

Albert Adams

The most popular man in harness racing

by DEAN A. HOFFMAN

MAYBE THE FBI COULD FIND HIM. PERHAPS A PRIVATE investigator. Or maybe we'd have to put out an all-points-bulletin with police agencies. Even then I doubt they would find this person.

If there is someone in harness racing who doesn't like Albert Adams, I've certainly never found him. I can only assume that such a person simply doesn't exist.

It's easy to understand why Adams may be the most popular man in harness racing. He's got a 1,000-kilowatt smile that would be the envy of any politician. He's got a folksy nature that immediately puts you at ease. He's as open and honest as anyone who ever lived. And behind all that personality is a horseman with few peers in the sport.

Adams is 65 years old, but he looks decades younger, and he can probably outwork most people half his age. He's got lots of experience in the arena of hard work; he's been doing it all his life.

Today, Adams works hard as the master of Winterwood Farm, set amid the bucolic hills of north central Ohio. That's where he and wife Sherry live, along with son Mark and his wife, and it's where they keep their broodmares and raise their yearlings.

The Winterwood yearlings will go under the hammer next month at the Standardbred Horse Sale Company's Harrisburg sale, with nearby Spring Haven Farm acting as Adams's agent at the sale.

Adams is closely identified with the popular grey pacer Laag, who suffers from Lyme Disease and compromised fertility today. On the track and in the stud barn, Laag was the culmination of Adams's lifelong passion for grey horses.

A native of Ontario, Adams was working for breeder Max Webster in 1962 when he went to Almahurst Farm in Kentucky to learn more about breeding farm management Bluegrass-style. He so impressed the Kentucky hardboots that he was offered a job at Almahurst, then owned by the Camp family of California.

Adams went to work at Almahurst Farm in the fall of 1962, working seven days a week for \$50. He and Sherry lived in an apartment in Lexington before moving to a house at Almahurst.

At the time, the stallions Shadow Wave, Blaze Hanover, Scott Frost, Diamond Hal, Harlan Dean, Meadow Pace, Dazzleway, Mighty Sun, Adiwaway and Bond Hanover stood at Almahurst. Most of them were graduates of the Camps' Grand Circuit stable, campaigned by Joe O'Brien.

A year after Adams started his new job, P.J. Baugh of North Carolina bought Almahurst and all its horses. The farm was top-heavy with hired help, and Adams was one of those scheduled to be let go, but his strong work ethic had caught the eye of manager Francis McKinzie.

Adams was given a chance to remain at Almahurst, and McKinzie never regretted that decision.





When McKinzie retired, Adams became the manager. He has fond memories of McKinzie, although Adams acknowledges that McKinzie was a taskmaster who seldom gave an errant employee a second chance. McKinzie was a boss who believed in “my way or the highway.”

The stallion most closely associated with Almahurst in the 1960s was Shadow Wave, the spectacularly marked chestnut Jug winner, who had foundered as a 2-year-old.

“His feet were a constant battle,” Adams recalled. “As Shadow Wave progressed in life, his feet got worse. He eventually lost one foot entirely, and we had to put him down when he was 17.”

Working with Shadow Wave, Adams admitted, wasn’t so easy, because he was uncooperative most of the time.

“He was tough,” said Adams. “That was the Grattan blood in his bottom side coming out in him. His foals were tough, too, but they were great-looking. They had big rumps.”

Other stallions came along to Almahurst during the Baugh ownership, among them Don Parker, Golden Money Maker, Lindy’s Pride and High Ideal.

“Lindy’s Pride had fertility problems from the beginning, and he went to Castleton after a few years,” said Adams.



“Trotting mares are high-risk If you get a trotting mare

LEFT: Winterwood is situated in the rolling hills of north central Ohio, one of the most beautiful spots of the Buckeye State.

ABOVE: Mark Adams throws some hay to two of Winterwood’s broodmares while his father handles the driving.

OPPOSITE ABOVE: Developing a horse farm to meet the standards that Albert Adams sets requires non-stop work, and here Albert and son Mark pause for a rare respite during the day.

High Ideal was a popular stallion, because he was the first son of Bret Hanover to stand at a major farm. Although he never actually won a race in 2:00 or faster, High Ideal had a time trial mark of 1:55.1 that made him stand out as a stallion in the early 1970s.

