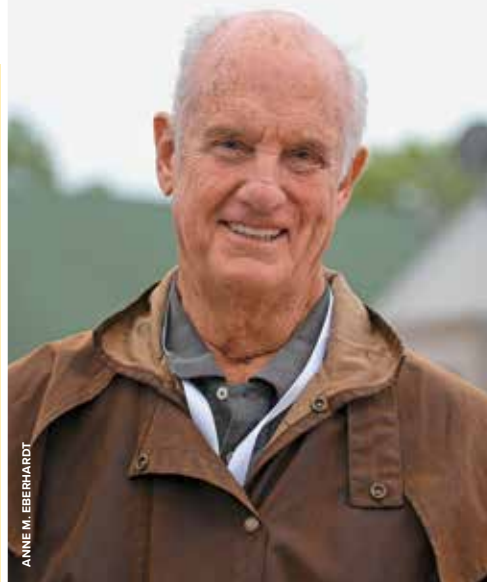


ROCK

TALK

Aerial view of Arthur
Hancock III's Stone Farm in
Bourbon County, Kentucky

BOBBY SHIFLEY/FRAMES ON MAIN



ANNE M. EBERHARDT

Arthur Hancock III reminisces as Stone Farm reaches the half-century mark

BY EVAN HAMMONDS

THE HANCOCK FAMILY'S LINEAGE in the Thoroughbred industry has been well chronicled through the years. Capt. Richard Hancock raised horses in Virginia, and his son, Arthur B. Hancock, moved to Bourbon County, Ky., to establish Claiborne Farm in 1910. His son, Arthur "Bull" Hancock Jr., carried Claiborne further, being the nation's leading breeder four times and home to eight-time leading sire Bold Ruler.

Bull Hancock's sons took different paths. Younger son Seth took the helm of Claiborne, where it thrives today under his son, Walker. Older brother Arthur Hancock III was sent to run a 100-acre tract known as Stone Farm in 1970. Fifty years later Stone Farm has carved its own way in the





THE MORNING TELEGRAPH

Hancock at Stone Farm in 1971 with the broodmare Fast Cookie and her two-day old Buckpasser colt

Thoroughbred business, has grown to some 2,000 acres and has bred, stood, and sold some of the best horses of all time. Two Stone Farm-raised, co-raced colts won the Kentucky Derby (G1): Gato Del Sol (1982; bred by Hancock III and L.J. Peters) and Sunday Silence (1989; bred by Oak Cliff Thoroughbreds).

As the farm reaches the half-century mark, *BloodHorse* posed Hancock a handful of questions about the operation, looking for the key horses, people, and events that have shaped the legend of Stone Farm.

Q: We're sure you had hopes, dreams, and aspirations when you started. Looking back, did you achieve those?

I remember sitting on the porch at Stone Farm when I first started and thinking about the Derby. I was

always brought up that the Kentucky Derby was the dream. That was my father's dream. He never won it...it was a freak thing...he had about three or four horses that could have won it, but something happened. They said Drone was going to gallop in the (1969) Derby, but he got hurt. He could outrun Dike for fun, and Dike finished third to Majestic Prince and Arts and Letters.

In the horse business I wanted to win the Derby, and thank God we were able to do it in 1982.

We were very lucky and fortunate. In 1981 we had Tap Shoes, and we thought he had a pretty good chance. He was trained by Mr. (Horatio) Luro, and he thought Tap Shoes could win. He trained (winners) Northern Dancer (1964) and Decidedly (1962); he said, 'We can ween.'

He (Tap Shoes) was 7-1 and finished 14th. I thought that was my one shot at

the Derby. I was really dejected. I thought that was my one chance. I saw my father go through his life and get his hopes up and bam, bam, bam.

The next year, thank God, Gato Del Sol came along. Everyone said he didn't have a chance.

I wanted to avenge my father's wishes. When it happened, I was 39 years old and I couldn't believe it. Now I'm an old man, and I'd kind of like to win it again.

