

Photos courtesy of Triple AAA Ranch



Strong family ties are a cornerstone of Triple AAA Ranch in Glendale, Arizona

## All in the families

Human and horse families play integral role in venerable Arizona operation

BY LIANE CROSSLEY

**T**RIPLE AAA Ranch, a 75-acre oasis surrounded by residential and commercial property on the outskirts of Phoenix, has been churning out Arizona-breds that excel in the upper echelons for generations. The family tradition continues in 2012 with Grade 2 winner Uh Oh Bango. The son of former Triple AAA runner and current stallion Top Hit is a fourth-generation homebred who typifies the commitment of Triple AAA's owner, Richard Owens, who has retained many of his horses to

continue his own bloodlines for decades.

While other breeders might attribute success to good fortune or a knack for selecting the right bloodstock, Owens, 75, suggests his self-described hard-headedness combined with his passion might be responsible for the longevity.

"I just like raising horses," he said.

Owens has a singular favorite horse among his long list of humble homebreds that excel in marquee races, overachieving broodmares, and regional breed-shaping

stallions. That favorite is not Uh Oh Bango, or his multiple stakes-winning half brother, Ez Dreamer, who is launching his stallion career at Triple AAA this season.

one of the most honest horses he ever campaigned. At age 30, the gelded son of Owens' foundation stallion Crafty Drone lives as a pensioner at Triple AAA.

Family figures prominently in people as well as horses at Triple AAA. Owens' son, Kory, is the stable's primary trainer and another son, Kevin, has a handful of broodmares. Owens' daughter, Erin, was a longtime racing official and now serves as chairwoman of the Arizona Racing Commission. Owens' wife, Ann, who

died in 1999, is honored each year at Turf Paradise in Phoenix with a race named for her.

The ranch also has strong family ties among the longtime employees who reside on the property. Farm manager Juan Martinez has been with the operation more than 30 years and his two nephews have been there nearly two decades.

"It's kind of family," Owens said. "We kind of stay in the business to keep them busy."

Despite his enduring connection to Arizona, Owens has shifted some horses to California to capitalize on

### Triple AAA stallions

Horse (sire)	Farm	Location
Chanate (Storm Cat)	Triple AAA Ranch	Arizona
Ez Dreamer (In Excess [Ire])	Triple AAA Ranch	Arizona
Rocky Bar (In Excess [Ire])	E. A. Ranches	California
Top Hit (Twining)	Triple AAA Ranch	Arizona

Owens easily singles out 1988 Coors/Phoenix Gold Cup Handicap (G3) hero Faro as his personal pick and calls the 20-time winner

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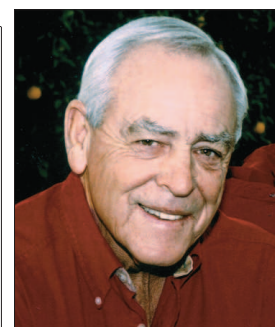
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Richard Owens and his family have been involved in the Thoroughbred industry for more than four decades

### Triple AAA Ranch

**Owner:** Richard Owens  
**Location:** Glendale, Arizona  
**Acres:** 75  
**Stallions:** Chanate, Ez Dreamer, Top Hit  
**Leading homebreds:** Faro, Fool the Experts, Ez Dreamer, Rocky Bar, To the Post, Uh Oh Bango  
**Notable:** Owens has been breeding Thoroughbreds for about 40 years; primary business was construction; son Kory is his trainer and daughter Erin serves as chairwoman of Arizona Racing Commission; Ann Owens Distaff Handicap at Turf Paradise honors his wife, who died in 1999



the state's breeder incentives. The group includes about six broodmares and graded stakes-placed Rocky Bar—a close relative to Ez Dreamer and Uh Oh Bango—who is standing at E. A. Ranches in Ramona, California. Another 15 mares remain at Triple AAA along with stallions Top Hit, Chanate, and the aforementioned Ez Dreamer.

### Ranch roots

Owens estimates it was 1964 when he first became involved in Thoroughbred racing by claiming a cheap horse at Turf Paradise. Circa 1969, he bought a few yearlings, but it was a youngster he passed up in 1973 that would transform his stable. Owens said he distinctly recalls seeing a good-looking Drone yearling at a sale, subsequently named Crafty Drone, but declined to purchase him at the time. However, he did buy him after he concluded his career as a multiple graded stakes winner.