“I bought High Ideal from Mr. William Ellerington on a handshake,” recalled Adams. “Mr. Ellerington was a gentleman, and I knew his word was good.”

Later, Almahurst took on such celebrated racetrack warriors as Ralph Han-

over, Nihilator, Trim The Tree, Royce, Dragon’s Lair, Radiant Ruler and Armbro Belmont. Although they came loaded with honors from their racing days, they failed to make much of a splash in the pacing pond, and Dragon’s Lair suffered from fertility problems.

During his Almahurst years, Adams got to know the legendary Joe O’Brien well. O’Brien trained and raced horses for both the Camp and Baugh families.

“Joe drove a horse like I wish guys would drive today,” said Adams. “He never killed a horse racing it on the front



mares. A mare might have a good trotter and never have another good one. that kicks a good one out every year, you've got a gold mine." —ALBERT ADAMS

end. How many horses can go to the front each week and keep winning? Darn few."

After several decades at Almahurst, Adams left to fulfill a dream by operating his own farm. It hasn't been easy. Anyone who's ever developed a 200-acre horse farm from scratch knows that the expenses never seem to end, and that the horse market is unpredictable at best.

To anyone who has visited Winterwood Farm, the fruits of Adams's labor—and all his money—are obvious. It is a gem of a farm in a picturesque setting. It is just a few miles from Malabar Farm, the home of famed novelist Louis Bromfield, and the spot where Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall tied the knot in 1945.

"Sherry and I grew to like this part of Ohio as we traveled up I-71 so many years," he said. "When you leave Columbus, it's not too long before you get into these rolling hills. For years Sherry and I would bring our camper up here and spend the weekend hustling around, looking for farms that were for sale."

In 1978, they found a superb location south of Bellville, just a few minutes away

from an I-71 interchange. They bought the property from an elderly man.

"We didn't do anything with it for a long time," he admitted. "We'd come up from Kentucky on weekends, and clean up fence rows and do whatever work we could."

"The soil was badly depleted at first, because they hadn't fertilized it in years. It was nothing but multi-flora rose growing everywhere. It was a mess. We got bulldozers in here to clean it all up. Then we row-cropped it—corn and soybeans—for years to get the weeds down and get the soil fertilized properly."

The endless expenses in building a farm can easily be overlooked. Adams said it cost over \$50,000 to put a road in from the farm entrance back to his home. When repairs are necessary, he and Mark will be making the blacktop patches themselves.

"Whenever you get into these projects, it's the labor that costs so much money," he said, "so we do whatever we can to save the labor costs."

Adams decided early on to keep Winterwood for his own horses. Only by

limiting the numbers, he reasoned, can he keep the individual care at the level he insists on maintaining.

"I want a nice farm," he said. "I don't want a farm that has too many horses and is so torn up that the fields look like mud lots."

Winterwood's broodmare band once exceeded 30, but Adams prefers to keep it at 12 to 15 mares. He admitted that he often finds it difficult to cull mares; they are like members of his family.

It's been over 34 years since Adams bought his first broodmare. In the spring of 1967, he spotted a grey mare named Blue Hurricane in a Tattersalls Mixed Sale catalog. She was by Storm Cloud, a grey son of Scotland standing at Walnut Hall Farm. Even without seeing her, Adams knew that she wouldn't bring a great deal of money. Most importantly, she was grey.

"I was working at Almahurst, and I didn't get to the sale that day at Tattersalls until after Blue Hurricane had sold," recalled Adams. "I was so disappointed I'd missed her. I saw a man and asked how much number 42 brought. He told

Three horses that have meant a lot to Albert Adams were Laag (**TOP**), shown with trainer-driver Dick Farrington en route to a record mile at Delaware, Ohio, in 1987; Trim The Tree (**BELOW LEFT**), a world champion half-brother to Laag; and Shadow Wave (**BELOW RIGHT**), a popular stallion at Almahurst Farm when Adams managed the Kentucky nursery.



ED KEYS



GEORGE SMALLSREED

“I’ve loved grey horses since I was a kid. I loved grey yearlings. To me, there’s nothing in the



ED KEYS

me \$700.”

The man then asked Adams why he wanted to know.

“I was trying to buy her, but I got here late,” admitted Adams.

“Well, I bought her,” said Carl Kull of Marion, Ohio. “If you really want her that bad, you can have her for what I paid for her.”

