



Brant Laue

COURTESY BRANT LAUE

STOCK *IN* TRADE

Laue thrives
in Thoroughbreds
and Charolais

BY LENNY SHULMAN

BRANT LAUE SUFFERED the nearly fatal curse that has hooked too many innocents on the Thoroughbred industry: He achieved immediate success with his first horse. His initial mating of his first broodmare, Hail Roberta, resulted in homebred Gun Salute, winner of the 2005 Secretariat Stakes (G1T) who also took Laue to the Breeders' Cup that season.

His good fortune with racing stock marked the third profession in which Laue has proved himself accomplished. His family has for decades maintained a thriving Kansas operation raising purebred Charolais cattle, and Laue is also a prominent attorney who has argued cases in top courts around the country. He currently works in the office of the Kansas attorney general.

And to top things off, in his spare time Laue also serves as chairman of the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association. In normal years he makes sure to spend his Augusts at Saratoga, where he shares a box with past TOBA chairman Dr. J. David Richardson.



Brant Laue's Gun Salute winning the 2005 Secretariat at Arlington International; below, in the winner's circle after the Hawthorne Derby





JOE LABOZZETTA/NYRA

Laue's Glorious View scores in the 2013 Vagrancy Handicap

Laue grew up on his family's ranch about 100 miles outside of Topeka. His father realized a dream when he began breeding Hereford cattle—one of only three purebred breeds in the country at the time—when he got out of the Navy. After one breeding season, his prize bull, for which he had paid \$600—a king's ransom at the time—walked out on the frozen Little Blue River that runs through the farm, fell in, and drowned.

"It was one of those moments when good comes from bad," noted Laue, 59. "New breeds were being introduced in

the country from Europe after being quarantined in Canada. So my dad bought a Charolais bull and soon realized that those calves quickly caught up in growth to the calves from the ill-fated Hereford bull, even though they were a year younger. Dad figured something was going on there, and that's when we began a Charolais ranch and started breeding Charolais cattle."

The breed of white cattle soon paid off, with one of the family's early calves setting a world record for yearling weight, and another becoming grand

champion at five major cattle shows. The family has never looked back and continues breeding pure-bred Charolais cattle to this day.

Horses entered the picture in the mid-1970s when the Laue Ranch began breeding Quarter Horses, primarily ranch horses.

"As a result of that, we started following Thoroughbred racing, watching on TV," said Laue. "The Kentucky Derby (G1) was always a good excuse to shut down the tractors on the first Saturday in May and go to the main house

to watch the race. I remember watching Secretariat in the Belmont (Stakes, G1) and Ruffian. I began following it as the highest form of animal breeding, never thinking I would get involved."

Laue left the ranch and eventually graduated from law school at Cornell University in upstate New York. For the past 35 years his law career has carried him to far-flung corners of the nation, beginning in Pierre, S.D., and continuing to Washington, D.C., as a member of the Justice Department in the Reagan administration. Following government work, Laue entered private practice in Kansas City, specializing in business litigation and class-action defense. He has appeared in more than 40 courts around the country, including six circuits of the federal Court of Appeals.

In 2013 he returned to government work when a family friend, Sam Brownback, was elected governor of Kansas. Laue served as chief counsel to Brownback and his successor, Dr. Jeff Colyer, before joining the state attorney general's office in 2019.

Meanwhile, the Thoroughbred seed that had been planted in Laue early began to blossom. While in the nation's capital, he attended the Preakness Stakes (G1) races won by Aloma's Ruler (1982) and Risen Star (1988).

He still owns a copy of *The Blood-Horse* that he bought at a truck stop in Kentucky during a business trip. The issue features Elocutionist on the cover—winning the 1976 Preakness. When Cigar caught fire in 1995, the horse piqued Laue's interest, and he hopped a plane to Chicago to watch Cigar tie Citation's consecutive win streak (16) in the Citation Challenge



New York-bred stakes winner Love Cove

at Arlington Park.

"I called my father from the track and told him this whole thing was fascinating," recalled Laue. "It was all so exciting. A short time later I bought a piece of a horse through a Centennial Farms partnership and did that for three or

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— DAN METZGER

four different partnerships with them, which was really helpful as an entrée into the industry."

Calling on his experience as a cattle breeder, Laue jumped into the Thoroughbred game on his own in late 2000. After Hail Roberta had RNA'd at the Keeneland November mixed sale, Laue spoke to consignor Alfred Nuckols about the Roberto mare and ended

up buying the unraced mare privately.

Hail Roberta, a \$310,000 Keeneland July yearling, had runners and winners but only a whisper of black type under her at the time Laue purchased her.

