

SOUTHWEST

Clear Vision

*At Clear Creek Stud,
the horse comes first*

BY GARY McMILLEN

YOU CAN'T FOLLOW Val Murrell on Twitter or “like” him on Facebook, but the man who runs Clear Creek Stud near Folsom, La., has more apps on his iPhone than most teenagers. Behind the technology curve? Not this guy. Attention to detail and a penchant for accurate, up-to-date information forms the core of Murrell’s personality and is one of the reasons that Clear Creek Stud is the premiere horse farm in the region.

Concepts and theories are just temporary teasers to Murrell. Forget the window dressing; give him the facts and give them to him quick. Murrell can handle it. That basic philosophy has resulted in a horse farm with clean appearance, vast spaciousness carpeted with an abundance of grass, and one that presents an unpretentious efficiency over style points. The consistent and established focus at Clear Creek Stud is the care and safety of horses. You don’t need petunias, rows of palm trees, and a water fountain to have an attractive farm.

The term “full service” is alive and well at Clear Creek and with 280 acres there is plenty of room to get the job done.

“Sometimes, in fact, it’s not big enough,” Murrell said.

On a year ’round basis, horses that are boarded receive constant attention. Clear Creek mares and others that are shipped in for the breeding season are served by eight standing stallions and those mares produce a total of 65 foals a year. Laid-up horses enjoy a swimming pond and a jog inside the 120-foot Eurociser for their recuperation. There is a five-furlong training track with break-away safety rails. Local veterinarian Dr. Lowell Roger is on hand every day of the week. Two vans are provided for owners or trainers in need of transportation. When it comes to sales prep, Clear Creek has a consistent record of being a leading consignor of yearlings at public auctions for several years.

The cowboy part of Murrell (he still has broken ribs from riding Brahma bulls in his youth) comes out in him when describing his favorite task—breaking yearlings. Beginning



MARSHALL BLEVINS/COURTESY PHOTOGRAPHY

Val Murrell has been at Clear Creek Stud since 1977

with lunging, the process moves to driving and activity in the round pen for three to four weeks. This is followed by slow gallops (about 25 minutes a day) around the perimeter of the farm in open fields.

“It’s a routine system but adaptable to a trainer’s specific wishes,” Murrell explained. “When they put their head down and want to buck we shut it down right there. We never let things get out of control. It’s all about learned behavior so you want to eliminate the danger and nervousness. It is not something that you want to rush. There is nothing wrong with just waiting for a better time.”

The best example of the full-service operation at Clear Creek is Evelyn Benoit’s Star Guitar. Born and raised on the farm, Star Guitar raced from ages 2 to 7, winning 24 of 30 starts. With earnings of \$1,749,862, the son of Quiet American is the leading money winner of all time for Louisiana-breds and has come full circle to join the stallion roster at Clear Creek.

People are more important than place and farm manager Michelle LaVoice is an invested link in the success of Clear

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2015 LEADING SIRES IN LOUISIANA

