

Stable Views--Voices and Stories from the Thoroughbred Racetrack
Archie Green Fellows Project, 2012-2013
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**Roderick Buhacevich interview, 2013-02-16 : interview conducted by Ellen E.
McHale**

INTERVIEW LOG

00 Ben (Roderick) Buhacevich is an outrider who began in 1975-1977 (unsure of date). He started with quarter horses and thoroughbreds in Ohio. He started as a groom in 1968-1969 in Ohio. Then he started galloping, then “ponying,” and then working as an outrider. He has trained and worked on the gate. He has done almost anything on the racetrack. “Anything to make a living.”

1:00 He started out as a groom for Harold A. Piper. His was a “small outfit.” Ben galloped for Piper also. He galloped for many people in Ohio. Ben worked for Piper on a salary, and then freelanced, especially in the springtime. He would ride 57 horses a day, from 5:00 a.m. to 5:30-6:00 p.m. He would get \$3.00 per horse. “That was a lot of money in those days.”

1:50 He talks about racetracks in Ohio: Beulah Park, River Downs, and Thistle Downs.

2:14 When he started, it (the area around the track) was mostly racetrack people. Ben (Roderick) Buhacevich is an outrider who began in 1975-1977 (unsure of date). He started with quarter horses and thoroughbreds in Ohio. He started as a groom in 1968-1969 in Ohio. Then he started galloping, then “ponying.” and then working as an outrider. He has trained and worked on the gate. He has done almost anything on the racetrack. “Anything to make a living.”

1:00 He started out as a groom for Harold A. Piper. His was a “small outfit.” Ben galloped for Piper, also. He galloped for many people in Ohio. Ben worked for Piper on a salary and then freelanced, especially in the springtime. He would ride 57 horses a day, from 5:00 a.m. to 5:30-6:00 p.m. He would get \$3.00 per horse. “That was a lot of money in those days.”

1:50 He talks about racetracks in Ohio: Beulah Park, River Downs, and Thistle Downs.

2:14 When he started, it (the area around the track) was mostly racetrack people and farmers, and now it is a big town.

2:35 He started out riding horses as a child. He learned to “gallop on the farm.” He liked the racetrack and has been there ever since – about 40 years.

3:15 He has “run” in Florida, Maryland, Kentucky and Ohio. The last horse he ran was 2006. He then started outriding full time.

3:40 He gets to the stables by 5:00 and gets to the racetrack by 6:00 a.m. Then, he is there for one or two hours after the races, so they are 12-14 hour days.

4:05 An outrider polices the racetrack: Tries to keep it safe, catches loose horses, helps get horses to the starting gate on time. The more you do it, the more you learn. Every horse is different. But you have to be sitting on a good horse. He uses quarter horses and retired racehorses as horses for outriding. The horses have to be fast, but be able to settle down “in between.” They have to be athletic. Ben owns four horses. An outrider owns his own horse. To get a horse that “has it all,” is hard to find. He talks about his quarterhorse, specifically. Ben says that the horse knows what to do and Ben just hangs on and reaches out when he gets to the loose horse.

5:52 Ben talks about the horse that was loose that morning and how the horse had gotten loose. He talks about what an outrider would have to do to get the horse. “They run scared and that is when they hurt somebody.” Horses panic when they don’t have a rider.

7:35 Ben does the morning workouts and then he’s at the races. Tampa Bay Downs has 3 outriders. Most tracks have 3 outriders, but larger tracks have more. Outriders are situated at different places on the racetrack.

8:40 Outriders bring their own horses to the job. Ben says that many people don’t want to do it anymore. He says one can make a lot more money “ponying” a horse. Some racetracks appreciate the outrider, and some don’t pay enough to cover the costs. Ben pays \$80/day for feed and horse care (shoeing and veterinarian bills). He says it is very expensive but you have to take good care of your horse.

10:10 Tampa Bay pays Ben as an outrider. It doesn’t cover his expenses or replacement costs. Ben buys a new horse a year, from working up “East.” They pay well (in the East).

10:49 He goes to Colonial Racetrack, Maryland, and Delaware. Colonial is in Virginia. Ben says that it is a good place– and they treat him well. He winters at Tampa Bay.

11:37 Maryland and Colonial were his best jobs. He likes Colonial the best. He talks about being friends with the people there.

12:10 He enjoys being an outrider, seeing if a horse will make a good horse, the challenge of catching a horse. You have to be able to read the speed of a horse, and have your timing down for when you “reach.” You have to be looking ahead all of the time.

13:05 He says that he doesn’t anticipate the loose horse, but his horse does. He says that you could “sleep on him.” The horse will go when they see that their job is needed. Ben says that that is what makes the job of outrider “fun.” It’s fun when a horse enjoys the job and then he enjoys it too.

14:00 End of interview.