

OBITUARIES

Horseman 'Tex' Oddson, 84, longtime riding instructor, dies

By Joe Simnacher

Staff Writer of The Dallas Morning News

Texas M. "Tex" Oddson, who taught generations of Dallas children to ride horses, died Thursday of cancer at his home behind the White Rock Stables. He would have been 85 on Monday.

Born in St. Paul, Minn., Mr. Oddson came to Dallas in 1924 to work as a horseman, said his son, Tex Oddson Jr.

No one knows how the son of Norwegian immigrants came to be named Texas. "It was his destiny," his son said.

Mr. Oddson learned horsemanship from Minnesota cowboys and made pickups and deliveries for blacksmiths. At 16, he left for warmer climates.

"He always wanted to be a horseman, and Minnesota was too cold," his son said. "Somehow, on the way to California, he got rerouted to Dallas and offered a job."

The job was training horses at stables where the Moss Creek Farms housing development now stands

north of White Rock Lake.

"He was a real man of the West, a real icon," said William P. Davis, Mr. Oddson's attorney of 30 years.

Mr. Oddson seemed to work miracles. "He could get on a troubled horse and the horse's ears would come up and he (the horse) knew he'd met his match," Mr. Davis said.

Diane Dynis, former spokeswoman for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Dallas, said Mr. Oddson set a jumping record that still stands with a horse that he was told wasn't a jumper.

"He just had a way with them," Ms. Dynis said. "One thing he used to say, 'The outside of a horse is good for the inside of a man.'"

Ms. Dynis met Mr. Oddson a year ago when she got a mistreated horse from an animal rescue program.

"Everyone suggested that I take her to White Rock Stables," she said.

The formerly starved and abused horse has now gained her weight back and is rideable.

"I've only known him a year, but I

feel like I've known him all my life," she said. "He was that kind of person — always smiling, always willing to help."

For a time, Mr. Oddson trained Thoroughbreds at Arlington Downs. In 1938, he founded White Rock Stables at Flagpole Hill, near the site of his first Dallas stables job. He built his stables on a city block that had been used as a dump. It had no grass.

White Rock Stables soon became the exclusive riding instructor for The Hockaday School. "He was the father, confessor and counselor to about three generations of Dallas kids," Mr. Davis said.

Many children began taking lessons when they were 8 and still had horses at the stables when they went to college, he said.

White Rock Stables has boarded Roy Rogers' horse, Trigger, Elsie the cow and her twin calves, and other famous animals. It hasn't rented horses for 26 years but is home to more than 50 horses.

Mr. Oddson was being treated for



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cancer. Saturday he asked to go home, said his son, who now manages the stables.

Mr. Oddson is also survived by a second son, Dr. Terrence A. Oddson of Little Rock, Ark.; a sister, LaVail Riley of Centralia, Wash.; and two granddaughters.

A memorial service will be at 3:30 p.m. Saturday at Restland Funeral Home's Wildwood Chapel. The family will receive friends at White Rock Stables after the service.

Memorials may be made to Family Hospice, 8150 N. Central Expressway, Suite 1201, Dallas, Texas 75206, or to the SPCA, 362 S. Industrial Blvd., Dallas, Texas 75207.