

R.C. "BUCKY" WHEELER

2013 ApHC RACING HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

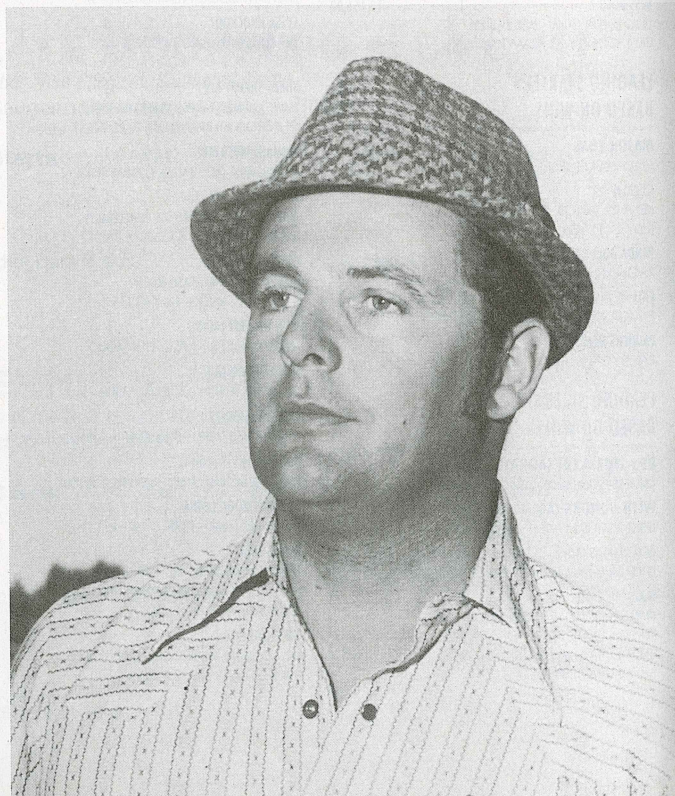
SUBMITTED BY ROBERT LAPP

During the early and middle 1970s, Bucky Wheeler was one of the most successful Appaloosa racehorse trainers racing primarily in California and the Pacific Northwest. Training Appaloosas for some of the biggest names in racing including future Hall of Famers, Wheeler has been described as having a superior knowledge of pedigrees, a keen eye for selecting racing stock, and the training abilities to develop multiple futurity and stakes winners. These skills produced a Hall of Fame-worthy record of success.

OVERALL TRAINING RECORD:

(ApHC OFFICIAL RECORD BOOKS)

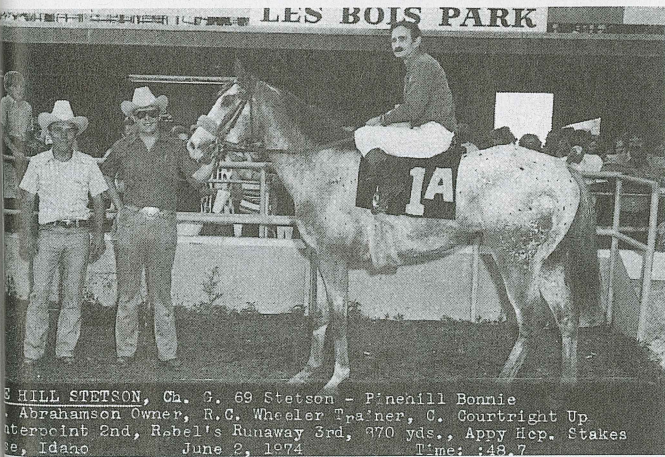
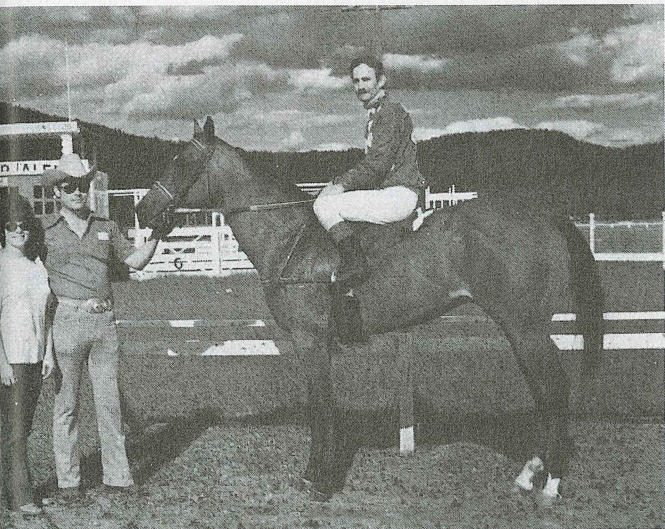
- 1971** – Tied for 6th place leading trainer, 10 wins and tied for 2nd place leading owner. Mr. Wheeler co-owned the stallion Bucky's Granite with Gay Ward.
- 1972** – Tied for 2nd place leading trainer, 22 wins. He Tied with Hall of Fame Trainer Joe King and ahead of Hall of Fame trainer Lewis Wartchow.
- 1973** – 1st place leading trainer, 40 wins, ahead of Hall of Fame trainers Don Collins and Lewis Wartchow.
- 1974** – 1st place leading trainer, 45 wins, ahead of Hall of Fame trainer Don Collins.