Another thing I wanted to do was to live on the land, and I've done that. I like to live my life close to nature, and I've done that. The land is everything. We're farmers, and the crop we raise is Thoroughbred racehorses. If you don't have good land, you can't raise corn or tobacco or anything. You need good land. I've always been a creature who wants to be close to the land. I was accepted into a couple of law schools, but I didn't want to go and sit in an office.

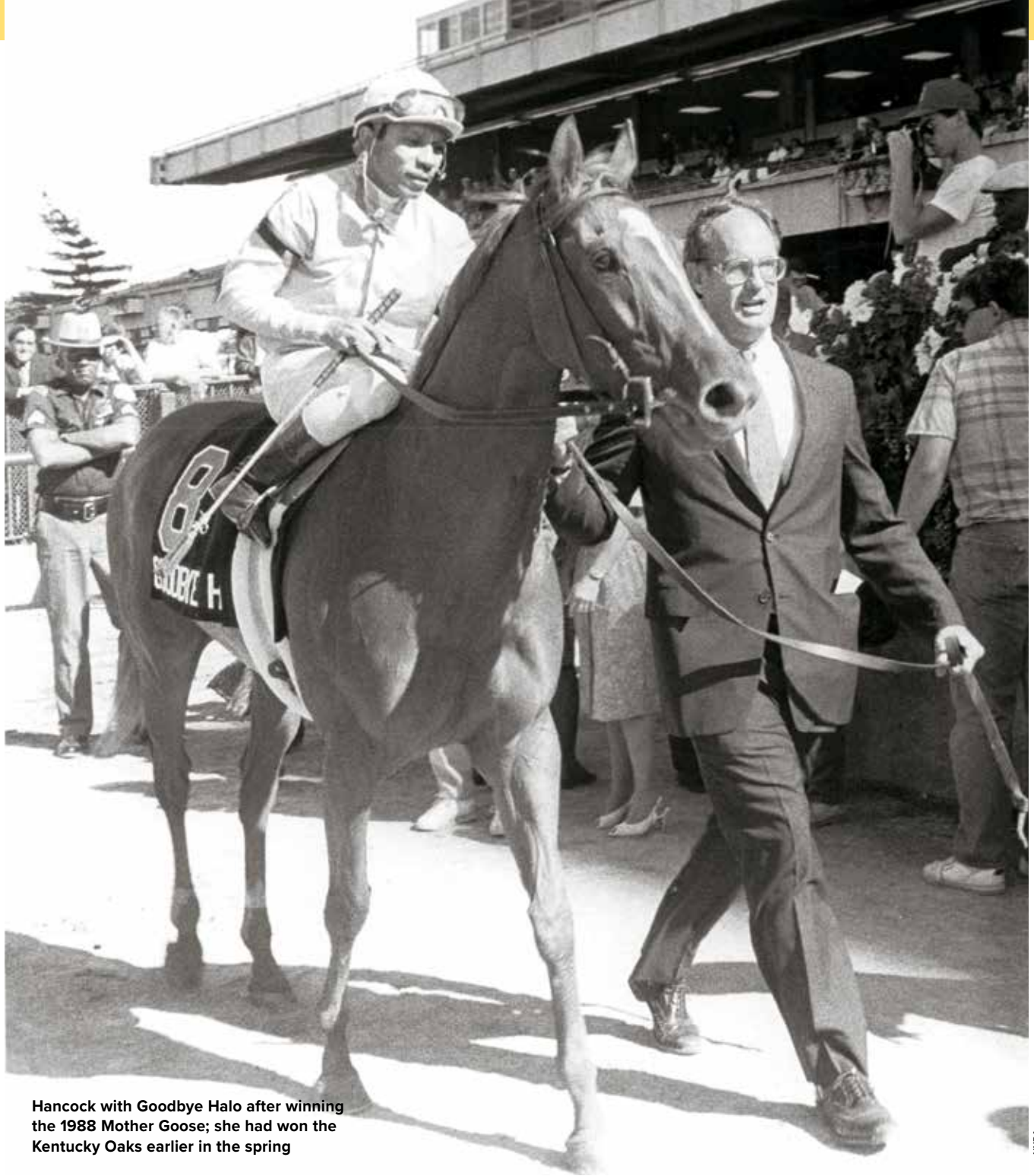


TONY LEONARD



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Above: The winner's circle ceremony after Gato Del Sol's score in the 1982 Kentucky Derby; left, Arthur and his wife, Staci, wearing the blanket of roses



Hancock with Goodbye Halo after winning the 1988 Mother Goose; she had won the Kentucky Oaks earlier in the spring

NYRA

Q: What were a few key races that changed or 'made' Stone Farm?

I bought this mare Sound of Success. I forgot what I paid for her, \$13,000 or \$16,000. She ended up being the dam of (grade 1 winner) Hawaiian Sound and (stakes winner) Lullaby, and Robert Sangster went in on Hawaiian Sound. To make a long story short, he got beat a nose in the 1978 Epsom Derby (G1). That was big for us. That put us on the international stage.

I bred him. Shirley Heights was a great horse and beat us a nose. I almost bred an English Derby winner. And if a frog had wings his ass wouldn't hit the ground.

Goodbye Halo won the 1988 Kentucky Oaks (G1) for us. That was a real good purchase John Adger engineered. We purchased her, and she won the Oaks and the Coaching Club American Oaks (G1). We owned her with Alex Campbell Jr. That was big for us.

Of course, the big one was Sunday Silence.



