

Father-son duo breeds prized trotting horses

Posted by: By BOB JORDAN
FREEHOLD BUREAU



(STAFF PHOTO: BOB BIELK)

William Perretti (left), owner of Perretti Farms, stands with his son Anthony, who serves as general manager of the Upper Freehold horse farm.

**Posted by the Asbury Park Press on
06/16/07**

UPPER FREEHOLD] ... This is the story of one father and his son ... and an equine father and his 1,200 sons and daughters.

William Perretti, 80, is the owner of the largest farm in New Jersey specializing in the breeding and racing of standardbred horses. About five years ago, one of his three children ... Anthony, now 47 ... decided to follow Perretti into the horse breeding business.

Anthony Perretti now works as general manager for his father at Perretti Farms and its 900 acres of rolling hills and pastures on Route 526.

Anthony still squeezes in time for his other passion: producing independent films. He studied at the American Film Institute Conservatory and said he and a crew are working on a film titled ""West End."

Of course, William Perretti says what a lot of fathers say: ""I wish he went to law school."

But the father and son have good and healthy family and business relationships, linked by the farm and a multimillion dollar business based on stallions and their offspring.

Perretti Farms is home to six prized stallions, including the 5-year-old Rocknroll Hanover, who has a syndicated value of \$7.6 million. Rocknroll Hanover was bred for the first time last year ... for a \$15,000 fee for each breeding ... and some of the resulting 150 foals are in residence at Perretti Farms.

The veteran of the farm's stallions is Matt's Scooter, the father of 1,246 foals, according to registration records from the U.S. Trotting Association. Of those, 1,015 made it to the races, earning a collective \$66 million in purses.

Matt's Scooter is 21 years old. Life expectancy for standardbred racehorses is typically into the 20s, said Bob Marks, the farm's marketing director.

""Matt's Scooter is being bred to a token amount of mares again this year," Marks said. ""He still seems to enjoy it."

On Sunday, Anthony Perretti said, the family will gather to celebrate Fathers' Day at his dad's home on the farm.

""We'll do the big Italian dinner thing," he said. It will be William Perretti and his wife, Cynthia, and the kids ... Anthony; Bill, 52, who runs a BMW motorcycle dealership in Florida; and Veronica, 23, who is a Manhattan commercial real estate agent.

William Perretti grew up in Brooklyn. He owned automobile dealerships in Bergen County and restaurants when he purchased a former potato farm in the late 1980s and turned it into Perretti Farms, his son said.

""When my dad was first getting into horses and farms, he bought a farm in Pennsylvania. Those were some of my favorite Father's Day memories, spending time together on some riding horses that we had," Anthony Perretti said.

Like most of those involved in New Jersey's racing industry, William and Anthony Perretti said they are not bullish on the future ... unless the state allows the racetracks to add slot machines to its wagering offerings.

Slot machines that are being added to racetracks in Pennsylvania and New York are producing revenue that is drawing horsemen and breeders to those states, Anthony Perretti said.

""It's dire in New Jersey for standardbred breeders," Anthony Perretti said. ""People in the industry are trying to make state legislators aware of the economic impact a weakened standardbred breeding industry would have on the state."

Though thoroughbred racing in the state will receive attention when Monmouth Park hosts the Breeders' Cup Thoroughbred Championships in October, Perretti said he fears the state's standardbred industry will be overlooked.

Both thoroughbred and standardbred horsemen need help to compete with improved business models in neighboring states, Perretti said.

""New Jersey is the No. 1 state in standardbred breeding and we have 2,000 broodmares here. The state's thoroughbred breeding isn't nearly as prominent, and there are about 300 thoroughbred broodmares here," he said.

William Perretti said he agrees with his son that help is needed.

Like father, like son.