

WEST COAST

# Leading the Way

*Clay Murdock recognized for managing Rancho San Miguel*

BY TRACY GANTZ

**FAMILY MEANS EVERYTHING** to Clay Murdock. He and his wife, Dena, have raised five children—three now grown and two still at home—and they already have several grandchildren.

But family to Murdock extends further, to the team at Rancho San Miguel, the California farm Murdock has managed for more than 30 years, and to the offspring of the farm's stallions.

"Every day you're following horses and seeing where the progeny of the stallions are racing," said Murdock. "It's fun for the whole farm."

Murdock recalls when Slew's Tiznow hit the exacta earlier this year in the El Camino Real Derby (G3) at Golden Gate Fields. Slew's Tiznow, a multiple stakes winner who stands at Rancho San Miguel, is the sire of El Camino Real winner Zakaroff. The stallion also sired More Power to Him, who was elevated from third to second upon a disqualification. Murdock was almost as proud of that as of his children and grandchildren's accomplishments.

Murdock isn't used to the limelight, as he runs the California farm for owners Tom and Nancy Clark, raising horses that go off to sales or to the racetrack. Thus, 2017 turned into an unusual year for the farm manager.

First, the Clarks and the entire Rancho San Miguel team threw a huge party for Murdock in April to celebrate his 30 years on the property. Then Tom Clark nominated him for the Godolphin Thoroughbred Industry Employee Awards, and Murdock was short-listed as one of three finalists in the Leadership Award—Farm category.

"He's incredibly dedicated to the farm, the clients, and the horses on the farm," said Clark. "He's loyal and a very knowledgeable horseman."

By qualifying as a Godolphin finalist, Murdock traveled to Lexington in October for an interview process, the awards ceremony luncheon, and a day of racing at Keeneland. The



COURTESY RANCHO SAN MIGUEL

**Clay Murdock, who has managed Rancho San Miguel for more than 30 years, was a Darley Thoroughbred Industry Employee Awards finalist this year**

awards launched in 2016 as a partnership of Godolphin, the National Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association, the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association, and The Jockey Club. The idea is to honor those who work in the industry caring for the horses, from their conception and foaling on through their racing careers.

Larry McGinnis, the stallion manager of WinStar Farm, ultimately won in Murdock's category, but as a runner-up, Murdock received \$2,500, with that same amount going to Rancho San Miguel. More than the monetary award, however, Murdock appreciated the entire experience.

"I felt very honored, and Godolphin does everything first class," said Murdock. "We had the opportunity to go out to Jonabell Farm (Darley, one of Sheikh Mohammed's U.S. operations) and Calumet Farm, too. I'm going to encourage people out in California to nominate more to those awards."

Murdock knows that, due to geography, the racing industry in California can be an island. But he sees the California-bred incentive program as a way to counteract any negatives involved with such an island state.

"We're trying to use the Cal-bred program and get stallions in here that could give breeders opportunities," said Murdock. "We're pretty diversified—we have grass stallions, dirt stallions, sprinters, and different types."

Rancho San Miguel, which sits near the town of the same name, advertises nine stallions for a variety of clients and for the farm itself. Marino Marini, now 17, is the farm's 10th

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# Championship Performance

## BEGINS AT HARRIS FARMS



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### MR. BIG

Five 6-figure earners from 16 foals of racing age include **G1**-placed **BIG SCORE** (**G3**, \$512,300). **Fee: \$6,500 LF**



### TIZBUD

18 six-figure earners include 2017 SW's **AMBITIOUS BREW** (**G3**, \$669,425) and **SOI PHET** (\$876,170). **Fee: \$2,500 LF**



### CLUBHOUSE RIDE

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### JERANIMO

\$1.5 million **G1** winner, 8-time graded winner and 1:32.61 miler will have first-crop 2-year-olds in 2018. **Fee: \$2,500 LF**