“No, I wouldn’t do that,” replied Adams. “I’ll give you \$25 profit.”

He laughs when he thinks about that offer in today’s dollars, but he wrote Kull

a check for \$25 on the spot and took the sales slip for Blue Hurricane.

Adams, however, had committed the sin of buying a horse without first seeing it. When he saw Blue Hurricane, he probably wanted to stop payment on his check. The 3-year-old filly was extremely small and in poor physical condition. As Adams was leading her through the stable area, a friend took in the sight and yelled, “Hey, Albert, where you going with that goat?”

Adams came to love the mare. Blue

Hurricane was first bred to Bomb’s Away and then to Shadow Wave. Later, she had foals by Golden Money Maker, High Ideal, Smog, Dallas Almahurst and Falcon Almahurst.

“Once I got her fed right, she became a nice-looking mare,” he said. “She produced 14 straight foals for us, and she died at age 18 with her head in my son Mark’s lap.”

Her best foal was Hurricane Shadow, and Canadian Hall of Famer Jack Kopas purchased him as a yearling for \$6,700.

"I told Jack when he bought him that if the colt didn't pace in 2:00, I'd give him his money back," said Adams. Hurricane Shadow earned over \$100,000 in the 1970s, but took only a 2:00.2 mark as a 3-year-old. "Thank God Jack never held me to it," Adams said with a laugh.

Adams may be the only man who ever preferred females with grey hair, and he deliberately built a band of grey mares during his years at Almahurst. His favorite by far was the grey Meadow Skipper mare Tinsel. She produced the 2-year-old world champion Trim The Tree p,2,1:53.3 and later the grey streak Laag p,3,1:51.2. While she was certainly a remarkable producer, the old grey mare could be a harridan to handle.

"Around foaling time, you just never went in the stall with Tinsel," he said. "Once you got the foal out and the navel iodined and gave it a shot, you were finished with it for about five days. When

Trim The Tree and Laag.

"There was something in her genes that just clicked," he said. "Both Trim The Tree and Laag were hard to get gaited. Dick Farrington practically gave up on Laag when he was a 2-year-old. One day a piece of paper blew across the track at Ben White Raceway, and Laag took off. From that moment on, Laag's gait was perfect. He just floated over the ground."

Adams has not embraced trotting mares with the same enthusiasm as he has pacing mares. He worries about the lack of consistency in trotting mares.

"Trotting mares are high-risk mares," he said. "A mare might have a good trotter and never have another good one. If you get a trotting mare that kicks a good one out every year, you've got a gold mine."

Adams recently acquired his first trotting mare, Beyond Help by Armbro Goal, from the family of Arnie Almahurst. She delivered a Yankee Glide

"I don't like mares that are back at the knees," he continued, "but many horses who are back at the knees can still race well. Take Nihilator, for example. He's just one horse, but he was back at the knee. So I'm not so sure it's as big a fault as people make it out to be. But if you're selling yearlings and you've got one back at the knees, the trainers will knock him."

Adams breeds mares in several jurisdictions, seeking the best available stallion values in places like Ontario, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Kentucky and Ohio.

He particularly likes two new Ohio stallions, Master Lavec and Jet Laag. He bred his one trotting mare to Master Lavec and several mares to Jet Laag.

"I really like Master Lavec," said Adams. "What a 2-year-old he was! I watched videos of him and loved him. He stands up tall, and looks like a trotter. He was good on a half-mile track, and that's what Ohio is all about.

"Jet Laag is a beautiful horse and a fast horse, and I think his foals will sell very well."

Mark Adams added, "Of course it doesn't hurt that Jet Laag is grey, and he's a son of Laag."

Certainly one of the best investments Adams has made as a breeder was a share in Cam's Card Shark when the 1994 Horse of the Year retired to Hanover Shoe Farms.

"I normally don't buy shares in stallions, because you're better off breeding a couple years and moving on," he said. "I really liked Cam's Card Shark. He was almost unbeatable. He went fast, and he could live for a long time. I think I paid for my share in Cam's Card Shark with the first yearling I sold by him."

Adams said he knows that Cam's Card Shark is only going to get more popular with the astonishing success he's enjoyed this season.

"Cam's Card Shark isn't the prettiest horse in the world," admitted Adams. "He's got that Roman nose, but we've been lucky in that all of our yearlings have had nice heads."