Stone Farm began as a 100-acre farm but has grown to more than 2,000 acres



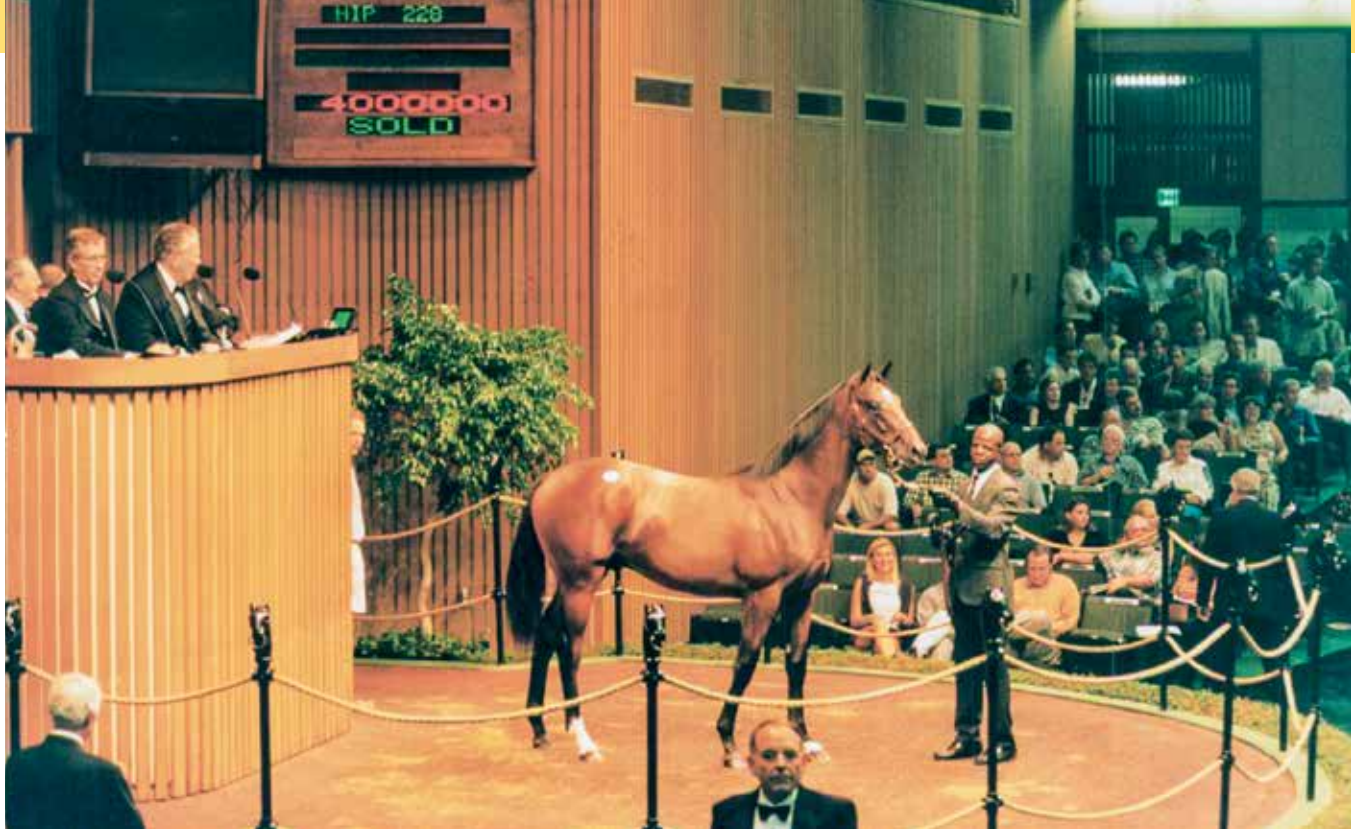
BOBBY SHIFLET/FRAMES ON MAIN PHOTOS

Q: What is a key buy/broodmare that changed or 'made' Stone Farm?

When we bought Angel Fever (a daughter of Danzig that cost Hancock and Robert McNair \$525,000); that was a key one. She became the dam of Fusaichi Pegasus (a \$4 million sale yearling and 2000 Derby winner). Then there were some others like Anne Campbell. She's the dam of Menifee. He just got beat in the (1999) Derby...he could have won it.

