

STALLION

POWER



*For nearly four decades
Lane's End Farm has
set the standard as one
of the world's major
stallion operations*

BY MARYJEAN WALL
PHOTOS BY DAVID COYLE

In 1866 an English horse named Leamington stood at stud for one season only in Woodford County, on land known in modern times as Lane's End Farm. Leamington accomplished a lot in that single year — commencing a stallion narrative that continues more than a century later for William Stamps Farish III, founder of Lane's End.

The land was called Bosque Bonita when Confederate Brigadier General Abraham Buford returned home from the Civil War. Buford had greater success with Leamington than he did fighting to save Paducah, Kentucky, from falling to the United States. Buford, a sharp horseman who had built his own racetrack on Bosque Bonita, saw opportunity in Leamington. The horse had failed at stud in England, but this was Kentucky, ruined economically in the war. Few stallions remained after outlaws and armies from both sides had emptied nearly every horse barn in the state.

Buford offered a stall to Leamington (he did not own him) and sent word to anyone who had managed to hang on to at least some mares. Leamington got down to work. In that one year he sired the inaugural Kentucky Derby winner, Aristides. He also sired that pride of Kentucky and most popular racehorse of the 1870s, Longfellow, plus another famed horse, Enquirer. Greater opportunities took Leamington to the Northeast where industrialists and venture capitalists had locked in all the money during the war. In the Northeast Leamington sired the first American-owned Epsom Derby winner, Iroquois, and became the nation's leading stallion four times. Buford looked positively prescient for standing him however briefly in Kentucky.

The Lane's End story has followed a similar course, although on a much larger scale. Stallion after stallion has made his reputation under Farish ownership of this land since 1979, mak-



Founded by Will Farish, right, Lane's End continues to thrive in the second generation, with Bill Farish, left, serving as second in command.

ing it look perhaps like the water here has magical qualities. Farish humbly says the keys to Lane's End's success have been good horse sense combined with good business decisions. Even if it's not the water, Farish has developed a model that would have rendered General Buford highly envious: Lane's End has been leading stud farm in the nation 14 times.

Leading American stallions headed by A.P. Indy, Kingmambo, Smart Strike,

Mineshaft, and Fappiano, and now current leading sires such as Quality Road, Candy Ride, and Union Rags, have sired more than 1,000 graded stakes winners, more than 285 grade 1 winners, 22 champions, and 17 classic winners since Farish opened the farm for business. These names are just a few. Lane's End has been home to Kentucky Derby winners, Breeders' Cup winners, and Preakness and Belmont Stakes winners in what turns out to be

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Popular young stallion Honor Code is typical of the kind of horse Lane's End seeks: stellar pedigree and championship racing record.

a very long list of famous horses.

Business only continues to get better, always with an eye to the farm's future. Quality Road, for example, will see his breeding fee raised from \$70,000 to \$150,000 for 2019, a nod to this stallion's success through his offspring sold at auction and their results on the racetrack. Three new Lane's End stallions for 2019 will include Accelerate, a multimillionaire who is one of only three horses to win the Santa Anita Handicap, the Gold Cup at Santa Anita, and the Pacific Classic in the same season. Another will be City of Light, a son of Quality Road and a winner of significant graded stakes races. Champion West Coast, winner of the Travers Stakes and Pennsylvania Derby and third in the Breeders' Cup Classic, will join the lineup as well.



REASSEMBLING BUFORD'S FARM

The model for Lane's End has always centered on its stallions, but the farm is a full-service operation offering sales prep, mating recommendations, appraisals, and boarding of mares in what the farm brochure cleverly describes as "a gated community unlike any other." The Lane's End operation plays a role equal in the

horse farm world to the leadership roles Will and Bill Farish serve in racing and breeding, with Will a Keeneland trustee and Bill a board member and former president of Breeders' Cup Ltd. (The industry refers to the elder Farish as Will to distinguish him from son Bill, the No. 2 at Lane's End.)

