

## Bottle of Cheerwine with Katie Bo Williams

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You may think this is the story. Arthur Hancock offers a full brother to Arthur's Tale, a 2-year-old colt who finished a green but promising fifth in a Saratoga maiden Saturday. The colt is a half-brother to War Hoot (War Chant) and Senada (Pulpit), both successful in the ring and on the racecourse. The son of Stone Farm's Owsley is part of Hancock's usual selective quality consignment.

Hancock will tell you about the horse, the family, the marketplace. But he'd rather tell stories.

"I remember sitting over there at the Reading Room with Horatio Luro, Jimmy Stone, and it was 1963, 1964. I was just 20. They were talking about whether or not Northern Dancer would be a good stallion. He had just gone to stud and I remember them discussing that. And there was this old gentleman, and he wasn't kin to E.P. Taylor, but his name was Mr. Taylor and he was from Canada. You have to remember in 1963, if a guy was 80, he was born in 1883. His father would have fought in the Civil War if he was an American. Well, Mr. Taylor was 90, so he would have been born in 1870. He was a short man and he had this long handlebar mustache – you don't see them very often any more. And one night he got locked out of the Reading Room. Somewhere or other he lost his key. He would go out and he would take beautiful women to dinner and stay at the Reading Room, and he was just a character. So he got locked out of his room, and he climbed up – this 90-some-year-old man – he climbed up this vine over there and got into his room on the second floor of the Reading Room."

On a cool, overcast morning at the Spa, Hancock sat outside of his consignment, legs crossed and one eye on the vet with the scope in the Bernardini colt's stall.

On the other side of the fence, every passer-by paused on the sidewalk to lean on the metal railing and swap stories.

Some of them are about horses. Some of them are about Siro's. One was about the time Hancock was nearly arrested.

"One night we were over in Siro's, and there was some big guy from New York and he was half a bully. He and I almost got in a fight and someone said, don't fool with him, he's got a gun. And I started yelling at him, pull out your gun! Jimmy Moseley was there and it was about three in the morning. They called the police and the waitress told me, you need to get out of here. We went out of Siro's and they got me in the car. Just as we were heading out, three police cars – woo! – came straight down towards Siro's.

"The guy with the gun was all mouth, he didn't do anything. Because where I'm from, it's kind of a rough area. We'll fight. The people in Kentucky are the very descendants of the people Hadrian built a wall across England to keep out."

"Yes," a bystander observed. "I was walking past Stone Farm, I saw an Apache war party going over there."

The best stories are hardly stories; they're a manual, a code. An insight into how to raise three Derby winners (and two seconds).

"When I started my farm, we have hundred-acre fields, and everyone said, that's wasting land. We've raised three Derby winners and two seconds and there will be another one, God willing. If you want to raise a trout to be a champion trout, is he going to be better if he's raised in an aquarium or a lake? Benjamin Franklin said in Poor Richard's Almanac, 'For want of the nail the shoe was lost, for want of the shoe the horse was lost, for want of the horse the rider was overtaken and slain by the enemy, all because of one little nail.' With raising horses it's the little things that count. Just take care of the details. If you take care of the little things, the rest will come."

Simple advice from a man who calls Humphrey Finney a gentleman and Horatio Luro a friend and a ladykiller. A man who remembers Danzig going through the ring, who has seen the best and appreciates the theatricality of a good auctioneer, who when he recalls Luro, mentions the good horse he once trained,

Tap Shoes, who won the Flamingo for Hancock at Hialeah in 1981.

The vet stepped out of the stall and caught Hancock's eye. Hancock went over, putting an end to the stories to discuss his strapping Bernardini colt. He posits the big bay may have more class than his brother. The colt has a show-stopping, eye-catching walk, so it's easy to believe Hancock isn't just selling the horse.

The Bernardini-Owsley colt sells tonight.