



John T. Ward, Jr.

Born: Aug. 2, 1945 in Lexington, Ky.

Resident: Paris, Ky.

Family: Donna (wife).

John Ward's record at Keeneland

Total Wins: 107

Stakes Wins: (6)

- Won the 2001 Kentucky Derby with Monarchos.
- Tied for leading trainer at the 2000 Keeneland fall meet.
- Won the 1999 Breeders' Cup Distaff with Beautiful Pleasure, who earned an Eclipse Award as the year's leading older female.
- Won the 2002 Lane's End Breeders' Futurity with Sky Mesa.
- Won the 1995 Kentucky Oaks with Gal In A Ruckus.
- He and his wife Donna were named recipients of the 2002 Kentucky Thoroughbred Media's Ambassadors of Racing Award.
- Former member of the Kentucky State Racing Commission (1982-1984).
- Chief operating officer for Calumet Farm in the spring of 1991 before it was auctioned to the late Henryk de Kwiatkowski.

John Ward Jr.'s roots as a horseman extend back several generations on both sides of his family. His father, John T. Ward, and grandfather, John S. Ward, were trainers. His maternal great grandfather worked with horses in England and his grandfather, Arthur Roberts, came to Canada and then the United States to work with polo ponies, later becoming a well-known trainer and judge of American Saddlebreds.

Ward grew up in a house about a stone's throw from the Keeneland track, and his father had horses stabled here for the inaugural 1936 meet.

Ward rode hunters and jumpers while he was growing up, which he continued into his early 20s. It was through horse shows that he met his future wife, Donna.

"We were fierce competitors for a period of time," he recalls. Now married for more than 25 years, she is his partner and co-trainer.

Ward graduated from the University of Kentucky with a degree in agricultural economics. His father left the decision up to him about his future. "He always used to kid me, 'I've raised you like a prince. Now you're going to have to support yourself. You can do what you want or you can come back and do the horses. But you make your own choice.'"

After some soul-searching, he decided to work with his father. "So the day I graduated from college, I started to work in the very back barn, mucking stalls," he said.

His father, his uncle, Sherrill Ward, and Woody Stephens were all brought along in the horse business by Ward's grandfather. "They worked for him as grooms and exercise personnel. During the War, they all went off to the Army and when they came back out, my father didn't want to go to the races, so we relocated here. Woody and my uncle stayed at the races, so my father acted as a supply system for them at the races."

Sherrill Ward and Stephens both were installed in the Racing Hall of Fame in the 1970s.

Ward and his father operated a multi-purpose operation, from breaking yearlings to caring for broodmares to rehabilitating racehorses. They broke yearlings for Stephens, Greentree Stable and King Ranch, among others.

They had a training stable on Rice Road as well as Fort Springs Farm. After his father died in 1976, the younger Ward has maintained both and also now owns Sugar Grove Farm in Bourbon County. Fort Springs is a 70-acre "training/boarding facility for racehorses and broodmares," he explained, while 200-acre Sugar Grove is "laid out as a breeding operation," and it's where he and Donna live.

When Wop Wop won the 1985 Fayette Handicap at odds of 70-1, it provided the Wards with their first stakes victory at Keeneland. They added two more in 2001—the Raven Run Stakes with Darling My Darling and the Hopemont Stakes with Overview—plus the Lane's End Breeders' Futurity (G2) in 2002 with Sky Mesa, an Eclipse finalist for champion 2-year-old colt.

In 2002, they trained three other graded stakes winners—Fountain of Youth Stakes (G1) winner Booklet, Rampart Handicap (G2) winner Forest Secrets, and Suwannee River Handicap (G3) winner Snow Dance. In 2003, they trained Hero's Tribute, winner of the Gulfstream Park Handicap (G2), and Snow Dance, winner of the New York Handicap (G2).

In 2005, the Wards won the Lexus Raven Run Stakes (G2) with For All We Know, the La Troienne Stakes (G3) with Seek a Star, the Arlington Oaks with Miss Matched and the Miss Oceana Stakes with Play Ballado. Last

year, they won the Super Derby (G2) and the Dwyer (G2) with Strong Contender.

Earlier stakes winners include Jambalaya Jazz, Pyramid Peak, Gal In A Ruckus and, of course, Beautiful Pleasure.

Not only was Beautiful Pleasure one of the best older mares in 1999 and 2000, but the horse Ward picked out for Fusao Sekiguchi at the 1997 Keeneland July sale, Fusaichi Pegasus, won the 2000 Kentucky Derby.

Ward had been approached several years earlier about buying yearlings for export to Japan. In 1997, Sekiguchi told Ward "he wanted to buy the best horse in the July sale." The horse they bought for \$4 million was Fusaichi Pegasus "He's recouped a lot of his investments," Ward commented.

Beautiful Pleasure was rewarded with the Eclipse Award in 1999 as best older female after winning the Breeders' Cup Distaff.

Training racehorses requires hard work and long hours. "Vacations as most people know them don't exist," Ward said, "especially in the business I'm in with my wife. It's a constant involvement because you're trying to keep a pencil sharp and you've got to constantly keep honing and honing to race at the highest levels of racing and win."

A few years ago, the Wards, along with longtime client John Oxley, decided "we'd put all efforts into concentrating on becoming a part of major racing."

Beautiful Pleasure certainly took them right to the top as did Monarchos with his Kentucky Derby win in 2001 and Grade 1 Hopeful winner Sky Mesa, who was an early favorite for the 2003 Derby but physical problems kept him out of the race.

Ward stressed that it's essential for trainers to make racing entertaining for their clients. "A lot of trainers have had clients like Mr. Oxley but didn't know how to cultivate them, how to make it fun for them."

He and Donna provide a "cradle to grave service" for their clients, from selecting yearlings to advising on matings to raising the foals to racing them.

"My only goal is to try and find very talented racing prospects and develop them and have the personnel available to develop them."

Beyond that, he said he deals in five-year plans. "I consider the Thoroughbred business to be one of the most rapidly changing businesses you can be in. The slightest tweak of a government regulation, the slightest thing can drastically change your direction. You've got to stay aware of the possibilities that can happen and be fluid enough in your business plan to adjust to it."

From 1976 through Jan. 9, 2007, he had conditioned 45 stakes winners, and won 531 races and the earners of \$21,916,691.