

Photos & Story Glenda Price

We caught up with Steve and Susie Prather recently at every race horse person's favorite place – the winner's circle.

Their 2-year-old filly, Casino Talk, had broken her maiden in fine fashion at Zia Park. She won the 6 furlong race for New Mexico Bred maidens by half a length, which was especially satisfying for the Prathers because she is a product of their Doubletree Farm breeding program.

Casino Talk's sire, Le Grande Danseur, has been living and working at Doubletree Farm since 2001. The 1998 stallion by Citidancer and out of Grand Marais (Mr. Justice) has developed a reputation for producing winning progeny. Worth noting is Northern Dancer's prominence in Le Grande Danseur's pedigree.

Le Grande Danseur sired 2006 stakes winner Theregoesdancer who ran second to undefeated Peppers Pride six times. Once, says Steve, "Peppers Pride won by maybe an inch."

Other winning Le Grande Danseur progeny include 2007 stakes winner Citi Girlfriend (\$57,595). Steve proudly notes that she won the Permian Basin Stakes against open competition.

Another daughter, Blue Eyed Bella, won the 2008 Rio Grande Senorita Futurity.

Steve's father, Paul "Dink" Prather, is part-owner of the recent Zia Park winner, Casino Talk. Steve and his dad partnered on purchasing and running race horses for many years.

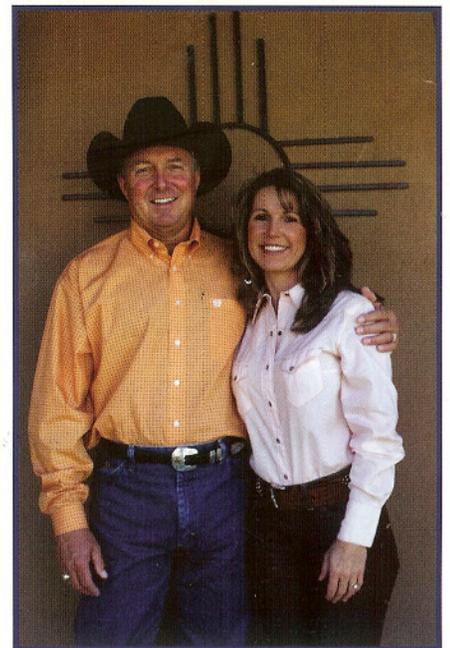
"My dad taught me at an early age how to take care of a horse and how to ride," says Steve. "Before I was old enough, my dad was involved with race horses. In the 1980s he owned Dance Trainer, who won 22 races and nearly \$300,000. In today's money that would be well over a million dollars."

Along about 1995 Steve and his dad began partnering more often on buying and running race horses, both Quarter Horses and Thoroughbreds.

"In 1998, I got serious about breeding mares," Steve says. "I had a gut feeling about the casinos and I like it, anyway." When he became a breeder Steve chose strictly Thoroughbreds. His horses usually run about 6 to 6 ½ furlongs, sometimes 7 furlongs, although some have run as short as 870 yards and some as long as a mile.

When Steve "got serious" he built a great facility between Hobbs and Eunice. Besides good barns and fences he put in an alfalfa field which provides enough hay to feed the horses along with some extra he can sell.

Every successful breeding farm has horsemen working there who know their stuff. Steve has two fulltime hands who live, with their families, on-site. They are Alfredo Gutierrez and Jorge Rojas. "Alfredo has been with us since September of 2002," Steve says. "He's become very knowledgeable about the breeding business. He's very dependable, and he's a self starter who doesn't need supervision. He was



Steve and Susie Prather

New Mexico Horse Breeder

made farm manager in '07, and he takes care of all the breeding on a daily basis. Also, he and Jorge cut and bale the hay."

Even though Alfredo takes care of the breeding and foaling, Steve still sleeps about an hour at a time during foaling, Susie says. "We have cameras in the barn and a monitor in our bedroom. Steve gets up about every hour during the night to check on them."

Their veterinarian is Charlie Mohr. Besides being on call, he comes in from his office in Andrews, Texas (about an hour away) and checks on everybody twice a week.

"We have had up to 120 head on-site during breeding season," Susie says. They have mares of their own as well as those brought in for breeding, and some people leave their mares at Doubletree Farm year-round. The Prathers' own mares and some others are put under lights in November.

