



# How Do You Say Goodbye?

I can't remember the first time I saw Strawfly Special, but I do remember the last. It was early evening when we walked into the stallion barn. It may seem surprising, but Strawfly was never the first one to put his head out of his stall door to see who was coming to visit. He didn't have to. He knew that, no matter what, we always ended up in his stall.

No, the first head we always saw was Sign Of Lanty. Yes, we know he's not a stallion, but we decided to put him in the stud barn where it was quiet and where the stalls are bigger than in those in the training barn after discovering that 'The Champ' didn't like living outside. So, it was Lanty who got the first fist of carrots.

Then, it was on to see "The Horse," as Jerry always referred to him. I'm not even sure Jerry knew he rarely called him Strawfly. It was always "The Horse." In fact, I will never forget the words on the phone at 2:00 a.m. on August 10, 2004. "Dawn," Jerry said. "I'm taking the horse to the clinic." He never spoke his name. He never had to. I knew who he was talking about and the panic began.

But, on the night of our last visit there was no panic. Just giggles from Carter when Strawfly got his hand full of slobber, the sound of Madison's kisses landing on that pretty white

nose of his, and Strawfly's moans as Rhonda rubbed his massive chest. He was a little thinner than normal. That was the way Jerry wanted him just to help a bit with the foot problem we were trying to get him over. But, his eyes were the same with the usual kindness and the sparkle that they had. Those eyes. He had great eyes. They made anyone who looked in them smile. I think he passes those eyes on to his babies. We can see them out in the pasture and they can be spotted a mile away. You just know they're Strawfly's. You hear Janet and Betty talk about Tailor Fit and how kind and full of class he is, and you know he's a Strawfly.

How do you say goodbye to eyes like that? I'm not quite sure yet. I guess you take it one day at a time, like we did with Dad. Knowing that Dad's up there with Strawfly does make it a little easier. And, it makes you feel even better when Carter says, "Mom, I bet his feet don't hurt anymore." Still, we want him here with us, in his stall, in that barn that's now so different and so quiet without him. We want him in the wash rack where he would always try to give a little bite to his handler – not a hard bite, just a nibble to let us know who was the boss. We want him dancing – as we called it – to the breeding barn as Jerry walked him over so many times. We want to hear that pat on his rump from Doc after he was collected. What we hear now is sorrow and sympathy from many people – so many that we are overwhelmed with how many of us loved him. People who never even got the chance to see those eyes up close loved him and are just as heartbroken as we are.

But, those eyes are closed now and he is at rest. We buried him right in front of the office so he could be in the middle of the action just as he was in life.

We have so many people to thank for this great journey we were blessed to be on. Dad, of course, for being so stubborn and determined to buy Strawfly no matter what the cost. Jerry for his constant attention and love for him. Dr. Elchari for being one of the greatest vets we've ever come across. The boys who took such great care of him on a daily basis and who put up with all his playful antics. The night watch crew for their diligence – they have no idea how important they are. John Firth, his farrier, who worked so hard on him, especially during these last few months. The mare owners for putting their dreams of a Champion in him. The journalists who wrote so many great stories about him throughout his lifetime.

Most of all, we need to thank "The Horse." You gave us everything – every dream, every wish, every prayer. We just hope you enjoyed yourself as much as we enjoyed you. We were blessed to have you in our lives for as long as we did, and we thank God for that.

*Thank you for the great run!!!*

*Dawn R. List*

## "The Horse"

The Horse, two very simple words  
Singling out not just any horse but rather  
A horse of gigantic presence,  
prominence and respect  
The Horse, much more than mere words  
can convey

The Horse, carried himself with grace  
Dancing lightly across the ground  
As if the very air were the shock absorber  
between his hooves and the earth  
The Horse, with eyes burning bright

The Horse, bred in the purple  
The son of a Champion and  
Triple Crown Winner  
His dam a blacktype producer from an  
outstanding Blue Hen family  
The Horse, his pedigree gleaming in his  
sleek bay coat

The Horse, a runner through and through  
Winning eleven races, he banked a  
quarter-million  
A sire ranked among the leaders every  
season from his first crop to his last  
The Horse, one from only a handful of  
legendary stallions

The Horse, made his contribution  
Giving his heart and soul to the  
horsemen he knew as his  
And to his offspring, that look of eagles  
and graceful stride  
The Horse, only one so special might be  
known simply as "The Horse"

*by Robin Hofmann  
August 12, 2004*

## My Strawfly

Oh Strawfly, my Strawfly,  
my gentle friend,  
How will our heavy hearts  
ever mend?  
On the night you died,  
I saw a falling star,

Your great spirit calling from afar.  
Oh Strawfly, my Strawfly, my special friend,  
A message to all, this is not the end.  
For there will be another dawn,  
In your sons and daughters  
Your class and courage will carry on.

My friends don't be sad,  
No better place to live has any horse had.  
I was cared for and shown great love,  
I was treated as gentle as a dove.  
All good things must come to an end,  
But will our heavy hearts ever mend?  
Now you must all carry on,  
For there will be another dawn.

*Doc  
August 12, 2004*