Lately we've been lucky to buy some good mares like Chatham (a \$190,000 purchase in 2009), who is the dam of Air Force Blue. Ghost Dancing has been a good mare; she's the dam of grade 1 winners Ascend and Roadster. Those are the kinds of mares you need.

Bottle Top, the dam of Strodes Creek, was an important one. We sold foals out of those mares...that is what pays the bills.



ANNE M. EBERHARDT PHOTOS

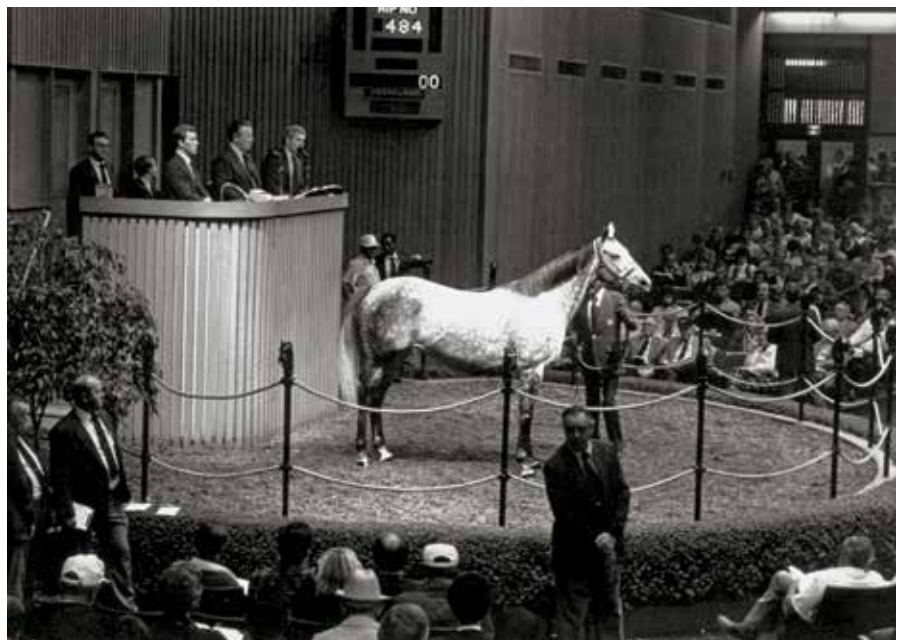
Hancock co-bred Fusaichi Pegasus, who sold for \$4 million in 1998 and won the 2000 Kentucky Derby

