

Inland Empire resident Ruben G. Cosme reflects on horse racing career



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Jockey Alex Bautista, Laura Hummel and Cosme at Los Alamitos race track.



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By Ed Ahrens

Ruben Cosme a long time Inland Empire resident and thoroughbred racing trainer was born on February 19, 1942 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Cosme was one of ten brothers and sisters and grew up in extremely tough conditions.

"My family was very poor and my older brother Juan and I walked race horses at an early age at the local race tracks to help my family survive. It was a difficult experience but I learned to work hard at an early age," remembered

plained Ruben.

Cosme returned to Southern California in the early 1990s and made his permanent base of operation at Pomona race track now named Fairplex Park.

"I was so happy to be back in California and trained and lived in the City of Pomona. I raced at all the major race tracks in California including Santa Anita, Del Mar, Hollywood Park, Pomona, Los Alamitos and Golden Gate Fields," stated Ruben.

While campaigning mostly cheap claiming horses, Cosme did set big payoffs records at Holly-

A zany Cosme clowning around prior to a race at Del Mar race track in 1996..

cial Reward," laughed Cosme.

A exacta is betting on two horses in the same race. To win, horses must finish first and second exactly as played. Superfecta is a bet where you must select the first four horses in a row such as 1-2-3-4 in order to win the wager.

Cosme feels his best horse was Dancin' Gandy which won three races at Santa Anita in 1995 and later was claimed by champion trainer Bob Baffert.

"My owner Mel Larson and myself purchased Dancin' Gandy at a farm in Riverside for \$500.00. We knew going in that Gandy had a hair line fracture in his hind leg and that we had to let the horse recover for a full year. Many people thought we were crazy but I saw something in the horse that I liked. In about a year, the horse came back and raced great for me until he was claimed," remarked Ruben.

Other horses that won races at major tracks under Cosme's tutelage included First Tank, Aloncame Elliott, Chance Eagle, Capote Music, Head Fake, Machado, Caro's Dream, Raising Yankee, Discovereds Dream and Poochaloo.

"Poochaloo won a race at Pomona in 1995 when the jockey on the horse that appeared he was going to win the race, misjudged the finish line and old Pooch ran by that horse to win the race," smiled Ruben.

Cosme's favorite track to race was Pomona/Fairplex and he preferred to train fillies and mares.

Ruben utilized alot of jockeys during his lengthy career including John Atherton, Ricardo Jaime, Jorge Bourdieu, Matt Garcia, Paul Toscano, Felipe Martinez, Joy Scott, Paul Atkinson, David Flores, Joe Steiner, Victor Navarro, Juan Leyva, Alex Bautista, John Bombek, Elliott Demesme and his favorite Omar Barrio from Panama.

Former thoroughbred owner Ron Lindsey currently living in Las Vegas, Nevada had this to say about Ruben. "He was a good horseman and a very successful long short trainer. Everyone knew him at the race track and he was alot of fun to be around."

Former jockey and Rialto resident John Bombek commented about Cosme. "I rode for him occasionally at the big tracks and he was a blast to be around. Cosme did things his own way and is def-

initely one of a kind."

Former jockey Elliott Demesme-"I rode alot of races for Ruben at Pomona, Los Alamitos, Hollywood Park, Santa Anita and Bay Meadows and we always had a great time. Ruben was always cracking jokes and very upbeat all the time."

Ruben's best year statistically was 1991 with 40 wins and he retired from active training in 2002 with 1,799 starts, 132 wins and horse earnings of \$1,292,850 ac-

ording to equibase.com.

The fun loving Cosme whose business card reads-"I can't print the money, but I can earn it for you," had two sons Christian age 16 and Brandon age 15.

"I had a great career and am proud of my accomplishments working in the horse race industry in five decades. I met alot of great people and had many good owners. While my life was never easy, it was certainly very, very rewarding," laughed Cosme.



PHOTO COURTESY/ED AHRENS

Dancin' Gandy winning at Santa Anita on February 23, 1995. Cosme is far right

Cosme.

Juan eventually moved to Brooklyn, New York in the early 1960s and Ruben quickly followed him to the United States.

"We both walked horses at the major race tracks in New York such as Saratoga, Belmont and Aqueduct for years until I relocated to Southern California and became a groom for the legendary trainer Lazaro Barrera," said Cosme.

Cosme became a licensed trainer at Turf Paradise race track in Phoenix, Arizona in the early 1980s and later trained in Canada at Northlands Park in Edmonton and Stampede Park in Calgary.

"It was really a big difference working in sunny Southern California and Arizona and then living and working in chilly Canada. Despite the freezing weather, I really enjoyed my eight years in Canada and I learned alot as a trainer," ex-

wood Park in 1994.

"I had a nice gray horse named Mr. Flower Power that finished second to Air Corn on June 9 that set the all time record for a quinella payoff of \$999.20 for a two dollar bet," smiled Cosme.

The quinella record stood for five months until November 11 when another Cosme trained horse Martial Reward won and triggered a \$1,024.60 payoff !! A quinella bet is a wager on two two horses in the same race to run first and second. If either horses selected wins and the other runs second, the bettor wins.

"Martial Reward was a pretty nice filly that won two or three races for me. In the race on November 11, Martial Reward keyed a exacta payoff of \$2,930.20 and a superfecta payoff of \$190,769.80 also a record that has since been surpassed. I didn't bet money on either Mr. Flower Power or Mar-



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