

Later, I realized that the Secretary thought I'd say "me!" but that wasn't my goal. I didn't need to lead, and I didn't feel I knew the players well enough. However, the person I selected was a pariah in the breed. She hated any horse with the iconic stallion Supreme Sultan's blood, which was a pretty hefty number of horses. She was also so thrilled to finally get where she could not get herself that she was ridiculous to deal with. When I announced, during the sport horse meeting at the convention, that "until and unless we are able to create a vibrant market for our horses who aren't making the show ring paradigm, welfare and sport horses will be inextricably linked" I thought she'd had a seizure. When I sent her a list of activities that I thought we needed to get working on, like newsletters, press pieces on successful ASB sport horses, etc., she accepted a resignation I never tendered. However, there was already a bit of support growing, and we were able to help more horses than we had been previously.

Beginning in 2000, we made a five year commitment to sponsor an American Saddlebred in hand class at Dressage at Devon; the largest breed show of its kind in the country. It wasn't insignificant. The cost of the sponsorship, paying for an advertisement, and then getting horses to the show was time consuming. I wanted to have high quality sport horses representing our breed in front of world class sport horse judges, so that we could actually have some manner of comparing our horses to warmbloods on a level playing field. Sport horses are judged by a strict set of criteria, and scored. This is reduced to a percentage, which means that one horse can reasonably be compared to another.

Each year, I took two horses over for the class, and we also competed in the open classes. I am not sure that having the breed announced over the loud speaker helps when you are trying to have a level playing field, and on more than one occasion, I am pretty sure it didn't, but we showed up, nonetheless. In 2003, Borealis who I pulled into the world, showed in front of Olympian and Olympic judge, Hilda Gurney. She awarded him a 78%, which set the record for the breed at that level. I was ecstatic. I adored my horse, and had raised and shown him myself, but moreover, we had arrived. We had shown we had the goods.

We had an approved warmblood stallion in the class one year, who was half-American Saddlebred. One other year, we had a half-Andalusian. I was just happy that people showed up, to help make the class. We never had more than five in the class, nor less than two. When we stopped the sponsorship, no one else stepped up, and there hasn't been a class for the breed at DAD since.

During this time, I began writing the bloodline analysis articles about the World's Grand Champions for National Horseman magazine. I had always been a bloodline research junkie, and actually having a reason to talk to the people who helped build the breed, the breeders, trainers, and owners of great horses, was a true joy. It afforded me the opportunity to hear stories about the horses I had only read about, and learn more about the ones I had seen. I realized why

it was so incredibly important to understand what each line in a on a set of papers brought to the dance. The American Saddlebred genepool is so incredibly diverse, and yet phenotypically prepotent. Being able to look at a horse, and realize where they had come from became even more important, as time went on.

I was attending the Fall Sale at Tattersalls each year, and bringing home horses from time to time. It was interesting bidding on the horses. When a horse who would not have brought much money came in, and an English woman started bidding against the Amish, other English would usually start in, as well. One afternoon, to test my theory, I bid well over a dozen horses out of range of the Amish dealers, without ending up with one. At one point, Christ Stoltzfus came in, and peered up into the stands at me. Obviously, someone had told him that I was the under bidder on these horses. Christ lived within a half-hour of my home, but I had never introduced myself. Later in the afternoon, I was bidding on a big chestnut gelding, and I dropped out at \$3700. They knocked the horse down at 4K, and brought me the ticket. I looked at Woody, the bid spotter. I always sat in his section. I said, "Hey- I was out at 3700!!" He said, "are you sure?" I said, "yes".

They brought the horse back in last thing in the afternoon, and once again the bidding commenced- me against the Amish. At around \$3400, an English guy jumped in who I did not recognize, and I dropped out. He won the bid. Several years later, a friend of mine introduced me to a gal who had a nice horse in her barn, by Harrodsburg. I asked the horses name, and she told me. It was the gelding. He had a wonderful home, and was loved. Sometimes, you can't take them home, but you can help them find one.

One year, the Tattersalls Fall catalog came out, and as I always did, I poured through it, looking at bloodlines, and descriptions. One colt, a two year old, stood out for me. He was a big colt, who had not done a lot of work, and he was ably a Five Gaited World's Champion, Callaway's Wish Me Will, out of a mare by a Five Gaited World's Grand Champion, Man on the Town. For me, this is classic high quality dressage horse breeding- the highest quality gaited horses with their quick hind leg, and loose "oily" shoulders are hard to find, and wonderful to train. I called the trainer, and asked about him. She explained that they had started him, he was kind and talented, but growthy, so they had turned him back out. I came to the point, "Is he forward headed?" "Well", she said, "maybe a little." I knew we had a prospect who, without intervention, would end up on the road.