Q: What was a key sale that changed or 'made' Stone Farm?

Fusaichi Pegasus I'd say...that was one of the tops. However, the Tuckers, Jim and Paula, who owned Princess Rooney...we sold her for \$5.5 million (1985 Keeneland November sale). That was a nice commission. I called Jim Tucker and I said, 'Jim, that mare brought so much money...we charge 5%, but I feel like that's too much to take \$275,000.' He said, 'Nope. Absolutely. I'm going to send you that check. That's the best check I'll ever write. You guys did a great job, and I want you to have that.' At that time, to get \$275,000 and you owe the bank and all, and the record stuck for a long time up at Keeneland. Jim Tucker was so gracious and appreciative; you know, I'll always remember that.

I've always tried to play my cards right. It's like being pregnant: You're either honest or you're not. You aren't a little bit honest or a little bit pregnant.

Before they had X-rays, if we sold a horse and somebody X-rayed it and said it had a chip, I'd say it has a home where



Princess Rooney in the ring at Keeneland in 1985

it came from or I'll pay for the operation. I don't know how many times we did that...probably two or three dozen times. I don't want to sell you a sweater that has a hole in the back.

I remember I bought some guys four or five beers down in Richmond at a place called Specs. I gave the waitress a

\$10 bill; she brought me the change and I kind of miscounted it and I said, 'I gave you a \$10 bill.' And she said, 'That's right.' She counted the change back out and said, 'I wouldn't cheat you.' She made me feel like a dog. I've never forgotten that, so that's always been our motto at Stone Farm: I wouldn't cheat you.'



Hancock in his office at Stone Farm in 2005



ANNE M. EBERHARDT PHOTOS

Hancock adviser and friend John Adger

Q: Who was a major player from the industry that most influenced you?

My father. He was a taskmaster; he was tough. You worked; you had to work. He said the only real happiness in life is in a job well done. And he lived by that. You worked for Daddy; he did that for me and for Seth. It taught us the value of work, the value of integrity, and thirdly, I guess, being a good horseman. My father was as good a horseman as I've ever seen. He knew things. He'd know if a mare didn't have enough milk when she foaled. I had to hold tools for the blacksmith. I hated it, but I learned it all from the ground up. When Gato won the Derby, I said, 'I'd like to dedicate this to my Daddy, who taught me everything I know and how to get here.' He did, you know.

You know who taught me a lot? John Adger. John certainly did. He was in the industry, as well as outside. He brought Tom Tatham here; in turn, we ended up with Sunday Silence. Tom brought (top sire) Halo here too, that was huge for Stone Farm. Tom was great; a loyal client and friend.

Aaron Jones brought Bold Forbes here. Early on, Leone Peters became my partner and boarded a lot of mares here, and we had Gato Del Sol together. We bred Risen Star together. And Mary Bradley...she wanted to send Cougar here and have me syndicate him.

Today, people like George Strawbridge and John Ed Anthony...without them we'd be out there raising potatoes.

I appreciate them all...If you see a turtle on a fence post, you know it didn't get up there by itself.



BOBBY SHIPLEY/FRAMES ON MAIN PHOTOS

Hancock said he has purchased 18 farms throughout his career

Q: Who was a major player outside the industry (non-family member) that was most influential in your life?

