



VASSAR PHOTOGRAPHY

# ALL SMILES

*Smiling Tiger delivers good times to Alan Klein and Phil Lebherz*

BY TRACY GANTZ

**WHEN SMILING TIGER** finished racing, owners Phil Lebherz and Alan Klein could have taken the easy route—sell him to the highest bidder and let others stand him at stud. But they just weren't ready to say goodbye to a horse who had brought them so much joy.

The two businessmen from California's Silicon Valley ap-

proached racing in an identical fashion: Treat it as a business, but have a fantastic time doing it. In a recent joint interview, their enthusiasm reached out and grabbed a listener as they finished each other's sentences and poured out their plans for Smiling Tiger and his offspring.

"Tiger was such a special horse," said Lebherz. "We won so

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## 2018 LEADING SIRES IN CALIFORNIA



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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2018 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2018 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	<b>STAY THIRSTY</b> (08, Bernardini), Lovacres Ranch	\$5,000	143/83	1/1	0/1	(Mind Control, \$240,900)	<b>\$3,802,673</b>	*324	5	1.35	1.52
2	<b>BLUEGRASS CAT</b> (03, Storm Cat), Ballena Vista Farm	\$7,500	158/86	0/0	0/0	(Chris and Dave, \$181,530)	<b>\$3,478,595</b>	*897	32	1.20	1.62
3	<b>SQUARE EDDIE</b> (06, Smart Strike), Ocean Breeze Ranch	\$25,000	91/52	4/4	3/4	(B Squared, \$202,213)	<b>\$3,053,704</b>	175	13	1.53	1.06
4	<b>LUCKY PULPIT</b> (01, Pulpit)	Died, 2017	173/75	3/4	3/3	(Pulpit Rider, \$263,613)	<b>\$2,765,623</b>	*447	10	1.40	1.08
5	<b>I'LL HAVE ANOTHER</b> (09, Flower Alley), Ballena Vista Farm	\$6,000	171/88	0/0	0/0	(Another Truth, \$228,682)	<b>\$2,688,998</b>	216	0	0.81	1.10
6	<b>UNUSUAL HEAT</b> (90, Nureyev)	Died, 2017	89/39	0/0	0/0	(Anatolian Heat, \$122,174)	<b>\$2,186,007</b>	*812	44	1.89	1.19
7	<b>TRIBAL RULE</b> (96, Storm Cat)	Died, 2014	108/69	2/2	1/2	(Brandothebartender, \$129,872)	<b>\$2,165,751</b>	742	36	1.23	1.03
8	<b>MINISTERS WILD CAT</b> (00, Deputy Minister), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$4,000	118/67	3/4	1/3	(Fly to Mars, \$219,190)	<b>\$1,973,305</b>	443	18	0.99	0.90
9	<b>SMILING TIGER</b> (07, Hold That Tiger), Harris Farms	\$6,500	56/30	5/6	3/5	(Spiced Perfection, \$275,125)	<b>\$1,807,445</b>	114	5	1.04	1.03
10	<b>VRONSKY</b> (99, Danzig), Old English Rancho	\$6,500	75/42	1/1	0/1	(Poshsky, \$106,685)	<b>\$1,425,247</b>	222	10	1.36	1.05
11	<b>U S RANGER</b> (04, Danzig), Rancho San Miguel	\$3,000	105/51	0/0	0/0	(Swing Thoughts, \$97,072)	<b>\$1,365,892</b>	*357	3	0.67	1.28
12	<b>GRAZEN</b> (06, Benchmark), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	37/24	2/2	2/2	(Just Grazed Me, \$173,160)	<b>\$1,335,447</b>	87	7	1.68	1.18
13	<b>ACCLAMATION</b> (06, Unusual Heat), Old English Rancho	\$15,000	45/21	2/5	2/2	(Heck Yeah, \$284,000)	<b>\$1,272,551</b>	104	2	1.12	1.26
14	<b>MISREMEMBERED</b> (06, Candy Ride), Barton Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	58/31	2/2	2/2	(Ax Man, \$165,900)	<b>\$1,121,447</b>	91	3	0.95	1.39
15	<b>EMPIRE WAY</b> (09, Empire Maker), Lovacres Ranch	\$5,000	46/25	1/1	1/1	(Loving Lynda, \$153,545)	<b>\$996,924</b>	82	1	0.79	0.89
16	<b>DESERT CODE</b> (04, E Dubai), Harris Farms	\$2,000	57/29	0/0	0/0	(Desert Law, \$70,597)	<b>\$883,788</b>	142	3	0.91	1.04
17	<b>SLEW'S TIZNOW</b> (05, Tiznow), Rancho San Miguel	\$3,000	45/29	0/0	0/0	(Trapalanda, \$80,510)	<b>\$877,906</b>	99	3	0.99	1.04
18	<b>KAFWAIN</b> (00, Cherokee Run), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$3,000	64/39	0/0	0/0	(We Will Re Joyce, \$73,545)	<b>\$824,640</b>	*632	18	1.01	1.19
19	<b>STREET HERO</b> (06, Street Cry)	N/A	49/28	1/1	0/1	(Ms Fifty First St., \$105,400)	<b>\$797,693</b>	*262	6	1.16	0.99
20	<b>DECARCHY</b> (97, Distant View)	Died, 2017	40/23	0/0	0/0	(One Fast Broad, \$141,318)	<b>\$747,998</b>	401	13	1.01	0.96