Will Farish, born in Houston, March 17, 1939, into a family that had founded Humble Oil, grew up riding horses and was known as a high-goal polo player during his time at the University of Virginia.

The racing connection also ran deep. His aunt, Martha Gerry, bred and owned three-time Horse of the Year Forego and raced the gelding under the name of the family farm in Texas: the 10,000-acre Lazy F Ranch. Will's grandfather had owned racehorses as had Will's grandfather's widow.

Will became even more involved in racing through his father-in-law, Bayard Sharp, a well-known racehorse owner, breeder, and director of Delaware Park. Sharp was "a great influence on me," Will has said. Will raced his first horse with Sharp: a filly named Cream Pie.

Racing fans and bettors and certainly the owner of 1972 Kentucky Derby winner Riva Ridge (the Meadow Stable that owned Secretariat) knew Will as owner of Bee Bee Bee, a \$39.40 upset over fourth-placed Riva Ridge in that year's Preakness Stakes.

People talked about that one for some years afterward, in awe over the mutual price and the fact that Riva Ridge would have won the Triple Crown had he not lost the Preakness. Bee Bee Bee represented Will's first major success in racing, and he was in it to stay.

Will's business background was as a stockbroker in Houston and as an executive in a mining exploration business. But as he and his wife, Sarah, traveled so frequently during the 1970s to the Keeneland sales, a Kentucky farm seemed their best prospect for committing to a future in the business. Thus, Will bought the nucleus of Lane's End in 1979 to provide a permanent home for his growing band of broodmares. Will was already in the stallion business, having partnered with a close friend, John T.L. Jones, in acquiring Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe winner Alleged, first to race and then to stand at stud at Jones' Walmac Farm. Alleged won the Arc a second time, racing for his new ownership of Jones and Farish.

Will recalls that Jones first showed him the land that became Lane's End. The size of the farm had shrunk from General Buford's day to 220 acres, as portions of Bosque Bonita had been sold off over the years to satisfy creditors. Will began buying up sections lost to the original Bosque Bonita to bring Lane's End back to about 2,300 acres, including 270 acres on Old Frankfort Pike. (Lane's End also manages Oak Tree Farm, about 1,000 acres located in Fayette County). Farish's first sight of the original 220 acres left him charmed.

"It was really beautiful, but it wasn't a horse farm," Farish recalled. The property had only one building: the residence, Pleasant Lawn, built in 1829. The residence stood in disrepair and required major restoration before the Farish family could move in. Still, Farish saw possibilities on his initial visit. There would be time enough to build fencing, broodmare barns, interior roads, and the stallion complex consisting of three eight-stall barns, a breeding shed, and a comfortable visitors' center attached to the central stallion barn of the complex.

The property stood landlocked when Farish acquired it. The farm was reached by way of a lane that ran from the Midway Road to the edge of his acreage. Hence the name, Lane's End. No one associated with Farish mistakenly calls it Land's End. However, many outside the horse business do.


This brings Bill, sitting for an interview alongside Will, to laugh about the mistaken identity that never seems to go away.

"I went through a drive-through the other day," Bill said, "and I was wearing a Lane's End hat. The lady said, 'You know, I love buying clothes at that place.'"

Lane's End wears the misspeak with good humor; who knows, maybe Land's End does, too. Everyone at the farm has heard similar stories. Their eyes glaze over with one more.




Father and son share a deep knowledge of horses and horsemanship, which has factored into their success.



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Union Rags is among the leading third-crop sires.



Mineshaft is a successful son of Lane's End hero A.P. Indy. Below, stallion halters hang neatly for their next use.



UNBEATABLE TEAM

Another Jones who proved instrumental to Will's success in the Thoroughbred industry was Warner L. Jones, owner of Hermitage Farm near Goshen, Kentucky. Jones, the first to breed winners of the Kentucky Derby (Dark Star, 1953), the Kentucky Oaks (Nancy Jr., 1967), and a Breeders' Cup race (Is It True, 1988 Juvenile), had founded Hermitage Farm four years before Farish was born. He was of an age to mentor Farish into the Thoroughbred business, and he did. Like Farish, Jones played polo. Both men had grown up riding horses.

