

W. T. Young

1918-2004



Overbrook Master

BY DAVID SCHMITZ

William T. Young said he wished he had found Thoroughbred racing and breeding earlier in life. But in the years he was in the business, Young built Overbrook Farm near Lexington into a showcase nursery and oversaw the development of homebred Storm Cat into the world's most valuable stallion.

Young, a Lexington native, died Jan. 12 at age 85 of an apparent heart attack at Gulf Stream Golf Club near his winter home in Gulf Stream, Fla. He collapsed after introducing sportscaster Jim McKay at a dinner engagement and never regained consciousness.

Like many Kentuckians, Young held a special place in his heart for what Overbrook official Ric Waldman called "the one Derby." Young's dream came to fruition May 4, 1996, when homebred Grindstone got up to win the 122nd Kentucky Derby (gr. I) by the shortest of noses over California invader Cavonnier in one of the fastest times ever.

"This is a very special moment for me," Young said at the time. "I'm no import. I'm from Kentucky. I was born here. I came back here after the war."

Young's hope for a Triple Crown sweep soon ended. Several days after the Derby, a bone chip was discovered in Grindstone's knee. Grindstone, a son of Unbridled, was retired to Overbrook and entered stud the following year.

THE LION OF OVERBROOK

That common theme, "I'm from Kentucky. I was born here," was evident in Young's behavior throughout his adult life. Young, whose success in a number of businesses provided the means to get started in

the horse industry in a big way, took seriously his role as a model Kentuckian, donating untold hours and a good part of his millions toward the betterment of the Bluegrass State (see sidebar, page 498). He was, as breeder/owner John R. Gaines eulogized, "the first citizen of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, first in his noble character, first in his generous spirit, first in his

creative endeavors, and first in the hearts of his friends."

Young relied on experienced horsemen to reach the top in breeding and racing, and one of the first ones he listened to was William Lockridge, who at the time was part owner of Ashford Stud near Versailles, Ky. Lockridge selected three young mares to be purchased by Young and Ashford in the early 1980s and then bred them to Ashford stallion Storm Bird, a record-priced syndicated son of Northern Dancer. One of the mares, the speedy grade II winner Terlingua, delivered Storm Cat in 1983 at Marshall Jenney's Derry Meeting Farm in Pennsylvania.

Young planned to sell Storm Cat at the 1984 Keeneland July yearling sale, but the sale company asked him to withdraw the colt and sell him in September because he had tested positive for equine viral arteritis. As Lady Luck would have it, like it had in 1903 when owner James R. Keene kept Sysonby in the U.S. rather than send him to England to race, Young decided to keep Storm Cat. It was a move that helped secure Overbrook's place in history.

It didn't take long for Young to realize how good a move it was. Trained by Jonathan Sheppard, Storm Cat won the Young America Stakes (gr. I) at Meadowlands in the fall of his 2-year-old season, then missed winning the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (gr. I) by a nose to Tasso, the eventual 2-year-old male champion. Young had been offered \$8 million for Storm Cat before the Juvenile, and less after the race. He decided to keep him.

Storm Cat entered stud in 1988 for a fee of \$30,000. Young found Storm Cat a tough sell in the beginning and offered foal-share

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Eclipse Awards

1994, Outstanding breeder
1994, Timber Country, 2-year-old male
1994, Flanders, 2-year-old filly
1995, Golden Attraction, 2-year-old filly
1996, Boston Harbor, 2-year-old male
2000, Surfside, 3-year-old filly

Classic winners:

1994, Tabasco Cat, Preakness and Belmont
1995, Timber Country, Preakness
1996, Grindstone, Kentucky Derby
1996, Editor's Note, Belmont

Breeders' Cup winners:

1994, Timber Country, Juvenile
1994, Flanders, Juvenile Fillies
1996, Boston Harbor, Juvenile
1999, Cat Thief, Classic

First stakes winner as breeder:

Storm Star, Pritchard Cherry Hinton Stakes (Eng-III),
July 9, 1985 (bred by
W. T. Young Storage)



Member and steward,
The Jockey Club

Director Emeritus,
Breeders' Cup

Director Emeritus,
Churchill Downs

TCA Honored Guest, 1996

TOBA Breeder of the Year,
2000



After Grindstone won the 1996 Derby, Young was joined by trainer D. Wayne Lukas, Young's daughter, Lucy, and jockey Jerry Bailey

arrangements. He later dropped Storm Cat's fee, but once the stallion's offspring started running, there was no stopping him. Storm Cat chalked up progeny earnings of \$3 million in 1992 when his oldest foals were 3-year-olds. He hit \$5.3 million in 1994, \$9 million in 1998, and \$12.2 million the following year when he topped the general sire list. He started standing for \$500,000 in 2002.