many fun races."

"Three grade 1s," interjected Klein.

"When he was ready to retire, you have a choice," said Leberz. "You could sell him to Kentucky, but we decided to stand him in California."

Klein: "That's an insane thing to do."

Leberz: "Yeah, it was pretty crazy, but so far it may have been the right thing."

Klein: "We got 90 mares to him the first year."

Several of those came from Leberz and Klein, who ferreted out quality mares that didn't cost a fortune at Kentucky breeding stock sales. They bought the mares expressly to breed to Smiling Tiger, and the plan has paid off on many levels.

Smiling Tiger, a son of the Storm Cat stallion Hold That Tiger out of the Cahill Road mare Shandra Smiles, led California's first-crop sires in 2017. Now standing at John Harris' Harris Farms near Coalinga, the stallion leads the state in 2018 among second-crop sires, even without the earnings of his son Ace Korea, a major winner in Korea. Smiling Tiger's progeny



COURTESY RON MESAROS/ PREMIER EQUINE CENTER

Smiling Tiger ranks ninth on California's 2018 general sires list

include stakes winners Spiced Perfection, Cruel Intention, Naughty Tiger, Ima Happy Cat, Grinning Tiger, and Baja Sur.

Leberz and Klein reaped bigger rewards through Tuscan Sunset, a mare who cost just \$36,000 at the 2013 Keeneland November mixed sale. Mersad Metanovic Bloodstock purchased her in foal to Into Mischief for the partners as a future mate for Smiling Tiger.

Tuscan Sunset produced Miss Sunset, the Into Mischief foal, in California and has a 2-year-old filly and a yearling colt

by Smiling Tiger. Miss Sunset became a graded stakes winner and earner of \$891,895. Leberz and Klein sold Miss Sunset for \$825,000 through Taylor Made Sales Agency at the 2018 Fasig-Tipton Kentucky November sale and Tuscan Sunset for \$200,000 through Elm Tree Farm at the 2018 Keeneland November sale.

As much as Leberz and Klein like to talk about these types of successes, they will just as quickly tell the crazier stories, such as how Smiling Tiger's racing career began.

Trainer Jeff Bonde had purchased Smiling Tiger for the partners for \$40,000 at the 2008 Washington Thoroughbred Breeders' Association yearling sale. As the colt worked toward his racing debut, Bonde had been telling the owners that Smiling Tiger looked like he could be a good horse. The trainer entered him in a four-furlong maiden race for 2-year-olds at Golden Gate Fields on a rainy day in May 2009.

