RAY HARRIS

Except for a brief period when Russell Baze rode primarily in Southern California, he has had Castro Valley’s Ray Harris as his agent since 1979. It’s the longest jockey-agent partnership in thoroughbred racing history and what a partnership it has been.

 Baze is the winningest jockey in the history of the sport with more than 12,700 winners and still counting. He surpassed Laffit Pincay’s record of 9,530 almost a full decade ago. Harris is the man who arranged more than 90 percent of those mounts.

 When Baze came to Northern California from Washington in 1979 he was looking for an agent and Ray needed a jockey.

“I made a deal with Russell,” Harris said. “I told him, ‘I’ll work for you, but if I get you in the top five (in the jockey standings) you promise you won’t go back to Seattle.” Baze finished fourth that year and the two have been together ever since.

Harris gets to the racetrack each day at 5:30 a.m. where he talks to trainers and arranges rides for upcoming races. He also plans Baze’s workout schedule each day.

Harris has landed Baze three rides in the Kentucky Derby, although the mounts finished out of the money each time. Ray thinks their best chance would have been aboard a Jerry Hollendorfer-trained horse named Event of the Year, but the horse broke his knee a week before the race and had to be scratched.

“I really think we would have won the Derby,” Harris said regretfully.

Many Castro Valley residents know Ray Harris for his work with Castro Valley Outreach, a non-profit he founded with School Board trustee Jo Loss in 1992. The organization runs a Thanksgiving food drive and an “Adopt a Family” Christmas program for needy families in the community. Harris recently earned the Jefferson Award for public service from KPIX-TV in San Francisco.

 Ray and Peggy have been married 42 years and have two adult children, Shawn and Vanessa, who are both professional musicians.