



## Dr. Johnny Mac Smith, *A. Gary Lavin Chair*

### ***How did you get involved with Grayson?***

My involvement with Grayson came about through my long-time friendship with Dr. Gary Lavin. I was semi-retired at the time and ran into Gary during the Keeneland September Sale scoping horses in the barns. He asked me what I was doing and before I knew it, he was convincing me I needed to take the position of Veterinary Consultant with the Grayson Foundation as Dr. Woody Asbury was retiring.

I talked with the President, Ed Bowen, about the duties and realized the research advisory committee was made up of all these academics and experts in various fields and a group of distinguished practitioners, most of whom I knew. My first thoughts were, I don't fit, but I went to the first RAC meeting and found that several of those academic experts had been through my practice as students! Now beginning the 15th year, I can say it has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career.

### ***What is your education and background?***

I grew up a farm kid in a rural L A, Lower Alabama. Where, as one of my farmer neighbors told me, the only good horse was one that would plow. I received a B.S. from Troy University '70 and DVM from Auburn in '76. Upon graduation, I took a job in Tampa Florida which included Florida Downs at the time, now Tampa Bay. The country kid and the big city was not a good fit, but now I had been immersed in the Thoroughbred industry. An opportunity came to work in a small group practice in Ocala where I worked for three years before I started my own solo practice.

Then a few years later (1980) with Dr. John Peterson co-founded Peterson/ Smith. It became one of the premier equine practices in the country and has been the training ground for many equine veterinarians over the years. I feel in retrospect that I hit the trifecta as a career. The Peterson/Smith practice, 14 years as a member of the Keeneland inspection team and Veterinary consultant for Grayson Jockey Club Research Foundation.

### ***What is the importance of this position?***

My position as Veterinary consultant, A. Gary Lavin Chair, is an integral part of how research is chosen, funded, then published and the results used for the health and welfare of our horses, no matter the breed. The Research Advisory Committee has been described as the backbone of Grayson and I recruit and work closely with this group to get grant applications reviewed each year by experts, practitioners as well as academics, in the area the research deals with.

Once the projects are chosen and funded, the Veterinary consultant makes sure that deadlines and benchmarks of the projects are met and reporting is up to date. The goal is a peer reviewed published article of the results as well as various presentations at meetings so the information can be used by the practitioner. The position is vitally important in the building of relationships between the foundation, Institutions, researchers, and practitioners. These relationships benefit all of equine research and most of all the horse.



### **A. Gary Lavin Chair**

*The "A. Gary Lavin Chair," was created in recognition of the late Dr. Gary Lavin, whose contributions greatly impacted the foundation and equine health.*

*Dr. Johnny Mac Smith was named the first recipient of the chair in January 2023.*

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*Reprint from The Grayson Gazette, 2023*