Hall of Fame jockey Russell Baze agreed to ride Smiling Tiger, a choice he must have reconsidered several times that day.

#### Special Note For Sire Lists:

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in the states featured in this section (stallions that are dead or exported prior to 2014 are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 2, 2018. As supplied to *BloodHorse* by The Jockey Club Information Systems Inc., lists include adjusted money from Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Adjusted earnings are put on par with average North American earnings from the previous year. For example, the average North American purse in 2017 is \$22,593 or 47% of the 2017 average purse in Japan. To put earnings on par, all Japanese progeny earnings are multiplied by 47% before being credited to a sire's progeny earnings. Hong Kong earnings are adjusted by 15%; Singapore by 68%. Current year stakes winners include all Northern Hemisphere black-type stakes results from all available countries. \*Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners include all countries.

\*AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX and COMPARABLE INDEX: Lifetime AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX indicates how much purse money the progeny of one sire has earned in relation to the average earnings of all runners in the same years; average earnings of all runners in any year is represented by an index of 1.00; COMPARABLE INDEX indicates the average earnings of progeny produced from mares bred to one sire, when these same mares were bred to other sires. Only 32% of all sires have a lifetime AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX higher than their mares' COMPARABLE INDEX.

Bonde did warn the owners of Smiling Tiger's "Storm Cat attitude—he's kind of a badass," recalled both Lebherz and Klein.

In the post-parade, Smiling Tiger twice bucked Baze off. Bonde ran onto the track to try to stop Smiling Tiger, who got loose and ran down the track. Then at the starting gate, Smiling Tiger didn't want to go in.

"All of a sudden—boom—he jettisons Russell Baze off again," said Klein. "I'm thinking this is going to be so bad."

Smiling Tiger broke quickly and rushed to the lead.

"I'm thinking it's over; he's just going to crash and burn," said Klein.

Instead, Smiling Tiger drew away, winning by six lengths.

"This horse was amazing—I'd never seen a horse like this," Klein said.

Smiling Tiger won the Lost in the Fog Stakes at Golden Gate in only his second start. It didn't take long for Smiling Tiger to tackle Del Mar, where he encountered Lookin At Lucky.

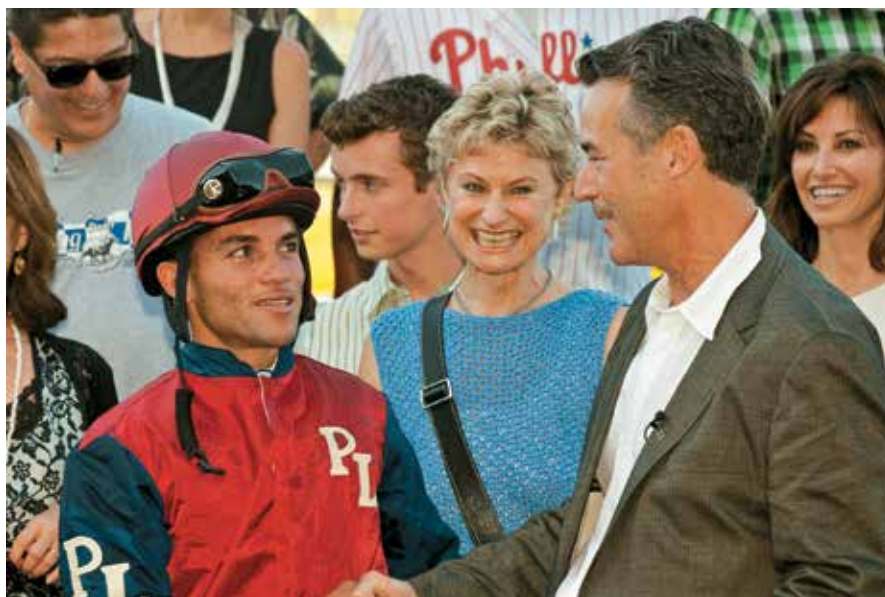
"If it wasn't for Bob Baffert and Lookin At Lucky, we probably would have had a superstar that year," Klein said.

