



Jerry Fanning in Profile

By Steve Schuelein
Turf Writer

Trainer Jerry Fanning sat in his mezzanine box overlooking the finish line at Santa Anita Park earlier this year and reviewed a career that has spanned more than a half century.

Fanning, a youthful 76, has been known for a wit as sharp as his eye for horses. A summa cum laude graduate of the old school of training, Fanning does not talk much but says a lot.

"It used to be one guy owned 10 or 15 horses; now 10 or 15 guys own one horse," said Fanning. "That's the biggest change I've seen. Guys used to just train for one stable."

Fanning, who currently trains 18 horses at Santa Anita, was asked about the ideal size of a stable. "I've always had enough horses," he replied. "One is enough if you've got the right horse."

Asked about his formula for training success, Fanning said, "You've got to have a little horse sense. There are some people who have never been around a horse who would be okay."

Fanning has observed the vicissitudes of the sport during a lifetime in it. "I've seen the good days, and I've seen the bad days, and it's hard for me to see where we're going."

The good days have outnumbered the bad for Fanning, who has saddled winners on the Southern California circuit every year since he began training on it regularly in 1967.

"From 1970 to 1995, I had a real good run," understated Fanning of a period when he averaged seven figures in purses earned each year and five times went over the \$2 million mark as a perennial power.

Stakes victories have not come as frequently during the past decade, but Fanning proved he can still be dangerous when he sent out Booyah to an upset in the \$125,000 Ralph Hinds Invitational Handicap at Fairplex Park in September, almost 50 years to the day he saddled his first winner.

Booyah, who paid \$39.60 for a \$2 win ticket, showed speed from the start under Joseph Talamo and battled back gamely to win by a head after being headed by Freesgood.

Fanning won the race, previously called the Pomona Handicap, for the seventh time but first in 23 years. He dominated during a decade when he won with Our First Delight in 1976, Mr. Dan in 1977, Stiff Diamond in 1981, Drouilly in 1982 and 1983 and Artichoke in 1985. Second in career wins at the track, he was inducted into the Fairplex Park Hall of Fame in 2007.

Booyah, a 5-year-old horse, is owned by automobile dealer Lathrop Hoffman, a client for more than a decade. Hoffman is a relative short-timer among Fanning's owners, who tend to stick.

Fanning stepped back in time as he traced owner Blake Barregar to the late 1970's. The trainer is already second generation with Dan Agnew, whose late father Jay began with him in the late 1960's and was instrumental in his early success; and Jan Harrison and her children Dickie and Tami, the widow and children, respectively of John Harrison, who met Fanning during the late 1950's and began breeding and racing horses with him in 1960.

Fanning, born in Colorado Springs in 1932, took a circuitous route to California. "My dad worked in the gold mines in Colorado," said Fanning of his late father, Lev. "When the war (World War II) started, the government closed the gold mines and we moved to Hurst, Texas.

"My dad trained there for H.P. Bonner, and when Bonner moved to California, we went with him in 1947," recalled Fanning. "I started galloping horses when I started going to Whittier High School. I was 4-11 and 98 pounds as a freshman and thought about becoming a jockey, but I grew out of it."

Fanning credited his father and brother, Lev Jr., for teaching him most of the basics. His father trained for Bonner and Harry Warner before his death in 1969. His brother became one of the most respected farm managers in the state--working at Hemacinto Stables, Cardiff Stud, and Rancho Paseana--before his death in September at age 78.

Fanning obtained a trainer's license in 1958 while primarily working as an assistant and recalled his first winner that year on Sept. 29: "Grand Lodge at Bay Meadows with Roy Yaka."

Fanning shortly thereafter accepted an County. "I went to Lolo Belle Farm," said facility near Perris owned by W.N. developed by Del Webb.

It was there that Fanning met Harrison, company. The pair and their families and breeders.

Fanning and Harrison campaigned several memorable than Little Reb, who left Triple to a 2 1/4-length victory in the 1979 said Fanning of the 5.90-to-1 upset

Fanning had previously campaigned Little the best sprinter in the country in the early bred colt who set or equaled four track records.

Fanning and [John] Harrison campaigned several homebred stakes winners, but none more memorable than Little Reb, who left Triple Crown winner Affirmed in his wake ...

offer to manage a ranch in Riverside Fanning of a stint from 1959-67 at the Modglin before it was purchased and

who owned a nearby ranch and feed became lifelong friends, as well as owners

homebred stakes winners, but none more Crown winner Affirmed in his wake en route Malibu Stakes. "I thought he was a cinch," winner.

