

Lovacres Ranch: For The Love Of The Game



by RUDI GROOTHEDDE
photos by RON MESAROS

"I'm positive about the future. I'm here to stay; I'm here to breed horses and I'm here to race horses in California and the way I look at it, it's just like anything else, when nobody else is doing something then that's probably the best time to do it. This is the time for me to be breeding because I'm still young enough. I have no desire to breed anywhere else than here in California."

So says 52-year-old Terry Lovingier, who with his wife of nearly 30 years, Barbara, owns Lovacres Ranch, a full-service Thoroughbred facility encompassing almost 500 acres at the mouth of the Temecula Creek in a valley at the base of the Palomar Mountain about 10 miles Northwest of Warner Springs.

But it wasn't so long ago that Terry's outlook wasn't so optimistic, because the original Lovacres location in Murrieta was about to become a thing of the past due to something completely out of his control.

"With eminent domain, the Government took all our properties; my brothers' and my dad Russ' but when one door closes, another one opens," states Terry. "However, I absolutely think that we are in a better

place now. There is no one who wouldn't tell you that the new farm is just a blessing. I'm probably one of the happiest guys around. I love the farm; Barbara and I love going out there."

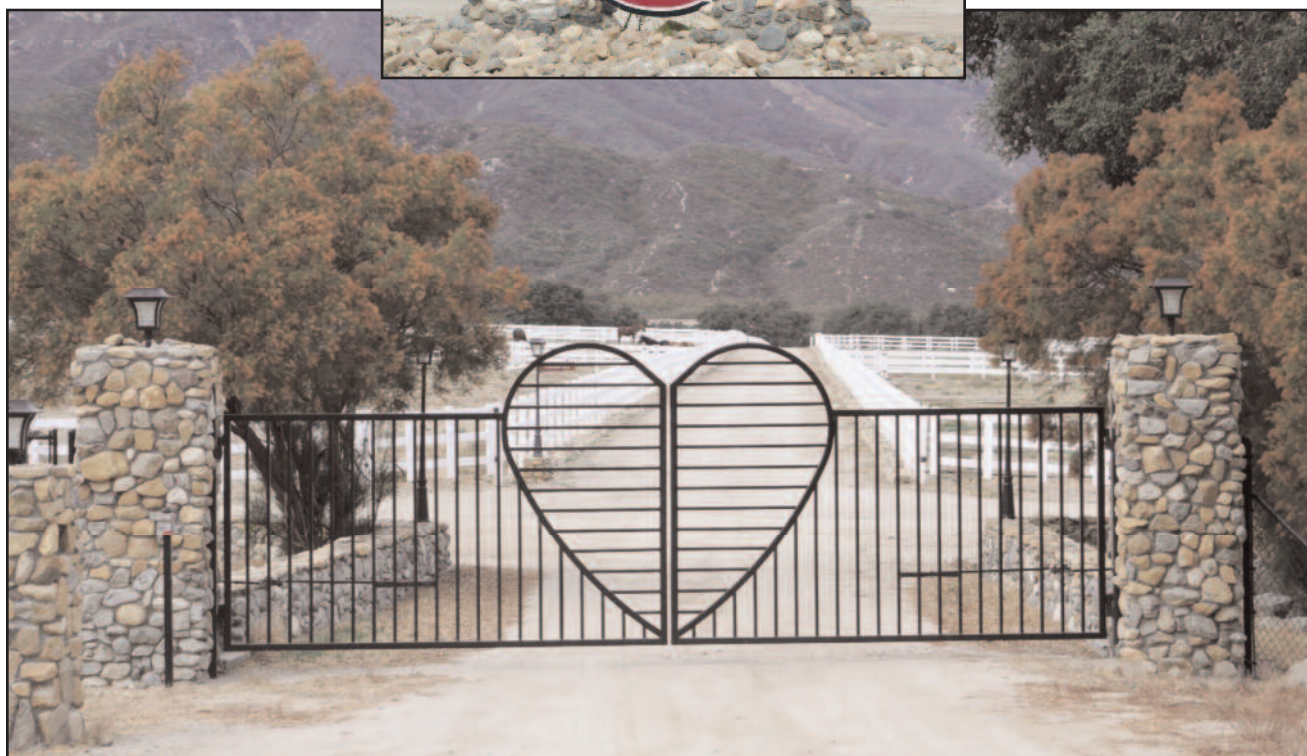
So the future again looks bright for the Oklahoma native whose love of the horseracing game was nurtured as a child in the Southern California city of Lakewood where Quarter Horses were ever present. "I fed them morning and evening, I looked after the broodmares, and I rode which is something I still do today," says Terry. "My brother Dan is an animal nutritionist who now works for a milling company in Utah. So it's not surprising that we've got our farm's nutrition down to a science."