### TAMARANDO

**G1** winner of \$722,652 by **BERTRANDO**, California's leading sire of graded stakes winners. **Fee: \$2,500 LF**



### DESERT CODE

Sire of Nov. Del Mar allowance winners **Desert Law** (7-3-2-0, \$122,200) and **OBEY** (\$149,907). **Fee: \$2,000 LF**



### METABOSS

**STREET BOSS** graded winner of \$300,420 set Del Mar Beyer Speed Figures of **101** and **102**. **Fee: \$1,500 LF**



### LAKERVILLE

Brilliantly consistent (11-5-4-0, \$318,910) stakes winner by **UNUSUAL HEAT**. First crop races in 2018. **Private Treaty**

*Stud fees are payable when foal stands and nurses. All stallions are nominated to the Breeders' Cup.*



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COURTESY RANCHO SAN MIGUEL

Rancho San Miguel enjoys a great climate with ocean breezes

stallion, but due to his age doesn't breed as much as the younger whippersnappers.

Most recently Danzing Candy went to stud at Rancho San Miguel. The son of Twirling Candy—Talkin and Singing, by Songandaprayer, won this year's San Carlos Stakes (G2) and Lone Star Park Handicap (G3) while trained by Bob Baffert. Ted Aroney's Halo Farms bred Danzing Candy and raced the earner of \$700,930 with Jim and Dianne Bashor.

"I think that's a testament to Clay and the reputation that he's built for our ranch," said Clark about getting Danzing Candy at the farm as the property of a syndicate.

Richard's Kid, whose first foals are 2-year-olds this year, has moved to Rancho San Miguel for the 2018 breeding season. By Lemon Drop Kid—Tough Broad, by Broad Brush, Richard's Kid won the Pacific Classic Stakes (G1) twice at Del Mar and earned a total of \$2,482,259.

U S Ranger, also at San Miguel, ranks high on many California sire lists, and his runners include 2017 stakes winner U S Officer. U S Ranger is a multiple Irish high-weight son of Danzig—My Annette, by Red Ransom.

Along with Slew's Tiznow (Tiznow—Hepatica, by Slewpy), Rancho San Miguel stands multiple stakes winner Northern Causeway (Giant's Causeway—Getaway Girl, by Silver Deputy) and Slew's

Tiznow's half brother Typhoon Slew (by Stormy Atlantic). The first foals by Northern Causeway and Typhoon Slew are yearlings of 2017.

This year marked the arrival of the first foals by grade 1 winner Tom's Tribute (Lion Heart—Halloween Fun, by El Prado), multiple stakes winner Rousing Sermon (Lucky Pulpit—Rousing Again, by Awesome Again), and unraced Curlin to Mischief (Curlin—Leslie's Lady, by Tricky Creek), the last-named a half brother to multiple champion Beholder, top sire Into Mischief, and Mendelssohn, winner of the Nov. 3 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf (G1T).

Marino Marini raced in this country for the farm a few years after the Clarks had purchased the property from Dr. William Marano. A \$1.8 million Keeneland yearling, Marino Marini (Storm Cat—Halo



COURTESY RANCHO SAN MIGUEL/IRON MESAROS PHOTO

Slew's Tiznow sired the one-two winners of this year's El Camino Real Derby

America, by Waquoit) won a stakes in Ireland. In the U.S., he placed in several graded stakes, including the 2003 Malibu Stakes (G1).

Marino Marini's foals include \$334,900-earner Starlight Magic and \$411,668-earner Sweet Marini, who gave the stallion back-to-back winners of the Fleet Treat Stakes in 2012-13.

While Murdock as farm manager oversees 28 employees, he remains very involved in booking mares to the stallions, one of the many aspects of his job that he enjoys.

"I love closing the deal and booking mares to stallions," said Murdock. "I like talking to people and helping them out."

In many cases that begins a friendly business relationship, as Murdock sees the resultant foals and often sends photos to the clients as the young horses grow.

Murdock didn't start out on the breeding side of the business, however. Now 57, he grew up in Rexburg, Idaho, where his father, Cal, trained horses part-time while holding down a full-time job. Murdock's mother, Karen, was very supportive of both Cal's training operation and Clay's subsequent equine career. His father still lives in southeastern Idaho.