"I did all the research and nicking percentages and decided she needed to be bred to a Danzig horse," said Laue, "and so I chose Military, a grade 1 winner on the grass at 10 furlongs, and bred to him. And lo and behold she had a beautiful, leggy colt whom I

kept and put in training."

Gun Salute in 2005 took the Hawthorne Derby (G3T), American Derby (G2T), and in the Secretariat Stakes defeated eventual turf male champion English Channel. He won eight times and banked \$829,118.

The Secretariat victory, at Arlington International Racecourse, brought with it high irony for Laue. Not only did Cigar's trainer, Bill Mott, condition Gun Salute, he, like Laue, had spent time in Pierre early in his career.

"We're walking to the press conference after the race, walking down hallways with all these photos of Cigar winning the race I had attended there," remembered Laue. "And it was the first time I met Bill Mott. It was pretty amazing. I eventually sold Gun Salute to a European syndicate, and years later claimed him and brought him home. He lives in a paddock next to the main house on our ranch where my mother lives. Everybody gets to feed him peppermints."

Laue's beginner's luck didn't drain through the hourglass with just Gun Salute, however. In 2003 he purchased a Langfuhr yearling filly at the Fasig-Tipton Saratoga New York-bred sale for

\$45,000. Enjoying the geography of New York State, Laue often names his horses after spots in the scenic country and chose Cayuga's Waters for his filly.

"I thought it was silly to just have one yearling (Gun Salute) go into training, so I bought the Langfuhr filly and gave her to Mott as well," noted Laue. "So in that magical year of 2005, she, too, became a stakes winner, winning the Pebbles at Belmont Park. She also ran perhaps my favorite race ever. On a rainy day at Saratoga, she won a second-level allowance by 10½ lengths. Tom Durkin's call was classic: 'Jerry Bailey is just along for the ride!'"

Cayuga's Waters earned just under \$200,000 in her career and has gone on to become the foundation mare in Laue's breeding operation. Sent to E Dubai, she produced the filly Cascadilla Falls, who scored in the 2011 Lucy Scribner Stakes. Then came the Pleasant Tap filly Glorious View, a Laue homebred who won the 2013 Vagrancy Handicap (G2) and earned more than \$300,000 for her career. Cayuga's Waters' Lemon Drop Kid colt Highball placed in two graded stakes and earned \$229,761. She has an American Pharoah yearling colt and a Malibu Moon colt by her side.

Love Cove, a Not For Love filly Laue purchased as a yearling from breeder David Cassidy, won two stakes and nearly \$400,000. She has produced stakes winner Bibby, a Stormy Atlantic filly.

Laue's good fortune, though, cannot be ascribed to beginner's luck alone. As a youngster, he competed in judging contests, evaluating livestock, and giving oral reasons why one was superior to another.

"When you grow up in that environment, it becomes almost second nature to understand what a top line is and what a nice front end looks like; what



Cayuga's Waters, in foal to Lord Nelson, with her Malibu Moon colt that arrived March 31

ANNE M. EBERHARDT PHOTOS

“

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— DR. J. DAVID RICHARDSON

a crooked leg looks like and what balance looks like, and what a filly should look like versus a colt,” Laue explained. “Having been raised around cattle on the ranch, you develop a sense for evaluating animals.

“I suppose that's a bit of an advantage coming into the horse business with that background, as opposed to a Wall Street banker who's never been within

six feet of a horse. But then again, he can hire guys to give him advice on those things. Part of the fun for me, though, is doing it on my own. I use veterinarians to help me at sales, but as far as the pedigree work and the horse evaluation, I've always done that myself. In identifying and buying a horse, I use a lawyer's term: I look for the totality of the circumstances.”

Nuckols, who boards mares for Laue at his Hurstland Farm near Midway, Ky., noted, “Being a cattleman taught Brant a whole lot about breeding, and he's carried that over to the horse business. He certainly knows how to read pedigrees and knows how they work together. And he's up on what's fashionable. Plus, he's got a really good eye.”

Added Richardson, “Brant is a stockman. He doesn't need to have somebody go pick a horse for him. He knows what a bull is supposed to look like, what Quarter Horses are supposed to look

like, and what a good Thoroughbred is supposed to look like.”

As the quality of his stock rises, Laue has been less likely to race homebreds lately and has been selling at public auctions. He has cut foal-sharing deals to gain access to top-tier stallions, and has sold offspring of Glorious View and Cayuga’s Waters successfully.

Asked what he loves most about the Thoroughbred industry after 20 years of participation, Laue said, “One of the

federal judge, and you don’t even know half the time because they just want to know what you think of Empire Makers out of Storm Cat mares, or of the five horse in the seventh race that day.

