

Winners

By Anne Lang

Margaret Porter

In Texas, where pari-mutuel racing resumed just three years ago after a 50-year absence, the normally rare establishment of new track records and similar distinctions are somewhat commonplace, given the embryonic state of the local industry. For Margaret Porter of Odessa, however, the frequency of such occurrences in no way detracts from the joy of having earned a special place in the record books. When

Porter's 5-year-old mare A Hula won the \$25,000-added Chisholm Trail Handicap at Trinity Meadows near Fort Worth in June, she became the first Thoroughbred to have won three consecutive stakes at a modern-day Texas pari-mutuel track.

"I'm just delighted, especially because I raised her," Mrs. Porter said of the Kentucky-bred A Hula, who is out of Porter's mare Reyrrah, by Yrrah Jr. "Reyrrah's babies always seem to blossom after three, and A Hula is a shining example."

A Hula's victories in the Run for the Roses Stakes, the Memorial Day Handicap (against males), and an allowance race earlier this spring at Trinity have resulted in a four-for-five season and earnings of \$40,600, bringing her career total to \$124,405. The mare, who also captured the Weatherford Stakes at Trinity last fall and was stakes-placed three times in Louisiana, is conditioned by respected Southwest trainer Tommie Morgan.

Twenty years ago, when Morgan began working for Mrs. Porter (now in her 70s) and her late husband, Fred, the couple had only recently switched to Thoroughbreds after their star Quarter Horse mare, winner of all seven stakes for the breed on the Texas bush track circuit, broke her



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leg. Several of the Porters' subsequent Thoroughbred homebreds had moderate success racing primarily in New Mexico, including Hula Man and Reygo (who both earned over \$100,000), and stakes winner Coin Machine.

Dancing with dreams

Porter, who died in 1984, never saw his lifelong dream of campaigning a Kentucky Derby (gr. I) contender come true. But Mrs. Porter achieved that goal in 1985 with the Riva Ridge colt Encolure, a Claiborne Farm-bred purchased while Porter was alive.

"I made up my mind that I was going to get Encolure to the Derby, and I did," Mrs. Porter said.

Never mind that Encolure finished 10th, 20 lengths behind winner Spend a Buck. The Charles Marikian trainee amassed \$593,244 in a three-year career that included three stakes wins and second- or third-place finishes in six graded events.

Then came the tragic October day in 1986 at Santa Anita, when Encolure broke down while leading a tightly packed allowance field. The ensuing collision brought down four horses on top of Encolure, crushing the colt's skull. While the other horses walked away unharmed, Encolure was immediately destroyed, and his seriously injured rider, Terry Lipham, never rode again. Also badly hurt in the accident was jockey Chris McCarron.

"I remember how they showed it over and over again on television," Mrs. Porter said, "and every time they did, I went down a little bit more. I'd wanted to bring Encolure home to stand in Texas eventually, but I didn't get a chance."

Mrs. Porter found the faith and courage to continue racing and breeding. She now boards her

mares and foals at a nearby farm and is looking forward to racing two homebreds by Texas stallion Triple Sec: one a yearling, and one a juvenile who just had its first start in Louisiana.

But Mrs. Porter attributes most of her rekindled enthusiasm to A Hula.

"I get fond of my horses, and I check on them very often to make sure they're taken care of," Mrs. Porter said. "I supervised every step of A Hula's upbringing, so I feel I can take credit for what she's become. She's given me the pat on the back I've really needed for a long time." ■