Polo led to their becoming fast friends. Will was playing for the University of Virginia and had been invited to play in a tournament over spring break in Florida. During a practice game he was barreling downfield to hit a ball when "out of the corner of my eye I see this guy on a horse coming at me from an illegal angle ... A couple of moments later, wham. He plows right into me, both horses go down, and it's a miracle nobody got killed. He looked over at me and said, 'How'd you like that, boy?' That was my first run-in with Warner and the start of a wonderful relationship."

Warner Jones was a crusty character who knew almost better than anyone else how to sell a horse. Both men benefited when he took Will into his realm, for they formed an unbeatable team.

Bill can remember his father and Jones talking nightly on the phone when "we were growing up in Houston. We ate dinner as a family, and every night after dinner he'd be on the phone with Warner and the laughter was nonstop."

Interspersed with the laughter were business matters that began to write a new chapter in Thoroughbred racing. Jones would be giving Will updates on mares and yearlings that went on to fill significant roles. Will, according to his son, took great joy in those conversations. Bill certainly has not forgotten these beginnings.

Jones and Will owned perhaps 15 mares together and they shared a similar philosophy about breeding and selling horses: They were in it as a business, as commercial breeders who would follow market trends to realize success at the sales. They made a point not to get carried away at the sales buying horses that wouldn't suit their long-range plans.

"They would buy a mare," Bill said, "and try to buy her right. They would breed her to the best stallions and hopefully get yearlings they could sell well at the sales."

It did not hurt Lane's End that Will founded the busi-



A.P. Indy, honored in bronze, is intertwined with Lane's End's success.



Now 29 and retired from breeding, A.P. Indy retains pride of place.

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Many legendary equine names are honored with markers in the Lane's End cemetery.

ness right on the cusp of a major, global expansion of Thoroughbred racing and breeding in the early 1980s. Riding the wave, Will and Warner Jones and Will's major partners, W. S. Kilroy Sr. and E. J. Hudson, both Texans like Will, were major players at the Keeneland sales. In 1985 Will and Warner Jones partnered in selling the world's highest-priced yearling at the Keeneland July selected yearling sale: \$13.1 million for a son of Nijinsky II, called Seattle Dancer. The colt's dam was My Charmer, whom the two men had acquired when they recognized her value a year prior to her most famous offspring, Seattle Slew, winning the 1977 Triple Crown.

The partners' success was a product of much more than luck or their sixth sense for business trends. Their horse knowledge was their bottom line. "I grew up in many ways with it. And Bill grew up with it," Will said. (Bill also played polo.) "When we go to look at a horse, we know what we're looking at, when a lot of people don't know."



Kingmambo, who died in 2016, was bred in the U.S., achieved racing fame in Europe, and had an international impact as a stallion.

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ILLUSTRIOUS ROSTER

The first major stallion (and one of the three original stallions) to stand at Lane's End was Dixieland Band, bred by Sharp and raced by his wife, Mary Sharp. Dixieland Band sired 114 stakes winners, including 43 graded stakes winners. Of special interest was Dixieland Band's success as a sire of broodmares, two of whom foaled a pair of Kentucky Derby winners: Monarchos and Street Sense. The stallion was named champion broodmare sire of 2004.

After Dixieland Band set up shop in the Lane's End breeding shed, the stallions started coming, "and the thing that really gave us the momentum," Will recalled, "was that Paul Mellon gave us his two top horses coming off the track: Hero's Honor and Fit to Fight."

From that point on, with each new stallion to arrive at Lane's End, a page in racing

history turned. The list of notable stallions that stand or have stood at Lane's End fills more than one Wikipedia screen. Names on gravestones in the farm's tidy equine cemetery, divided with stallions on the right and broodmares on the left, stand as yet another testament to the significant role the farm has exercised in improving the Thoroughbred breed.

