

SARATOGA  
THE TRAVERS  
STORY & PHOTOS BY: STEVE HEUERTZ

# SARATOGA & "It's A Dead Heat!" Travers 143



**D**escribing directions to Saratoga Race Course, Red Smith once wrote, “From New York City you drive north for about 175 miles, turn left on Union Avenue and go back 100 years.” Today’s world of GPS devices and Google Maps may lend many alternate routes, however no matter which is chosen, the final destination is always a step back in time.

*Counter-clockwise from above: One year after its inaugural meet, Saratoga moved across the street to establish its permanent location; Turbulent Descent focuses on the task at hand prior to the start of The Ballerina (Gr. 1); Capturing her fourth career Grade 1 victory, Turbulent Descent wins The Ballerina with John Velazquez up; Zagora and jockey Ramon Dominguez fly around the Saratoga inner turf course while winning The Ballston Spa (Gr. 2) in track record time; Alan Garcia guides New York bred, Willy Beamin, to win The Foxwoods King’s Bishop (Gr. 1) a mere three days after the duo won the Albany Stakes at Saratoga; After a slow start, Contested, with Rafael Bejarano up, rallies late to win the The Test (Gr. 1);*



For many, Saratoga is an annual pilgrimage that reminds us of what once was, when life seemed simpler and the horse was the embodiment of that reality. Today, little has changed at Saratoga and every summer in late July it reopens its gates and allows people the chance to capture the experiences previous generations were afforded.

Join this pilgrimage and photo journey (August 23-26, 2012) back to a place where the horse is king and time has chosen to ignore.

## Past & Present



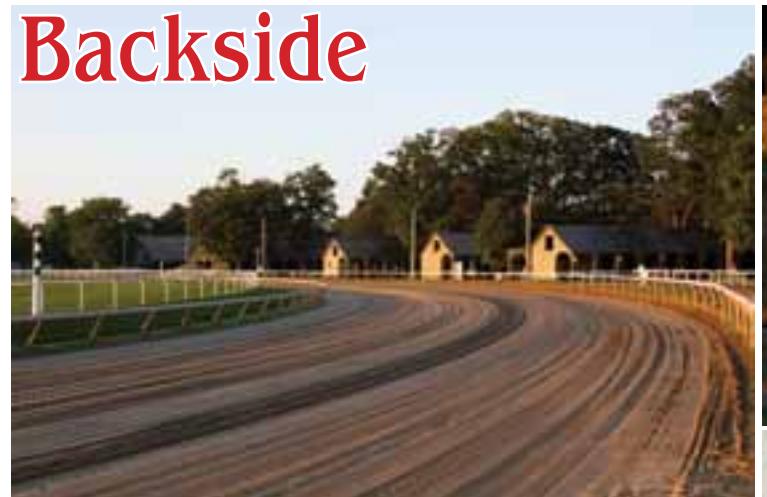
Clockwise from top: The wares of a barn on the main track backstretch; Taking a bath is part of the daily routine in the life of a racehorse; Every horse knows there is nothing like a good roll to get nice and dirty after a bath; A summer sunset's warm glow retells the timelessness of Saratoga; Hotwalking after a morning workout; Although no longer used to stable horses, places such as barn 43 (possibly part of the original track from 1863) have a presence and remind us that Saratoga is history... and Man o' War once walked here; The Horse Haven Track near the Oklahoma Training Track is a remnant or the original track used during the first Saratoga race meet in 1863. Appearing to be nothing more than a simple unpaved oval-shaped road, many people will walk down its path and not realize the storied treasure beneath their feet;

## The Spa

At the height of the American Civil War and one month after the Battle of Gettysburg, Saratoga Race Course held its inaugural meet in America’s first resort town, named for its naturally occurring mineral springs, Saratoga Springs, NY. Beginning on August 3, 1863 and lasting only four days, the meet was held at the old Saratoga Trotting Course. Known today as Horse Haven, it is a remnant of the original track and still exists on Saratoga’s Oklahoma backstretch. The inaugural meet was successful and on August 26, 1863, the Saratoga Racing Association was formed to develop the future of Saratoga or “The Spa” as it would later become nicknamed.

