



CTBA Member
PROFILE

CURT AND LILA LANNING

BY EMILY SHIELDS

They met at a bowling alley, playing in different leagues. Years later, Curt and Lila Lanning are still chasing sport together, but via a different avenue. The couple breeds their own Thoroughbreds and have recently enjoyed another stakes victory with Tribal Storm.

Their success is a far cry from Curt Lanning's humble beginnings in the sport.

"Curt has always liked horses, and he would go to the track with his brothers," Lila explained. "He bought a horse with a fellow from Illinois, but unfortunately that horse broke

down, which turned him off for a while."

When Curt decided to try again, he and Lila dealt with what she calls the "chicken and the egg" scenario.

"He wanted to buy a young horse, but you have to have a horse on the track to obtain an owner's license," she said. "But to get a horse on the track, you have to have an owner's license."

The situation was sorted out, and Curt began stocking up on yearlings.

"Then we ended up breeding," Lila said. "Now we breed a few and race a bunch."

The Lannings currently have 32 horses on the track,

with several more at the Green Valley Training Center on layup and a number of broodmares and yearlings as well. Ed Moger Jr. trains for them, campaigning strings of Lanning-bred runners in both Northern and Southern California.

Having just one trainer made sense.

"Curt is a hands-on owner," Lila said, "and it's easier for him because when he goes to the track two or three times a week, he can stop at one barn instead of three or four. Curt was impressed by the fact that Ed is honest and he would communicate with us. Those two things are really import-

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Lila and Curt Lanning have been longtime pillars of California's Thoroughbred program

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ant: honesty and communication. We still believe that today.”

Through the years the Lannings have had several stakes runners that have given them extreme returns on their initial investments.

“We’ve had a few nice ones,” Curt noted. “You have to take what luck gives you.”

Before they settled on buying and breeding California-breds, the Lannings had multiple graded stakes-placed stakes winner Washington-bred *Legendary Weave*. They bought him for \$26,000 as a yearling from the Washington Thoroughbred Breeders’ winter mixed sale in 1999. *Legendary Weave* won a pair of stakes and placed in several grade 3 events for the Lannings.

Inspiration Within, a Cal-bred daughter of *Helmsman*, was an \$11,000 purchase at the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association 2005 Northern California yearling sale. She went on to be a stakes-placed winner for the Lannings with earnings of \$221,809. *Legal Separation* was a \$2,000 purchase out of the same sale in 2008, and the son of *Jackpot* went on to be stakes-placed, earning \$266,318 over 39 starts.

Arizona-bred *Wedding Blush*, by *Pure Prize*, was multiple stakes-placed after being a \$10,000 purchase. Cal-bred *Amber Hills*, by *Bold Badgett*, was a multiple stakes winner, earning \$261,143 after being purchased for \$9,700.

Perhaps the two best from the Lannings’ program have been the mares *Gentle Charmer* and *Qiaona*.

Gentle Charmer, by *Bertrando*—*Triple Charm*, by *Great Charmer*, was a \$17,000 yearling purchase at Barretts and ultimately won the \$150,000 California Cup Distaff Handicap at 54-1. She also placed in four other stakes before retirement with \$344,313 in earnings, and brought \$50,000 as a broodmare at the Keeneland November sale.

Qiaona, who is still racing, has been their highest earner with \$654,540 accumulated to date. The Cal-bred daughter of *Wilko*—*Starlet Sky*, by *Skywalker*, was a \$4,500 Barretts purchase in 2011, and she was stakes-placed in 2012 before



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Curt and Lila Lanning have celebrated stakes wins in many a winner's circle

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— Lila Lanning



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Tribal Storm, shown winning the Harris Farms Stakes, is the Lannings’ latest rising star

she ever broke her maiden. She won the \$300,750 California Breeders’ Champion Stakes in 2013, then ran fourth or better in six other stakes that year. *Qiaona* also won the 2013 California Distaff Handicap en route to finishing in the top three placings in 22 of 42 starts.

Most recently, homebred *Tribal Storm*, a son of *Papa Clem*—*Tribal Feathers*, by *Tribal Rule*, broke through for his first stakes win in the \$100,675 Harris Farms Stakes at the Big Fresno Fair Oct. 7. He had been running admirably in stakes company throughout his sophomore season after breaking his maiden and winning an allowance optional claiming race in his two starts as a juvenile.

Tribal Storm ran consecutive third-place finishes in the \$245,000 California Cup Derby, the \$200,450 El Camino Real Derby (G3), and the \$200,345 Echo Eddie Stakes. After the Harris Farms Stakes, *Tribal Storm* has earned \$210,885 with four wins, a second, and three thirds in nine starts.

“I was a little surprised, but not exactly surprised,” Curt Lanning said of *Tribal Storm*’s 13-1 upset in the Fresno stake. “I really did think that *Tribal Storm* was a great horse to begin with.”

The unraced dam *Tribal Feathers* is still part of the Lannings’ broodmare band. She has two winners from two starters, with her first foal being the *Slew’s Tiznow* filly *Tribal Headdress*. She also has a *Vronsky* 2-year-old filly named *Leonilla*, a *Slew’s Tiznow* yearling colt named *Tribal War Chant*, and a *Clubhouse Ride* weanling colt named *Tribal Impact*. She is in foal to *Papa Clem* to give birth to a full sister to *Tribal Storm* in 2018.

“You hope they do really well, but who knows,” Lila mused. “The nature of the horse business is that you survive long enough to get a really good horse, or you simply have to be lucky. You can pay \$1 million for a yearling and only earn \$12,500 with them. There’s no magic system. Now, if you could look into the horse’s heart to see if they have the heart to run, well, that would make a big difference.”

Tribal Storm certainly has shown a will to run and win. **CTB**