"It's in a very beautiful part of the state," said Murdock. "We're right on the Wyoming border. I could see the Grand Tetons outside of our house. Yellowstone is about 70-80 miles from us. It's very cold, with a lot of snow, but very beautiful."

Cal usually times his visits to his son for the winter so that he can avoid some of the colder weather. He enjoys helping his son check on the horses.

Murdock's grandparents were potato farmers—"I worked a lot of potato harvests," Clay said—and his father was raised in Idaho. Clay's grandparents and great-grandparents farmed with workhorses, and so Cal grew up with horses.

"My dad was instrumental to me as a young man," said Murdock. "He taught me how to ride and break horses. My dad had a passion for horses. Then he developed a passion for racing."

The Murdocks raced Quarter Horses, primarily on the bush

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FOR THE 2018 BREEDING SEASON**



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FEE: **\$5,000** LF

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## 2017 LEADING SIRES IN CALIFORNIA


 For daily updated sire lists  
 visit [BloodHorse.com](http://BloodHorse.com)

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB, Sire), Where Stands	2017 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2017 Earnings	Foals	Cumulative		
									Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	BLUEGRASS CAT (03, Storm Cat), Ballena Vista Farm	\$7,500	196/104	3/4	0/3	(Bluegrass Jamboree, \$181,900)	\$4,519,021	*847	32	1.20	1.68
2	LUCKY PULPIT (01, Pulpit), Harris Farms	Died, 2017	156/84	3/4	2/3	(California Chrome, \$250,000)	\$3,181,184	*390	7	1.61	1.13
3	UNUSUAL HEAT (90, Nureyev)	Died, 2017	108/52	3/4	1/3	(Starlite Style, \$146,740)	\$3,132,779	*780	44	1.93	1.22
4	TRIBAL RULE (96, Storm Cat)	Died, 2014	125/77	4/4	1/4	(Pee Wee Reese, \$192,920)	\$2,802,722	738	35	1.26	1.05
5	MINISTERS WILD CAT (00, Deputy Minister), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	97/59	1/2	1/1	(Mr. Hinx, \$438,548)	\$2,032,539	404	15	1.03	0.91
6	PAPA CLEM (06, Smart Strike), Legacy Ranch	\$2,000	102/62	2/2	2/2	(My Italian Babbo, \$221,961)	\$1,978,083	233	6	0.85	1.11
7	SQUARE EDDIE (06, Smart Strike), Ocean Breeze Ranch	\$25,000	75/33	2/3	2/2	(B Squared, \$243,735)	\$1,960,619	139	11	1.57	0.96
8	U S RANGER (04, Danzig), Rancho San Miguel	\$3,000	135/71	0/0	0/0	(Ranger Lady, \$99,394)	\$1,886,737	*338	3	0.67	1.33
9	VRONSKY (99, Danzig), Old English Rancho	\$6,500	67/39	1/1	1/1	(What a View, \$228,845)	\$1,826,102	191	9	1.48	1.10
