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PROFILE

CAMARADERIE
PUTS MORE
FUN INTO
RACING

VICTOR FLORES

BY JACK SHINAR

As far back as grade school, horse owner Victor Flores has been driven to succeed.

Bored with the classes he was taking at Workman High School in La Puente and restless to make his way in the world, Flores decided he'd had enough during the second half of his sophomore year. After being informed by his counselor that he was so far behind in credits that he would not be able to graduate on time, the 16-year-old Flores passed the GED test. By the next week, he was working in a manufacturing plant.

"My parents totally signed off on my decision," Flores said. "They knew I wouldn't just lay around."

Often working two jobs at a time, he found his way to Dow Hydraulic Systems in 1987 as an employee for a company that manufactures and tests precision hydraulic parts for the aerospace industry. Thirty-six years later, he is the general manager and co-owner of the firm, which he said has about 100 employees and does \$24 million annually in sales.

His arrival at the Pomona-based company coincided with his marriage to Patricia, who convinced him to join her in the real estate sales

business. He's also heavily involved in investing. And he's in the process of opening a restaurant in Claremont named Magnolia Bistro.

Horse racing is something else, however, for Flores, 59, who now lives in La Verne.

"Patricia and I love it," he said. "That's really important, that she's as much into it as I am. We are in this game because we love it."

A fan since attending Southern California races as a youngster with his father and brother, Flores approached horse ownership cautiously through limited shares in partnerships after meeting trainer Jeff Bonde.

"Getting into racing through partnerships was the best way for us to go," he said. "It is a heavy load to own on your own." Flores is currently part of an ownership team that has Tom's Regret, a California-bred multiple stakes winner and graded stakes-placed runner.

Horse partnership, he said, not only allowed him and his wife to compete with horses they otherwise wouldn't be able to afford, but also made the experience more enjoyable because they were sharing it with others.

A partner with Jeff Ganje in Texacali Racing, they had claimed a Cal-bred filly named Baroness Kenmare in 2000 who went on to win a starter allowance over a sloppy track at Golden Gate Fields and paid \$73.80 to win.

"I was hooked after that," Flores said.

Partnering on other horses with members of Bonde's group such as Rusty Brown



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VICTOR FLORES

Patricia and Victor Flores have two broodmares, three yearlings, and two weanlings at Lovacres Ranch

and Phil Lebherz, Flores enjoyed his first real taste of success with Twice the Appeal. A \$35,000 Barretts 2-year-old buy, Twice the Appeal—racing for Brown, Flores and a third partner, Henry Hernandez—appeared to be anything but a steal. It took the son of Successful Appeal seven starts to win his first, which came in a \$30,000 maiden claiming race. But in March 2011, Bonde shipped the dark bay colt to New Mexico to win the Sunland Derby (G3) going away by 1 1/2 lengths at odds of 25-1.

That win qualified Twice the Appeal for the Kentucky Derby (G1) just two years after 50-1 long shot Mine That Bird had shocked the world by scoring in the Kentucky Derby following a run in the Sunland Derby. It didn't go quite so well for Twice the Appeal, in spite of the fact that Bonde enlisted Mine That Bird jockey Calvin Borel. Twice the Appeal finished 10th.

"Going to the Kentucky Derby with our own horse, that was the greatest," Flores said. "Patricia and I spent 10 days back there. If you were a kid like me, that was the dream, even though he didn't run all that great. To win a race like that, a horse has to peak at the right time."

Twice the Appeal never won another race but he retired with earnings of \$476,060. Looking for a place to stand him as a stallion, Flores approached Terry Lovingier of Lovacres Ranch in Warner Springs. Lovingier not only gave Twice the Appeal an opportunity, he welcomed Flores into his group of investors.



Flores owns Tom's Regret with Eugene Zondlo, Tom Beckerle, Todd Sheehan, Burton Johnson, and Saul Carrillo (not pictured)



Victor and Patricia and their daughter Monét (right) meet with jockey Kyle Frey at Del Mar

“(Terry Lovingier) put us together with so many other partners, which was great for me because I love to have a lot of horses. We have met so many great people through Terry.”

— Victor Flores

It turned out Twice the Appeal wasn't a great stallion prospect because of a low sperm count, Flores said.

"Terry knew I liked to race, and he really likes to get people involved in racing," Flores said. "He put us together with so many other partners, which

was great for me because I love to have a lot of horses. We have met so many great people through Terry.

"He taught me all about the California breeding program and the great incentives they offer. He taught us the value of the bonuses for Cal-breds, got us thinking about that. It has helped keep us going. He's taught us a lot about breeding. The networking has been a big part of being with Terry. We're part of a group of about 14 to 16 people, and we have a lot of fun. Win or lose, we always have a good time."

Flores currently has 10 horses in training—including three juveniles he owns outright—and is especially high on Tom's Regret, whose future he feels will be in grass sprints.

Three-year-old Tom's Regret, trained by Steve Miyadi, has three wins and five placings from her eight lifetime starts with earnings of nearly \$300,000. The California-bred daughter of Tom's Tribute is out of the winning Quality Road mare Pure and owned by Flores, Tom Beckerle, Saul Carrillo, Eugene Zondlo, Burton Johnson, and Todd Sheehan. The bay filly ran second in the Senorita Stakes (G3) at Santa Anita in May and has two black-type stakes victories so far, most recently winning the Mary Clare Schmitt Pleasanton Oaks at the Alameda County Fair July 2.

"We are so excited about Tom's Regret; she has so much class," Flores said. "After we purchased her, our partner Tom Beckerle made the comment that he was going to regret doing it. And that's how she got her name, Tom's Regret." **CTB**