Go to BloodHorse.com for daily updated sire lists

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2015 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2015 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	HALF OURS (03, Unbridled's Song), Clear Creek Stud	\$5,000	70/18	1/1	0/1	(Gentlemen's Bet, \$66,500)	\$672,690	*296	7	1.08	1.26
2	E DUBAI (98, Mr. Prospector), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$3,500	71/18	0/0	0/0	(Brass Pear, \$48,800)	\$402,311	*952	32	1.32	1.23
3	PRIVATE VOW (03, Broken Vow), Red River Farms	\$2,000	30/10	2/2	2/2	(Tensas Harbor, \$90,000)	\$387,630	156	5	0.80	1.27
4	SONGANDAPRAYER (98, Unbridled's Song), The Stallion Station @ Copper Crowne	\$4,500	82/20	0/0	0/0	(Aireofdistinction, \$30,000)	\$382,261	*843	37	1.19	1.53
5	D'WILDCAT (98, Forest Wildcat), Whispering Oaks Farm	\$3,500	59/14	2/2	1/2	(Amelia's Wild Ride, \$59,190)	\$344,498	*373	16	1.41	1.30
6	YANKEE GENTLEMAN (99, Storm Cat), Le Mesa Stallions	\$3,500	70/11	0/0	0/0	(Prissy Bele, \$31,400)	\$339,402	*464	19	1.22	1.24
7	FOREFATHERS (04, Gone West), Red River Farms	\$2,000	32/12	1/1	1/1	(Mr. L. S. Shoe, \$75,000)	\$327,137	101	1	0.73	1.19
8	MY PAL CHARLIE (05, Indian Charlie), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	43/13	0/0	0/0	(Sugar Creek Pal, \$34,870)	\$306,839	85	1	0.92	1.25
9	IDE (93, Forty Niner), Clear Creek Stud	\$2,500	52/9	0/0	0/0	(Ide Be Cool, \$57,300)	\$275,845	565	17	1.11	1.07
10	AFTERNOON DEELITES (92, Private Terms)	Pnsd	29/9	1/1	1/1	(Afternoon Tango, \$60,340)	\$265,791	*602	26	1.11	1.34
11	GOOD AND TOUGH (95, Carson City)	Died, 2012	39/10	0/0	0/0	(Grande Basin, \$35,270)	\$257,144	*460	16	1.12	1.14
12	MY FRIEND MAX (92, Danzig)	N/A	29/10	1/0	0/1	(Queen Peso, \$38,975)	\$249,409	215	11	1.00	0.92
13	LION TAMER (00, Will's Way), Clear Creek Stud	\$2,500	35/9	0/0	0/0	(Heavy On Themister, \$59,400)	\$244,924	118	2	0.82	1.09
14	TENPINS (98, Smart Strike), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$3,000	52/9	0/0	0/0	(Kate Is a Ten, \$46,000)	\$232,896	*335	9	0.95	1.09
15	MASS MEDIA (01, Touch Gold), Red River Farms	\$1,500	51/11	0/0	0/0	(Masster Chief Ron, \$25,875)	\$230,961	*170	5	1.15	1.07
16	GOLD TRIBUTE (94, Mr. Prospector), Red River Farms	\$2,000	22/5	0/0	0/0	(Where's Cain, \$43,595)	\$226,961	*474	11	0.95	1.09
17	RUN PRODUCTION (00, Saint Ballado), Whispering Oaks Farm	\$2,500	32/8	0/0	0/0	(Foreign Production, \$32,200)	\$220,142	158	7	1.29	1.04
18	CLOSING ARGUMENT (02, Successful Appeal), Whispering Oaks Farm	\$4,000	42/9	0/0	0/0	(Heavenly Alibi, \$36,500)	\$218,251	*400	17	1.27	1.22
19	SUN KING (02, Charismatic), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	43/11	0/0	0/0	(Nice'n Sunny, \$31,000)	\$216,833	251	2	0.69	1.04
20	BIG TOP CAT (02, Storm Cat)	Died, 2012	34/7	0/0	0/0	(Top Figure, \$26,430)	\$175,124	146	2	0.80	0.88
21	OLE REBEL (99, Carson City), Clear Creek Stud	\$1,500	27/5	0/0	0/0	(Gayle's Rebel, \$24,510)	\$162,668	82	1	0.76	0.84
22	TIME BANDIT (96, Time for a Change), Heritage Stud	\$1,000	23/6	0/0	0/0	(Ty's Bandit, \$39,300)	\$153,413	258	4	0.86	0.92
23	ELUSIVE BLUFF (06, Elusive Quality)	N/A	12/4	2/2	1/2	(C. Zee, \$71,620)	\$141,062	33	2	1.54	0.93
24	BEHINDATTHEBAR (05, Forest Wildcat), Le Mesa Stallions	\$1,500	20/5	0/0	0/0	(Gampys Poker Money, \$37,770)	\$137,431	66	0	0.58	0.93
25	GRAND APPOINTMENT (98, Unbridled), Fallen Oaks Farm	\$1,500	11/2	1/0	0/1	(Jsloukovrurshoullda, \$88,500)	\$122,349	75	3	1.04	0.90
26	SORCERER'S STONE (03, Gulch), Louisiana Stallion Station North	\$500	20/5	0/0	0/0	(Ben's Magic Stone, \$40,200)	\$116,070	75	0	0.45	0.62
27	CHATAIN (03, Forest Wildcat), Chad & Pat White Farms	\$1,000	21/3	0/0	0/0	(Etta J, \$18,040)	\$115,634	59	0	0.61	0.96
28	PORTO FORICOS (95, Mr. Prospector)	Died, 2013	32/5	0/0	0/0	(Francesca Del Port, \$16,000)	\$111,715	237	5	0.99	1.17
29	GREELEY'S GALAXY (02, Mr. Greeley), Averett Farm	\$3,500	9/2	0/0	0/0	(Mr. Masterpiece, \$46,100)	\$110,366	91	1	1.18	1.18
30	CROWNED KING (00, Barkerville), McKeever Racing Stable	\$1,500	1/1	1/1	0/1	(String King, \$75,000)	\$75,000	31	1	1.41	0.66



Star Guitar stands at Clear Creek

Creek. With an undergraduate degree in Business Administration from Loyola University and a MBA from the University of New Orleans, LaVoice brings an "old school," "new school" balance to her position. After watching her first horse race as a 7-year-old at the old Jefferson Downs racetrack, LaVoice sustained her interest in horses while securing an education that could complement her skills in the breeding industry. A progressive thinker in terms of automation, it is LaVoice that quenches Murrell's thirst for iPhone apps. Her natural grasp of the importance of customer service makes her a perfect fit to carry out the mission of Clear Creek. The breeding piece of the business is her secret garden.