That following year Saratoga moved across Union Avenue to its present location. While the first meet lasted only four days, the Saratoga race meet has since evolved to one of the most prestigious in American racing and lasts a total of 40 days beginning each year in late July and ending in early September. Racing at Saratoga is so grand that in 2012, the tracks 149th year, a total of 54 stakes races were held

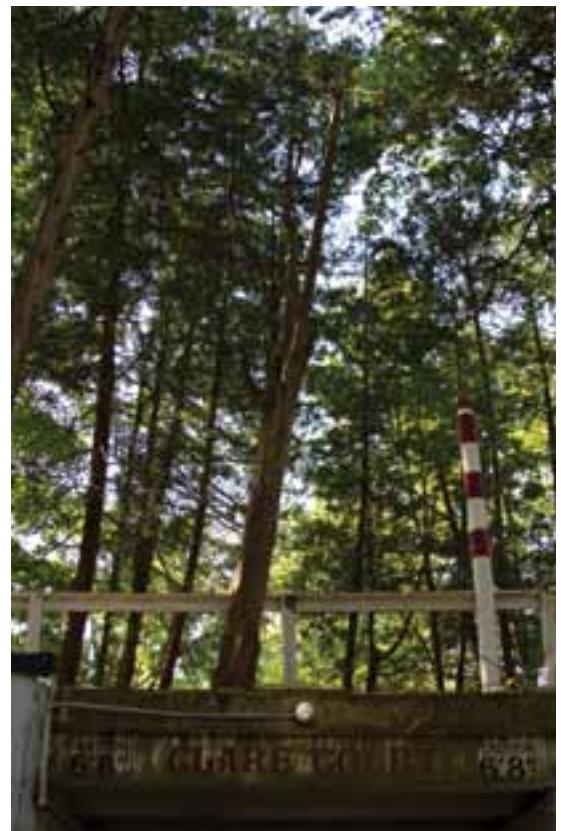
# Backside



Clockwise from top: The historic Oklahoma Training Track and a few of its neighboring barns; Enjoying a bite to eat in a true Horse Haven; Horses enjoy the Saratoga scene and realize it likely didn't look much different even 100 years ago

of which 35 were of the graded variety. To put this in perspective, many entire states have either a small handful or altogether no graded stakes races while Saratoga itself has four Grade 3's, 15 Grade 2's and an astonishing 16 Grade 1's (the highest level of American racing). In fact, on Travers weekend alone, there was one Grade 2 and five Grade 1 races (all of which are captured photographically within this article).

Likely due to the tremendous competition yielded at its high class racing meet, Saratoga has been the site of many historic defeats of great horses including Man o' War, Secretariat and Gallant Fox. Subsequently, Saratoga earned the title "The Graveyard of Champions" as races at the historic venue truly present some of the toughest challenges any horse might ever encounter.



*L to R: Trees canopy Clare Court and the main track backstretch; Clare Court, on the main track backstretch was built in 1902 to be August Belmont Jr.'s (Man o' War's breeder) private training facility.*

# Clare Court



Aside from the action on the main track, Saratoga is also known for its legendary Oklahoma Training Track that sits close to the site of the original meet. Here, every morning beginning at 5:30am, horses emerge from rustic barns and set foot on the track to train amidst a spectacular foggy backdrop that epitomizes the soul of the Saratoga experience.

Today, "The Spa" remains the oldest modern sports venue in the United States and continues to observe many of its traditions from years past including charms such as allowing anyone to reserve their seat by merely leaving a newspaper upon it. In one year, Saratoga will celebrate its 150th anniversary with the hope that the next 150 years will be as wonderful as the first.