Storm Cat provided Young with a veritable constant supply of top runners. One of them, dual classic winner Tabasco Cat, was bred and raced by Young in partnership with longtime friend David Reynolds of Richmond, Va. Tabasco Cat won the 1994 Preakness (gr. I) and Belmont (gr. I) Stakes.

Reynolds' daughter, Dotty Brotherton, remembered the close friendship between the two men. "He was a special kind of steadfast friend for my dad, not just in the good times, but in the bad," Brotherton said. "He was close to me and my two sisters, Julie Swords and Margie Mackell. Mr. Young was one of the directors of Reynolds Metals, and Dad was one of the early supporters of Storm Cat before he became popular. The third time was the charm because Tabasco Cat was the result."

SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN

Young's friendship and counsel were highly valued in a variety of circles. Arthur

B. Hancock III of Stone Farm remembered the time Young advised him of the benefit of selling Sunday Silence to a Japanese party. Hancock had experienced difficulty selling stallion shares in the 1989 Horse of the Year and was faced with a mountain of bills.

"He told me that it was a good business decision," Hancock said from his Paris, Ky., farm about the \$10-million deal.

Hancock and Young were partners in grade I winner Harlan, who was bred on a foal-share arrangement. The two men remained partners when the son of Storm Cat entered stud at Stone in 1995.

Said Hancock, "When I think of Mr. Young, I think of Australian poet Adam

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— Arthur Hancock

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"I remember the time I was invited to speak to a group of horsemen in Australia. Mr. Young said, 'Hawk—that's what everyone calls me—take that guitar of yours with you. They'll probably never remember the speech, but they won't forget your guitar playing.' I sang a song about Sunday Silence, and they stood up and cheered."

Ogden Mills "Dinny" Phipps, chairman of The Jockey Club, also benefited from Storm Cat's stallion prowess. His Storm Flag Flying, bred by Phipps Stable, won the 2002 Long John Silver's Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (gr. I) and was voted champion 2-year-old filly. "Mr. Young wrote me a wonderful letter after the Eclipse Awards," said Phipps. "He loved racing and was a great contributor."

EARLY DAYS

Born Feb. 15, 1918, Young graduated from the University of Kentucky in Lexington with a degree in mechanical engineering and served in the Army during World War II. Following his discharge after the war with the rank of major, Young returned to Lexington, married Lucy Hilton Maddox, and started a peanut butter company. His father-in-law was in the peanut business in Georgia. Big Top peanut butter later be-

Legacies

John R. Gaines, founder, Breeders' Cup Ltd.; co-chairman, W.T. Young Library; board of curators, Transylvania University; and fellow horseman:

"W.T. Young was the first citizen of the Commonwealth of Kentucky—first in his noble character, first in his generous spirit, first in his creative endeavors, and first in the hearts of his friends."

Jockey Jerry Bailey, who rode Young's Grindstone to a nose victory in the 1996 Kentucky Derby:

"In the paddock before the race he told me, 'I'd really like to win this one.' Afterwards, I didn't know if I'd won or not until the photo came down. Then Mr. Young came over and said: 'I really appreciate the ride. Next time, don't make it so close.'"

D.G. Van Clief Jr., president of Breeders' Cup Ltd.:

"Bill was immensely loyal to his friends and associates, and he was an absolutely fair person. He never failed to give the benefit of the doubt, and he was fair to people of all walks of life."

Nick Nicholson, president of Keeneland:

"He was very sensitive to people, and not just 'important' people. He was fond of and close to the people at Keeneland that served him. He knew all of their names. If you look at some Overbrook winner's circle photos, sometimes you'll see his waitress. He was certainly unique in that way. It was very real and genuine, and something that came natural to him."