"There is nothing more satisfying than seeing a new baby foal," LaVoice said. "To

be there at 3 o'clock in the morning and watch them take their first breath. And then after when they go on to do something special like win a stakes. That's awesome."

LaVoice is protective of the number of people involved in the delivery and development of a foal. She is more comfortable talking about her team than tooting her own horn. One veteran member of that team is shedrow foreman Javier Diaz, who has worked on the farm for 30 years.

"When we are in full swing during sales prep time we have about 25 workers," LaVoice explained of the staffing. "Other than that it varies. I just know that when I bring out biscuits in the morning that they go pretty fast."

The 14½ miles of fencing that borders and sections off Clear Creek Stud are one of the responsibilities of operations man-

Special Note For Sire Lists:

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in New York (stallions that are dead or exported prior to 2011 are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through March 16, 2015. As supplied to Blood-Horse by The Jockey Club Information Systems Inc., include adjusted money from Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Adjusted earnings are put on par with average North American earnings from the previous year. For example, the average North American purse in 2014 is \$21,617 or 45% of the 2014 average purse in Japan. To put earnings on par, all Japanese progeny earnings are multiplied by 45% before being credited to a sire's progeny earnings. Hong Kong earnings are adjusted by 19%; Singapore by 54%. Current year stakes winners include all N.H.-foaled stakes winners worldwide and any S.H.-foaled horses that won a N.H. stakes. *Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners includes all countries. (A ♯ indicates a sire represented by his first crop to race).

*AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX and COMPARABLE INDEX: Lifetime AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX indicates how much purse money the progeny of one sire has earned in relation to the average earnings of all runners in the same years; average earnings of all runners in any year is represented by an index of 1.00; COMPARABLE INDEX indicates the average earnings of progeny produced from mares bred to one sire, when these same mares were bred to other sires. Only 32% of all sires have a lifetime AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX higher than their mares' COMPARABLE INDEX.

Taking your Dreams and Making Memories

HALF OURS

UNBRIDLED'S SONG-ZING, BY STORM CAT

2015 LEADING LOUISIANA SIRE
2014 LEADING LOUISIANA SIRE OF LA-BRED 2YOS

Sire of G1 Breeders Cup Sprint pl GENTLEMEN'S BET.
THE TOP SIRE BY NUMBER SOLD at Breeders Sales Company of Louisiana 2014 Yearling Sale Yearlings selling for \$33,500, \$33,000, \$30,000, etc.

2014 2YOs selling for \$190K, \$85K, \$75K, \$72K, \$70K, etc.

2015 Fee: \$4,500 LF9-1 or \$5,000 LFSN

Nominated to Breeders' Cup



B.J.'S MARK

SHEIKH ALBADOU-GEM'S FOR JULIE,
BY DIAMOND PROSPECT

15% STAKES HORSES

\$44,500 AVE/ STARTER

67% WINNERS

2015 Fee: \$1,000 Live Foal, 9-1 or \$1,500 LFSN



CUSTOM FOR CARLOS

MORE THAN READY-MEADOW OAKS, BY MEADOWLAKE

MULTIPLE GSW • TRIPLE DIGIT BEYERS 5X

CUSTOM FOR CARLOS First crop Yearlings sold at public auction for \$98,000 (OBSAUG), \$70,000 (FTKCOCT), \$55,000 (FTKJUL), etc.

Watch for them at the 2YO sales this year!

2YO SELLS FOR \$125,000 AT OBSMARI!

THE LEADING SIRE BY TOTAL AT EVDMARI!

2015 Fee: \$3,000 LF9-1 or \$3,500 LFSN

Nominated to Breeders' Cup



G.W.'S SKIPPIE

SKIP AWAY-LOGICAL REASONING,
BY LORD AVIE

SW AT 2 AND 3

\$72,000 AVE/STARTER!

67% WINNERS

2015 Fee: \$1,500 Live Foal, 9-1 or \$2,000 LFSN

Nominated to Breeders' Cup



STAR GUITAR

QUIET AMERICAN-MINIT TOWINIT, BY MALAGRA

4-TIME LOUISIANA BRED HORSE OF THE YEAR!

