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PROFILE

THE JETT SET
ARE SOLD ON
CALIFORNIA
RACING

LARRY AND ANN JETT

BY EMILY SHIELDS

In Larry Jett's mind, he probably had a future Kentucky Derby winner, but Red Ralph never hit the board.

After years of attending the races as a fan, Jett, along with wife Ann, had purchased his first California-bred Thoroughbred. There were high hopes for Red Ralph, a chestnut gelding by M. Double M.—Jakscent, by Jaklin Klugman.

"The fellow that owned him couldn't have him anymore, so I bought the horse for \$5,000," Larry

said. "Within two days of working him in the round pen, he came up lame. The former owner said that if we paid for the vet, they would give us our money back." He added wryly, "Keep in mind, this was the future Kentucky Derby winner."

It turned out that Red Ralph had osteochondritis dissecans (OCD), and surgery to clean out the joint didn't help when he bucked shins not once, but twice. Still, the Jetts remained optimistic.

"His first race came as a 4-year-old at Del Mar," Larry said. "I had a full entourage

with me."

Red Ralph rewarded their patience by finishing eighth of nine horses, and promptly dumped jockey Alex Solis after the race.

"So, that was my first experience," Jett said.

Ann added, "I had never been around racing before. That was my first introduction to racing and ownership."

She wasn't quite sure what all the fuss was about.

They could have packed it in, but didn't, which has led to Cal-bred Carmelita's Man, who has won back-to-back stakes. In 2004, the Jetts, with Lewis and Donna Cenicola, bred an In Excess mare named Cathrine's Hope. She was named after Larry's mother, who had introduced him to racing in the 1950s. Lewis Cenicola had been the exercise rider of the great John Henry and trained for the Jetts before his death in 2012.

"My mom loved to go, and she'd let me tag along," Larry recalled. "Cathrine's Hope was a hard-trying mare."

Cookin Vickie, the dam of Cathrine's Hope, was graded stakes-placed in 1999 and earned \$232,627 from 28 starts. Cathrine's Hope inherited some of that toughness, earning \$259,162 with five wins in 23 tries. She was eventually sold as a broodmare for \$23,000.

Time went on and horses filtered in and out of the Jetts' lives, bringing both disappointments and mystical thrills. There was the time they left the funeral service of a dear friend where the renowned song "Somewhere



Ann and Larry Jett flank jockey Juan Hernandez in the winner's circle following Carmelita's Man's win in the Crystal Water Stakes

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Over the Rainbow” had been played, made it to Hollywood Park in time to watch one of their horses—Cathrine’s Hope’s half brother, Cookinthisort—that—race, heard the same song on their way to their seats, and saw him win.

“Coincidence, or something else?” Jett mused.

The Munnings filly Miss Lady Ann broke her maiden in her second start, scoring by 3¾ lengths at Santa Anita. Dark Nose, a Bertrando half brother to Cathrine’s Hope, won a pair of races in 2005 and 2006, and even defeated subsequent \$114,939 Derby Trial Stakes winner Record in an allowance race at Santa Anita.

The Jetts tried claiming horses but preferred to bring them up from birth. They were still waiting on a “big horse” when they got a call from trainer-turned-bloodstock agent Jack Carava.

“He was at the Barretts sale in 2018 and saw this horse come into the ring,” Jett said. “He looked up the pedigree and what did he see? The second dam was Cathrine’s Hope. He bought the yearling (for \$23,000) then asked me if I wanted to buy him. That is Carmelita’s Man.”

Carmelita’s Man is a chestnut Cal-bred gelding by Mucho Macho Man—Carmelita, by North Light. Carmelita scored at Woodbine in 2013. She was sold to Richard Barton Enterprises while carrying Carmelita’s Man.

In training with Dean Pederson, Carmelita’s Man took four tries to break his maiden, but did so at Santa Anita Oct. 9, 2020. He added a starter optional claiming victory three weeks later and another starter in January of 2021. The gritty gelding bounced around in allowance company, running up a strong record, before finally



The Jetts’ Cal-bred Carmelita’s Man takes the Crystal Water Stakes at Santa Anita

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— Larry Jett



Carmelita’s Man’s California Dreamin’ win was his second consecutive stakes victory

trying a higher level in the \$100,000 Crystal Water Stakes at Santa Anita May 28.

Sent off as the favorite against tough competitors such as Jimmy Blue Jeans

and Irish Heatwave, Carmelita’s Man rallied from last to win by three-quarters of a length.

“We were there and it was so exciting,” Ann said. “And I really enjoy seeing how excited Larry gets.”

“I wash out faster than the horses,” Larry joked.

Ann wasn’t able to be in attendance for Carmelita’s Man’s second stakes start, the \$152,500 California Dreamin’ Stakes at Del Mar Aug. 6, but Carmelita’s Man split a wall of horses and rallied up the rail to score by a head in the 1¼-mile contest.

“I was ill and couldn’t make it, but I was so happy for Larry and excited because I knew he was excited,” Ann said.

The victory pushed Carmelita’s Man’s record to six wins, five seconds, and a third in 19 starts for earnings of \$362,038. While the Kentucky Derby is out of the question for the 5-year-old turf horse, the Jetts finally have a horse who has made all the previous disappointments worth it.

“My old trainer Lewis once said to me, ‘Larry, you better be wearing steel shorts because there’s a lot of ups and downs in this business,’” Jett recalled.

But there could be more ups on the horizon: their homebred American Cat, a Cal-bred sophomore by American Freedom, debuted at Del Mar Aug. 7 and ran a promising fourth. The 3-year-old Sky Mesa filly Sky Maker has finished in the top three spots in seven of eight starts this year in Northern California, and the Jetts have five 2-year-olds, including a daughter of Cairo Prince out of the Candy Ride mare Candy n’ Oats who has been working well.

“We don’t own a boat, but we own horses,” Larry said. And the horses are a much more compelling reward. **CTB**