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**PROFILE**

**OWNER GETS  
FIRST STAKES  
WINNER  
AT AGE 90**

# ANDY SMOLICH

BY JACK SHINAR

**A**ndy Smolich knows that it's never too late to dream.

The 90-year-old semi-retired Sacramento attorney, a small-scale breeder and owner of Thoroughbreds since 1987, recently celebrated his milestone birthday as well as his first stakes victory when Chancery Way captured the Bear Fan Stakes at Golden Gate Fields.

"Hope springs eternal," chuckled Smolich, who owns the filly in partnership with his son, Robert.

Chancery Way, a California-bred 2019 daughter of popular California sire Mr. Big, is four-for-four to start

her career for trainer Jamey Thomas, with earnings of \$110,520. The bay filly, who is out of the stakes-placed War Chant mare This Means War, has yet to be headed in any of her races.

With Kevin Radke aboard, Chancery Way won the Dec. 10 Bear Fan impressively by 1¼ lengths off a 4½-month layoff. She set swift fractions in the six-furlong test and held off the even-money favorite Big Summer in the final furlong in a time of 1:09.89.

"We're following the dream," Smolich said. "When you win four in a row and never trailed, you can't help but dream a little."

Smolich explained the long

layoff prior to the Bear Fan.

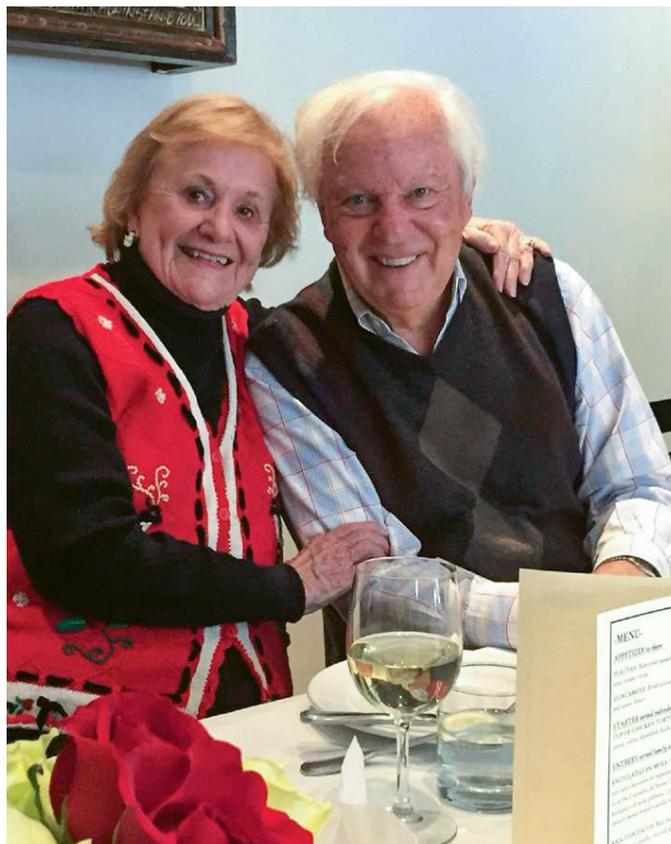
"This horse has shown a lot of heart," he said. "I wanted to put her up for the Governor's Cup (at Sacramento's Cal Expo summer meet). We ran her in a mile allowance race instead. She led all the way, but just barely. It was one of those 100-plus (degree) days in Sacramento, and it took a lot out of her. That's why we waited so long."

Smolich has been around horse racing long enough to remain realistic about Chancery Way's prospects for the future, but he wants to give her a chance against better competition in 2023. He said he and Robert will probably pony up the \$25,000 required to make her eligible for the Golden State Series of stakes races for state-breds.

"We're all looking for the next California Chrome," he said.

Chancery Way, bred by Harris Farms and John Nicoletti, was acquired as a yearling for \$6,500 at the 2020 California Thoroughbred Breeders Association Northern California sale. She's named for the Carmichael street on which Smolich and his wife, Marilyn, have lived for nearly 50 years, raising their two sons, James and Robert.

"That's about as deep as we get in naming our horses," Smolich said. "When I was checking the name to see if anyone else had used it, I noticed there was one earlier Chancery Way. I was surprised by that, but even more surprised to find that I was the one who named it. She was a filly we had bred



COURTESY OF SMOLICH AND SMOLICH

Marilyn and Andy Smolich take vacations around their racing endeavors



more than a decade earlier who never did much.”

Married for 66 years, Smolich notes that Marilyn has been an active partner in their racing endeavors over the years, as have their sons.

“It’s been a family affair all the way through,” he said.

In addition to racing, sons Robert and James Smolich are partners in the law firm that their father founded more than 50 years ago on J Street in midtown Sacramento. They represent private clients in workers’ compensation, personal injury, and Social Security disability cases.

Smolich also founded the Lincoln Law School of Sacramento, a private school offering an evening-only four-year Juris Doctor degree program. He notes proudly that the school had produced a number of California Superior Court judges, a federal court judge, a Franchise Tax Board head, and a former Sacramento County district attorney. James is the law school’s chief executive officer.

Andy was born during the Great Depression. His father, a Croatian emigrant who had settled in Sacramento in 1910, was a baker. Andy attended local schools and then earned his B.S. degree at Santa Clara University, where he first became interested in pursuing a law degree. He earned his J.D. degree at McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento and passed the state bar exam in 1965.

“I’ve enjoyed the law,” he said. “Doing the sort of work we do, we’re dealing with people who often come to us with almost nothing, and it’s very gratifying when you can do something that helps them out. We don’t take money from those who can’t afford it (since it’s all



Chancery Way won Bear Fan Stakes at Golden Gate Fields

VASSAR PHOTOGRAPHY/SHANE MICHELL

**“(Racing) has been so important to many of the things we do as a family. In many ways, it’s been like owning your own sports franchise.”**

—Andy Smolich

done on contingency). We can help people and still make money at it. So it was a very rewarding career.”

First as a fan and handicapper, then as a horse breeder and owner, Smolich said he’s “gone through all the stages of racing.” He began by claiming a couple of horses in 1987 that were trained by Fred Lonnerberg. He also purchased Dalmation Princess for \$15,000 out of the 1988 Keeneland September yearling sale. The daughter of Stalwart

was a three-time winner, but Smolich had other plans for her.

“She was our foundation mare,” Smolich said. “We got nine or 10 foals from her. She lived to be 30. One of her daughters was Princess Lianna, and she also became a broodmare for us. We had 15 to 20 foals from those two.”

A Cal-bred stakes-placed daughter of American Chance, Princess Lianna earned \$224,975 while winning eight of 28 starts.

Smolich has bred dozens of horses over the years and raced others as well in several claiming partnerships. He was associated with trainer Steve Specht for more than 30 years, but since the pandemic struck, he’s stepped back. Robert, who has developed a close relationship with Thomas, is “very much involved with the horses now, much more so than I am,” Andy said.

“I used to talk a big game (about owning horses),” Smolich said. “But I’d probably still be talking about it if it were not for Rob.”

The family owns a time share near the racetrack at Del Mar, and Smolich looks forward to the fun and atmosphere there each year. Vacations the family has taken to places like upstate New

York and Lexington, Ky., rank as some of the greatest times of his life.

Smolich joked about “how a smart guy like me can lose so much money in racing,” but adds: “I’ve really enjoyed horse racing. My family as well, we’ve all really enjoyed it. It has been so important to many of the things we do as a family, the vacations we’ve taken. It gets you out with people. In many ways, it’s been like owning your own sports franchise.” **CTB**