10	STREET HERO (06, Street Cry)	N/A	66/31	2/2	1/2	(The Player, \$187,043)	\$1,251,472	*221	6	1.14	0.97
11	GRAZEN (06, Benchmark), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$3,500	31/16	3/6	2/3	(S Y Sky, \$278,240)	\$1,232,717	66	5	1.72	1.25
12	DESERT CODE (04, E Dubai), Harris Farms	\$2,000	51/24	0/0	0/0	(Desert Law, \$122,220)	\$976,344	129	3	0.98	1.10
13	DECARCHY (97, Distant View), Magali Farms	Died, 2017	50/25	1/1	1/1	(One Fast Broad, \$172,000)	\$944,712	374	13	1.02	0.98
14	CYCLOTRON (00, Grand Slam), Old English Rancho	Private	39/21	1/1	1/1	(He Will, \$175,759)	\$928,937	113	2	1.23	1.27
15	MARINO MARINI (00, Storm Cat), Rancho San Miguel	\$1,500	82/42	0/0	0/0	(Marino's Wild Cat, \$69,778)	\$902,267	363	4	0.81	0.96
16	MISREMEMBERED (06, Candy Ride), BG Thoroughbred Farm	\$2,500	51/20	0/0	0/0	(Whiskey Tree, \$105,296)	\$896,804	74	1	0.96	1.53
17	SLEW'S TIZNOW (05, Tiznow), Rancho San Miguel	\$2,500	33/21	3/3	0/3	(More Power to Him, \$132,979)	\$885,975	77	3	1.08	1.13
18	SURF CAT (02, Sir Cat), Old English Rancho	Private	32/16	1/5	0/1	(Sircat Sally, \$464,660)	\$874,347	110	2	0.89	1.19
19	THORN SONG (03, Unbridled's Song)	Died, 2014	69/33	0/0	0/0	(Exotic Ghost, \$52,210)	\$857,302	120	1	0.56	1.30
20	HEATSEEKER (IRE) (03, Giant's Causeway), Harris Farms	Died, 2016	63/27	0/0	0/0	(Emmy and I, \$95,850)	\$848,764	*201	8	1.13	1.26
21	KAFWAIN (00, Cherokee Run), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$3,000	61/38	0/0	0/0	(Pray Hard, \$71,700)	\$800,589	*606	18	1.03	1.21
22	SOUTHERN IMAGE (00, Halo's Image), Rancho San Miguel	\$1,500	64/30	0/0	0/0	(Boy Howdy, \$57,546)	\$775,792	*501	7	1.06	1.15
23	EINSTEIN (BRZ) (02, Spend a Buck), Daehling Ranch	\$3,000	59/28	1/1	0/1	(Seeking Albert, \$87,076)	\$774,944	*169	1	0.69	0.96
24	EDDINGTON (01, Unbridled), Ballena Vista Farm	\$3,500	51/25	0/0	0/0	(Handiwork, \$71,850)	\$635,776	*420	10	1.22	1.44
25	BOLD CHIEFTAIN (03, Chief Seattle), Victory Rose Thoroughbreds	\$3,000	31/18	1/1	1/1	(Moonless Sky, \$244,720)	\$614,665	54	1	0.81	0.95
26	TANNERSMYMAN (98, Lord Carson), Woodbridge Farm	Private	26/17	0/0	0/0	(El Huerfano, \$141,575)	\$612,255	169	3	0.72	0.72
27	BENCHMARK (91, Alydar)	Died, 2017	42/23	0/0	0/0	(Princess Kendra, \$94,317)	\$594,205	721	28	1.19	1.09
28	DIXIE CHATTER (05, Dixie Union), Ballena Vista Farm	\$2,500	68/27	0/0	0/0	(Blow the Whistle, \$52,418)	\$568,951	203	3	0.60	0.99
29	STORMIN FEVER (94, Storm Cat)	Pnsd	41/24	0/0	0/0	(Marriage Fever, \$126,090)	\$567,069	*769	26	1.12	1.32
30	IDIOT PROOF (04, Benchmark), Victory Rose Thoroughbreds	\$3,000	11/6	1/2	0/1	(Richard's Boy, \$402,360)	\$544,780	53	1	1.48	1.10
