



## CANTERBURY PARK

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1100 Canterbury Road  
Shakopee, MN 55379

# Canterbury Park Mourns The Death of Chairman Curtis Sampson

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Shakopee, Minn. -- Curtis Sampson, Chairman Emeritus of Canterbury Park Holding Corporation, died Thursday at the age of 87. Sampson is well-known for reopening Canterbury Park horse track in 1994 and leading it to the successful publicly held gaming, entertainment and development company that it is today. Under his chairmanship, Canterbury Park was transformed from a shuttered racetrack into one of the most attended racetracks in the nation through a unique blend of entertainment and a relentless focus on its family-friendly atmosphere. Canterbury Park expanded beyond racing in 2000 with the launch of the Canterbury Card Casino under Sampson's leadership. Recently, the company has announced a significant redevelopment plan to maximize the surrounding property secured during his chairmanship.

Throughout a career that began in 1955, Sampson was instrumental in the formation and growth of several multi-million dollar telecommunications companies, all while operating out of his hometown of Hector, Minn. where he was born in 1933. Sampson graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1955 with a Business Administration degree. After working three months as an accountant in Minneapolis, he returned to Hector and remained there until his death, first helping build Minnesota Central Telephone, then Midwest Telephone Company, and in 1970 forming Communications Systems Inc. (CSI). Later in his career came North American Communications Corporation (NACC II) in 1986 and in 1990, CSI formed Hector Communications Corporation which was eventually sold, with great returns to shareholders, in 2006.

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Sampson had become involved in racehorse breeding in the 1980s along with his son Randy and they raced the family horses at what was then Canterbury Downs in Shakopee, Minn. The track flourished initially but quickly faltered, losing \$10 million in 1992, its final year of operation before closing.

Curt and Randy along with South St. Paul businessman Dale Schenian purchased the racetrack and surrounding property in 1994, took the company public later that year, with Curt as Chairman of the Board, Schenian as Vice Chair and Randy as company president. In 1995 live horse racing returned to the state at the newly branded Canterbury Park. During his speech while being inducted into the Minnesota Business Hall of Fame in 2012, Sampson said that “horse racing and horse owners need a track” to be successful. He thought it possible to turn a business that lost millions of dollars into a profitable venture but more importantly he knew what it could mean for those involved in the industry. “It had taken our whole team [at CSI] 15 years to generate 1,500 good jobs. In one fell swoop, by buying Canterbury, there could be 1,500 people back to work.”

It is that dedication to people and an industry he had come to love, that is ingrained in the culture of Canterbury and was the trademark of any Sampson business. Curt created a culture of loyalty, ethical business dealings, honesty, and community service.

In 2012, his leadership was instrumental in a partnership created with the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, owners and operators of Mystic Lake Casino Hotel, just three miles from Canterbury. A cooperative marketing and racing purse enhancement solidified the future of racing and breeding in the state.

Curt is survived by wife Marian, daughter Susan, and sons Randy, Paul and Russ along with 11 grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

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**For a photograph please use this link: <https://canterburypark.egnyte.com/dl/jg0xTdXdH4>**