

# Cliff Lambert: Life On The Lead

By Pete Herrera

Ruidoso Downs, NM--Cliff Lambert went to first grade when he was four years old.

He was six when he rode in his first race at a Kansas county fair.

He graduated from high school at 15, and would have done it sooner had the local school board not decided an 11-year-old didn't have any business going to high school.

And it took him just three months to get Glenna Cosper from a drive-in movie to the alter.

Yes, it seems the oldest of Vern and Florence Lambert's six boys has spent much of his life in a hurry. Which can be a good thing when the purpose of your profession is to get horses to go faster.

Lambert is 78 now and the patriarch of a family that is synonymous with horse racing in New Mexico. As Harold Payne, the former general manager at Sunland Park and one of the state's most respected racing officials put it, "the Lamberts are a huge part of the foundation for horse racing in this state."

Their ties to New Mexico racing dates back to the '50s and transcends their extended families. Glenna's dad, George Cosper, a former trainer and rodeo star, was one of the founders of what is now the New Mexico Horsemen's Association.

Cliff will forever be linked to the first All American Futurity. He was the winning jockey aboard Galobar in the race which at the time had a purse of \$129,686. That amount of money was easily the largest for a horse race anywhere in America, more even than that year's Kentucky Derby.

Years later, Lambert would be the first trainer of Bold Ego, a New Mexico-bred thoroughbred who turned out to be good enough to win three major stakes races in 1981, including the Arkansas Derby. That launched him into the Triple Crown races, where his best finish was runner-up to Pleasant Colony in The Preakness.

Lambert trained Bold Ego during the colt's 2-year-old season in 1980, during which he raced mostly in New Mexico and won his first five races. In 1981, Lambert turned Bold Ego over to trainer Jack Van Berg, who conditioned the speedster during his 3-year-old season.

Casey Lambert, the youngest of Glenna and Cliff's three sons, retired this summer after 34 years of riding quarter horses and thoroughbreds. He won in the neighborhood of 3,400 races, most of them in New Mexico and a large

percentage of those on horses trained by his dad. He rode primarily thoroughbreds during his career and won more than 2,700 races on that breed.

Chuck and Cody, the two oldest boys, excelled in collegiate rodeo competitions. Both went to Sul Ross University, where Cody won the national collegiate all-around title in 1982 and Chuck was the national runner-up.

Cody went on to become one of the best bull and saddle bronc riders in the country. He made the National Finals Rodeo seven times in bull

riding and three times in saddle bronc, finishing second in that event in 1990.

Cody was one of the founders and investors for what became the Professional Bull Riders (PBR) circuit. He retired from fulltime competition after the 1996 campaign and now is director of livestock for the PBR.

After college, Chuck worked as a stunt man in western movies filmed in New Mexico and Texas and now is an assistant in Cliff's barn at Sunland Park.

Cheyann, Cliff and Glenna's youngest,



*Glenna and Clifford Lambert*