"He was a big, beautiful horse so I bought him," Owens said. "I only had about five mares when I bought him. It took off from there. He kind



Courtesy Photography

of started the whole thing."

Crafty Drone died in 1982 and left behind a lasting legacy despite siring just 89 foals in five crops. His leading runners include Grade 3 winner Fool the Experts, a prolific regional stallion and sire of world-record-setting speedster G Malleah, and Steady Gate, third dam of Uh Oh Bango and matriarch to a long line of Triple AAA stakes performers.

"Crafty Drone was really the foundation and sire of most of my mares," Owens said. "Everything that I raised

Ez Dreamer, a half brother to Grade 2 winner Uh Oh Bango, begins his stallion career at the Triple AAA Ranch on the outskirts of Phoenix owned by Richard Owens, who bred and campaigned the son of In Excess (Ire)

by him were really nice horses and his daughters all produced for me."

Both Uh Oh Bango and Ez Dreamer are out of French Debutante, who made amends for failing to win on the track by becoming an exceptional broodmare. In addition to Ez Dreamer and Uh Oh Bango, she has produced two other stakes winners from her first four foals. Her fifth foal is three-year-old Ez Effort, who, like Ez Dreamer, is a son of In Excess (Ire). He showed

such promise in his career debut this year that Owens sold him as a classics prospect.

"There was a big temptation to keep him, but I have the whole family," Owens said. "I don't need another stallion from the same family so I reluctantly sold him. You can't keep them all!"

Owens had similar offers for Uh Oh Bango when he had the look of a Kentucky Derby (G1) prospect, but he resisted the temptation to sell that time.

"As old as I am, I thought, 'Heck, I might want to go this time,'" he said. "So I turned them all down." ④

Liane Crossley is a freelance writer based in Lexington.

## AAA promise fulfilled

French Debutante lost her chance to show her ability as a racehorse after suffering a career-ending injury, but made amends as a prolific broodmare for Richard Owens.

Owens, who bred the daughter of French Deputy under his Triple AAA Ranch banner, said French Debutante was poised for her first career victory after finishing third at Hollywood Park in 2003. In the saddling paddock for what was to be her third ca-

reer start, French Debutante suffered fractured withers after rearing and falling and was retired to the broodmare band.

Bred to In Excess (Ire), French Debutante produced multiple stakes winner and \$533,948-earner Ez Dreamer, who began stud duty at Triple AAA this year. Her next three foals, including Grade 2 winner Uh Oh Bango, also are stakes winners. The three are by 2001 Oklahoma Derby (G3) winner Top

Hit, a \$25,000 yearling purchase who banked \$445,357 for Triple AAA.

French Debutante's fifth consecutive foal, three-year-old Ez Effort (by In Excess), flashed such brilliance in his career debut that Owens received an offer he could not refuse and sold him as a Triple Crown prospect. French Debutante has a two-year-old by the Tabasco Cat stallion Tavasco and a Top Hit yearling.—Liane Crossley



Benoit & Associates photo

Uh Oh Bango rolls to victory in the San Pasqual for owner-breeder Triple AAA Ranch

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# ARIZONA

## GENERAL SIRE LIST BY 2012 EARNINGS

STALLION, YOB, sire; farm where stands	Current year					Lifetime						
	Stud fee	Strs/Wnrs	SWs/ StWins	Leading earner, earnings	Progeny earnings	Crops	Fis	Strs	Winners	SWs	Avg. winning dist.	Per runner
<b>Top Hit</b> , 98, Twining; Triple AAA Ranch	N/A	14/5 (36%)	1/1	Uh Oh Bango, \$130,000	\$177,588	5	53	37 (70%)	31 (58%)	7	6.27	\$43,889
<b>Margie's Wildcat</b> , 01, Storm Cat; Fleming Thoroughbred Farm	N/A	22/3 (14%)	0/0	Party Boy, 35,700	78,374	4	73	51 (70%)	29 (40%)	0	6.19	19,216
<b>Hold for Gold</b> , 95, Red Ransom; Fleming Thoroughbred Farm	N/A	7/3 (43%)	0/0	Great Investment, 28,350	58,586	12	135	96 (71%)	67 (50%)	4	7.04	54,717
<b>Millennium Wind</b> , 98, Cryptoclearance; Little Kentucky	1,500	14/2 (14%)	0/0	Barely Nothing, 34,600	52,314	7	239	175 (73%)	99 (41%)	3	6.94	22,560
<b>Red Sky's</b> , 96, Skywalker; Fleming Thoroughbred Farm	1,500	14/7 (50%)	0/0	Maggiereadvantune, 8,578	44,872	5	103	45 (44%)	21 (20%)	1	5.93	8,703

