

Remembering A Good Friend



by DOUG BURGE

The California racing community lost a true horseman, advocate and friend with the recent passing of long-time trainer Richard Matlow, who succumbed to Lou Gehrig's disease (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) last month.

Richard was gifted with an amazing ability to judge and select a young horse. Known for his creative eye, "Inspector Clouseau," as I called him, hand-picked many bargain yearlings who later became graded stakes winners and even champions; Breeders Cup Sprint winner Reraise and multiple graded stakes winner King of the Roxy, to name just a couple.

I was introduced to Richard in 1995, by the late trainer Eddie Gregson, as a candidate to lead the inspection team for the CTBA Sales' Del Mar Yearling Sale. Over the next 10 years, we would travel the state and abroad together inspecting yearlings and searching for the annual sale-toppers. Whether we were battling bad weather, bad directions or having to explain to owners why their horse didn't qualify for the sale, the yearling inspections were always the highlight of my year.

As far as Richard was concerned, the horse always had to

represent itself. He paid little attention to pedigree or politics. He was very fair, very consistent and always willing to explain the conformational faults to the owners and/or consignors present.

Through Richard's guidance, the sale average and reputation for producing quality runners grew. Grade I winners Gourmet Girl, Richter Scale and Officer led the group of graduates. He took his position as inspector very serious, and also did his best to promote the sale to fellow trainers. Many of the top-priced yearlings were purchased through his recommendation.

My travels with Richard taught me so much about the inside and outside of a horse, and for that experience I am forever grateful; but even more thankful for the friendship that we had over the years.

Prior to his passing, the CTBA presented Richard with a book featuring articles and pictures highlighting his successes and contributions to racing. Included in that book was a letter from Richard's old-time friend and mentor, trainer Lyman Rollins. We have included that letter below, as a tribute to Richard:

I was training horses at Centennial Racetrack in Littleton, Colorado in the summer of 1964. I had about 28 horses in training and one day I got a call from Richard Matlow and Al Christiansen, a couple of young men that were going to college in Pomona, California. They were asking to come up and go to work for a year for nothing to train racehorses. They had been studying equine science in college, but wanted to get hands-on experience. I wrote back and told them "no" because I didn't think I wanted to be bothered with a couple of green-horns.

It wasn't too much longer that I got a phone call from Richard asking me to reconsider. I thought to myself, "Here are two young men going to college that have got to be a couple of really good guys. Maybe I will give them a chance." So I told them to come on up. When they arrived, were they ever green-horns! They didn't even know how to put a lead shank on a horse. But they were two good, clean cut young guys, so we let them join the crowd. We spent the summer there in Colorado and I let them "enjoy" everything about the game. We made them start by cleaning stalls and grooming horses. That's where you have to start. Later we took them over to help saddle the horses in the races. They asked a lot

of questions as we went along and soon, Richard and Al became just like part of our family.

When we moved to Phoenix, Arizona, for winter racing, Richard and Al came with us. They stayed on with us through the next summer in Colorado, living in the basement of Bradley and Sharon Rollins' rented summer home. Before the summer of 1965 was over, Richard had a little help from his folks financially, so he claimed a cheap horse. We were going with our horses to Pomona in California, so he took that horse with some others that I was training down there and he won a race at Pomona. After this, Richard made his home in California, and developed on his own into a real first-class trainer and has done very well in the business.

Over the years, Bradley, my son, and his wife, Sharon, got to be real good friends with Richard. I would send Bradley with some horses over to the coast to race and he and Sharon would always stay with Richard in his home in Monrovia. He gave them a key to his home so they could come and go like family.

—Lyman Rollins



Richard Matlow (right) with Lyman and Bradley Rollins.