

Stable Views--Voices and Stories from the Thoroughbred Racetrack  
Archie Green Fellows Project, 2012-2013  
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**George R. Arnold interview, 2013-08-30 : interview conducted by Ellen E.  
McHale**

**INTERVIEW LOG**

00: Trainer, George (Rusty) Arnold talks about his circuit. He leaves Saratoga after racing end there. They go to Keeneland and Churchill Downs for April/May/June; then they go to Saratoga; and then they go to Gulfstream for the winter. This is what they've done for the last 7 years. Before that, they stabled at Belmont and then to Saratoga, for six or seven months. They added Kentucky about seven years ago. He is originally from Lexington, but he had trained in New York for 22 years.

1:30 Georges grandfather worked for Elmendorf Farm, and George's father had his own farm and business. George (Rusty) got interested in the racetrack while he was in High School and liked it better than the farm.

1:50 George talks about Elmendorf Farm, owned by the Widener Family – the people who owned Hialeah. He says that the Widener family was one of the biggest racing families. Rusty is a 3rd generation trainer. He has a brother who runs Dixiana Farm, as the General Manager. Rusty has no children.

2:40 Rusty learned his horsemanship from his grandfather and father, but his training techniques were learned along the way. Training is in progress every day. There is never just one way to do it. George worked for trainer, Gene (Eugene) Euster and he learned a lot from him. He picked up a lot from watching others. The good thing about the racetrack is that people like to talk to each other. George also learned from Alan Jerkens and Shug McGaughey. He says that people learn from each other.

3:50 There is an element of being lucky in two or three different ways. Sometimes you have to be lucky to get the horses in your barn that can run. It might be meeting the right person, being in the right place at the right time, being introduced to the right person. Because no matter how talented you are, if you don't have horses with talent, you can't do well in this business. "I'm not

saying you can't help a horse, you can't make a horse a little bit better, that one trainer can't do a better job than another one, but without a talented horse, you can't make them talented."

4:45 I think probably [a good trainer is] being astute, picking up on things a horse needs, learning how to evaluate their horse, placing their horse in the right spot, and taking very good care of a horse. "I think there's two or three basic philosophies that anybody you interview on training horses are going to give you: feed a horse well, take care of him well, get him fit and happy, and he usually performs well for you. Then the other key, at that time, is getting him in the right place where he can win. And then getting a little lucky in racing, on top of everything else."

5:30 He has 40 horses in Kentucky and he brings 15 to Saratoga. It's top competition in Saratoga because you have the best of the best here. All the top horses are at Saratoga. The Hall of Fame trainers are all at Saratoga. When they leave Saratoga, all of the horses scatter throughout the US. to different places. Racing isn't as hard (competitive) when they are scattered. Most of the better horses are at Saratoga. Some trainers go to Delmar in California at this time (instead of Saratoga), but they are mostly people who are already in California.

7:00 The trainers are all on circuits. Some are on the same, some are on different circuits and they'll pass each other once or twice a year. It depends upon the circuit.

7:30 There are so many horses, you don't always know your competition. Each trainer is identified by a saddle towel so you can see whose horse is training. You can identify each stable from the saddle towel. Some have colors, names, initials, or distinct markings.

8:30 Some stables also identify their riders through colored shirts.

8:45 Arnold has about 8 owners for whom he trains. Sometimes he has a horse he trains for himself.

9:30 He has workers who have worked for him for 14-15 years, some who have worked one or two years.

10:00 George hasn't seen a real change in how things are done. Technology has improved things. For example, you used to mix feed by hand and it is now mixed for you. Veterinary medicine has improved. Basic horsemanship has not changed. A lot of information is passed down about the care of the racehorse from trainer to trainer.

11:30 George thinks that the future of racing is that it will be a weekend sport, with larger fields on fewer days. When he was younger, there wasn't simulcast. If a person wanted to see a race, he

had to go to the racetrack. Now people can view a race from their television. Now, the 'handle' (or how much money is bet) is now mostly 80% from simulcast and OTB and 20% from track. This is a flip-flop from the past, when it was 20% from the track and 80% remotely. Now, an owner can see how his horse is trained through remote means. They can pick up the work out times, five minutes after they have been worked. Those times goes onto the internet directly from the timer. It used to be the trainer had to call the owner to tell him information about his horse. Today, owners can get information on their own.

15:00 Rusty's owners are all over – Florida, California, Kentucky, Pittsburgh.

15:25 Training is harder than it used to be. You used to work for someone and then you hung out your shingle and started. Most stables had 30-40 horses. Now, big stables have 200 horses and they don't turn down horses. His advice to an up-and-coming trainer would be to work for several trainers first- 3 or 4 different trainers at all levels.

16:50 George had worked for his father on the farm, and then for Gene Euster, in Philadelphia. He wasn't a big name but he was well known.

17:25 Arnold says that Wayne Lukas changed the business. Lukas had multiple stables in multiple states and he hired several assistant trainers, who were spread all over: Kieran McLaughlin, Todd Pletcher, Randy Bradshaw, Mike Maker. Before that, people thought you had to be in the stable. People who left him replicated that model. Now, it is much more corporate. This was in the late 80s, early 1990s.

19:10 He says that it has been a wonderful life for him. There are many perks, but it is 360 days a year, with early mornings. He has never wanted to do anything else so he is lucky.

19:51 End of interview.