- 1975** – 1st place leading trainer, 32 wins, ahead of Hall of Fame trainer Don Collins.
- 1976** – 2nd place leading trainer, 20 wins. Hall of Fame trainer Don Collins won with 29 wins.

Wheeler continued training through the late 1970s and early 1980s, although data from that era is difficult to obtain. From 1979 through the early 1980s, he was co-owner and head trainer for the Sport O' Kings Ranch in Dixon, California. While there, he campaigned Auburn King to multiple stakes wins and stood the famous Rose Time colt, Olympic Time, along with the speedy Thoroughbred sire, King Harry.

Of note in the '80s was his relationship to Racing Hall of Fame trainer/breeder Gene Miles, and the great speedster Miles J.J. (Jim J. (JC) x Kinda Nice We Go), who Wheeler campaigned to wins on the tough California circuit in the 1981 Pomona Futurity (which



later became the Star of Stars), and 1982 California Derby. J.J. earned California State and National Champion 2-Year-Old Distance Colt.

Although he was never the primary trainer for any current ApHC Hall of Fame racehorses, he trained for some of the most famous owners in racing history and produced winners who were famous in their own right:

He trained Commanche Warbonnet (bottom right) for Charles Bates, winning the 1973 California Derby, 1974 Pleasanton Handicap, 1974 Trial Heat at Chicago's famous Arlington Park track and Ben Blades Memorial, placing 6th in the finals to one of the toughest fields in history. Warbonnet became a 1973 Medallion winner, 1973 Leading 3-Year-Old Colt, Colt with Most Wins, and then 1974 Leading 4-Year-Old Colt, setting four track records.

He handled Gene Miles' famous We Go Easy on the California Circuit, winning the 1976 California Derby by five lengths.

He trained extensively for Hall of Famer Martin Abrahamson, producing multiple stakes winners in California and on Pacific Northwest tracks: Taken For Granite, Ky-Lotta, Bolero Jet, Pinehill Stetson (left middle), and Amber Jag Hancock. He was also co-owner of the great Thoroughbred sire, Red Granite, and stood him at stud at his Ridgefield Ranch just over the Washington border from Portland, Oregon.

He trained and campaigned Wardon Wildeyes (bottom left), the 1974 Medallion and stakes winner, for Greg Simon.

He was successful training on both California and Pacific Northwest tracks for Jane Eisman, co-owner of the famous Terlingua Appaloosas ranch, home of the great Navajo Breeze. There he produced winners By By Blackbird, Clever Cleo, and D.L's Better Luck.

Although he was not the primary trainer for John Haid's famous stallion Divideck, Wheeler did campaign this famous Appaloosa on some of the Northwest tracks, winning multiple stakes races (top left).

He trained Run Deeds Run and Wildrooz for Hall of Famer Jake Snipes.

Although Wheeler was more of a trainer than an owner/breeder, there was a stallion he bred, raised, co-owned, and trained exclusively—The 1969 sorrel blanketed, Bucky's Granite. Bucky raced only one season, his 2-year-old year, and died unexpectedly from a ruptured stomach at Centennial Track in October 1971, but what a season it was.

He won 9, with 4 seconds in 14 starts and earned the ApHC Leading 2-Year-Old Colt title for 1971. He won his first start by 9 lengths at the Kennewick, Washington Futurity; won at Bay Meadows by 6 lengths; ran 2nd to Apache Double at the Ferndale, California Futurity; beat Apache Double and won by 3 lengths at the '71 Chief Joseph Futurity Trials; ran 2nd in the Finals; ran at the '71 World Wide Futurity but didn't qualify for the finals. He campaigned in 7 states at 11 different tracks, traveling over 10,000 miles and producing 2 track records, 3 Appaloosa colt records, and won at 6 different distances from 350 yards to 4 furlongs.

Few trainers from the glory-years of Appaloosa racing not already in the ApHC Hall of Fame can match Bucky Wheeler's record of success. Training and producing winners for some of the most notable breeders and owners in Appaloosa racing history, his induction into the ApHC Racing Hall of Fame is well deserved. 🐾