Offsetting the joy that Cam's Card Shark has brought him is the sadness he feels over the health problems that have plagued his beloved Laag this year.

"His fertility just went all to hell," Adams said. "It took forever to discover that Laag had Lyme Disease. They don't know how that affected his fertility, but he sure had problems this year."

the Lone Ranger's horse. I've always loved seeing world prettier than a grey yearling." —ALBERT ADAMS

Tinsel came into heat, you could do anything you wanted with her. But otherwise she was tough."

Two particularly dangerous mares he remembers from his years at Almahurst were Neon by Volomite and Ballyhean by Bye Bye Byrd. "They wanted to hurt you," he said.

Although mean mares often turn out to be good producers, they're certainly no joy to work with, and Adams emphasized it's important that people understand that. He recalled selling the mare Reba Winterwood (Fame-Resourceful) a few years ago.

"I told everyone who looked at Reba Winterwood that she would kick," he said. "I said if the mare was going to be around little kids, they might want to think about it, because she would try to hurt you. I would never sell a mean mare without telling people about her."

Adams has dealt with his share of wicked broodmares over the years, but he and Mark, who works closely with his father at Winterwood, are happy to say that their broodmare band now doesn't include any vile-tempered types.

During a lifetime with horses, Adams has learned that genetics is difficult to fathom, and he admitted that he couldn't predict that Tinsel had enough pedigree to produce two exceptional pacers like

foal colt this year.

He was a late May foal, and Adams is happy the mare delivered before the calendar page flipped to June. He knows that some buyers automatically dismiss June foals at the yearling sales.

"I've heard buyers saying, 'Oh, God—that's a June foal. We don't want him,'" said Adams. He knows that June foals can become outstanding horses, but he also knows that earlier foals with more size are more appealing to yearling buyers.

He pointed out that the ideal trotting mare and the ideal pacing mare are different types.

"Trotting mares are usually longer and up off the ground more," said Adams. "They usually have a nice long neck. That's more important than in a pacing mare. You like to see a pacing mare with a nice quarter behind. She can be a bit more compact and thick."

Adams knows that some of the breed's best broodmares have conformation flaws and have still produced champions. If he's buying a mare, he avoids small mares, because he realizes that buyers don't like small yearlings. He also wants no part of mares with club feet.

"A mare with a club foot won't have foals with club feet every time," he said, "but they will have some with club feet. And that's a real no-no in a sale yearling."

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BRIEF SUMMARY

INDICATIONS: Marquis (ponazuril) is indicated for the treatment of equine protozoal myeloencephalitis (EPM) caused by *Sarcocystis neurona*.

WARNING: For use in animals only. Not for use in horses intended for food. Not for human use. Keep out of the reach of children.

PRECAUTIONS: Prior to treatment, EPM should be distinguished from other diseases that may cause ataxia in horses. Injuries or lameness may also complicate the evaluation of an animal with EPM. In most instances, ataxia due to EPM is asymmetrical and affects the hind limbs.

Clinicians should recognize that clearance of the parasite by ponazuril may not completely resolve the clinical signs attributed to the natural progression of the disease. The prognosis for animals treated for EPM may be dependent upon the severity of disease and the duration of the infection prior to treatment.

The safe use of Marquis (ponazuril) in horses used for breeding purposes, during pregnancy, or in lactating mares, has not been evaluated. The safety of Marquis (ponazuril) with concomitant therapies in horses has not been evaluated.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: In the field study, eight animals were noted to have unusual daily observations. Two horses exhibited blisters on the nose and mouth at some point in the field study, three animals showed a skin rash or hives for up to 18 days, one animal had loose stools throughout the treatment period, one had a mild colic on one day and one animal had a seizure while on medication. The association of these reactions to treatment was not established.

ANIMAL SAFETY SUMMARY: Marquis (ponazuril) was administered to 24 adult horses (12 males and 12 females) in a target animal safety study. Three groups of 8 horses each received 0, 10, or 30 mg/kg (water as control, 2X and 6X for a 5 mg/kg [2.27 mg/lb] dose). Horses were dosed after feeding. One half of each group was treated for 28 days and the other half for 56 days followed by necropsy upon termination of treatment. There were several instances of loose feces in all animals in the study irrespective of treatment, sporadic inappetence and one horse at 10 mg/kg (2X) lost weight while on test. Loose feces were treatment related. Histopathological findings included moderate edema in the uterine epithelium of three of the four females in the 6X group (two treated for 28 days and one for 56 days).