Reb's sire, Reb's Policy. "I thought he was 1970's," said Fanning of the California-

Fanning had already risen to prominence on the circuit by then on the strength of several 2-year-old stakes horses and Terlago, who gave Fanning his first major stakes victory in the 1970 Santa Anita Derby.

"(Bill) Shoemaker rode Terlago to give me my first win in a \$100,000 stake," said Fanning, only too happy to return the favor with another milestone. "And Shoemaker won his last hundred-grander on Present Value for me in the 1989 Goodwood."

Terlago, owned by Agnew, gave Fanning his first Kentucky Derby starter, but was never a factor. "He couldn't stand up in the mud, and it rained that day," said Fanning of an 11th-place finish behind winner Dust Commander.

"Terlago was a nice little horse and if we had Lasix back then could have been a real nice horse," said Fanning of the colt who had a bleeding problem.

Fanning was better equipped for a return in the 1983 Kentucky Derby with Desert Wine, who finished second behind Sunny's Halo.

Fanning has enjoyed many good days, but none better than March 5, 1983. That day he watched Croeso win the Florida Derby on television for a \$172 win payoff before sending out Desert Wine to win the San Rafael Stakes at Santa Anita.

"I was supposed to go to Florida but got stomach flu and couldn't go," recalled Fanning of the dream day on the 3-year-old trail. "They wouldn't give me a license over the phone, so Steve DiMauro saddled him.

"I don't know why he was so long," continued Fanning. "(Fred) Hooper's horse, Copelan, was out here that winter, and I knew we could outrun him. Croeso had more speed."

Fanning never found out how Croeso would have fared in the Kentucky Derby. "I sent him to Turfway Park and he chipped a knee training there," said Fanning of an injury that would sideline him until that autumn.

Desert Wine continued to flow as smoothly as his name, adding a second-place finish in the Preakness to his resume. Fanning thought he might have done even better. "He had a hitch in his hind leg the whole time and busted an abscess out of that foot two days after the Preakness," said Fanning.

Desert Wine, co-owned by Dan Agnew and Cardiff, returned in 1984 and won the Strub, Californian, and Hollywood Gold Cup before retiring with \$1,618,043, the most of any Fanning trainee.

Fanning would go on to train three more millionaires: the mare Top Corsage, who won the Grade 1 Spinster Stakes at Keeneland in 1986; Present Value, who won seven stakes in 1989 while criss-crossing the nation from Portland Meadows to Chicago to Detroit to Minnesota to Santa Anita; and Pleasant Variety, an \$80,000 claim who won the Grade 1 San Luis Rey Stakes in 1991.

Fanning produced plenty of other highlights. Who could forget A Kiss For Luck, the California-bred mare who won the Grade 1 Vanity Handicap in 1983? Or Akinemod, the Jack Klugman-owned filly who won the 1990 El Encino Stakes by 18 lengths? Or Star Recruit, the 59-to-1 longshot who missed winning the 1995 Santa Anita Handicap by a nose to Sir Beaufort?

Greatness was predicted for Bag when he 16 lengths in a six-furlong race for 2-year-olds at Del Mar. "Bag might have been keep him sound," said Fanning.

Fanning said that Hyperborean, winner of accomplished more had he been gelded. and hurt himself," said Fanning of a

Fanning-trained Kings Island led all the head in the 1985 Sunset Handicap, looked like a quarter horse, but could run English import.

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Jerry Hollendorfer

broke his maiden at second asking in 1991 by year-olds at Del Mar. "Bag might have been keep him sound," said Fanning.

the 1983 Swaps Stakes, might have "He had his teeth on the gate, broke crooked career-ending injury the following year.

way and upset 2-to-5 favorite Greinton by a costing the runner-up a \$1 million bonus. "He a mile and five-eighths," said Fanning of the

Fanning also provided a fountain of knowledge to former assistants Jerry Hollendorfer and Jack Carava. Hollendorfer, who went on to become the fourth trainer in North America to win 5,000 career races, credited Fanning for much of his success.

"Jerry Fanning was a guy who never said much, but I learned a lot from him by observing," said Hollendorfer. "He was really good at seeing potential problems before they came up in horses and taking preventative measures."

Carava, who assisted Fanning eight years before going on his own in 1992 to become a solid fixture on the circuit, also learned greatly from his former boss.

"He took care of each horse as an individual," said Carava. "Pleasant Variety was a claiming horse who had been lugging out, and he got him out of that bad habit. He placed Present Value in the right spots and won stakes around the country with him. Akinemod was brilliant, and he tried to ration her speed so she could go long."

Fanning the flames of optimism for another productive year, the septuagenarian trainer has also learned how to ration his speed and go long. □