31	OLD TOPPER (95, Gilded Time), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	31/16	0/0	0/0	(Queen Bee to You, \$130,085)	\$506,661	542	19	0.94	0.83
32	MR. BIG (03, Dynaformer), E. A. Ranches	\$6,000	8/5	1/1	0/1	(Big Score, \$364,500)	\$500,329	16	1	2.72	0.85
33	TIZBUD (99, Cee's Tizzy), Harris Farms	\$2,500	23/10	2/3	2/2	(Ambitious Brew, \$170,200)	\$494,529	190	6	1.10	0.89
34	BEDFORD FALLS (03, Forestry), Poplar Meadows	\$1,500	18/9	1/1	1/1	(Cuddle Alert, \$197,214)	\$482,416	50	1	0.96	0.91
35	COMIC STRIP (95, Red Ransom), Gray's Farm	\$5,000	24/16	0/0	0/0	(Drouillard, \$53,295)	\$475,628	339	11	0.82	1.10
36	ACCLAMATION (06, Unusual Heat), Old English Rancho	\$15,000	19/7	0/0	0/0	(Take the One O One, \$81,345)	\$435,552	65	0	0.99	1.30
37	GAME PLAN (93, Danzig)	Died, 2015	18/7	1/2	0/1	(Ashleylrvssugar, \$331,845)	\$434,002	447	17	0.87	0.79
38	COIL (08, Point Given), Magali Farms	\$3,500	32/14	0/0	0/0	(Spring Heat, \$85,251)	\$426,108	84	0	0.59	1.31
39	¶ SMILING TIGER (07, Hold That Tiger), Harris Farms	\$4,000	31/6	1/1	1/1	(Spiced Perfection, \$148,280)	\$420,468	66	1	0.64	1.09
40	PEPPERED CAT (00, Tabasco Cat), Daehling Ranch	\$3,000	38/19	0/0	0/0	(Gato Pimiento, \$54,903)	\$408,350	82	1	0.93	0.62
41	MCCANN'S MOJAVE (00, Memo)	Died, 2013	34/17	1/1	0/1	(Yahoo Tahoe, \$94,980)	\$381,284	101	1	0.64	1.07
42	LUCKY J. H. (02, Cee's Tizzy)	Died, 2016	32/15	0/0	0/0	(Lucky J Lane, \$82,966)	\$377,367	81	1	0.81	1.17
43	POPULAR (99, Saint Ballado)	Died, 2014	11/7	1/6	0/1	(Daz Lin Dawn, \$188,693)	\$367,552	99	2	1.00	0.93
44	ELUSIVE WARNING (04, Elusive Quality), Madera Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	23/12	0/0	0/0	(Ain't Misbehavin, \$69,717)	\$360,140	61	1	0.73	0.99
45	EMPIRE WAY (09, Empire Maker), Lovacres Ranch	\$5,000	29/10	0/0	0/0	(Empress of Lov, \$76,240)	\$339,066	55	0	0.67	0.90
46	SIERRA SUNSET (05, Bertrando), Paradise Road Ranch	\$1,500	24/10	0/0	0/0	(Senator Robert, \$95,278)	\$334,477	79	0	0.75	0.81
47	TIME TO GET EVEN (04, Stephen Got Even), Lovacres Ranch	\$2,000	26/8	0/0	0/0	(Time for Ebby, \$108,960)	\$333,308	65	1	0.77	0.67
48	AWESOME GAMBLER (04, Coronado's Quest), Lovacres Ranch	\$5,000	40/18	0/0	0/0	(Drop the Gambler, \$29,094)	\$328,033	222	1	0.71	0.76
49	DON'TSELLESHORT (01, Benchmark), Running Luck Ranch	\$2,500	34/19	0/0	0/0	(Pequena Maty, \$53,396)	\$319,480	129	1	0.50	0.72
50	ROI CHARMANT (01, Evansville Slew), Magali Farms	\$1,000	16/9	0/0	0/0	(Princess Roi, \$64,600)	\$307,286	40	0	1.19	0.82
51	THE PAMPLEMOUSSE (06, Kafwain), Rancho San Miguel	\$1,500	38/12	0/0	0/0	(Sheeza Sassy Girl, \$37,120)	\$303,869	100	0	0.53	1.11