ALL TIME LEADING LOUISIANA-BRED MONEY EARNER

EARNED \$1.75 MILLION • 24 WINS FROM 30 STARTS

Pedigree includes DR. FAGER on the top and DAMASCUS on the bottom.

1st Crop Yearlings of 2015!

2015 Fee: \$3,500 LF9-1 or \$4,000 LFSN

Nominated to Breeders' Cup



OLE REBEL

CARSON CITY-VELVET TULIP,
BY VALID APPEAL

MULTIPLE SW SPRINTER

TRIPLE DIGIT BEYERS 4X

TWO 2014 STAKES HORSES

2015 Fee: \$1,500 Live Foal, 9-1 or \$2,000 LFSN

Nominated to Breeders' Cup



IDE

FORTY NINER-MAYTIDE, BY NASKRA

OVER \$24.5 MILLION LIFETIME PROGENY EARNINGS!

AVERAGE/STARTER over \$54,000

72% WINNERS/STARTERS

30% 2YO WINNERS/STARTERS

Sire of 2013 Louisiana Horse of the Year **IDE BE COOL**

Sire of EVAMAR sale topping 2YO

2015 Fee: \$2,000 LF9-1 or \$2,500 LFSN

Nominated to Breeders' Cup



G. W.'S D'ORO

MEDAGLIA D'ORO-SARAH LANE'S OATES, BY SUNSHINE FOREVER

Son of MEDAGLIA D'ORO

a 2014 top 10 Leading Sire.

Out of Champion SARAH

LANE'S OATES

2015 Fee: \$1,000 Live Foal, 9-1 or \$1,500 LFSN

Nominated to Breeders' Cup



LION TAMER

WILL'S WAY-TIPPECANOE CREEK, BY OLYMPIO

MILLIONAIRE G1 WINNING SPRINTER/MILER

TRIPLE DIGIT BEYERS 9 TIMES

Sire of: **HEAVY ON THEMISTER**, (\$545,170) Won EVD

Mile H. setting NTR (1 Mi. in 1:36.38); **SOUTHERN**

DUDE, G3 placed; **Win Lion Win**, 2014 Louisiana Cup

Sprint S. placed; **Pitcher**, stakes placed at 2.

2015 Fee: \$2,000 LF9-1 or \$2,500 LFSN

Nominated to Breeders' Cup



Clear Creek Stud is a full service facility with comprehensive horse care, including breeding, boarding, foaling and mare care, breaking and training, sales prep & representation.

Clear Creek Stud is fully committed to providing the best quality care for all of

our clients and the horses that are entrusted to us. We are dedicated to developing the best racehorses we can.

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#1 in this group by % of winners from starters 73%**

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2015 LEADING SIRES IN NEW MEXICO

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2015 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2015 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	ATTILA'S STORM (02, Forest Wildcat), A & A Ranch	\$3,000	30/12	1/1	1/1	(Lonnie Ton, \$51,720)	\$292,034	115	10	1.42	0.82
2	DESERT GOD (91, Fappiano)	Pnsd	29/11	1/0	0/1	(Proceed, \$51,000)	\$242,419	259	27	1.50	0.74
3	DIABOLICAL (03, Artax), A & A Ranch	Private	31/9	0/0	0/0	(She Devil, \$21,620)	\$183,401	101	8	1.02	1.02
4	THE WAY HOME (04, Giant's Causeway), Doubletree Farm	\$3,500	29/6	0/0	0/0	(E P Who, \$18,360)	\$122,416	95	4	1.03	0.97
5	QUINTON'S GOLD (97, Carson City), Doubletree Farm	\$5,000	21/5	0/0	0/0	(Quinton's Doll Who, \$22,896)	\$121,144	106	8	1.56	0.87
6	KING BULL (01, Holy Bull), Tucumcari Thoroughbreds	Private	4/2	1/1	1/1	(Infinite Bull, \$90,060)	\$112,094	16	3	2.03	0.55
7	SOUTHWESTERN HEAT (04, Gone West), A & A Ranch	\$2,500	11/3	1/1	1/1	(Southern Fire, \$54,310)	\$96,404	*44	1	0.68	0.95
8	GHOSTLY MOVES (92, Silver Ghost)	N/A	18/4	0/0	0/0	(Dont Ask Ghost, \$23,230)	\$95,010	229	23	1.03	1.03
9	FIREJACK (02, Dixieland Band), Hourigan Horse Farm	\$650	7/3	1/1	1/1	(Miss E Bar, \$51,000)	\$91,993	65	1	0.50	0.85
10	DEVON LANE (93, Storm Cat)	Died, 2012	18/5	0/0	0/0	(Laura's Melody, \$17,845)	\$81,080	439	19	0.78	0.80
11	DOMINIQUE'S CAT (97, Storm Cat), McKenna Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	15/5	0/0	0/0	(D Cat's Trip, \$19,724)	\$79,344	99	4	0.85	0.63
12	ROLL HENNESSY ROLL (00, Hennessy), A & A Ranch	\$3,500	17/3	0/0	0/0	(Kiss My Hennessy, \$15,150)	\$75,820	119	10	1.08	1.05
13	YOUR EMINENCE (01, Saint Ballado)	Died, 2012	12/3	0/0	0/0	(Gnacarano, \$37,080)	\$72,557	165	3	0.69	0.74
14	TO TERAS (00, Unbridled's Song), New Mexico State University	\$1,500	12/3	0/0	0/0	(Morning Monster, \$16,450)	\$57,592	71	2	0.83	0.61
15	PREMEDITATION (99, Afternoon Deelites), A & A Ranch	\$2,500	11/3	0/0	0/0	(Beau Wizer, \$20,350)	\$53,981	75	6	1.09	0.88