Smiling Tiger ran third to winner Lookin At Lucky in the Best Pal Stakes (G2) and the Del Mar Futurity (G1). Lookin At Lucky went on to be named the Eclipse Award champion 2-year-old male of 2009 and champion 3-year-old male of 2010.

Meanwhile, Smiling Tiger developed into one of the top sprinters in the country, with victories in the 2010 Bing Crosby Stakes (G1) and Ancient Title Stakes (G1), 2011 Triple Bend Handicap (G1), and four other graded stakes. Twice he finished third in the Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1), and he earned \$1,480,704.

Baffert didn't forget Smiling Tiger. He currently trains Cruel Intention, a Cal-bred son of Smiling Tiger—Perfect Feat, by Pleasantly Perfect. Lebherz and Klein bred the colt and sold him for \$200,000 through Andy Havens' Havens Bloodstock Agency at the 2018 Barretts spring sale of 2-year-olds.

Cruel Intention is two-for-two racing for Jungle Racing, LNJ Foxwoods, and Nexus Racing Club. He broke his maiden by 5½ lengths and defeated the classy Uncle Mo Cal-bred Galilean by a neck in



**Trips to the winner's circle...above, Klein with Joel Rosario in 2011 after Smiling Tiger's score in the Triple Bend; right, Lebherz with Victor Espinoza after the 2010 Bing Crosby**

the Nov. 3 Golden State Juvenile Stakes. Galilean topped that same Barretts sale at \$600,000.

Nexus Racing Club had been formed to get young people involved in racing, and Cruel Intention became the first stakes winner for the organization. While Nexus doesn't have an equity interest in these horses, the arrangement gives members the chance to experience the excitement of ownership.

Lebherz and Klein applaud those kinds of efforts and do something similar with their family and friends.

"I'll sell pieces of any horse for a dollar," said Lebherz. "They don't really have an ownership, but they can claim ownership. I call it a bragging right. So my brother Rick will say, 'Yeah, that's my horse—I own that one.' He gives me a dollar, and he's in.

"Kristie's Heart was named after my sister-in-law, and they owned one dollar's worth. Man, do they love it. They come out to the track, and they go crazy."

Lebherz and Klein are paying it forward, spreading the enthusiasm for the sport that they learned as youngsters.

"I got into racing through my father, Norman, in the early '70s," said Klein. "We had always gone to the racetrack in the late '60s, when it was 50,000 people at Santa Anita. We'd go in the infield, and I just got



hooked on it.

"My dad got into it through his mother, Lena Klein. She took me to the racetrack for my seventh birthday, on the train from L.A. to Del Mar."

At one point Klein and his father went to an auction, "sort of by accident," said Klein, "and we ended up buying a horse for \$4,000."

Norman and Alan claimed a few horses until Alan moved to Northern California. Business interests took over, though Alan continued to follow the sport. After he sold one of his businesses in 2001, he bought a couple of horses again.

"My dad has passed on, but he was alive when Smiling Tiger was running," said Klein. "We had quite a bond watching his

racers. He loved it. Every time we have a big race, I think of him a lot.”

Lebherz grew up in San Diego before he relocated to Northern California.

“My dad was a captain in the Navy—he was a doctor at Balboa (Naval) Hospital,” Lebherz said. “In the summer I would work at the county fair at Del Mar. I watched the races and would make a few bets.”

In Northern California, Lebherz attended the races at Bay Meadows with his brother Rick and a friend named Hershel Petty. Phil eventually asked someone about horse ownership and purchased a 25% interest in Just Plain Fancy, a Cal-bred daughter of Falstaff who ultimately

Meister bred and raced Standard Setter, a Cal-bred son of Benchmark who won the 2003 Golden Gate Derby.