The Space To Succeed

And that's not the only thing that Lovacres Ranch has down to a science.

Opened late in the summer of 2007, the farm's original 280 acres were expanded recently by Terry and Barbara's purchase of Gary and Sue Folgner's adjacent, 200-acre Folgner Ranch, resulting in even more

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“The advantage that Kentucky has on California is the space that they are able to raise their babies in,” explains Terry about why wide open spaces are important to him. “I believe this farm has the environment where we don’t necessarily need to keep them inside. I’m from the Blane Schvaneveldt school; I think horses do 100 percent better outside. The more space you give horses, the better they do, especially the babies. We have grassy 10-acre pastures for all our babies to grow up on.”

At an elevation of 3,500 feet, Lovacres provides a suitable climate for its equine residents. “When it’s hot, it’s hot and when it’s cold, it’s cold, but the horses like it,” says Terry. And also keeping these valuable Thoroughbreds safe, in-between Terry’s bi-weekly visits, is Gregorio Rincon.

“He’s a great horseman and he’s been with me for a number of years,” says Terry of this graduate of the San Luis Rey Downs Training Center who once worked for such famous names as Charlie Whittingham, Laz Barrera and Ron McAnally, and currently oversees a staff of 15 to 20 who live in three-bedroom houses now dotting the landscape of what was once cattle ranch brush.

Though still somewhat in the developmental stage, the ranch already boasts some great facilities. Adjacent to the main barn, featuring a spacious breeding area and more than 30 stalls (12x12) that can be extended to 12x24 in size during foaling season, are two round pens, four hot walkers, 70 pens (24x24)—30 of which are busy being covered to

room for breeding, boarding, breaking, training, lay-ups and sales preparation.

become “Mare Motels”—and, of course, the six-furlong, 22-foot wide training track that has seven paddocks within its perimeter and stretches out to mile with the gap and chute included.

Terry is very proud of this breaking and training portion of Lovacres that is maintained daily and also includes a four-stall starting gate and a team of six full-time exercise riders.

“I like racing but I really love raising the babies more. I love the fact that you don’t know what you’re going to get. Take Unbridled Meeting who won a stakes race (\$66,100 CARF Debutante Stakes) this year. When she was young, I would have given her away because her legs were going every way. But we worked with her and she came out of it, which is pretty amazing.

“We broke over 100 horses on the track this year, and they did well. We turn them out for 75 days after breaking and use shavings on the ground of the paddocks to make the ground soft for the babies. When we break them, we keep them in pens not stalls. I train most of my horses outside because I think they are healthier.

“I have a civil and environmental engineering degree with emphasis in soil mechanics, so I was able to screen the material and make my own track surface, and it’s a good one.”

Other relatively unique features that hold Lovacres in good stead are two sets of solar panels that help provide electricity to the farm and all the white, five-rail PVC fencing that is almost exclusively in use on a property that boasts 50 to 100 paddocks and pastures, many with oak trees to provide welcome shade.

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rather replace a rail than have a horse get hurt,” says Terry. “I already have permits to build more barns, including one for the stallions who are presently in half-acre pastures with the more resilient v-mesh fencing, but first I’m trying to get all the pastures done with Alfalfa and Bermuda grass. The biggest thing up there is water, but our six wells and sprinkler system are more than sufficient.”

Youth & Experience Combined

For more than a decade, Lovacres’ Murrieta and Warner Springs locations were home to just two sires, Nineeleven and Rio Verde, but the past couple of years have seen a significant change in the stallion roster.

Rio Verde, who retired to stud in 1999, still holds court at Lovacres’ current facility where he has now been joined by 2008 arrival Awesome Gambler and a trio of new stallions for 2010; Bushwacker, Rivergrade Boy and Time to Get Even. Meanwhile, Nineeleven, a 16-year-old son of Phone Trick who has sired five stakes winners and the earners of more than \$1.9 million, was recently sold to stand in Mexico after covering 19 mares earlier this year.

Terry says, “Enough good mares need to be put under each stallion to make them succeed so I like to improve my broodmare band, which now stands at more than one hundred, by going back to Keeneland in Kentucky every year to buy four to ten mares, better than the ones I’ve got. Frankly, you have to have broodmare power.”

