



four winners! That was the remarkable achievement of the George Collins-Ed Haughton-Verlyn Smith combination on the inaugural program of the fall race meeting at the muddy KY Association track Saturday." By the end of the 1929 racing season, at the age of 14, Verlyn Smith was the runner-up to champion jockey Melvin Knight, meaning that he had the second most wins among "rookie" jockeys that year. He had won 172 races in eight months!

It was in November of 1929 that Edward Haughton resigned from the services of George Collins, and accepted a new training job with Greentree Stables, also in KY. It was announced that "Mrs. Payne Whitney, owner of Greentree Stables, has purchased the contract on this sensational apprentice rider, Verlyn Smith, and that Smith would remain with Haughton, to ride a string of thoroughbreds which Mrs. Whitney plans to race over the western tracks during the year 1930." Verlyn's contract was sold for \$20,000, which proved to be money well-spent, as young Smith became one of five star apprentices who rode 100 winners that year!

On June 23, 1929, Verlyn rode Thistle Fyrn, the second best filly of the year, taking first place in the Ohio Derby. In a newspaper article describing the race, Tedd H. Kline stated that, "She ran down that long lane faster than any Erie train that's Pittsburgh-bound, ran to a new track record of 1:51 3-5 for the mile and an eighth and refunded 15.15 for every dollar contributed on her." He further stated that "V. Smith knew his business almost as good as the coughdrop brothers know theirs." And he called Verlyn a "wise kid."

Smith was next scheduled to ride in the Kentucky Derby, but contracted chicken pox the day before, and had to withdraw.

It was at this time that Verlyn's brother Dayton, for reasons that are not clear, revealed that the boy was not yet 16. The Kentucky State Racing Commission was thus required to ban him from racing in the United States for another year and a half. But Mrs. Whitney was not to be discouraged, sending young Smith to Canada (where at

one point he raced for 80 days straight!) and to Cuba to ride her horses in races there.

By the time he turned 16, Verlyn's return to US racing was greatly anticipated and keenly welcomed! But he could only race for a short time, as he experienced a growth spurt and could not keep his weight at 100 pounds, subsequently retiring from racing in 1932.

At this time, he returned to Lytton, Iowa, finished high school in 1936, and bought an 80-acre farm with his saved earnings. A few years later he bought a second 80 acres, also with saved earnings. After graduation, he married Lura Smith, and together they farmed and raised a family of four children, Karen, Dianne, Mark, and Nicole. He provided well for his family.

Verlyn and Lura have donated most of his riding equipment and clothing to the Lytton Museum. Today, at age 91, Verlyn resides in a care center in Sac City, Iowa.

If you are ever in the area, stop in the museum and see how a young boy made it big in horses in a very difficult era. You will be impressed!



*Above: Verlyn Smith at home on his farm in about 1980  
Below: Smith & his wife, Lura, have donated most of his racing days' memorabilia to the Lytton, Iowa museum.*