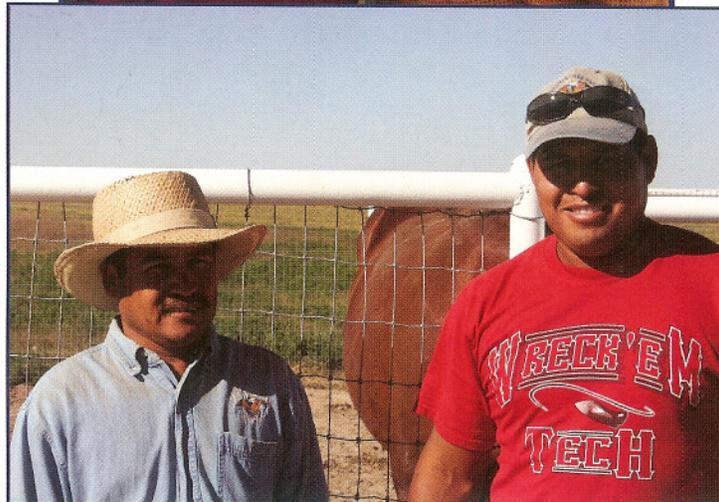
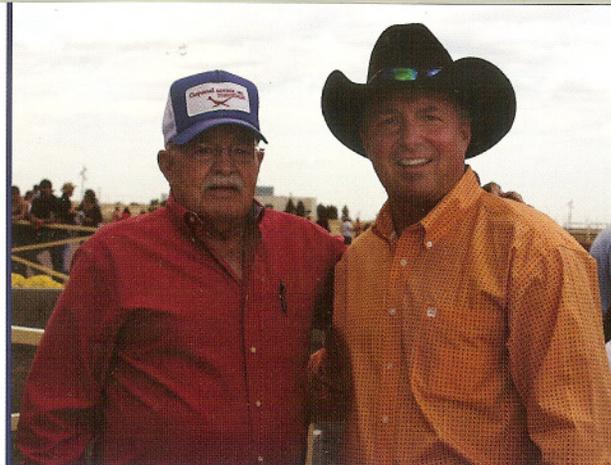
Doubletree Farm has expanded in the past few years. Three other stallions have joined Le Grande Danseur.

Quinton's Gold, 1997 son of Carson City and out of Relasure (Relaunch) happens to be a grandson of Mr. Prospector. His offspring Lefty Who won the Senior Futurity convincingly -- by 5 1/2 lengths -- for owner Sam Stevens of La Mesa, Texas, Steve proudly reports.

"Quinton's Gold's oldest crop is 2008 2-year-olds. He's only had one starter, but all the trainers that have his colts and fillies in training now rave about him," Steve says. "Todd Fincher, a good trainer who trains for me, said I should breed everything to Quinton's Gold because of my two and the other ones he sees at the track."

The Way Home, 2004 chestnut by Giant's Causeway (by Storm Cat) and out of Homewrecker (Buckaroo) is owned by a partnership of Steve, Sam Stevens, Byron Ritchie and Larry Strain. "We're going to give away 30 free breedings to him in 2009," Steve says, "to stakes winning or producing mares or Mr. Prospector line mares."

The Way Home's first crop will come in 2009. "Giant's



Causeway produced 16 stakes winners in '08 and 23 graded stakes winners from his first three crops," says Steve. "Homewrecker is from a strong commercial family. She has five graded stakes winners plus her full brother Giant Wrecker is winner of over \$300,000 and he's still running at 6 years old."

Comic Genius, 1998 son of Unbridled and out of Squan Song (Exceller) produced this year's Don Juan de Onate stakes winner at Albuquerque -- Skar -- who ran the 6 furlongs in 109.2, Steve says. "Gale Brown and Gary Balzano own a share of the syndicate that owns Skar. They live in Tucumcari."

So how does Steve find these stallions with such impressive credentials -- and resulting progeny? "I look for a sire of sires, like Mr. Prospector or Storm Cat or possibly a son of a leading sire," Steve says. "I look for either a commercial family or horses with good race records themselves."

He works with Ed Price of Mohns Hill Farm in Pennsylvania. "He buys and sells horses internationally," says Steve. "He's very reputable and doesn't mess around in junk. He's particularly noted for his integrity, and if he's got something, it's worth having. I've been buying broodmares and stallions from him for 10 years."

Those great stallions will be on display November 8th at 6 p.m., immediately following the Zia Park races. It's the Doubletree Farm Stallion Showcase.

"We will have food, drink and live entertainment," says Steve, "and everyone is invited." ■

Photos from Top to Bottom:

Paul "Dink" and Steve Prather.

Alfredo Gutierrez and Jorge Rojas

Casino Talk in the Winners Circle.