Still another reason for the Lane's End's success has been the farm's employees. Mike Cline, general manager, has 38 years at the farm. Callan Strouss, farm manager of the farm's Oak Tree Division, has 36 years of service. Bill Sellers, assistant manager in charge of stallions, has 35 years with Farish. Farm manager Todd Claunch has been with Lane's End for 27 years. Lexi Calabrese, Bill Farish's executive assistant, retired this year after 28 years with Lane's End. Several more employees have more than 20 years with the farm.

On a sweltering late afternoon during the recent Keeneland September yearling



sales, stallions were readied for their customary evenings spent outside in their individual paddocks. Like most other Thoroughbreds in Kentucky, they spend the daytime in their barns to avoid the flies and overbearing sun. Lemon Drop Kid, winner



Many young horses bred and raised at Lane's End are destined for auction, where Lane's End has had an impressive record as a consignor.



Statues of famous Lane's End horses decorate the office.



Will Farish recalls the original tract of Lane's End as a beautiful piece of property, but it took him many years to develop the farm to match his vision.

of the 1999 Belmont Stakes, is the only one to remain in his stall with a large, industrial-sized fan placed outside the stall door for his comfort. He stays inside a lot because he likes to overindulge in the grass. When he does go out, he wears a muzzle to curb his rapacious appetite.

A.P. Indy routinely is the first to make the evening walk. He is the king, after all, and deserves to be first out of the barn. Now 29, the 1992 Horse of the Year retired from breeding in 2011. Because he is who he is, he continues his reign as Lane's End's premier resident. A.P. Indy ambles, rather than walks, to his paddock. He's seen it all and glimpses nothing in the scenery worthy of speeding up his evening stroll.

Soon the other stallions make their short walks to evening paddocks: Candy Ride, Connect, Honor Code, Langfuhr, Liam's Map, Mineshaft, Morning Line, Mr. Speaker, Noble Mission, Quality Road, The Factor, Tonalist, Twirling Candy, Unified, and Union Rags. There's a stud fee in this varied lineup to suit a wide range of mares.

And let us not forget the broodmares. The public's beloved Zenyatta, winner of

13 grade 1 races, resides in Lane's End pastures. In Lane's End's early days Weekend Surprise reigned as an outstanding broodmare. The daughter of Secretariat became the dam of A.P. Indy and 1990 Preakness Stakes winner, Summer Squall, following her career of winning prestigious stakes.

The star of the farm remains and always will remain A.P. Indy, a horse Lane's End bred and sold as a yearling, then reacquired with an interest purchased for racing and breeding. For Lane's End, A.P. Indy "was a game changer," Will said. "We had a lot going on, but he was the superstar."

In addition to its reputation as a stallion powerhouse, Lane's End has been known for its houseguests as much as for its horses in residence. Queen Elizabeth II has stayed in Pleasant Lawn five times and President George H.W. Bush, twice. Indeed, Farish's long alliance with the Bush family led to his appointment by President George W. Bush as U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 2001-2004.

Bill had been working as an aide to George H.W. Bush in 1992 when A.P. Indy won the Breeders' Cup Classic (father Will had worked similarly as his aide when Bush ran for the U.S. Senate). The President was

up for reelection. "I was on a whistle-stop tour during the campaign; we were on a train clacking down the tracks and there was a little television in the corner of the train car but the reception was terrible," Bill said. "I was dying because I couldn't see the first half of the race. And right as they came into the stretch, it went clear, and I was able to see him come down the lane and win the Classic."

Bill had watched Bee Bee Bee win the Preakness the same way, on television. He was 8 years old and made to stay behind at home in Houston, so he watched the race on TV in company with his cousins. Upon his father's winning the race, "A celebratory pillow fight ensued," Bill said. "That's clearly etched in my memory."

Father and son shared many memories on the late summer's day when they sat for an interview in the Lane's End stallion complex. One could only imagine old General Buford also sitting there in spirit in his ethereal glory, sipping on his julep and nodding in appreciation at their stories. He would be pleased to see his land continue its new life as a modern success that has written its own page in Thoroughbred history, and written it large. **KM**