# Hall of Fame



*Left to right above: The National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame resides in Saratoga Springs, NY just across the street from Saratoga Race Course. Each year new members are inducted into the Hall of Fame which recognizes the greatest horses, jockeys and trainers to ever participate within the sport of Thoroughbred Racing. A statue of the great racehorse, Seabiscuit, sits outside to welcome fans to enter; Within the Museum and Hall of Fame's courtyard, a statue of Secretariat honors the legendary horse*

# "Oklahoma"



*Clockwise: Around the turn and through the fog. Early mornings at the Oklahoma Training Track are known for their hazy backdrop that is another token of the Saratoga setting; Early to rise and off to work at the Oklahoma Training Track; Appreciating another morning at Saratoga's Oklahoma Training Track; Opened in 1904, the Oklahoma Training Track sits across Union Avenue from the main track. The name "Oklahoma" came from the perception that it felt like a long way from the main track*

## The Mosstest Hoss That Ever Was

Forever linked together, the presence of Man o' War is felt at Saratoga. From the winding pathway that is Man o' War Way to the affectionately named Big Red Spring and the Travers trophy that is named the Man o' War Cup, it is clear that Man o' War was and remains part of Saratoga.

Sired by the mighty Fair Play and out of the dam Mahubah, Man o' War was born March 29, 1917. Bred and originally owned by August Belmont Jr., Man o' War found his way to Saratoga when he was sold at the 1918 yearling sale to Samuel Riddle for \$5,000. One year later, Man o' War would begin a career that catapulted him into the racing stratosphere.

Man o' War, who was nicknamed "Big Red" or just "Red" due to his bright chestnut coat, raced a total of 21 times (six at Saratoga), winning 20 and finishing second just once. His lone loss came as a two-year-old in the Sanford Memorial Stakes at...Saratoga. To this day there are multiple opinions as to why Red lost. While some believe his jockey,

Johnny Loftus, purposely lost the race, others claim Man o' War was facing the wrong direction when the race started (there were no starting gates in 1919, instead horses lined up behind a long thin net called the "barrier" that was lifted to start the race). Nonetheless, although closing fast, and by some accounts taking the lead shortly after the finish, Man o' War lost the Sanford by ½ length. That day, the horse that beat Man o' War was the appropriately named, Upset.

Still, the Big Red horse would set the racing world on fire. During his illustrious career Man o' War won prestigious races including the Hopeful Stakes, Preakness, Belmont Stakes, Travers and Jockey Club Gold Cup among many others. His other accomplishments include setting eight speed records, winning

one race by an astonishing 100 lengths and defeating the first Triple Crown winner, Sir Barton, in a match race. Many of these feats occurred while carrying significantly more weight than his opponents as a handicap measure.

# Man o' War Way



*Clockwise: Walking in the footsteps of legend, horses venture down Man o' War Way to enter the Saratoga paddock; The winding path of Man o' War Way; Watching the horses walk down Man o' War Way;*

Man o' War retired from racing at the end of 1920 and eventually entertained countless visitors at Riddle's Faraway Farm. There, he developed a bond with his devoted groom, Will Harbut, who famously said of Man o' War, "he's just the mosstest hoss that ever was." Red was extremely successful at stud and sired a Triple Crown winner, War Admiral. Even in retirement, Big Red's fame was so profound that his 21st birthday celebration was nationally broadcast via radio.

On November 1, 1947 Man o' War died at the age of 30 years old. He is believed to be the first horse ever to be embalmed and his funeral was broadcast on national radio. Today, he is buried at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, KY.

In 1999, The Blood-Horse named Man o' War #1 on the Top 100 Race-

## The People



*Clockwise from above left: Fans enjoy breakfast at Saratoga while watching the horses workout in the morning; As a historical resort town and summer destination, Saratoga Springs, NY brings out a classic style in many; Happiness is destined to ensue when you befriend a horse; A painter depicts his version of the Saratoga paddock; Attempting to do a little handicapping and pick the Travers winner; Fans gather in anticipation of a race*

horses of the 20th Century.

