

# TRIBUTE TO ALAIN LEQUEUX - CHAMPION FRENCH JOCKEY

**O**n Wednesday 26th April European racing lost its dearest friend. Alain Lequeux, the internationally successful French jockey who hung up his boots in December 1992 to run the popular Chantilly restaurant Chez Lequeux, passed away in hospital following a brain haemorrhage. He was just 59.

He had brightened up his restaurant just as surely as he had brightened the racecourse with his ever youthful presence. To all he is remembered as both jockey and joker, a man who was counted as a best friend by all who knew him and who never made a single enemy in the world. A true gentleman.

In a career spanning thirty years and including many great successes among his 2,000 wins, Alain displayed more self-derision than vanity. He could flare up in the heat of a moment, but always with a wink and a smile; he was devoid of malice.

A son of the great jockey Guy Lequeux, forever associated with the great Tanerko and Bella Paola, Alain found little encouragement from his modest father, who would have preferred to see him enter the security of the hotel trade. Typically mischievous, Alain instead convinced his father's trainer, Guy Hain, to teach him to ride.

At 14, Alain joined the legendary François Mathet as an apprentice and rode his first winner in April 1963. Mathet may not have been generous with praise, but his actions spoke volumes. Just 6 months later he

by Lissa Oliver



*Alain Lequeux*

entrusted stable star Mirna to the young Alain in the Prix de la Forêt, enabling Alain, at 17, to become the youngest winner of a Group One race at that time.

In later life Alain gained a reputation as a jockey for the big occasion and his services were always much in demand by the biggest of owners and trainers. Though a freelance, loyalty was always his by-word, associated with such names as Maurice Zilber, David Smaga, Robert Collet and Olivier Douieb, with whom he spent a year in Newmarket, England, where he was extremely popular. Typical of Alain Lequeux – he was loved wherever he went.

His name will be forever linked with the exploits of the many great horses of the era – Sanedtki, Argument, Dumka, Behera, Nadjar, Procida, Priolo, The Wonder, Providential, Triptych, Nadjar, Le Glorieux, Al Nasr, to name but a few. As a jockey he possessed the much-needed old head on young shoulders, but above all he had a rare natural gift. In retirement, he brought racing people flocking to his doors at Chez Lequeux, always a happy place, lit up by his stories. Alain Lequeux will be held forever dear in the heart of racing and is very sorely missed.