“That’s what’s compelling about it to me. The shared interest and the escape from the other parts of our lives. That has fascinated me from the beginning.”

Taking on the TOBA chairmanship gives Laue the opportunity to help shape horse racing’s recovery from the

fresh perspective. We’re facing challenging economic issues and integrity issues, and I think Brant has a good sense of what the industry needs, and he knows how to work with different entities.”

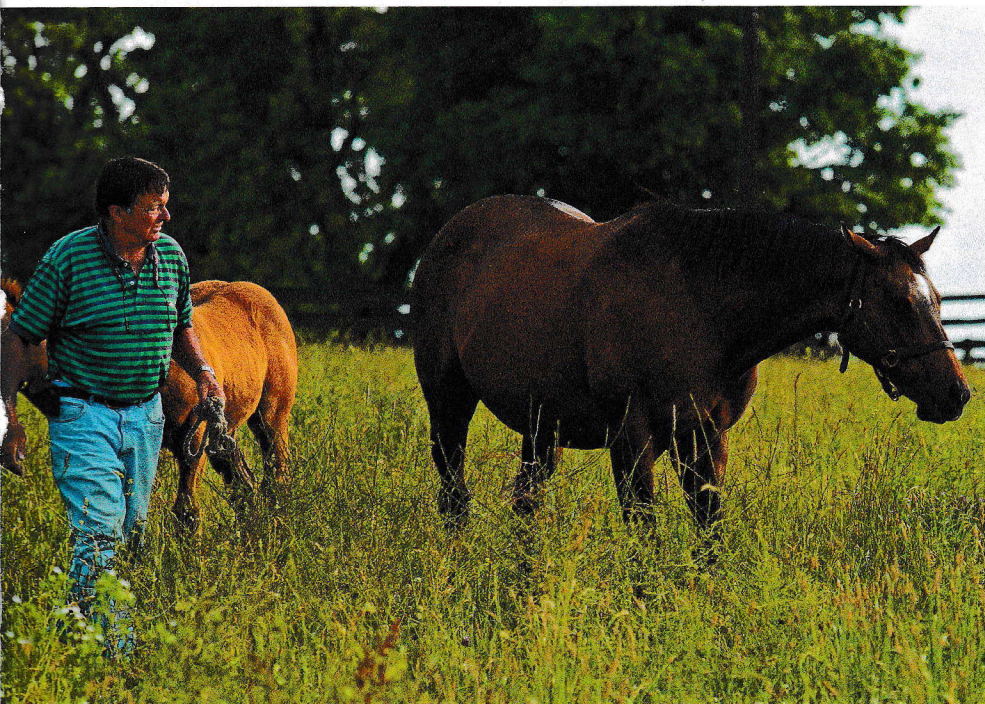
Although splitting time among his duties as an attorney, rancher, and horse breeder has spread him a bit thin, Laue considers it important to lend his expertise to TOBA.

“When you are involved and committed to an industry, it’s worth your time to give something back,” he noted. “I find TOBA unique and interesting among the alphabet soup of equine associations in that it has more depth, breadth, and diversity among its membership. We have people who own racehorses, breed them, train them. Kenny McPeck and Barbara Banke are on the board. So there is the potential for all points of view, with the goal of trying to make the industry economically sound and productive for all its segments.”

He pointed to the current advertising campaign, which TOBA contributed to along with various other organizations, that seeks to widen racing’s popularity to people who don’t have other sports to view or wager on during the pandemic, as one area of importance. He noted that TOBA also has been active in working with racetracks to allow owners back at the facilities to see their horses train and run.

Laue offered that having solid teams to help him in his trio of major endeavors has been key to being able to work as an attorney Monday-Friday, get to the ranch every weekend, and delve into racehorses with what time is left over. It is a balancing act he is managing to thrive in, with no sign of falling through the ice. **BH**

Lenny Shulman is a senior correspondent for BloodHorse.



Alfred Nuckols with Glorious View at Hurstland Farm near Midway, Ky.

things I noticed right off the bat, and that I still find compelling, is when you’re standing at the rail at the Oklahoma training track at Saratoga, everybody is interested in the horse. What’s going on with that horse or this one. It’s all about the shared interest and camaraderie revolving around the horse. And the five or six people standing with you may include a groom that just arrived from Mexico, a CEO of some humongous multinational corporation, or a

COVID-19 pandemic that closed racetracks this spring and brought uncertainty to breeding and sales. According to TOBA president Dan Metzger, Laue’s unique toolbox of experience will help steer the industry going forward.

“Brant is very analytical, which will serve him well,” said Metzger. “And with his background as an attorney, his understanding of politics, and his involvement in national associations in the cattle industry, he brings a unique,