I contacted a person I knew had been looking for a nice prospect, and she was willing to consider hi, but she couldn't make it to the sale. I contacted a friend who I knew was going, and had experience bidding. My friend went to the sale, sent pictures of the horse through her phone to the buyer, and they took the colt home for under \$1500. He spent the winter with my friend, and ended up going home to the buyer the next year. He then embarked on a dressage career.

Harlem Town Miss Delta is a lovely mare that the owner had bred, by the gorgeous stallion Harlem Town, and she ended up in a partnership on the mare. Her partner wanted to sell, and they entered the mare in the first Robertson Sale. I warned her that the mare would end up Amish. She told me emphatically that her trainer had assured her that was not the case. That Sunday of the sale, she brought \$1700, and headed up to my area of the country. The woman was hysterical; she'd bred this mare, and she did not want her to disappear into a life on the road. I told her that I'd find her.

As fate would have it, the mare had been purchased by a broker for the Amish man I did most of my business with. He often ran horses back through Mel Hoovers catalog sale, and the mare was entered into the sale. We fundraised for the mare, and some other horses who were listed, through Team American Saddlebred, and went to the sale. "Delta" went back home to her breeder in Kentucky, to be enjoyed by the family.

Another time, I had been going through all of the stalls, before the sale, and making notes, as I always did. I opened the door to look at a handsome chestnut gelding who was a big three year old. He was a full brother to a World Champion five gaited horse. I held the book in my hands, and read his write up, and he touched his nose to the catalog, and then to my face. I was smitten. I dragged my friends over to meet him, and when I opened the stall door, and stepped in, he came over and touched my face again. One of my friends said, "what are you doing? You don't know that horse!" I said, "Yes I do. I know this horse." There was just something about him.

Just before it came time for him to go through the ring, a trainer friend of mine signaled to me to come and talk to the owners of a really nice mare that was for sale. Before leaving the stands, I asked one of my friends to bid on the gelding- and buy him for me. When time came for him to go through, she lost her nerve, and let him go.

Saturday night, everyone was loading up their new horses, and I was running around making sure everyone we'd purchased had a ride home, when I saw the truck with Christ Stoltzfus' horses in it parked in front of the barns. The semi was closed up, and packed full. I walked over to Christ, and said, "Hey, you bought this horse, and showed him the catalog page. What will you take for him?" We dickered, and made a deal, and I asked where the horse was in the truck. He told me he could give him a ride home, but "he might get a little banged up." Then I realized that the horses were packed like sardines, and tied to the wall of the trailer. No hay, no dividers. If one went down, they were done. When I told him what I thought of his shipping methods, the discussion became heated. I said, "Open up the truck, let's see where he is." When the back of the truck came open, there was Willoughby Wallaby Woo, looking right at me with that beautiful face, and I knew he was thinking, "you didn't forget me!" I said, "get him off of the truck."

When I walked back into the barn, leading my newly purchased horse, a trainer ran up and threw her arms around me and said, "YOU are MY hero!" I thought, well as long as I am HIS hero, and then started to worry about how I was going to get him home. In 2003, he beat an approved warmblood stallion in hand at Dressage at Devon, in front of Hilda Gurney. As a weanling, he was fifth at Louisville in hand. An athlete is an athlete, they say. He now calls the gal who was afraid to bid, his Mom, and lives back in Kentucky.

After acquiring several very well bred mares, by notable stallions, I realized that one mare, in particular, would cross very well on a popular stallion, and made a deal to breed the mare. That foal became a Reserve World Champion in 2006, and I was thrilled to be the breeder, and co-owner, of one of the horses who found glory on the green shavings of Louisville.

In 2005 and 2006, we did an American Saddlebred breed demonstration at the Spring Devon Horse Show. An iconic presence on Philadelphia's Main Line, the show attracts the top hunters and jumpers in the country, as well as having Saddlebred and Hackney classes. The show horse trainers were incredibly supportive of the venture. The first year we put six horses in the ring; a combination of show horses and sport horses. The second year, we did it with twelve, in three sections, with a grand finale where all of the horses, wearing red, white and blue bunting around their necks. The horses went into the ring with Rock music playing. The first section was Sweet Emotion, by Aerosmith, the second was Jump, by Van Halen. We finished with "Proud to be an American".

