

NORWOOD - Unlike

Victor Espinoza and his horse, War emblem, former professional jockey Gene Bresnahan was never in the running to win the Triple Crown, but, as racing fans anxiously await the June 8 Belmont Stakes, the Norwood resident fondly recalls his days in the saddle.

It was on a horse named Slow Motion on which Bresnahan rode in his first official race. "I was neck-and-neck with the leaders going into the gate," Bresnahan joke with the same sense of humor that prompts him to ask fellow jockeys if they want him to fill out the "short form" for their taxes. He is an accountant in Norwood. Bresnahan's first race is only part of a life story that is littered with irony.

On the back stretch of life, the 63-year-old Bresnahan is only 10 pounds heavier than is racing weight and still possesses all the pep of a man who used to ride 20 to 30 horses a day. After his ride on Slow Motion, Bresnahan ended up racing horses all over the country from Suffolk downs to Florida Downs from 1966 to 1971. Bresnahan might still be racing today if fate hadn't cracked the whip on him when he met his future wife, Joanne, one day at the track. "She told me she couldn't live like this," said Bresnahan. So he quit.

All along, Bresnahan had been doing tax work for many of colleagues, so he went into the business full time and settled down in Norwood in 1977, where he has lived ever since. Bresnahan took what he learned in racing and has applied it to business, working

SERVING DEDHAM, NORWOOD, WALPOLE, WESTWOOD AND CANTON

The NEPONSET VALLEY DAILY NEWS

AN EDITION OF THE METROWEST DAILY NEWS

www.neponsetvalleydailynews.com

THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2002



with clients including jockeys, trainers and other athletes.

"You've got to think like them," said Bresnahan. Bresnahan said he misses the track life from time to time - he still thinks he could go to the Brockton Fair races and rent out the winners' circle for a day, if he got in riding shape - but he only visits tracks now as a guest.

For 13 years, Bresnahan has organized a Day at the Races, which started out as a Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce event and is now a fund-raiser for the Dedham Boys and Girls Club.

Last year Bresnahan and three busloads of people, including many of his clients, traveled to Rockingham for the day. For \$35 a head, Bresnahan said people get the whole trip, including lunch and a tour of the jockey's room. Bresnahan said he got involved with the Boys and Girls Club after being asked to be treasurer. Since the club is not big

enough to qualify as part of the national Boys and Girls Club umbrella, Bresnahan said it does not receive any funding. "We're hoping to get it to the

childhood background of a typical jockey. The only thing Bresnahan knew how to ride was a Greyhound bus and maybe a Huffy bicycle.

But that didn't stop him from hopping the fence one day at Suffolk Downs in East Boston, proclaiming to be the first person he met that he wanted to be a jockey. It was here that irony struck again in the form of Junie Bresnahan, one of the more famous trainers in New England. Whether it was the shared last name (no relation) or the fact that young Gene had the perfect build for a jockey, Junie took in the 21-year-old.

Bresnahan learned to ride at a farm in Medford and, eventually, Junie sent Bresnahan down to his farm in South Carolina to help "break" younger horses. He did that for three years before moving onto the racing circuit, which was a different experience entirely.

"It was like going from a

sparring partner to a boxer," said Bresnahan. Bresnahan never raced in a big time venue like Churchill Downs, but he managed to win his fair share of races and earn decent money. The closest Bresnahan got to the Kentucky Derby was training a horse at Churchill Downs.

As it turned out, Bresnahan's horse got spooked by something running behind it. That something happened to be gold-medal winning boxer Casius Marcellus Clay, who would later make a bigger name for himself under a different moniker, Muhammad Ali.

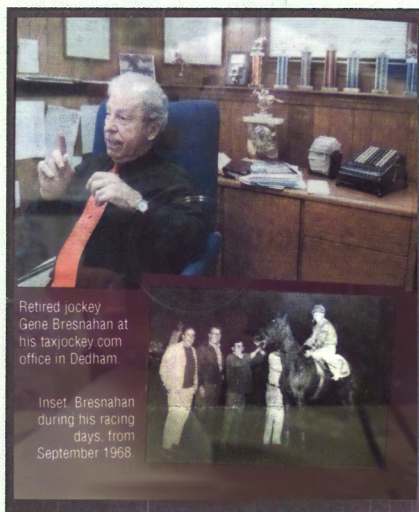
Bresnahan has many racing stories as he had broken bones and stitches during his racing days.

"People don't realize that you're really not touching the horse at all," said Bresnahan.. "If that horse stumbles, you're flying off like a bar of soap because you're wearing silk."

In addition to his infamous start aboard Slow Motion, Bresnahan said he had many experiences where he would find success by getting into the mind of a horse, knowing where the horse liked to be. In one instance, Bresnahan was riding a horse called Red Glory, who had an interesting affliction: He was scared of other horses.

"He was always coming out slow, getting behind the other horses," said Bresnahan. So Bresnahan opted for a new strategy - get out front early. Red Glory won going away. "He was afraid to slow down," said Bresnahan. "In fact, I had trouble slowing him down after the race."

Reporter: Brian Falla
Design: JK Studios



Retired jockey Gene Bresnahan at his taxjockey.com office in Dedham

Inset: Bresnahan during his racing days from September 1968

point where it will be big enough to become part of the national organization, but it's not there yet," said Bresnahan. Bresnahan said many of the kids go on the trip as well, which brings him back to his youth. "They love visiting the jockeys," said Bresnahan. "They're the same size." Growing up in Cambridge, Bresnahan didn't have the