### The Travers

The Travers is a \$1,000,000 Grade 1 Thoroughbred race run at 1 ¼ miles on dirt that, much like the three races that make up the Triple Crown, is restricted to three-year-olds. In fact, some even refer to the Travers as the "Fourth Jewel of the Triple Crown."

Initially first run in 1864, the race is named after the original president



*Clockwise from top: A run down the Saratoga backstretch; Turning for home horses hear the cheers that urge them to victory; One of the main entrances to the track. Jockey statues are painted to recognize each of the Grade 1 race winners from the previous year's meet. In 2012 there were 16 Grade 1 Races run at the 40 day Saratoga meet; A statue in the Saratoga paddock immortalizes 1993 Travers winner, Sea Hero; An outrider and lead pony guide horse and jockey to the starting gate; A lead pony donning a Saratoga*

## The Beauty



of the Saratoga Racing Association, William Travers and is the oldest stakes race for three-year-olds in American Thoroughbred Racing. In the 148 years since its inception, the Travers has been run in all but six years (1896, 1898-1900, 1911 and 1912).

The race is the centerpiece of the prestigious Saratoga meet and is often referred to as "The Mid-Summer Derby." Each year the Travers winner is awarded the Man o' War Cup and the owner's silks are subsequently painted on a jockey statue that resides in the Saratoga paddock and a canoe that floats on a pond in the infield.

Notable horse to win the Travers include William Travers own horse, Kentucky, who won the first edition of the race in 1864, Hin-