Paul Sullivan. We got to be friends when I was 12 and he was 11, and we got into a fistfight. He's from Paris, and he worked his way through law school.

Paul is an attorney in Lexington, and he's always given me great advice about everything. He drew up the Halo syndicate deal; he drew all the contracts on the farms I've bought over the years. I've bought 18 farms—I've also sold a lot of land back because we got land poor—but Paul has always been very smart. He's got great common sense as well as a great legal mind.

I didn't want to sell Sunday Silence. I loved that horse, but nobody would take any shares. I was out to dinner with Paul and I said, 'I love this horse. He'll make a great stallion.' But he said, 'You've got two shares sold...you owe the bank \$15 million. I'm going to tell you something.' He was about as serious as I've ever seen him. He said, 'If you don't sell this S.O.B., I'm going to get Staci and have your ass committed.'

I looked at him and he was dead serious, and I thought, well, I guess I am crazy.

We've been friends all of these years. He wrote me a letter

one time when I was really in debt. He's a good businessman, too. He's a CPA as well as an attorney. He has a good overview of the industry that maybe somebody in the industry wouldn't have had.

Before Sunday Silence came along, I owed a lot of money but I had a lot of land. I had him out to the office and I said, 'Let's go over everything.'

He came out and we sat at the desk for two or three hours and went over all of the financial stuff, and he looked up at me and said, 'Hawk, you're gone.' I said, 'What?' He said, 'You're gone. There is no way short of a miracle that you will ever pull this out.' This was in 1988 when the market had crashed. I owed all that money and was paying all of this interest. I said, 'You're joking.' He said, 'No, Arthur, I'm not joking.' Then being the friend he is, he started laughing and said, 'But you can always go out to Montana or somewhere and start Hawk's Bar and Grill and pick that guitar.' That's when I had six children and a wife, and I was about to go under.

Sunday Silence was the miracle that nobody knew about.

I thought I'd be the laughingstock of the industry, but that couldn't have been the worst thing to happen to me. Like Ricky Nelson sang in that song, 'But if memories were all I sang, I'd rather drive a truck.'



Hancock: 'You are only as good as the people that work for you'



ANNE M. EBERHARDT

Derby week last year ready to root on Stone Farm-bred Roadster, from left, trainer Bob Baffert, Staci, Alex, Arthur, Lynn, and Arthur Hancock IV, and Jak Knelman

Q: What's in store for Stone Farm?

Two of my daughters are working here and I'm 77. You are only as good as the people that work for you. And over the years I've had some wonderful people work for me that made Stone Farm. Everett Charles...he's been here 47 years; people like that. The clients; the guys that work here; Barbara Nicholls, has been here for 25 years; she booked mares. Great influences to keep an idiot like me half on the ground.

I'm just going to work until they put me in the ground. I like working. We had three foals last night, and we were looking at them because you never know if it's going to be the next champion.

The day Gato foaled, I called about 5:30 in the morning. They said, 'Yeah, Peacefully foaled last night. She had a colt.' I went over there and walked in and, hell, he wasn't even up to your knees; a little bitty thing. I said this little S.O.B. will never amount to a quarter.'

I don't know that Stone Farm or any other farm has a future if we don't remedy the drugs and thugs that permeate this industry. I gave a speech called 'Drugs and Thugs' back in 1991. It's more pertinent than ever. If you don't believe me, ask the FBI.

I've been fighting this stuff. I don't believe the American public will put up with us if we don't clean this industry up. The only thing to do right now is support the Horse Racing Integrity Act. We don't have a lot of time.

Look what has happened in the last year. The Integrity Act is the one thing that can help rebuild our reputation and give the fans confidence that we are above board.

I'm going to quote my father, this was back when racing was the number one spectator sport in the country, he said, 'nobody needs to own a horse, and nobody needs to bet on a horse.' That came from Bull Hancock and people in this industry ought to remember that. **BH**