tracks of Montana and Idaho.

"I was probably 10 or 11 years old when I was breaking my first horses," said Clay. "I was galloping horses by age 12 and riding races at 12 or 13. We couldn't ride at the recognized tracks 'til we were 16."

Clay helped his dad with the horses during the summers. Once he had turned 16, he rode in races for a few years and was

beginning to segue into training. Clay decided he wanted a full-time career in the racing industry, something difficult to do in Idaho at the time. He decided to move to Northern California in the early 1980s, taking a couple of Quarter Horses to Bay Meadows.

"I was getting taller, so I knew I wasn't going to be a jockey and was kind of set on

training horses," he said.

The Quarter Horse circuit moved from Bay Meadows in the winter and spring to Los Alamitos in Southern California for the rest of the year. Murdock worked as an assistant to Quarter Horse trainer Glen Walker, and he also galloped horses for Quarter Horse jockey John Creager.

"Back then in the Quarter Horse world, a

#### Special Note For Sire Lists:

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in the states featured in this section (stallions that are dead or exported prior to 2013 are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through November 26, 2017. As supplied to BloodHorse 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 2016 is \$22,141 or 45% of the 2016 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 17%; Singapore by 65%. Current year stakes winners include all Northern Hemisphere black-type stakes results from all available countries. \*Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners include 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.

COMMITTED TO BREEDING QUALITY

# Rancho San Miguel

## HOME OF CALIFORNIA'S LEADING SIRES



### Second Leading Active Sire in California by 2017 Winners

#### **U S RANGER** Danzig – My Annette, by Red Ransom/ **\$3,000 LFSN**

- Sire of 169 winners, incl. 2017/2016 SW **U S OFFICER** (\$169,000), 2 1/2-length winner of the \$100,000 open listed Clever Trevor S. and 3rd in \$300,000 Remington Springboard Mile S.; **VIUDA ALEGRE**, 2017 **Group 1** Handicap de las Estrellas SW; new 2YO **Wild West Ranger**, placed in \$100,000 Gold Rush Futurity; returning SPW **He's a Ranger**; etc.
- Second Leading Active California Sire by 2017 repeat winners with Graded Stakes Winners in each of his first two crops, sire of \$250,000 **Grade 3** Dixiana Bourbon SW **LAWN RANGER** (\$213,714); \$150,000 **Grade 3** Arlington-Washington Futurity SW **SOLITARY RANGER** (\$242,546); Australian **Group 3** SW **GET THE NOD**.

### Pedigree Powerhouse – First Outstanding Foals Race in 2018

#### **NORTHERN CAUSEWAY** Giant's Causeway – Getaway Girl, by Silver Deputy/ **\$2,500 LFSN**

- Graded Stakes-Winning son of Three-Time Leading Sire **GIANT'S CAUSEWAY**, sire of 192 SWs, 342 SHs & earners of over \$162 Million.
- Out of a half-sister to Leading Sires **GHOSTZAPPER** and **CITY ZIP**, the sires of 147 SWs, 271 SHs & earners of over \$143 Million.
- **NORTHERN CAUSEWAY** is a Graded Derby winner from the foundation family that produces Breeders' Cup Classic & Kentucky Derby winners.



### Half-Brother to THREE Grade 1 Winners

#### **CURLIN TO MISCHIEF** Curlin – Leslie's Lady, by Tricky Creek/ **\$3,500 LFSN**

- Half-brother to four-time Eclipse Champion and three-time **Grade 1** Breeders' Cup SW **BEHOLDER** (\$6,156,600, **114 Beyer**), 11-time **Grade 1** SW, etc.
- Half-brother to **Grade 1** CashCall Futurity SW **INTO MISCHIEF (103 Beyer)**, sire of 33 SWs, incl. two-time **Grade 1** Breeders' Cup SW **GOLDENCENTS**, 2017/2016 three-time **Grade 1** SW **PRACTICAL JOKE**, etc.
- Half-brother to **MENDELSSOHN**, a record \$3,000,000 yearling & winner of **Grade 1** Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf, 2nd in **Group 1** Darley Dewhurst S.
- By two-time Horse of the Year/Leading Sire **CURLIN**, sire of 40 SWs, incl. **EXAGGERATOR (G1)**, **PALACE MALICE (G1)**, **KEEN ICE (G1)**, etc.

