

OWNER PROFILE



PHOTO: BENOIT & ASSOCIATES

The Love of the Horse

DON REGO

By Jim Ghidella

If you ask Northern California owner Don Rego what brought him into racing, he'll tell you ...

"I love the races, I love the competition, I love the people, but it's the love for the horse that brought me into and keeps me involved in this marvelous sport."

Don lives adjacent to the Silverado Country Club in Napa with his wife Rita, whose love of horses parallels his own. He is in the midst of leaving the upper echelons of banking in San Francisco, but denies that he is retiring, stating "I was involved in banking for 37 years, but I'm not retiring, I'm just changing lifestyles." Don plans to have just as active of a life, but will refocus his energy to his horses at the track and on the farm. The 58-year-old St. Mary's College graduate also serves on the Board of Regents for the college, as well as on the boards of various charitable organizations.

Growing up in East Oakland, Don's

first contact with the horse came as a youngster when he would spend summers in Pleasanton helping out on a friend's Thoroughbred farm. Smitten by his early experience on the farm and on the county fair circuit, Don became a life-long fan of racing and was briefly involved some time ago owning a few claimers.

In 1993, Don and Rita formed Silverado Springs Racing Stable and enlisted trainer Dean Pederson, who was in the process of starting a stable in Northern California. Their venture was almost an instant success when their first claim, Persian Sunshine, won three races in a row. Then came their biggest racing thrill to date when they claimed Majestic Nasr for \$16,000 who went on to win eight races and the Governor's Handicap at the California State Fair, earning over \$150,000 for the Regos. Now retired, Majestic Nasr is now like one of their children. Don is currently building a three-acre horse facility near their home so that Rita can visit their four-legged family member on a daily basis.

"We currently have more horses than we need," jests the smiling Regos, including five 2-year-olds at the track,

three broodmares, and various progeny. Their plan is to build a program of young horses and augment their stable with claiming horses that fit the plan. Don intends to visit all California sales in 1999 and may even venture to Kentucky. The stable is currently guided by trainers Dean Pederson and Duane Offield.

Ever since the staff at U.C. Davis saved the life of one of his mares, Don has made a yearly donation of a racing and/or broodmare prospect to the school to be auctioned off for sale. His two donations this year, sold at the recent Northern California sale in Vallejo, brought \$20,000 to U.C. Davis.

Don emphasizes, "I choose to think of this sport as a business, and not a game. I love it, I want to learn more about it, and I want to give back to the sport - as well as to the wonderful horse."

We applaud Don's philosophy, and heartily welcome him to his new avocation. 🐾

Jim Ghidella serves as TOC's Deputy Director for Northern California.