Sierra Sunset, a son of Bertrando bred in California by Martin and Pam Wygod, did even better. Owned by Lebherz, Al Mariani, George Schmitt, and the George and Carol Wirth Trust, Sierra Sunset captured the 2008 Rebel Stakes (G2) and earned \$459,696.

Florida-bred stakes winner Erica’s Smile earned \$232,190 for a Lebherz partnership, and Lebherz sold her through Taylor Made for \$675,000 at the 2003 Keeneland November sale.

“I bought her back several years later

utante Stakes (G1), She’s a Tiger finished first in that year’s Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Fillies (G1) by a nose over Ria Antonia, only to have her number taken down in a controversial stewards’ decision. She’s a Tiger was voted the year’s Eclipse Award champion 2-year-old filly.

Smiling Tiger entered stud in 2014 at Premier Thoroughbreds near Oakdale, Calif. Dr. Jerry Black had previously owned the property and operated it as Pioneer Equine Hospital before moving to Colorado State University. Lebherz purchased the farm from Black.

The facility now includes an equine swimming pool, and Lebherz has leased part of the farm to Pat Grohl, who runs a rehabilitation facility there for racehorses and other performance horses. Lebherz also keeps several of his mares on the property.

Lebherz, Klein, and Rusty Brown breed many of Smiling Tiger’s offspring, such as Cruel Intention, in the name of Premier Thoroughbreds.

After Smiling Tiger’s first year at stud, Lebherz and Klein moved him to Harris Farms.

“I talk to John Harris all the time,” said Lebherz. “He says Smiling Tiger owns the whole place. He says it’s just amazing to see.”

Lebherz also owned part of Sway Away, an earner of \$206,800 who placed in the 2010 Best Pal Stakes (G2), 2011 San Vicente Stakes (G2), and 2012 San Carlos Stakes (G2). Sway Away stood at Premier, but Lebherz said that he has since been sold to stand in New Mexico.

The partners own about 30 mares. They sold many of the early foals by Smiling Tiger, but they are hoping to race several of their 13 homebreds that are currently yearlings. They also have a few 2-year-olds that haven’t reached the races yet, and they are looking forward to more chances to get to the winner’s circle.

“When we have a really fun horse like a Miss Sunset or a Smiling Tiger—you can’t replace those kind of days,” said Klein, “especially when you bring out your friends and family.” **BH**

*Tracy Gantz is the Southern California correspondent for BloodHorse.*



VASSAR PHOTOGRAPHY

**Lebherz and Klein are regulars on the Golden Gate Fields backstretch**

earned \$138,425.

“Then she got claimed for \$40,000 at Del Mar, so I thought, ‘Wow, this is easy,’” Lebherz said.

Bonde has trained for Lebherz since 1995, and he bought Kentucky-bred Robahush for Lebherz and some partners for \$70,000 at the 1998 Barretts March 2-year-old sale. In two starts for them Robahush broke his maiden at Golden Gate Fields and finished second in the Westchester Stakes at Hollywood Park. Lebherz said he sold Robahush to Kentucky interests for \$350,000.

Florida-bred Epic Honor, co-owned by Lebherz, won the 1999 Golden Gate Derby (G3) under Bonde’s tutelage, earning a total of \$341,960. Lebherz and Richard

for \$22,000,” said Lebherz. “I bred her to Smiling Tiger and sold her baby for \$190,000 (at the 2016 Barretts October yearling sale through the Woodbridge Farm consignment). I still have her—she puts out beautiful babies.”

Lebherz and Klein met during morning workouts at Bay Meadows about a decade ago. Bonde purchased Smiling Tiger for them not long after that. Smiling Tiger did so well that in 2012 Lebherz became a partner in the horse’s half sister by Tale of the Cat that Metanovic had purchased for \$150,000 at the 2012 Keeneland September yearling sale.

Named She’s a Tiger, the filly gave Lebherz a Breeders’ Cup victory—for a few minutes. Winner of the 2013 Del Mar Deb-