# The Atmosphere

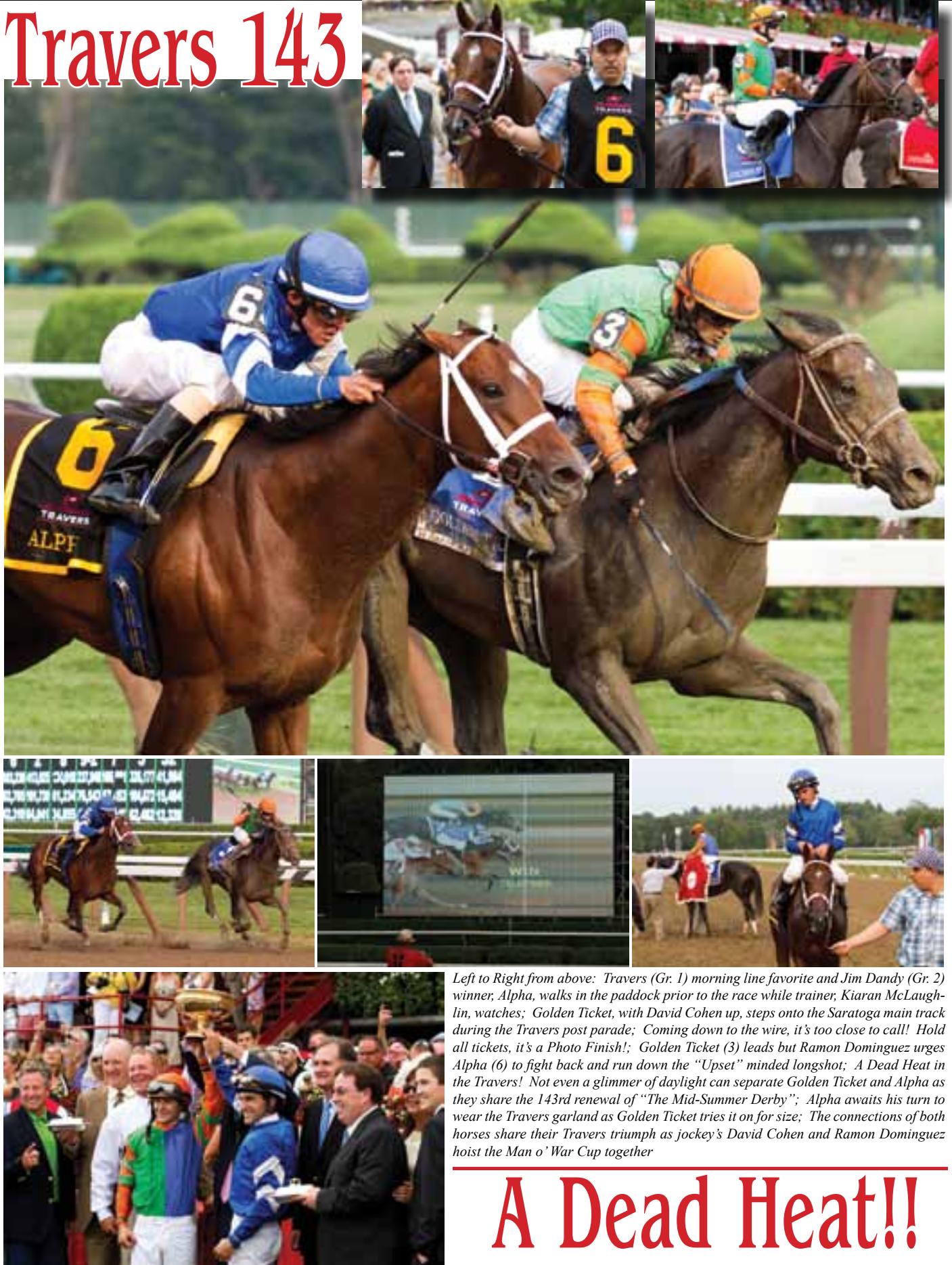


*Left to Right from above: Flying around the clubhouse turn; Stopping for directions; Strumming a few notes for the patrons; Watching a race from the picnic area behind the grandstand; Either a jockey in the making or maybe just having a little Saratoga fun; Sam the Bugler calls the horses to the post prior to each race at Saratoga; Big Red Spring (named after Man o' War), near the Saratoga paddock. The name Saratoga Springs, NY is derived from the existence of mineral springs in the region*

doo (1881), Man o' War (1920), Native Dancer (1953), Sword Dancer (1959), Buckpasser (1966), Damascus (1967), Alydar (1978), Easy Goer (1989), Holy Bull (1994) and Point Given (2001). However, only one horse in history has been able to win the Triple Crown and complete the "superfecta" with a win in the Travers. Whirlaway accomplished this remarkable feat for the legendary Calumet Farm in 1941.

Despite the changes in the three-year-old division, eleven other horses sought their own opportunity for stardom with a potential victory in the Travers. Fresh off his win in the Jim Dandy (Gr. 2) at Saratoga (the local prep for the Travers), Alpha was installed as the 5-2 morning line favorite and looked the role of Travers champion as he was part of that original group that spoke of depth in the division earlier in the year.

# Travers 143



*Left to Right from above: Travers (Gr. 1) morning line favorite and Jim Dandy (Gr. 2) winner, Alpha, walks in the paddock prior to the race while trainer, Kieran McLaughlin, watches; Golden Ticket, with David Cohen up, steps onto the Saratoga main track during the Travers post parade; Coming down to the wire, it's too close to call! Hold all tickets, it's a Photo Finish!; Golden Ticket (3) leads but Ramon Dominguez urges Alpha (6) to fight back and run down the "Upset" minded longshot; A Dead Heat in the Travers! Not even a glimmer of daylight can separate Golden Ticket and Alpha as they share the 143rd renewal of "The Mid-Summer Derby"; Alpha awaits his turn to wear the Travers garland as Golden Ticket tries it on for size; The connections of both horses share their Travers triumph as jockey's David Cohen and Ramon Dominguez hoist the Man o' War Cup together*

