

# Thanks for the Memories...

## A Bay Meadows Retrospective

By Jon Forbes

Change is inevitable, but that doesn't mean one has to like it. Such was the sentiment expressed by longtime Thoroughbred owner and Bay Meadows icon, Harry Aleo, shortly before he lost his brief battle with cancer on June 21 (See "In Memoriam" on page 21).

Best known for owning *Lost in the Fog*, Aleo lamented how the area has changed. Cable cars no longer run down Castro Street. Mom and pop operations have given way to chain stores. And now Bay Meadows Racecourse, which opened in 1934, will be redeveloped following the San Mateo County Fair meet in August.

"I know I saw *Seabiscuit* run there," Aleo said before rattling off a list of other top horses that competed at the San Mateo track. "*Noor*. *Citation*. I saw *John Henry*. *Cigar*. And *My Lost in the Fog* was one of the greatest."

Other Champions to have raced at the San Mateo oval include *Mioland*, *Painted Veil*, *Wistful*, *Berseem*, *Round Table*, *St. Vincent*, *Two Lea*, *T.V. Lark*, *Typecast*, *Bates Motel*, *Brown Bess*, *Lady's Secret*, *North Sider*, *Track Robbery*, *A.P. Indy*, *Cardmania*, *Charismatic*, *Itsallgreetome*, *Jewel Princess*, and *Gourmet Girl*. Champion honors eluded *Native Diver* and *Spain*, but the headstrong Cal-bred gelding and the second-highest earning mare of all time both broke their maidens at Bay Meadows. Also, *Wild Again* finished third in an allowance race at Bay Meadows before upsetting the inaugural Breeders' Cup Classic.

Claiming owners like Joe Morey will probably never own a champion, but he enjoys competing in the overnight races that drive the industry. Morey first attended the track with his family before claiming a horse in 1978. Bay Meadows was where

Morey won his first \$100,000 stakes race, which came in the 2003 California Sprint Championship courtesy of *Trapper*. The triumph was also the first stakes win for trainer William E. Morey, son of Northern California mainstay William J. Morey Jr., who is of no relation to the owner.

Joe Morey realizes Northern California racing will continue despite Bay Meadows' absence; but moving dates to other tracks won't replace the history and memories.

"You'd like to see it stay open, but that's not going to happen," Morey said. "It's an unfortunate situation because they have so much history there."

Program seller Louise Newberry has seen a lot of that history, having worked at Bay Meadows for what she estimated to be 60 years. Newberry, 82, also worked as a messenger and a cashier, running bets for patrons from their box seats.

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said of how the closure will affect the track's most elderly patrons. "A lot of people don't go to the simulcast. They just go to the live races."

Trainer Dennis Patterson, who has been based at Bay Meadows since 1964, is unsure if he'll relocate his operation to Golden Gate or to Pleasanton but plans to stay at Bay Meadows until the final day.

"I'll be the last one out the gate," said Patterson, whose wife works in the Owner/Trainer Lounge in the clubhouse. "I'll shut the gate and turn off the lights."

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