### California Champion Two-Year-Old by Lucky Pulpit

#### **ROUSING SERMON** Lucky Pulpit – Rousing Again, by Awesome Again/ **\$2,000 LFSN**

- Ranked among the **Top NINE Colts of his crop** on the Experimental Free Handicap, 2nd by only a neck in the \$750,000 **Grade 1** CashCall Futurity beating **DRILL (G1)**, **HANDSOME MIKE (G2)**, **BLINGO (G2)**, **SKY KINGDOM (G3)**, etc.
- Ran 1-2-3 in 20 of 36 career starts earning **\$821,571**, winning and placing in 13 Stakes, incl. the \$1,000,000 **Grade 2** Louisiana Derby, \$200,000 **Grade 2** Robert B. Lewis S. and \$150,000 **Grade 3** Native Diver S.
- Offers breeders an **A++ TrueNicks** rated pedigree as a grandson of Sire of Sires **PULPIT** and **AWESOME AGAIN**, o/o a half to millionaire **CHINDI (G3, 111 Beyer)**.



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jockey would hire one or two exercise riders to help their trainers gallop horses,” said Murdock.

Creager rode for Russell Harris, a major Quarter Horse trainer whose charges included multiple champions Florentine and Prissy Fein. Harris eventually asked Murdock to head up his satellite training facility in Southern California near Lake Elsinore.

After about six years working for Harris, while in his late 20s, Murdock received the chance to work for Marano at Rancho San Miguel. The farm was then primarily a Thoroughbred training facility and about equidistant from Los Angeles and San Francisco just off the 101 freeway, in an area that was attracting horse farms and wineries. Fred Sahadi moved his Cardiff Stud Farm from the Santa Ynez Valley to nearby Creston in 1986, standing Flying Paster and Desert Wine there.

“With all the wine tasting now, Paso Robles, which is nearby, has become a destination,” said Murdock. “We’re very strategically located, and we have a great climate here. We’re close enough to the coast that in the summer we get the ocean breeze.”

When Murdock began at Rancho San Miguel, the training track was just being finished. He transitioned to Thoroughbreds, taking in lay-ups for trainers as well as breaking and starting young horses.

Brent Sumja trained horses at the Northern California tracks for Rancho



Murdock, left, with Joe LaCombe and Sherwood Chillingworth at the 2015 CTBA awards dinner

RON MESAROS

San Miguel. Those runners included Sudden Hush, a California-bred son of Stop the Music who finished second in the 1992 Del Mar Futurity (G2) and competed in that year’s Breeders’ Cup Juvenile (G1) at Gulfstream Park.

“That was the first Breeders’ Cup I went to,” said Murdock. “He was a neat horse that I always really liked.”

Sumja also trained for Tom Clark, who had grown up on a farm in Pennsylvania and began going to the races at a young age. Clark became an investment banker and was living in California when he bought his first racehorse in 1984.

“I developed a relationship with Rancho San Miguel soon after that because I used the ranch as a lay-up facility and a place to break my yearlings,” said Clark.

When Marano decided he wanted to sell Rancho San Miguel, the Clarks bought it in 2000.

“The Clarks wanted to focus on breeding,” said Murdock. “That’s when we built the stallion barn and the foaling barn, and it really took off.”

Murdock at this time of year oversees the care of about 300-350 horses on the 220-acre property. He said the population swells to more than 400 during the breeding season and they foal about 120-130 mares annually. With that many horses the Clarks and Murdock keep a veterinarian, Dr. Stacy Potter, on staff.

The farm’s location is also fortuitous for water supply, always a critical consideration for a California farm, especially with recent drought conditions.

“We’re in a pretty good aquifer, and we have four wells,” said Murdock. “We have several grass pastures. Maintaining and keeping the grass fields is very important to us here.”

Murdock concentrates on giving horses the best start that he can, something the Clarks and Rancho San Miguel clients appreciate.

“He’s the best partner I’ve ever had in any business venture I’ve been involved in,” said Clark. “I’d trust him with my last nickel, and I think of him as a friend and a colleague as well as someone who works for me.” **BH**

*Tracy Gantz is the Southern California correspondent for BloodHorse.*



Richard's Kid's first foals are 2-year-olds of 2017



Curlin to Mischief's first foals arrived this year

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