

BOB GILBERT

The horseman is doing well and looking for a job.

By Richard Chamberlain

BOB GILBERT IS BACK ON HIS FEET.

"I'm fine now," said Gilbert, who turned 65 on September 26. "If I'd known I was going to live this long, I think I'd have taken better care of myself."

Not that he had much choice in the matter. One of the most popular and respected trainers in American Quarter Horse racing in the 1980s-90s, Gilbert, then 56, was critically injured in an assault on March 14, 2001, in the parking lot at Los Alamitos Race Course.

"I was down at the Indian casino in Temecula, and I'd won quite a bit of money," Gilbert recalled. "Evidently, these two guys had been watching me and they followed me out of the casino when I cashed out. The police have a (casino security) videotape of them behind me. They followed me all the way to Los Alamitos, and when I was unhooking my trailer, they came up behind me and cold-cocked me. I never heard them, never saw them."

A track security guard found Gilbert unconscious beside his truck and trailer. Gilbert was rushed to a Long Beach hospital, where he was kept in an induced coma for several days. He later was transferred to a rehabilitation center in Fort Worth, Texas, and at the end of the year returned to his ranch at Nocona, Texas.

Despite the videotape and a \$100,000 reward offered by Los Alamitos owner Dr. Ed Allred, no one ever was arrested or charged with the crime, which shocked the Quarter Horse industry. A fund to assist Gilbert was established at the Bank of Oklahoma in Oklahoma City, the golf tournament at that August's Vessels/Schvaneveldt sale was used as a fund raiser,

and many other people sent individual contributions.

"I want to tell everyone 'Thank you,'" he said. "Thank you for everything."

In a career beginning in 1972, Gilbert conditioned the earners of more than \$8.5 million, with 654 wins from 4,161 starts, a win percentage of almost 16 and earnings that at the start of this decade ranked him 12th all-time among Quarter Horse trainers. Gilbert saddled champions

Jaimie Jay, Rare Form, Meter Me Gone, Junos Request, Isaws Sugar Bear, Elliptical, Uncas and Liberty Coin, and his sprinters scored in 22 Grade 1 and two Restricted Grade 1 events.

"I'm not doing nothin' right now," Gilbert said from his home in Nocona, Texas. "I haven't trained a horse since I got hurt out in '01. But I'm doing good now."

He also can drive a truck and trailer across the country. Earlier this year, Gilbert took a Dash Thru Traffic filly that he bred and raised to California. Out of a winning Chicks Beduino mare, Aladyfromnocona is a half sister to the graded-stakes-winning Meter Me Gone gelding Nacona Tex (\$85,734).

"I decided I'd haul her out to California and start back training," he said. "I took her out there and put her in Blane's barn, and stayed there a week. I'd get up every day and go out to the track, visit and talk to everybody. But it's changed so much out there, I didn't even know anybody, anymore. After a week in the motel, I thought well, I'd just be better off to go home and give the filly to somebody else. I left her with Blane and came on home."

Blane Schvaneveldt conditioned the filly, who trained and galloped well but never finished higher than third in six races.

"I've got her turned out now," Gilbert said. "I'll breed her. I should have bred her this year, but I waited too late to get it done."

For several years after his return home, Gilbert was in the care of nurse/housekeepers who nursed him back to health. Both of those women are gone. Gilbert now shares his home with two friends, one a man and the other a woman who also keeps a couple saddle horses in his barn.

Still drawing disability pay, Gilbert fills time as he can. "Oh, just whatever I can find to do," he said. "I'm not doing anything. I'd like to have a good job training for someone, somewhere, either at the track or on a ranch or farm. Horses are all I know – all I know how to do is train horses."

Gilbert laughed softly.

"I'm fine. I can put in a full day's work." □

"I want to tell everyone 'Thank you,' " he said. "Thank you for everything."

PHOTO BY Z



Bob Gilbert

Scoring one of his 22 Grade I wins, Gilbert sent out Steve Treasure on Awesome Blossom in the 1993 Golden State Derby.