It was a nightmare to organize. The show horses were all on the grounds, for the show, and the demo was the day before the Saddlebred divisions started, so many of them were happy to get their horse into the ring, under the lights, to work. The sport horse people had to drop what they were doing in their lives, and show up, just because they loved their horses and wanted to support the breed. They came from as far away as North Carolina. The second year, one of the horses was a gelding who I had taken in when he was a yearling, and who had been rehomed to an event rider. It was simply awesome to see him all grown up, and jumping around the fences in the Dixon Oval, showing people what the breed could do. We had combined driving horses, dressage horses, and eventers, along with western pleasure horses, harness horses, country pleasure horses, and gaited horses, all in the same ring.

We rehearsed the night before, and we only had that night to get it right. I gave a script to the announcer. After the first year, I decided that the script needed be short and sweet, and we'd let the horses and the music sell it. When Sweet Emotion came through the loud speakers, a friend of mine told me that everyone standing around him on the rail got interested. Then, the announcer turned down the music, so he could repeat my short script. He did this over and over, and we couldn't hear our cues. I have never been prouder to be a part of a group of people; that they showed up, and did us proud. By the time

the first strains of Proud to be an American came though, I was practically in tears. What it lacked in production, it made up for in spirit. At least, that is what I told myself as I made the rounds handing out flutes of champagne to the participants. I also determined that it was a great thing for people to do around the country, to present our breed's diversity to the show world. As long as I didn't have to do it.

The American Saddlebred is a breed in crisis. For the year 2015, as I write this, the American Saddlebred Registry reports that 963 horses have been registered. Since 2007, we have not registered over 2500 foals in any given year. These numbers are simply not sustainable, and while the old guard in the breed wanted to believe that the "show horse", the "Peacock of the Show Ring" would somehow find resurgence, the reality has come home to us; the show horse buying public isn't seeking enough of these horses to make breeding them viable, and we have no alternative markets, and so our numbers tumble. Whether it is the image of show shoes, or set tails, perception of higher costs, or other indeterminate factors, we are failing the horses. But more than that, in the over 40 years that I have loved, adored and breathed this breed, there has never been any proactive, managed plan to support the diversity of the breed, and therefore create an outlet for each and every American Saddlebred that is born. I love this breed in all of its forms- from the show ring, to the dressage ring. I simply love the horses.

To look at the numbers yet another way, in 2014, there were 2766 mares reported bred. In 2015, only 963 foals were registered. Therefore, of the 2766 mares bred, fewer than 35% of the live foals produced were registered. Many breeders have made it a practice to not register their young stock until they are sure that they will have a future in the show ring. Why? Well, of course it saves money, and beyond that, they see no value in horses whose lives will be outside of the traditional show ring having their heritage. Since the ASR doesn't require microchipping, unlike every breed registry in Europe, and The Jockey Club, beginning in 2017, most horses without their papers, and those who were never registered have no hope of having value anywhere but on the road, where they have value only as long as they can hold up to the work. The ASHA and ASR will continue to bring in less and less income through registration, and futurity programs, as these numbers continue to dwindle.

Futurities function with the idea that you can win a whole lot of money with your colt, as a foal. But then, what do you do with them? People like Louise Gilliland, of Winsdown Farm, have been beyond brilliant in producing horses who can win in hand, and then working with them to allow them to have futures as performance horses. Many of her horses have gone on to have wonderful lives as sport horses, but she is an exception.

When reviewing the numbers for the All American Cup, our largest and most successful futurity by dollars, I looked at one year, determined which breedings had actually produced foals, how many of those had actually made the AAC

weanling class, and of all the foals produced, how many actually went on to have show careers by the time that they were four years of age. The numbers were abysmal. It isn't that these breedings aren't producing quality stock. The issue is that they aren't producing that tiny percentage of horses who meet the criteria for today's show ring, which has been established by the judges- most of whom are also trainers.

The problem is much larger than one futurity; the breeders of these horses need to be supported, or most simply cannot continue, and the horses need to be able to be marketed to high quality long term homes. I found many former futurity colts among the horses that I had my hands on in the Amish country. To create a bunch of horses who have no possibility of a future in the show ring is not only completely fiscally irresponsible; it is a welfare issue. Even in the best case, with the best quality care, life on the Amish road is hard, and of limited duration. We have a breed that is easily useful into their 20's, except on