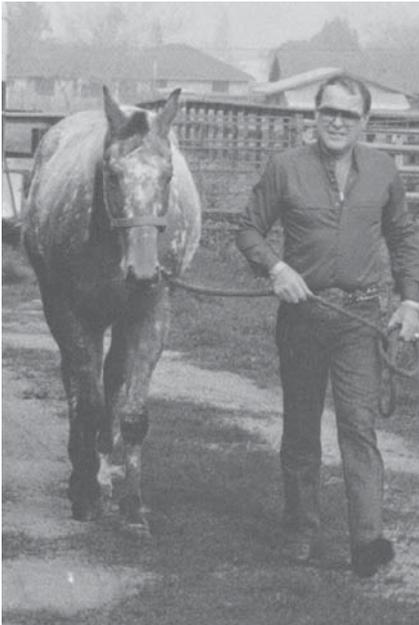
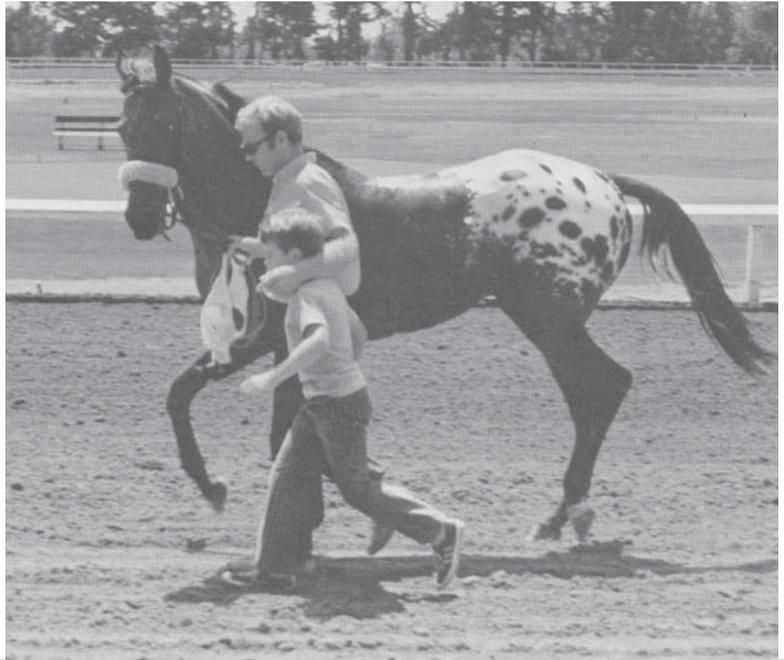


## Van Walker



The life of a salesman quickly gave way to racehorses for Van Walker, who was horseback from a very young age.

“From the time I was little, I had an affinity for horses,” Van says. He began spending his summers on a working cattle ranch in Nevada when he was 12, and developed an interest in ranching.

That later gave way to a job as a salesman for Proctor and Gamble, but it was in the sales business that he met a man who owned a loud leopard stallion—and that began a lifelong affiliation with the Appaloosa breed which would span nearly 50 years as an owner, breeder, organizer and trainer.

He bought a colt named Little Freddie M., and campaigned him as a performance horse. Van earned various titles and awards with the stallion, and around that time decided to get out of sales and back on a ranch. He purchased a ranch in Pleasant Grove, California, and built an oval.

Pari-mutuel racing didn’t exist in California then, so as Van built his operation he also began aiding the effort to change that. After three years of hard work, pari-mutuel racing was legalized in California in 1965.

Van was then a full-time race trainer, a position he thoroughly enjoyed. “I liked the breeding, and enjoyed raising colts,” Van says. “But I loved the training. My son was my assistant from 14 until we got out of it in 1994.”

Most memorable of Van’s Appaloosas

was Charli, a 1967 gelding by Log’s Pride (JC) and out of Beggar’s First. This phenomenal gelding had a long career on the track, despite an injury that could’ve sidelined him forever. “He set a world record at 13,” Van remembers. “I’d say he was the best known Appaloosa in California.”

Charli was best running distance, and set 13 track records in California. “He was an outstanding horse,” Van says. “He’d be my favorite Appaloosa.”

In 1966, Cal-Western Appaloosa Racing Inc. was formed, and Van was heavily involved in its formation, and as a board member and president. That same year, Van was honored as Cal-Western’s top trainer with most wins on California tracks and was the ApHC trainer of the year with most wins. In 1979 he tied with Harlan Norman as ApHC trainer of the year; in 1983 was top California trainer of the year.

He and his wife, Pauline, have three children: Justin, Vandi and Valerie. Though retired from the industry, Van still harbors an enjoyment of horses.