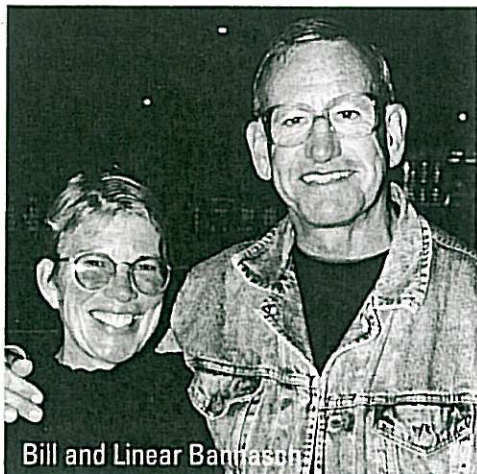


O W N E R P R O F I L E



Bill and Linear Bannasch

AN OCEAN OF EXCITEMENT

BY CRAIG HARZMANN

You can't have it all. Just ask owner Linear Bannasch.

"I'm allergic to horses," she lamented, to which husband Bill quickly added, "The sneezing is really annoying. It goes on constantly."

But even those nagging sinuses can't keep the two away from trainer Barry Abrams' barn, home to their three superstars, Puzar, Mister Alleged, and Michigan Bluff. The Bannasch's operate under the stable name Plan B Stable, and since claiming their first horse last spring, are riding a wave of astonishment.

"I didn't think that we would have won a race yet," said Linear. "We've had one win at every track – Santa Anita, Hollywood Park, and Del Mar. We've just been really lucky."

The personable couple has been avid racing fans for quite some time. Living in Solana Beach for about nine years, they are regular railbirds at the summertime Del Mar meeting. You'll still find the pair cheering from the same vantage point even though they've joined the owners' ranks, only now they usually make a stop in the winners' circle too. And appropriately enough, their first win came right in their own backyard.

"We were shocked," said a beaming Linear. "It was a photo finish, and it just seemed like it was forever. My legs were like rubber." Puzar, their first racehorse, had just dueled the tough Mister Alleged to the wire, and the wait

was well worth the agony, for Puzar had indeed nosed out his stubborn challenger.

"The thing is," noted Bill, "we claimed Mister Alleged out of that race. We've got a big blow up of the photo. It was perfect that it ended up that way."

Owners of a chain of 30 Easy 8 Motels peppered throughout San Diego, the Bay Area, and Arizona, the Bannasch's only recently decided to dive into horse racing.

"We were talking about it for probably three years," Bill recalled. "We had a motel in Houston on the market. I said, 'If we sell that place, we'll get into the business.'"

They tabbed Abrams as their man and claimed Puzar in May, and though Bill and Linear are just learning the ropes of the business side, the competition aspect is in their blood.

"Sailboat racing and horse racing – that's what we do," said Bill, a veteran skipper since childhood. Lured to San Diego by the prospect of year-round boating, Captain Bill counts among his seafaring exploits two runs at the TransPac, a grueling nautical marathon to Honolulu that lasts 10-11 days.

But not all of their aquatic adventures center around sport.

"We've got two boats," he said. "We have the race boat in San Diego, and then we've got the cruising boat in the Caribbean." This pleasure vessel, aptly

named Plan B by Linear, reflects the couple's laid-back philosophy of life.

"Plan A is to work hard all the time," explained Bill. "Plan B is to go out and play on your boat." Now Plan B serves double duty for boats and horses, and whether they're sailing the shores off Tahiti, Tonga, or Tortola, there's always one thing at the top of their list.

"You go there to get away from everything," said Bill, "but we find ourselves sitting on the boat thinking about the horses. That's the biggest problem we have with her," he added, nodding towards his wife. "She turns them into pets. We love to hang out on the backstretch."

"They're my babies," conceded Linear.

And don't look for the Bannasch's to sail off into the sunset any time soon. In addition to their current runners, they anchored themselves in the game recently by joining some Abrams' partnerships in the purchase of five yearlings. Just wait until Linear sees one of those little guys break from the gate. She can hardly contain herself as it is.

"I didn't think it would be this much fun," she said; though she might see one drawback to it all.

"Why can't I be allergic to alligators?" she questioned. "I'm never going to be around an alligator!"

Craig Harzmann is a freelance writer based in Glendale, CA.