

A New York Odyssey
By Robert D. Fierro

Each or the following fortuitous events happened in 1981, though not necessarily in chronological order.

Because I was still interested in forming limited partnerships early in 1981, I introduced myself to Michael Lischin, a young man who'd just become president of TECO, the investment arm of Fasig-Tipton at its then headquarters near Belmont Park. He suggested we have lunch at a local Italian place and when I got to the restaurant he asked if it would be OK if the other two men at the table were part of our conversation. I agreed and was introduced to one Barry Weisbord and one Craig Banderoff, both of whom at the time were working as agents for all kinds of deals out of an office in Manhattan.

When they asked me what I wanted to do it was not surprising that all of them sort of put a damper on investing in the New York program for this reason and that reason, and have you tried the baked clams here? What is ironic, of course, is that Barry went on to develop *Thoroughbred Daily News* in New Jersey, became a friend and bred in New York from time-to-time. After a number of years he turned the operation over to Sue Finley who, as a college senior began an internship in the publicity department at NYRA in 1983—I just happened to be in the press box on her first day when she looked really uncomfortable, befriended her and we have been pals ever since.

Craig then founded Denali Stud in Lexington and after a few years became one of the leading consignors of New York-bred yearlings at Saratoga. And Mike branched out to purchase a farm in the Hudson Valley which he named Dutchess Views, and he's been very active in both breeding but also acquiring stallions.

We'll skip a few months to August where I was introduced one night at the yearling sale to Howard C. Nolan who represented the Albany capital district in the state Senate. He was in the early development of his Blue Sky Farm in Orange County in the Catskills—a facility which proved to be the site of several serendipitous and fortuitous meetings over the next couple of years.

Senator Nolan introduced me to his new marketing director, a young man from Albany named Tom Clark, who introduced me to the farm's broodmare manager, Linda Shudlow. Tom and I became friends after he hired Old Empire to promote the farm. Tom went on to become an associate of John Gaines until he started his Thomas Clark Bloodstock in the 1990s. We are still buddies. Linda (subsequently, Linda Cowasjee), went on to become one of the country's premiere breeders and judges of Jack Russell terriers.

My marketing projects at Blue Sky kept me on a regular round trip from Queens to Orange County. One day I went down to the stallion barn where it was hard to miss a long white limousine parked there. Standing beside it were a silver haired couple who were admiring their grey stallion who'd just moved in. The couple were Anne and Donald Rudder whom I then got to know through my close friendship with their advisor Maureen Harmonay.

One thing led to another with the Rudders and eventually they became the major investment force in Equix Biomechanics, of which I was president for eight years, and then in DataTrack International, the same kind of service which I co-founded in 2004 and became Managing Director until it closed earlier this year. The Rudders achieved major racing success over the years utilizing this technology including winning the Travers in 1996. Mr. Rudder also founded the National Association of Thoroughbred Owners (NATO) which was reconstituted later into what is now NTRA. Anne and Don became more than business associates—they became our friends.

I was a guest lecturer on pedigree research at two classes for horse racing neophytes at The New School in Manhattan. The classes were run by CBS Radio horse racing host Bradley Telias. In the first year one of the participants was Vivien Malloy who immediately hired me as her pedigree consultant. She has long called me her "guru," and over the years her Edition Farm has earned two Breeder of the Year Awards. Vivien also became a major consignor of New York-bred yearlings through Craig Banderoff's Denali Stud.

In the second year I met soon-to-be-wed Herb and Ellen Moelis who subsequently created Candy Land Farm in Delaware and also became clients. A decade later I recommended a mating to them for one of their mares suggesting a \$5,000 stallion rather than a \$50,000 one. The resulting foal, a colt by Houston, topped the 1994 Saratoga Select sale at \$350,000. More importantly two years later they created a unique under-the-tent event each January at their farm, an event which eventually evolved into them founding Thoroughbred Charities of America along with Allaire DuPont. I was privileged that they asked me to be the Master of Ceremonies at the annual auction party soon became a major social event in the industry before relocating to Lexington; my gig as MC lasted 10 years or so.