His \$180,000-plus layout last month for six stakes-

performing mares, including the stakes winners Fun Logic (\$371,012) and Cricket Wicket (\$210,185) and the group I-placed Summer Symphony (Ire), all in-foal to such prominent stallions as Awesome Again, Afleet Alex, Street Sense, Discreet Cat, Fairbanks and Stormello, at the Keeneland November Breeding Stock Sale in Lexington, shows that Terry puts his money where his mouth is.

“If I had been breeding mares like these new ones to Rio Verde and Nineeleven all along, we probably would have had a heck of a lot more stakes winners,” he concludes.

Awesome Gambler

Awesome Gambler’s stud career has started phenomenally, with the five-year-old son of Coronado’s Quest covering 84 mares this year, after getting a 78-strong book in his initial season. The winner of the \$80,800 Alydar Stakes in 2007, he was also stakes-placed as a two-year-old and earned \$98,579 from two wins and a placing in six starts.



Owned by Peter and Barbara Walski, Awesome Gambler is out of unraced Wedding March, a Deputy Minister half-sister to the grade I-placed stakes winner Conquistadoress. This is the family of Carriage Trail, winner of the grade I, \$500,000 Juddmonte Spinster Stakes last year, and the four-time graded stakes winner of 2007 and 2008, Criminologist.

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really good conformation,” says Terry of the 16.3 chestnut who will stand for a \$3,000 – Live Foal fee in 2010.

Bushwacker

From 2004 to 2008, Bushwacker banked \$285,840 from five wins, four seconds and two thirds in 25 starts, including a graded stakes placing at two, a stakes placing as a four-year-old and a graded stakes win at five.



In 2004, he ran second in the grade III, \$100,000 Hollywood Prevue Stakes to Declan’s Moon, that year’s Eclipse Champion Two-Year-Old Male. In 2006, he ran third in Santa Anita Park’s \$300,000 Sunshine Millions

Sprint Stakes, defeating that year’s Eclipse Champion Sprinter, Thor’s Echo. In 2007, he defeated the grade I-winning millionaires In Summation and Greg’s Gold when he won the grade III, \$105,800 Vernon O. Underwood Stakes at Hollywood Park.

By Outflanker out of the winning Romantic Lead mare Musical Score, a half-sister to multiple stakes winner Father Don Juan and full sister to stakes winner All My Girls, Bushwacker hails from the family of grade II victor Soldier’s Lark.

Now owned by Terry, the 16.1 dark bay’s 2010 fee will be

\$3,000 – Live Foal. “He’s a real nice horse, so I’ll probably breed some of the more than 100 mares I have right now to him next year,” he says. “I like him enough to where he’s going to throw some speed because of his race record and the speedy look to him. He not only has a good hind end and a great gaskin, but he has good elevation and a good length to him.”

Rio Verde

Following a win at three and a stakes placing at four in France, Rio Verde won in the U. S. as a five-year-old in 1997, before retiring with earnings of \$86,470 and is now the sire of nine stakes horses, including both Grace Upon Grace—runner-up in this year’s \$100,000 Graduation Stakes at the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club—and graded stakes-placed Making Dreams, among the earners of more than \$2.4 million.



A son of Nureyev and River Rose (Fr), a stakes winner in her native land, the half or full sibling to six black-type runners, including multiple group I-winning champion Baiser Voile, covered 29 mares in 2009.

“He’s getting older now, so I’ll probably breed him to mares who I know cross well with him, like Chasing Wind and Thelma Rose, whom we had good racehorses out of,” says Terry of his dark bay stud whose fee in 2010 will be \$3,000 – Live Foal.

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Rivergrade Boy

Stakes-placed as a two-year-old, Rivergrade Boy's overall 23-race record in 2007 and 2008, included three wins, seven runner-up efforts and a \$141,594 bankroll.



By Grand Slam out of O K To Dance, a graded stakes-placed dual stakes-winning daughter of With Approval, his immediate family includes the grade I winner and \$3,902,405-earner Devil His Due whose 11 crops of racing age have yielded 79 stakes horses and the earners of more than \$39 million.

The bay is owned by trainer Caesar Dominguez, Bill Foltz and Dan Ray, and his 2010 stud fee is \$2,500 – Live Foal.

Time To Get Even

Included among the three wins, three placings and \$150,084 in earnings that Time to Get Even garnered from the 16 starts that he made at the track during three seasons of racing, was a victory as a three-year-old in the 2007 edition of Hollywood Park's grade III, \$109,700 Lazaro Barrera Memorial Stakes.

