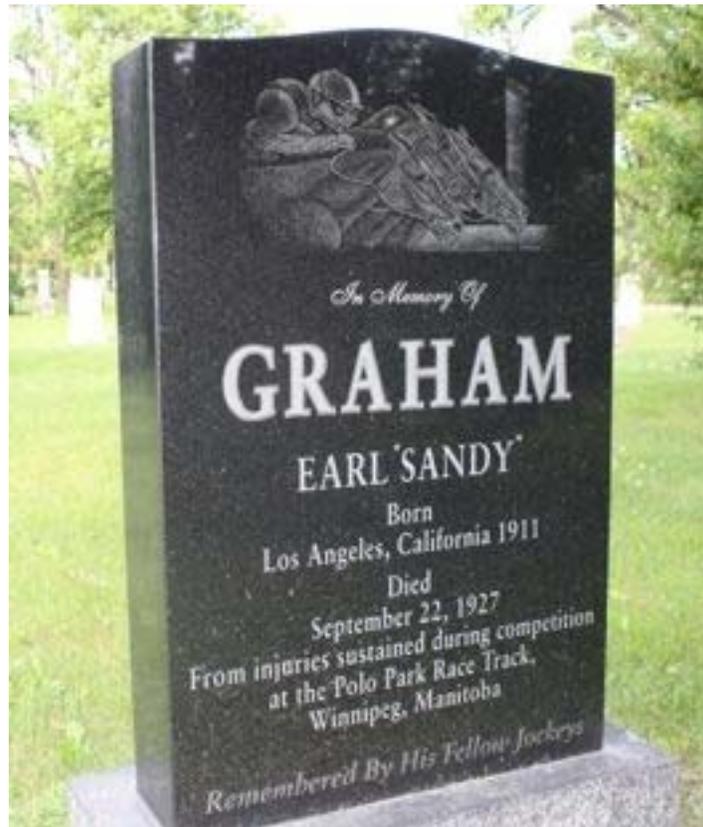
Though his home was Los Angeles, California, he was buried in a pauper's grave at Brookside Cemetery in Winnipeg because his family couldn't afford transporting his body home.

That sad event would simply have faded away had it not been for the fact that Sandy should not have been riding that horse. Another jockey, **Tommy Luther**, had originally been booked to ride and Sandy was a substitute rider.

Guilt consumed Luther and he vowed that his fellow jockey's death would not have been in vain. Over the next 13 years, he sought to organize jockeys into a guild and was even barred from riding for his unionizing activities. But finally, in 1940, with many "name" jockeys at the time as founding members, the Jockeys' Guild was formed.

So today, an ambulance is on standby during every race at Assiniboia Downs as it is at tracks throughout the continent.

Sandy's grave now has an imposing granite headstone with the words "remembered by his fellow jockeys" and a commemorative plaque is mounted on a stand near the Winner's Circle at Assiniboia Downs.



Still, how many jockeys riding today realize they are safer today because of what happened at a remote race track on the Canadian prairies 90 years ago?