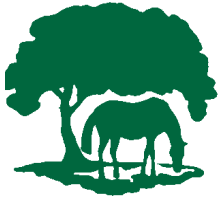


THOROUGHBRED RETIREMENT FOUNDATION

November 2000



Dear Friend:

You know their names almost as well as your own. Secretariat.... Kelso.... Forego.... Alydar.... Citation.... Seattle Slew. They are remembered, these champions of the past. They are loved. Their achievements, their spirit, the way they enriched the sport and our lives, have burned their names into our memories.

But what of all the others? The lesser lights, the nameless ones. Will we remember them? Will we remember Saratoga Character?

Not a champion. Just a good horse who gave everything he had. A racehorse whose career parallels that of the countless thousands of racehorses who fill the undercards that make championship-deciding stakes races possible. You could call him "Everyhorse," because that's who he is.

"Everyhorse" on a downward spiral

Saratoga Character, like his racing brothers and sisters, had a promising start. His sire, Saratoga Six, was a son of Alydar and a sire of stakes winners. Foaled in 1992, Saratoga Character is a beautiful animal. His papers describe him as a bay, but one of his several owners, Michael Paul Becker, likened him to the "horse of another color" in *The Wizard of Oz*. "His head is bay, but as for the rest, he's more of a roan."

Character first raced at age three, at Oaklawn Park, in January, 1995. He broke his maiden at Oaklawn in his seventh start on April 15 in a \$21,000, six-furlong Maiden Special Weight. He would never win at a greater distance, but in five years on the track, he finished on the board in half of his 78 races, with 11 wins, 15 second-place and 13 third-place finishes. When he left the track for the last time, he'd earned \$149,261.

For his first three years, Saratoga Character raced at major tracks: Churchill Downs, Keeneland, Monmouth Park, Aqueduct, and the Meadowlands, in allowance company, for purses up to \$30,000, and in the occasional claiming race.

Patrick Byrne claimed Saratoga Character for Becker from a \$20,000 claiming race at Keeneland in April, 1996. Becker had him for 11 races, running him mostly in \$24,000-and-up allowance races at Monmouth, the Meadowlands, and Aqueduct. One of his trainers, Howard Tesher, remembers Character as "a big, exceptionally handsome horse who always gave it everything he had. Despite a bad breathing problem, he had so much heart that he managed to win anyway."

Character was next claimed for \$15,000 on December 27, 1996, and would change hands twice more. By mid-1997 he had dropped down to

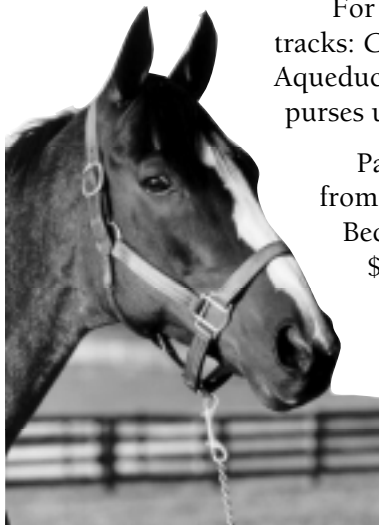


PHOTO BY Z

You could call Saratoga Character "Everyhorse."

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\$4,000 claiming races at Rockingham Park. Sore and hurting and just plain out of breath at age seven, Saratoga Character was being raced every six to nine days, with one or two longer breaks. He still finished on the board more often than not, prompting one horseman to say, “He ran the last quarter-mile on class.”

His future was grim; his racing decline matched that of thousands of other imperiled horses—geldings at the end of their game, deemed of no value when they can no longer run.

For our Everyhorse, some badly needed racing luck

Kim Zito was at Rockingham Park with her husband, Nick, the New York trainer (and TRF director) when she first saw Saratoga Character. He was occupying a stall near Nick’s horses, with no bedding and no hay. “He was the sweetest horse,” she said. “Despite his mistreatment at human hands, he was eager to be petted—he shut his eyes and buried his head in my shoulder.” On the Zitos’ next trip to Rockingham, she went looking for the horse, and this time found him “unshod, with his feet curling up.” She found the owner, who said he planned to run Character at the Northampton Fair.



PHOTO BY Z

Saratoga Character is recovering nicely under the TLC of Blackburn’s inmate-caregivers.