The only son of Stephen Got Even currently standing at stud in California, he is out of Tomisue's Pleasure, by Seeking the Gold. Time to Get Even's second dam was Summer Matinee, a graded stakes



winner of \$277,870, while his pedigree page also includes the grade I performers Weekend Squall and Spacelink.

Owned in partnership by Tony Murrietta (Murrietta Racing Stable), Joe Lopez and trainer Walther Solis, the dark bay will stand for a \$4,000 – Live Foal fee in 2010.

Says Terry, "His partners are going to support him and I like him because he's stout, really long-bodied and has a real nice hind end on him."

Training To Win

Ranked fifth among the leading breeders in California with earnings of more than \$1.2 million in 2008, and fourth through Aug. 31 this year, Terry's many philosophies on success are worth taking note of.

"Having played basketball through the D1 college level, I know that cardio vascular systems in horses are the same as in humans, so we need to get them out more. You can't come out cold turkey; you have to get the horse to an appropriate level of fitness before you can work them hard. To me, the early two-year-old races from two to four and a half furlongs are stepping stones. The horses are less stressed, and it's easier to get a horse ready to go two furlongs than it is to go six furlongs. I have had a lot of horses win at up to six and a half furlongs after starting at these shorter distances. In my mind, I believe our horses have stayed sounder because we handled them more as babies. "We spend six to eight months on them at the ranch handling them as babies every day, so they can be ready to come in to the races. Granted, a lot of horses make you wait on them anyway. Every horse you have to take on their own merits. If you can go short with them and win, then go short with them and win. If they give you a reason to wait on

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them, then you wait. It just depends on the horse.” Because of this, Terry likes to use different trainers, including his current conditioners Walther Solis, Caesar Dominguez, Gary Sherlock and Paul Aguirre.

Another policy that Terry is big on is partners. “Most of them are from Long Beach, where I have my business Lovco Construction, like Dick London and John Costello, while Linda Templeton, who sold the Warner Springs place when it got to much for her to handle after her husband passed away, is another great supporter. I’ve also got a lot more new guys who’ll be racing with me next year. For me, it’s not as much fun to look around the winner’s circle and not have any partners to share it with.

“My partners are happy because they are spending their money exactly where I’m spending my money and they don’t pay a lot to get into these partnerships. They allow me to make the decisions as I am honest about what I think each horse will be good at. Every horse has a spot, but the minute I see a horse can no longer compete on the Southern California Circuit, then I find a good home for them. My trainers know to tell me when a horse is no longer productive as I’ll get them a replacement.”

Future Speak

When asked about what needs to be done to bring the Thoroughbred breeding and racing industry back to its glory days, Terry was quick to respond.

“We need to take care of the people who take care of our industry, such as the breeders, the gamblers, and the owners who race the horses and also like to go to the betting windows; that’s what drives our purses. We need to make sure that people don’t go elsewhere, such as Las Vegas, because we haven’t catered to them. It bothers me that heavy gam-

blers had to buy tickets to the Breeders Cup. We should have sent a limo to get them. We need everybody in this industry, a greater combined effort, to work harder to get slot machines in our race tracks. We need to look at all the options and put together packages that entice new people, especially youngsters, to participate.

“I think our industry members, like the trainers and vets, have got to figure out a better deal. Owners just want to know where they stand. Billing must be simple and timely. Communication to let an owner know where they stand on a horse in a timely manner is a must. As an owner and a seller of horses at auction, I think all the industry participants need to understand that a lot of the things they did in Kentucky, like dual representation, were not good. I tell people, if someone gives you money to buy a horse, then make sure you buy a good one because long-term success is better than a short-term score. Buy the best horse you can for the money you are given. A lot of people I try and get interested in racing say, “I’ve done that, I don’t want to do that again!”

“We also need to keep our focus on the welfare of the horses. We must not rush to judgment when they get injured. We often blame something else besides the real problem. We need to remember that sometimes it’s not a racing surface that is the problem but an inherent one in the horse; a propensity to bow a tendon, a chip or a conformational problem. That being said, I think I’m more partial to the dirt tracks.

In a positive conclusion about the future, Terry states, “I don’t think horse racing is going anywhere, it’s still going to be here. A lot of people are worried about this or that but I’m not. There are so many people who make their livelihood out of it; it does a lot of good for a lot of people. Sure, everything is down but it’s certainly not going to be going away any time soon.”

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 Training, Lay-Ups & Sales Preparation

**LOVACRES RANCH
FACT-FILE**

**Horse Population
December 2009**

Stallions.....	5
Broodmares.....	110
Weanlings.....	75
Yearlings.....	40
Two-year-olds.....	10
Retirees.....	5
TOTAL.....	245

