

The Enduring Legacy of BILL BRADY

BY NIKKI SHERMAN

When All American Rod roared to a 3 1/4-length victory at 35-1 in his career debut Feb. 6 at Parx Racing, emotions surged as his connections celebrated the upset win. There were many reasons why, with the most obvious being that it was the first career win for new owners Stephanie and Mike Yekenchik, who race under the name Isaiah 4031 Racing Stable. But behind the scenes, everyone involved with the 3-year-old Rimrod gelding was remembering All American Rod's breeder, William "Bill" Brady of R H Breeding.

Brady had been a longtime fixture in the lives of Castle Rock Farm owner Peter Giangiulio and manager June Hillman, as well as trainer Dee Curry. When he passed unexpectedly in July 2023, it hit his family and friends hard. He left behind his wife of 58 years, Kathleen, as well as sons Michael, Mark and Brian, and eight grandchildren. That's without even mentioning his large but close extended family, a rarity in today's age.

ALL AMERICAN ROD
ALLOWANCE WINNER
AT PARX 3-6-24



BARBARA WEIDL/EQUIPHOTO

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ALL AMERICAN ROD
MSW WINNER AT PARX 2-6-24



BARBARA WEIDL/EQUIPHOTO

Bill threw himself into everything he loved, including playing golf, volunteering, cheering on all of "his" Philadelphia sports teams (especially the Flyers and Phillies), and perhaps most importantly, his love of horse racing. Brady's family made sure to include his membership in the Pennsylvania Horse Breeders Association in his obituary.

Brady had several broodmares at Castle Rock Farm and a few racehorses with Curry. His family wasn't sure how to handle his beloved horses, so they raced one horse under The Estate of William P. Brady. Whatsagizmo won one week after Brady passed away, and Curry was in tears in the winner's circle. She specifically asked if the track photographers in the Equi-Photo office could add a notation to the top of the win photo: "It was an Honor to Give You One More Win."

While Brady's family was happy that his homebred had won a race, the reminder of their recent loss became too painful and they made the difficult decision to disperse his horses. That was when Hillman and Curry leapt into action. They were able to find homes for all of his horses, either for permanent retirement or new broodmare/racing owners.

Curry was looking for potential buyers of the youngsters and racehorses when she spoke to longtime jockey agent Dave Yannuzzi. He suggested reaching out to his daughter Stephanie Yekenchik, who, along with her husband Mike, ran two farms: a horse boarding stable called The Jennings Farm and an animal/produce farm named Medford Cattle Farms.

"The thing is, I wanted nothing to do with racing," Yekenchik admitted. "My dad was an agent before he retired and my grandfather [Joe Yannuzzi] was a trainer. I didn't have a high opinion of racing and was way more into show horses."

One of Yekenchik's concerns was for the welfare of the racehorses, especially when they finished racing. However, Curry has had a hand in Thoroughbred aftercare for a long time and reassured her that there was no need to worry.

"I told Stephanie that we always find homes for the horses when they're ready," Curry explained. "Parx has the Turning for Home program or we could rehome them ourselves. That seemed to ease her mind."

One day in church, Stephanie's husband Mike read a Bible verse and it instantly made him think of horses racing. Isaiah 40:31 states, "They who wait for the Lord shall renew

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their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." The couple knew they had found a name for their racing entity: Isaiah 4031 Racing Stable.

Hillman absolutely loved the name. "Bill was a man of faith so the Bible reference in their stable name is significant."

All American Rod's career debut on that fateful Parx afternoon in February was Isaiah 4031 Racing Stable's fourth as an owner, coming a few weeks after just missing a win with another horse from Brady's breeding legacy, the Rimrod gelding Dropline.

"Never in a million years did I think he was going to win," Yekenchik posted on her Facebook page, and then added later, "He's just so gritty!"

Curry found herself feeling the power and presence of Bill Brady that day. All American Rod is a half-brother to Whatsagizmo. Hillman felt it in her heart as well.

"I know Dee talks about it all the time," she said. "I truly believe he is looking down on the horses and maybe has a hand in the success they have had since his passing. We are all so proud that we were able to keep so many of them on the same path they would have been on if he was still alive. We feel like it is fate."

Less than three weeks later, Dropline strongly drew away to a 5 1/2-length Parx maiden special weight victory.

And then on March 6, All American Rod ran against older, more experienced horses in an allowance at Parx. Again a longshot, he ran his heart out and won by a length at 18-1. The Yekenchiks were rendered speechless; they had been prepared for the race to be a learning experience, not a win.

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"For some reason, there haven't been any races in the condition book for straight 3-year-olds," Curry lamented. "I thought we had no chance but there were no other options so we decided to give it a shot. Look at his birth date - May 13th - he's still biologically a 2-year-old!"

Then Curry realized something special. Brady's last wins with her as trainer under his own R H Breeding name had been with Late to the Show almost exactly two years prior, on March 15, 2022, and Ninja Prize, on March 21, 2023. She knew at that moment, it was Bill watching from above.

Hillman misses Brady but enjoys caring for his broodmares that are still at Castle Rock Farm. His family even gifted her ownership of a Rimrod mare named Lemon Strudel.

"I am truly honored to have known Bill Brady," she said. "He was the kindest man. I was always happy to see him and he was the type of owner we need more of in racing. I feel a great sense of peace from helping to be a part of continuing his legacy with his horses." ■