Saying she was interested in acquiring the horse, Kim took him out of his stall. “He was dead lame,” she said, “with a right ankle the size of a grapefruit. Racing him would have been a death sentence.” The Zitos bought Character for retirement to the TRF farm at Blackburn Correctional Facility in Lexington, Kentucky, where he is recovering from what X-rays showed to be a fractured sesamoid.

Weaving a safety net for all racehorses in jeopardy

Providing safe retirement options for racehorses has become an industry-wide concern. And thanks to industry support and the unwavering generosity of horse lovers everywhere, our capacity to receive horses has significantly increased.

Our Thoroughbred population is growing daily. We guarantee lifetime care to *any* racing Thoroughbred, no matter where the horse ran or at what level of achievement. And unlike many organizations, we will accept horses whose racing injuries leave them with no future as pleasure horses.

More and more, the TRF is taking a proactive role in horse rescue, seeking out Thoroughbreds desperately in need of safe retirement options, reaching out to grateful owners and trainers with nowhere else to turn, and scouring the notorious sales that send these helpless horses to slaughter. We urgently need your help to continue these efforts.

Our goal this year is to establish a “safety net” fund *in addition to* the program costs of the escalating population of racehorses being retired to our principal and satellite farms. Already, TRF intervention on the backstretches is channeling horses to safety *before* they are consigned to trucks that would have taken them to the “killer buyers.” Especially at smaller tracks, where so many horses end their days, and their lives, in cheap claiming races, TRF directors, supporters, and volunteers from smaller rescue operations with limited resources are united in this labor of love. They visit tracks, talk to owners and trainers, put up posters to alert horsemen to the TRF’s “fast, first-rate alternative to the auction.”

And we intervene at the sales, acquiring horses directly from the “killers.” Two recently arrived four-year-old fillies were on the brink of a trip to the slaughterhouse when we found them in a pen at the New Holland sale in Pennsylvania. These young, fit, beautiful Thoroughbreds had become friends in their adversity, and they still hang together at the TRF Exceller Farm for Rehabilitation and Retraining in upstate New York. (Our success rate with private adoptions has soared because of this program that prepares former racehorses for new careers as pleasure and companion animals.)

Biker Girl, a granddaughter of Tom Rolfe, is a striking black-brown filly with lifetime earnings of just \$10,258 and only one win to her credit in 27 starts. That was in November 1999 at Finger Lakes. Her last race was at Northampton Fair in September. Her new best friend, Miss Scarlet, finished first at Fairmount Park in June last year, her only win in 22 starts. When her racing days ended at Northampton Fair, she had earned \$6,618 lifetime.

As a result of the TRF's safety net initiative, as many as 20 horses have entered TRF retirement programs on a single weekend. Satellite farms often act as way stations. The horses' condition is evaluated before vanning them to the appropriate TRF facility. It may be the Exceller Farm, or Historic Long Branch in Virginia, where they will live out their days in carefree tranquility on magnificent pastures that seem to go on forever. Some will go to one of the farms at correctional facilities in New York, Kentucky, Maryland, or Florida, where rest and plenty of TLC work wonders to restore their health and good spirits. The horses work some wonders of their own, too, as their inmate caregivers learn vocational and life skills, gaining a new-found respect for all living creatures.



PHOTO: THERESA TERILLI

Miss Scarlet and Biker Girl hang out together at the TRF Exceller Farm for Rehabilitation and Retraining in Poughquag, N.Y.

You can give the gift of lifetime haven

Our proactive rescue initiative is proving effective, but costly. We can only do it with your help. Tripling our Thoroughbred acceptances, we are looking at a huge increase in program costs: feed bills; medications and veterinary care for infirm horses; transportation; fencing more paddocks, and building run-in sheds. We must also keep up our regular rounds of track visits to strengthen our present safety nets and to weave new ones. Add to all this the need to expand our rehabilitation and retraining program.

We've come a long way with your help; now we ask you to stay the course to ensure a future for horses in peril. As we near the holiday season of giving, please, remember the horses who have enriched your life with their courage, beauty, and heart. Your gift will make the difference between life and death.

With heartfelt thanks on behalf of the Thoroughbreds you will save, and with best wishes for a wonderful holiday season, I remain,

Most sincerely,

Monique S. Koehler
Founder and Chairman

And God took a handful of southerly wind, blew His breath over it and created the horse.
~~Bedouin Legend