In January of 2003, Young provided a "Mystery Trip" for seven female Keeneland employees he found to be exceptionally polite and courteous. Young invited them to take their first trip to New York City on his private plane, then gave them a tour of the city and took them to a Broadway matinee before capping off the night with dinner at the Rainbow Room.

Alex G. Campbell Jr., the owner and breeder who got W.T. Young involved in racing in the early 1970s:

"A lot of the things he did you don't read about. I don't think he

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came Jif after Young sold W.T. Young Foods to Procter & Gamble in 1955.

Young proved successful in a number of other businesses and also dabbled in politics. He started W.T. Young Storage and Lexington Cartage and served as chairman of Royal Crown Cola from 1966-84. He was on the board of Kentucky Fried Chicken and at one time was the largest single shareholder in health-care giant Humana. John Y. Brown Jr., who was behind KFC's huge growth, tapped Young to serve as his chief of staff after his election as Kentucky governor.

"We called him 'The Chief,'" said veterinarian Robert Copelan, who started with Overbrook in the late 1970s. "He had a hand in everything. Because of his engineering skills, he was able to put everything in a practical sense. He had that special disposition that made everything run smoothly."

"He saw the big picture; he didn't micromanage," said Waldman, who started advising Young in bloodstock matters in 1986 and set up shop at the farm four years later. "There were no limitations on what we could do or on spending. It was good chemistry, and it was enjoyable to go to work every



Young developed his Overbrook Farm into a showplace

Young's start in racing wasn't unlike many who have taken up the sport. He went to the track one particular day and loved it.

Young accompanied Alex G. Campbell Jr. to Churchill Downs in 1972 to see his friend's filly run. She won. Campbell convinced Young to go in as a partner with him, and Young soon owned half-interest in five yearlings. The neophyte owner quickly learned about the sport's uncertainties. One of the fillies, the most expensive one, died. It was a total loss because she wasn't insured, but Young's enthusiasm never waned.

In 1972, Young bought from Lucas Combs the first piece of land that became Overbrook. He continued to add on and the farm—at two separate sites—now encompasses 2,400 acres.

Young, who admitted he was no expert when it came to horses, figured what had worked for him in the business world would do the same in the horse business. He surrounded himself with a team of experts, but oversaw the execution of the plans and had the final say.

day. Working for Mr. Young was the most rewarding period of my life from a personal and business sense."

What sets Overbrook apart from most farms is that its stallions are home grown. With Waldman's skill in handling bloodstock matters, Overbrook has taken on the reputation as a stallion factory. Nine of the farm's 10 stallions are homebreds. The lone exception is Editor's Note, the 1996 Belmont Stakes winner for Young.

IN WAYNE WE TRUST

Young experienced his greatest success with horses trained by D. Wayne Lukas. The Hall of Fame conditioner not only trained the three classic winners and Harlan, but a host of other top runners for Young, including:

Boston Harbor, 1996 champion 2-year-old male and Breeders' Cup Juvenile (gr. I) winner; Cat Thief, 1999 Breeders' Cup Classic (gr. I) winner and an earner of \$3,951,012; Flanders, 1994 champion 2-year-old filly and Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (gr.

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turned anybody down completely. He was a great giver."

Satish Sanan, whose family's Padua Stable uses Overbrook Farm as a role model in the industry:

"When my technology company had trouble in 1999, I barely knew him, but I phoned him and said, 'Mr. Young, I need some advice and need some help.' He spent the better part of the day talking to me, then put Bob Warren (Overbrook Farm's general manager) on the phone while he called some financial institutions that helped get me through the problems. People like that are few and far between. The true judge of friendship is when you are in need, people step up. There are a lot of big people in this industry, but there are no other Bill Youngs."

Tim Smith, commissioner, National Thoroughbred Racing Association:

"He had an abundance of optimism and positive energy about everything, specifically our business. The great thing is he combined that with literally a steel-trap mind. He was a very unusual combination of a sweet man who was far from naïve, and who could even be tough and blunt."