2015 LEADING SIRES IN ARKANSAS

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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2015 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2015 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	PORTOBELLO ROAD (04, Storm Cat), Anderson Farms	\$1,000	31/8	1/1	1/1	(Pistolpackingpenny, \$60,850)	\$321,224	100	1	0.77	1.03
2	BRAHMS (97, Danzig), Trophy Club Training Center	\$2,000	40/11	1/0	0/1	(Over a Barrel, \$68,900)	\$315,329	*626	19	1.09	1.18
3	THE DADDY (02, Valid Expectations), Trophy Club Training Center	\$1,500	24/8	1/1	1/1	(Manchurian High, \$73,920)	\$191,760	*134	5	1.02	1.22
4	ZARBYEV (84, Nureyev), Chad White	\$1,500	17/5	0/0	0/0	(Ringneckdove, \$32,010)	\$128,287	*353	15	1.09	0.85
5	HIGH CASCADE (98, Woodman), Cornerstone Farms	\$500	24/5	0/0	0/0	(Cupid's Hit, \$34,650)	\$119,957	*178	1	0.51	0.63
6	HESABULL (93, Dispersal)	N/A	24/3	0/0	0/0	(Impetuous Bay, \$28,700)	\$113,417	181	6	0.85	1.06
7	PRIMARY SUSPECT (01, Hennessy), McDowell Farm	\$1,000	24/4	0/0	0/0	(Bud Ro, \$36,300)	\$110,498	119	4	0.76	1.13
8	RICHTER SCALE (94, Habitony), Chad White	\$1,500	12/5	0/0	0/0	(Farmerville, \$55,400)	\$98,980	377	9	0.75	1.23
9	COMMANDER'S SHOES (03, Deputy Commander), Rafter R Ranch	\$1,500	10/2	0/0	0/0	(Easter Shoes, \$43,800)	\$82,558	42	0	0.63	0.72
10	HARPERSTOWN (86, Devil's Bag)	N/A	2/1	0/0	0/0	(Trace Creek, \$39,650)	\$67,730	103	2	0.82	0.61

ager Trey LaVoice. They grew up on a family farm, working with livestock and row crops. Along with his crew, Trey works seven days a week with a five-hour break

on Sunday afternoon. They cut grass, feed and water the horses, muck stalls, unload delivery trucks of alfalfa, spread shavings for bedding or do anything else that re-

quires a pitchfork, rake, shovel, hammer, or lug wrench.

"When my boys say there is nothing to do they aren't looking hard enough," Trey said, changing into a new pair of gloves. "Some days may be harder than others but the truth of the matter is that we love what we do. There aren't any clock-watchers on this farm."

On a cold winter morning trainer Gary Scherer arrived at Clear Creek to watch one of his 2-year-olds go to the training track. Scherer races horses on the Louisiana/Illinois/Minnesota circuit and is a regular client of Clear Creek Stud.

"They do it all here and they do a good job," Scherer said. "You could take these facilities and the set-up and drop it right into Kentucky and nobody would notice. Everybody is friendly and courteous plus they know their jobs. I like to send my horses out here because it just plain feels good to be in the country life."

A trophy shelf inside the front office presents evidence of Clear Creek Stud's



Michelle and Trey LaVoice

reputation as the standard bearer for Louisiana's stud farms. Displayed at a height level that makes you look up, 13 bronze statues representing past Louisiana stallions of the year are lined up on the wall.