# A Dead Heat!!

# Travers Tradition



*Left to Right: Traditionally, the Travers winning horse has their owner's silks painted on a jockey statue that resides in the Saratoga paddock. This year a second statue had to be recruited to recognize the Travers twosome; Like the jockey statue, the Travers winner has their owner's silks painted on this canoe within the Saratoga infield. A second canoe will be added to the pond this year to honor both horses*

# Personal Ensign



*Above: 2011 3-Year-Old Female Eclipse Award winner, Royal Delta, is saddled by her Hall of Fame trainer, Bill Mott, prior to the start of The Personal Ensign Invitational (Gr. 1); And they're off in the Personal Ensign! As the field breaks from the gate, It's Tricky (1) takes a bad step and stumbles. It's Tricky is able to safely regain her footing and rally to finish 3rd in the race despite her troubled start*



*Love and Pride is the darling of the Personal Ensign as she wins it with John Velazquez up*

## Until Next Year...

On September 3, 2012, the Saratoga race meet concluded, just over one week after the dramatic Travers dead heat. The delightfully sweet 40-day race meet is a magic elixir that leaves you satisfied yet perpetually craving your next bite. Still, while the gates close and the horses and people move elsewhere, the memories of a Saratoga summer live within the hearts of many and provide a little extra warmth during those coldest of winter days. That is, until next July, when that cold is long gone and for the 150th time Saratoga will once again embark on a journey back in time.

### Steve Heuertz Bio

*It started with a horse named Cowboy. Disregarded and discounted, this nine-year-old Red Dun Quarter Horse left his life as a ranch horse in South Dakota and ventured a new path into the life of Steve Heuertz in 2004. Shortly thereafter, a bond was formed that fully catapulted Steve into the world of the horse where he became fascinated with the wonderful capabilities of this majestic animal.*

*Of particular interest were the speed, endurance and competitive spirit demonstrated by the equine heroes within the sport of Thoroughbred Racing. Although initially satisfied with observing from afar, Steve became increasingly captivated by the sport and turned toward capturing the splendor of racing via his other passion, photography. The result was a recipe where he could combine his great love for horses, racing and photography into one harmonious blend that was greater than the sum of its parts.*

*Since then, racing has taken Steve across the country to such wonderful places as Saratoga Race Course, Churchill Downs, Santa Anita Park, Pimlico, Belmont Park, Keeneland and Hooiser Park. During these travels, Steve has been fortunate to witness and photograph equally wonderful races such as the Kentucky Derby, Preakness and Belmont Stakes (racing's famed Triple Crown) as well as the Travers, Santa Anita Derby, Indiana Derby and the Breeders' Cup. However, residing in the Chicago suburb of St. Charles, IL, Steve regularly frequents Arlington Park and Hawthorne Race Course where he has enjoyed capturing magnificent races like the Arlington Million and Hawthorne Gold Cup.*

*Today, Steve's passion for horses, racing and photography is like a fire that continues to be stoked. While either behind the lens capturing the thrill of a Grade 1 race or in the saddle loping around a field with Cowboy, Steve has learned to operate under the simple truth that the more he is able to involve the horse in his life, the happier his days become.*

and McPeek though wouldn't witness a repeat of the 1874 outcome. Instead, today they would become more than childhood friends as they now became linked as the two trainers to finish in a dead heat in one of America's most historic and prestigious races. For McLaughlin, he had Alpha to thank for this honor and for McPeek, the same gratitude owed to Golden Ticket.

Prior to the Travers, people were wondering what might have been had the likes of I'll Have Another, Union Rags, Bodemesiter, Hansen or Paynter made the race. However, 2 1/2 minutes afterward, as horse racing often does, there were no more wishes or regrets. No, those feelings had been replaced by the realization that what had just been witnessed was a far greater imagination.

*Steve Heuertz: Steve's horse and loyal friend, Cowboy, a 17-year-old, Red Dun Quarter Horse*

