

RON TURCOTTE

Ron Turcotte had everything a jockey could want. From 1972-'73 he rode the winner of five of the six Triple Crown races, sweeping the series with Secretariat after nearly taking the trilogy with Riva Ridge the year before.

Born in 1941 to one of the dynastic families in riding, along with the Fireses, Valenzuelas and a few others, Ron grew up speaking French and English in the Canadian province of New Brunswick. The second-oldest son of 12 children born to a family of lumberjacks, Ron, at 5'1", was encouraged by his father to handle the logging horses. With the experience and skills he gained from that job, a course was set that would take him to the top of a new profession.



He moved to Toronto in 1959 and took a job as a roofer but a slowdown in the construction business pushed him to the door of Windfields Farm, the powerhouse breeding operation in Ontario, where he took work as a hot walker. With his size and his experience riding horses, it wasn't long before he gave up the shank and grabbed the reins.

The first great horse he rode competitively was Northern Dancer, breaking that champion's maiden race in 1963. He wasn't aboard for Northern Dancer's Kentucky Derby and Preakness victories in 1964, but his first classic victory came the next year, in the Preakness with Tom Rolfe.

The connection of his professional lifetime came in the early '70s when he hooked up with Meadow Stable and its trainer, Lucien Lauren, a Canadian and former rider himself. Meadow Stable owned Riva Ridge and Secretariat, superstars dubbed by the press as the "Gold Dust Twins." With Watergate gaining momentum and the Vietnam War grinding to its grim conclusion, Secretariat provided a rare bright spot. In the same week, in June of 1973, the big red colt made the covers of Time, Newsweek and Sports Illustrated, and Ron was aboard in each picture.

A spectacular career came to an end July 13, 1978, when the horse he was riding, Flag of Leyte Gulf, was bumped by another horse and went down, hurling Ron to the ground. At 36 he was paralyzed for life.

Over 18 years, he had ridden in 20,281 races, winning 3,032. His mounts earned \$28,606,490.

Through it all Ron has cheerfully answered the fan mail that still comes to his home in Grand Rapids, New Brunswick, and has made several public appearances to help the sport as well as disabled jockeys.