Ready to compete with those past honorees are the nine stallions assembled on the current roster. With pedigree, conformation, and proven ability on the racetrack, six of the nine stallions at Clear Creek are Breeders' Cup nominated. The latest addition to the line-up is Star Guitar. A winner of 22 stakes races, Star Guitar's stud fee is \$3,500 live foal and he has his own website.

A son of More Than Ready, Custom for Carlos hit the board 11 times from 15 starts.

Lion Tamer made 16 of 20 starts in stakes and has sired multiple stakes winner Heavy On Themister.

A son of Forty Niner, Ide was the 2013 Louisiana stallion of the year and has 72% winners from starters.

From the speed influence sire Carson City, Ole Rebel won nine of 29 starts.

A top 20 leading national third-crop sire, Half Ours is a son of Unbridled's Song.



The distinctive barns at Clear Creek Stud

The only stakes-winning son of Skip Away at stud, G. W.'s Skippie's progeny are earning \$47,510 per start.

B. J.'s Mark set three track records from 12 career starts and his progeny are averaging \$44,500 per start.

By Medaglia d'Oro out of Sarah Lane's

Oates, Dr. Glen Warren's G. W.'s d'Oro has black type all over his pedigree.

Comeback from Katrina

The scenic panorama of Clear Creek Stud was torn to pieces Aug. 29, 2005. Hurricane Katrina pulled the place

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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2015 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2015 Earnings	Cumulative			
								Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	NOTIONAL (04, In Excess), Rockin' Z Ranch	\$2,000	54/15	1/2	0/1	(Far Right, \$270,000)	\$523,355	229	6	0.89	1.18
2	READ THE FOOTNOTES (01, Smoke Glacken), River Oaks Farm	\$3,500	28/6	0/0	0/0	(Lady Gracenote, \$36,780)	\$268,569	*300	15	1.40	1.19
3	LATENT HEAT (03, Maria's Mon), River Oaks Farm, Inc.	\$3,500	65/14	0/0	0/0	(Nejma, \$31,600)	\$264,815	*284	6	0.94	1.08
4	CACTUS RIDGE (01, Hennessy), Royal Vista Ranches	\$5,000	32/8	0/0	0/0	(Yucca, \$38,460)	\$224,609	*423	23	1.28	1.05
5	TOCCET (00, Awesome Again), Mighty Acres	\$2,500	26/9	1/0	0/1	(Ring It Up, \$51,400)	\$200,071	*333	14	1.09	1.22
6	TACTICAL CAT (96, Storm Cat), Raywood Farm	\$1,000	24/6	0/0	0/0	(Heykittykittykitty, \$70,200)	\$155,060	570	27	1.05	1.23
7	KIPLING (96, Gulch), Mighty Acres	\$2,500	38/7	0/0	0/0	(Kipling's King, \$24,700)	\$130,488	308	12	1.08	0.88
8	DON'T GET MAD (02, Stephen Got Even)	Died, 2013	17/5	0/0	0/0	(Populist Politics, \$41,800)	\$126,709	*155	4	1.23	0.97
9	FOREIGN POLICY (02, Danzig), River Oaks Farm	\$1,250	3/1	0/0	0/0	(Ribbon of Darkness, \$80,800)	\$86,878	25	1	0.77	0.90
10	ORATORY (02, Pulpit), River Oaks Farm, Inc.	\$3,500	22/4	0/0	0/0	(Wild Oration, \$22,800)	\$86,831	*173	3	1.24	1.16
11	MR. NIGHTLINGER (04, Indian Charlie), JEH Stallion Station-Oklahoma Division	\$2,500	21/6	0/0	0/0	(Misterbulltoyou, \$18,492)	\$84,325	107	1	0.56	0.90
12	LUCKY LIONEL (93, Mt. Livermore)	N/A	12/6	0/0	0/0	(Plucky, \$16,919)	\$82,726	353	14	1.14	1.22
13	OMEGA CODE (00, Elusive Quality), Rockin' Z Ranch	\$2,000	23/4	0/0	0/0	(Omeatron, \$16,855)	\$66,408	305	10	0.69	1.26
14	FREEFOURINTERNET (98, Tabasco Cat)	N/A	14/3	0/0	0/0	(Princess Freebie, \$18,600)	\$61,607	85	1	0.87	0.95
15	EVANSVILLE SLEW (92, Slew City Slew)	Died, 2012	15/4	0/0	0/0	(Maybelle Slew, \$17,000)	\$45,143	*519	34	1.07	0.91



Yearlings have room to roam on the 280 acres at Clear Creek

everywhere but loose. Murrell was not present. Attending a horse sale in Texas, Murrell watched the storm's eve of destruction on a television monitor.