For a copy of the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) or to report Adverse Reactions, call Bayer Customer Service at (800) 633-3796.

HOW SUPPLIED: Code: 045799 Carton contains four (4) x 127 gram syringe applicators and one (1) reusable syringe plunger

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ALBERT ADAMS

There are precious few horsemen who can equal Albert Adams at turning a rough-and-ready yearling into a mouth-watering sales horse. He preps all the Winterwood yearlings at his farm, and sells them as part of the Spring Haven consignment. The job he does in fitting a yearling for sale can only be appreciated if you take a close look at the Winterwood yearlings.

One of the reasons his yearlings look so good is that Adams is persnickety about his feeding program, and he learned long ago that cheap feed is false economy. For example, he's not afraid to refuse a load of hay if his sense of smell tells him something's wrong.

"Fortunately, they make good hay in this part of Ohio," he said. "I'm picky on the hay we feed. It's got to be good, and it's important to get the best quality we can. In the winter when you have snow on the ground, you'd better feed good hay, because the horses have to eat whatever you put on the ground. If you feed poor-quality hay, you'll get in trouble. I feed straight alfalfa in the winter."

Adams said that you can't judge hay quality by looking at it; you must smell it for freshness and quality.

"If hay smells like silage, it's not right," he said. "If it smells like candy, it's good hay."

He's not fond of feeding hay from round bales unless they've been stored inside.

In addition to the best hay available, all the horses at Winterwood get Strategy, a Purina product.

"I've used Strategy with great success, and it's nice to have a feed that you can use on all the horses on a farm," he said. "You can buy cheaper feeds than Strategy, but I like the way horses do on it. In the long run, it doesn't cost as much as using a cheaper feed."

Because Winterwood is small, Adams doesn't get many buyers stopping in to inspect his yearlings prior to the sale. That's where videos can be very useful.

"Videos seem to suffice," he said. "Last year we had a yearling that was the smallest colt we've ever sold. People would look at him and comment about how small he was, so I told them 'He's big on the video. Let me show it to you.'"

The colt showed determination and a smooth pacing gait on the video, and he sold for a handsome price in light of his small stature.

"The video really sold that colt, and

paid for all the other videos we've done that haven't helped us at all," said Adams.

Winterwood has enjoyed great success over the years selling its yearlings at Harrisburg, and Adams noted that he was the first to sell the offspring of the Ontario patriarch Run The Table there. One of his best friends is Jack McNiven, who stands Run The Table at his Killean Acres.

"I had great luck selling Run The Tables at Harrisburg, but after a while other breeders starting selling yearlings by Run The Table there," he said. He does like the Ontario Sires Stakes program, but pointed out that it may become inundated soon, as some of the major American breeding farms have patronized Ontario stallions heavily.

Adams chuckled when he discussed the vagaries of the yearling market. Last year he felt that his best yearlings got overlooked and sold cheap, while others brought more than he expected. Such is the plight of a commercial breeder.

Talk to Albert Adams for very long, and sooner or later the topic will turn to grey horses. You can sense his passion for them as he speaks.

"Oh, I've loved grey horses since I was a kid," he said. "I loved the Lone Ranger's horse. I've always loved seeing grey yearlings. To me, there's nothing in the world prettier than a grey yearling. Laag sure was a beautiful horse."

He acknowledged that not everyone shares his passion. Trainers often don't like them, because they spook other horses. Yearling sale grooms don't like greys because they present dilemma.

"You'll get those white hairs in all your rubrags and brushes," Adams explained. "If you're grooming bay or brown horses, you can use the same equipment, but if you're also grooming a grey horse you need to keep separate equipment."

Adams is convinced that grey horses are better racing prospects on a horse-for-horse basis than their darker rivals.

"I don't know what that grey gene does, but it makes them tough," he said. He can readily cite one race after another as proof of Laag's toughness, but he acknowledged that Laag wasn't the only gallant grey to wear harness.

Albert Adams has raised an exceptional number of tough horses—in shades of grey and bay, and everything in between—at Winterwood, and his success is proof that in harness racing, horses bred by a nice guy do indeed finish first. **HB**





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