

## O W N E R P R O F I L E

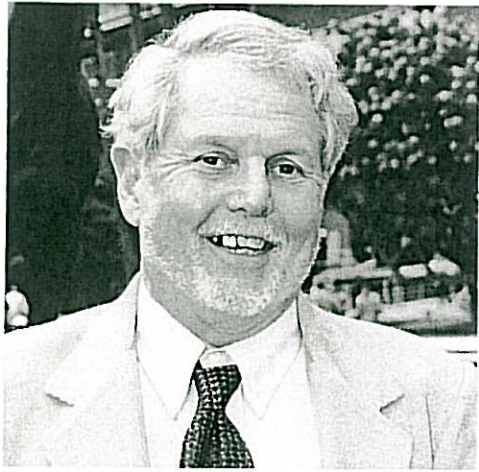


PHOTO: BENOIT &amp; ASSOCIATES

# Barry Henley-

## Imagining a Dream

BY CRAIG HARZMANN

HE'S BEEN UP AND DOWN THE RACING ROLLERCOASTER IN JUST EIGHT YEARS AS A RACEHORSE OWNER - AND SEEN JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING. HE'S STRUGGLED THROUGH THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF A PROMISING STAR, AND HE'S EXPERIENCED THE SHEER EXHILARATION OF WATCHING A DARK HORSE UPSET A MAJOR STAKES EVENT. GOOD ADVICE, BAD ADVICE... BARRY HENLEY HAS BEEN THERE, DONE THAT, RIGHT?

"We still learn all the time," he said. "It's a constant learning curve."

Henley was snagged by the racing bug as a youngster while making regular stops at Santa Anita with his aunt. The bug never released its grip on Henley's heart, and roundabout 1990, he and his wife decided to advance their involvement in the sport to the level of ownership.

The harsh reality of Thoroughbred ownership was felt at once, when Noble Zipper, a young speedster with talent to burn, suddenly died in his stall one day having given no apparent warning. Though Henley was jolted at first, he swallowed the lump in his throat and pressed on.

"I knew when I first started that I was going to take some bumps in the road," he admitted.

It has been this realistic point of view

that has taken Henley to the heights of racing in just a few years. The game plan was simple: Attack ownership with the premise that fun is a goal, but the game is a business. It should be treated as such.

He has applied himself to horseracing with the same vigor that he uses to oversee We Imagine Inc., a family-built operation. Started by his father as a motion picture and television special effects company, the Chatsworth-based company now does business as an electronics subcontractor.

"It's got the same challenges as the horse business," he admitted.

Owner of Whitehawk Ranch in Santa Ynez, Henley currently awaits a slew of two-year-olds from up north. His present string of runners, bedded in trainer Tim Pinfield's barn, includes the multiple-stakes winning turf mare Tassa, an exciting new prospect named Nijinsky's Passion, and his seasoned veteran, Skip A Stream.

"He's a Cinderella story himself," Henley said of his claimer turned stakes-placed star. "He's a good, strong horse. Brent Sumja worked long and hard to turn him around."

"We've got seven wins with him," he went on, adding that "Skip's" propensity for jumping shadows and periodic shying away from some mysterious inner demon has cost them all a few winners' circle photos as well.

Racing under the *nom de course* Imagination Stable - derived from his company's name - Henley shifts the credit of a majority of his success to Clay Murdock at Rancho San Miguel, "the eyes and ears" of his racing practice. A veteran trainer, Murdock has been instrumental in educating Henley about the entire realm of racing. Henley can only advise prospective owners to take the same route.

"Go in with an open mind," he stressed. "You have to have some trust there."

And though owners' seminars were not readily available to Henley when he began his voyage into ownership, he emphasizes their importance in the education process of racing. "They're very valuable," he said, "from the tax aspect, to responsibilities as an owner, to picking trainers."

His life firmly entrenched in the racing game, Henley eyes a bright future, yet he remains gracious in extolling his accomplishments to date.

"I just appreciate the opportunity to participate," he said. "If you're fortunate enough to get one good enough to run, there's nothing like that. There's a certain charge you get. There may be eight horses in a race, but I see only one." 🐾

*Craig Harzmann is a freelance writer based in Glendale, California.*