"I had been through dozens of hurricanes," Murrell recalled. "No big deal. I figured it would be just another near miss."

Wrong. Katrina was more of a direct hit. What flood water did to New Orleans, sustained winds more than 100 miles per hour did to the area around Folsom. Barn roofs were blown off. Fences destroyed. Horses were loose. Yvette Barbazon was farm manager at the time. A Clear Creek employee for 19 years, Barbazon held things together, dealing with frightened employees that were threatening to leave the premises.

A flight from Dallas to Baton Rouge got Murrell to ground

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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2015 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2015 Earnings	Cumulative			
								Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	TOP HIT (98, Twining), Triple AAA Ranch	Private	21/7	0/0	0/0	(Top Estate, \$21,480)	\$80,622	85	11	1.01	0.91
2	MARGIE'S WILDCAT (01, Storm Cat), Fleming Thoroughbred Farm	Private	11/2	0/0	0/0	(Hadfunlastnight, \$18,600)	\$53,520	95	0	0.73	0.91
3	DISTORTED REALITY (04, Distorted Humor), Fleming Thoroughbred Farm	Private	23/5	0/0	0/0	(Worthy Grapes, \$8,732)	\$48,591	91	0	0.30	0.82
4	RED SKY'S (96, Skywalker), Fleming Thoroughbred Farm	Private	6/3	0/0	0/0	(Red Zeus, \$21,530)	\$45,541	112	4	0.42	0.48
5	CHESTERTOWN SLEW (02, Seattle Slew)	N/A	10/2	0/0	0/0	(Chessie Slew, \$16,220)	\$45,270	24	0	0.56	2.72

zero. His imagination could not have prepared him for what he saw.

"We got off the Interstate exit and there

was a narrow trail cut through the debris on Highway 1077," Murrell remembered with a shudder. "Two cars couldn't pass

each other. Power lines were draped over the road. Everybody with chainsaws was cutting the downed trees into sections and pulling them out of the way."

Murrell eventually reached the farm. Groves of pine trees had been reduced to splinters. Giant oak trees more than 100 years old were uprooted.

"It looked like a war zone. It was mind-boggling," Murrell said. "Then, as if things couldn't get any worse, it was over 90 degrees and the humidity was miserable."

With no water, ice, or electricity, living and working at Clear Creek Stud became like a primitive camping trip. Meals were prepared outside in bar-b-que pits.

Murrell is a binge watcher for news and information so the dead airwaves after Katrina were torture.

"It was like gravitating back in time. All we had were these little battery-operated transistor radios," Murrell recalled. "But there is always a silver lining. I learned how to text message."

The miserable conditions lasted for six weeks and during that time the future of Clear Creek hung in the balance. Murrell did not raise the white flag. True to his nature, he assembled a list of priorities that started with the safety of the horses and

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Clear Creek delivers about 65 foals a year