James E. "Ted" Bassett III, trustee and former president, Keeneland:

"When he spoke, everyone listened, for he was never uninformed and his tactful yet forthright views were always respected and generally accepted. He was truly a giant among men who accepted success like a gentleman and disappointments like a man."

Leslie Wellington, a Transylvania University senior majoring in math from Jackson, Miss., one of 25 annual recipients of a four-year W.T. Young Scholarship to the private institution in Lexington:

"It is really amazing that a man I never met and who never knew me could have such an important impact on my life."

William S. Farish, owner, Lane's End Farm; vice president, steward, The Jockey Club:

"Bill Young was one of the greatest men I have ever known."

I) winner; Golden Attraction, 1995 champion 2-year-old filly; Seaside Attraction, 1990 Kentucky Oaks (gr. I) winner; Surfside, 2000 champion 3-year-old filly; and Timber Country (raced in partnership), 1994 champion 2-year-old male and Breeders' Cup Juvenile winner and 1995 Preakness winner.

Flanders, the dam of Surfside, remained special to Young. Her second dam, Cinegita, was one of the three original mares Young purchased with Lockridge in the early 1980s. Cinegita produced the first stakes winner bred by Young, a Storm Bird filly named Storm Star. Bred in the name of W.T. Young Storage, Storm Star was a group III winner in England for Young's daughter, Lucy. Flanders, who is in foal to A.P. Indy, is booked to Empire Maker.

The relationship between Young and Lukas proved special because of the way Young stuck with the conditioner during a low point in Lukas' career.

"He was a great stabilizer for me," Lukas said. "I remember when I was a little fed up about the Hall of Fame. I'd say that if I ever did get inducted, I might not show up for the ceremony. Mr. Young said, 'Wayne, you're going to get in, and you're going to go there, and you're going to accept it.' It was like my father telling me. He didn't say I'm ask-



Young was quick to credit Lukas with much of his success

ing you to do this. He was such a model and set such a standard for all of us."

Alone and in partnership, Young bred 103 stakes winners and raced 82 stakes winners, many of whom were homebred. Young received an Eclipse Award as outstanding breeder of 1994.

Young's survivors include Lucy and a son, Bill Jr., plus a brother, Dick. Young's wife died in January 2002. The family requested that there be no flowers or charitable contributions. ☐

Young's Philanthropy Far-Reaching

W.T. Young did not often contribute to national charities. Instead, he preferred to help Kentucky and his hometown of Lexington. But his efforts were still far-reaching.

By helping raise the funds to build and equip a new library at the University of Kentucky, he helped every student, those from Kentucky and many other states and countries. By helping establish a scholarship program at Transylvania University, he ensured students could attend the small, private college who otherwise might not



The W.T. Young Library on the University of Kentucky campus in Lexington

have that opportunity. By raising money for Shaker Village, he helped preserve a precious Kentucky landmark that attracts visitors from around the globe.

By his own account, Young and his family gave more than \$60 million to various causes. His son and daughter also have foundations in their own

names, obviously influenced by their father's strong philanthropic nature.

Young's \$5-million gift—the largest cash gift by an alumnus ever—began the campaign to build a new library at the University of Kentucky. The \$58-million building bears his name. He later pushed for an endowment to purchase books for the library; that \$65-million endowment is the largest at any public university.

A University of Kentucky graduate, Young spearheaded an effort to raise \$7.5 million to build a new house for his fraternity, Sigma Alpha Epsilon. He didn't just give money—Ben Giles, the project manager at Young's Overbrook Farm, was asked by Young to oversee the design and construction of the fraternity house.

Young was probably the most important person in the history of Lexington's other university, Transylvania. He founded and funded the Thomas Jefferson Scholarship Program there in 1982 to offer merit-based four-year scholarships to 10 incoming students. It was later expanded to 25 students a year. Since that time, Transy's enrollment has risen from 700 to over 1,000 because of the program. The university's board renamed the program the W.T. Young Scholars in 1987.

Chairman of the Transylvania board for 23 years, he led three capital campaigns that raised \$75 million.

Young was also a huge supporter of the YMCA, Junior Achievement, Spindletop Research, and the Red Cross.

By Dan Liebman