# CALIFORNIA

## GENERAL SIRE LIST BY 2012 EARNINGS

STALLION, YOB, sire; farm where stands	Current year					Lifetime						
	Stud fee	Strs/Wnrs	SWs/ StWins	Leading earner, earnings	Progeny earnings	Crops	Fis	Strs	Winners	SWs	Avg. winning dist.	Per runner
<b>Unusual Heat</b> , 90, Nureyev; Harris Farms	\$20,000	58/18 (31%)	1/1	La Sombre, \$80,040	\$713,795	12	562	374 (67%)	264 (47%)	30	7.17	\$87,724
<b>Benchmark</b> , 91, Alydar; Ballena Vista Farm	5,000	59/20 (34%)	1/1	Abella, 36,960	415,750	11	650	452 (70%)	339 (52%)	32	6.48	54,629
<b>In Excess</b> (Ire), 87, Siberian Express; Pens	5,000	49/16 (33%)	0/0	Kingpin Ryno, 55,280	394,004	17	964	677 (70%)	501 (52%)	63	6.27	62,819
<b>Kafwain</b> , 00, Cherokee Run; Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	5,000	59/15 (25%)	2/2	Peggy Jane, 46,200	372,694	6	398	265 (67%)	179 (45%)	16	6.57	38,766
<b>Tribal Rule</b> , 96, Storm Cat; Ballena Vista Farm	5,500	64/15 (23%)	0/0	Joy Boy, 35,500	352,088	7	442	230 (52%)	149 (34%)	21	6.29	48,863
<b>Ministers Wild Cat</b> , 00, Deputy Minister; Tommy Town T'breds	4,000	54/20 (37%)	0/0	Sean S, 63,600	326,773	4	207	115 (56%)	73 (35%)	8	6.45	26,112
<b>Bertrando</b> , 89, Skywalker; Pens	3,500	50/12 (24%)	0/0	Salty Sarah, 48,360	313,887	16	1,008	721 (72%)	498 (49%)	53	6.84	57,166
<b>Old Topper</b> , 95, Gilded Time; Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	3,500	61/11 (18%)	1/1	Zehner's Zenna, 36,576	312,274	9	475	354 (75%)	264 (56%)	19	6.34	39,082
<b>Southern Image</b> , 00, Halo's Image; Rancho San Miguel	2,500	49/12 (24%)	2/2	Calibracho, 90,000	288,988	4	325	191 (59%)	115 (35%)	5	6.71	40,464
<b>Giacomo</b> , 02, Holy Bull; Magali Farms	5,000	38/10 (26%)	0/0	Jake Mo, 55,000	265,877	3	166	89 (54%)	53 (32%)	5	6.72	24,036
<b>High Brite</b> , 84, Best Turn; Dead		36/13 (36%)	0/0	My Brite Caroline, 50,400	235,098	21	923	703 (76%)	567 (61%)	46	6.44	49,971
<b>Vronsky</b> , 99, Danzig; Old English Rancho	2,500	17/6 (35%)	1/1	Norvsky, 108,000	229,911	5	77	29 (38%)	20 (26%)	2	6.76	55,354
<b>Swiss Yodeler</b> , 94, Eastern Echo; Harris Farms	5,000	52/12 (23%)	1/2	Sammy's a Runnin', 34,800	222,797	11	672	491 (73%)	348 (52%)	24	6.09	47,029
<b>Salt Lake</b> , 89, Deputy Minister; Dead		39/11 (28%)	0/0	Kitty City, 35,820	206,931	17	1,206	994 (82%)	803 (67%)	71	6.21	59,736
<b>Marino Marini</b> , 00, Storm Cat; Rancho San Miguel	2,500	43/8 (19%)	1/1	Shudacudawudya, 39,300	181,468	5	240	129 (54%)	90 (38%)	5	6.13	31,826

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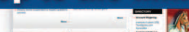
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