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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2015 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2015 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	VALID EXPECTATIONS (93, Valid Appeal)	Pnsd	38/15	3/3	2/3	(Ivan Fallunovalot, \$117,200)	\$439,735	642	46	1.22	1.16
2	TOO MUCH BLING (03, Rubiano), Lane's End Texas	\$4,000	45/13	1/1	1/1	(Meme Jo, \$44,328)	\$337,301	147	14	1.28	1.16
3	MY GOLDEN SONG (03, Unbridled's Song), Valor Farm	\$4,000	18/4	2/2	1/2	(Thegirlinthatsong, \$192,000)	\$312,576	77	8	1.17	1.07
4	EARLY FLYER (98, Gilded Time), Valor Farm	\$2,500	34/9	2/2	2/2	(Solid Sender, \$55,300)	\$310,080	240	17	0.83	0.90
5	INTIMIDATOR (01, Gone West), Asmussen Horse Center	\$1,500	46/6	0/0	0/0	(Fearless Factorcat, \$30,500)	\$146,948	180	5	0.64	0.79
6	SILVER CITY (06, Unbridled's Song), Valor Farm	\$3,500	9/1	1/2	0/1	(Promise Me Silver, \$105,000)	\$125,855	30	1	1.24	0.95
7	SPECIAL RATE (00, Pulpit), Stoneview Farm	\$3,000	24/8	0/0	0/0	(Special U F O, \$18,700)	\$118,187	135	2	0.59	0.49
8	SING BABY SING (03, Unbridled's Song), Lane's End Texas	\$2,500	15/4	0/0	0/0	(Made Me Talk, \$23,056)	\$112,851	44	0	0.38	0.86
9	GRASSHOPPER (04, Dixie Union), Lane's End Texas	\$3,500	16/3	1/1	1/1	(Supermason, \$55,000)	\$102,381	42	1	0.52	1.02
10	UNCLE ABBIE (97, Kingmambo), Key Ranch	\$2,000	21/3	1/1	1/1	(F J Uncle Vic, \$36,000)	\$100,392	220	8	0.67	0.64
11	LITTLEEXPECTATIONS (97, Valid Appeal), Asmussen Horse Center	\$1,500	17/4	0/0	0/0	(Marry Me Kate, \$33,900)	\$86,850	194	4	0.77	1.00
12	SCRIMSHAW (00, Gulch), Keen Farms	\$1,500	18/3	0/0	0/0	(Shyloh's Friend, \$18,005)	\$71,231	*185	3	1.00	0.92
13	CAPTAIN COUNTDOWN (96, Relaunch), Double S Thoroughbred Farm	\$500	14/2	0/0	0/0	(Our Romeo, \$14,283)	\$45,474	181	3	0.51	0.67
14	TOTAL COMMAND (01, Forestry), Double S Thoroughbred Farm	Private	5/2	0/0	0/0	(Back Stage Bonita, \$22,130)	\$44,768	27	0	0.30	0.80
15	WIMBLEDON (01, Wild Rush), Key Ranch	\$2,000	4/3	0/0	0/0	(Pukwudgie, \$13,290)	\$42,370	106	4	0.76	0.77
16	DRUMS OF THUNDER (04, Concerto), Witt Racing	\$1,500	6/2	0/0	0/0	(Witt Six, \$17,920)	\$41,111	27	0	0.44	0.39
17	GAFF (02, Maria's Mon), Seguin Horse Center	\$2,000	15/2	0/0	0/0	(Captain Tyree, \$10,005)	\$37,832	60	0	0.65	1.03
18	SENECA JONES (90, Alydar)	Died	5/3	0/0	0/0	(Air Ride Jones, \$14,010)	\$36,849	238	11	0.92	0.84

the comfort of his employees. With a price tag of \$800 each, Murrell bought 45 generators. Michelle LaVoice remembered the distribution decisions of the equipment.

"There are five water wells on the farm and the first generators went to run the water pumps so the horses could drink," she explained. "The next generators went to our Hispanic help so they could have air conditioning. Unless we wanted to start cleaning stalls, they had to come first."

Throughout the ordeal, the pecking order of "horses before family" was maintained. The storm hit four weeks before a big sale and there were yearlings to prep. One of the top filly yearlings was a non-sweater. Rows of fans, run by generators, were put in place to keep her and the others cooled off in the heat.

"Nobody blinked," Murrell recalled of the crisis. "Time was precious. Everybody jumped in and did what they had to do."

Their efforts preserved a long tradition. The legendary Jack Lohman founded Clear Creek in 1969.

"Jack was an innovator, a brilliant visionary who networked with legislatures and put our industry on solid ground," Murrell remembered. "He was a Masters student at LSU in Baton Rouge majoring in Equine Science with an emphasis in reproduction physiology. His ideas have withstood the test of time but most of all he was my mentor."

Two hours after he graduated in May 1977, Murrell was at the farm, continuing his research with hormones that could enhance the heat cycle of Thoroughbred broodmares. That same year Murrell assumed management oversight of Clear Creek.

"I'm one of the few people you will ever meet that actually gets to use what they learned in school," Murrell said.

Lohman's most lasting lesson to Murrell was the importance of keeping good records. Weighing close to 10 pounds, a black binder in the main office contains the individual files on each broodmare. Hell or high water, Murrell and Michelle enter data at the end of each day that documents categories such as foaling date, sutures, plasma for the baby, heat cycle, ovulation, etc.

"It's a physiological snapshot of each mare at a specific point in time," Murrell explained. "It may look unnecessarily complicated but it can be the deciding factor in whether or not you have a baby. After all, that's the whole game in a nutshell."

In the last hour of daylight, Murrell eased away from the noise. He turned off the iPhone apps and made his rounds to check on the horses. He used to ride his lead pony Willie (named

after Willie Nelson), but these days he sometimes rides a golf cart. From pasture to pasture, the wheels crunch on the freshly scraped gravel.

"There is one fundamental truth about this business," Murrell said while going past the training barn. "We all have a passion here for the work and life that revolves around horses. It wouldn't work otherwise. Believe me, it's not about the money. It's much bigger than that. From rich owners to hotwalkers and grooms, the enthusiasm comes from being around these horses." **EH**

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