

7 Special HORSES

FAMOUS HORSES WHO'VE TOUCHED OUR LIVES.



By Elizabeth Kaye McCall

THEY'VE GALLOPED INTO HEARTS and minds, from films and fields and pages of books. Whether born of fiction or real-life legends, some horses are so distinctive they become part of the human story. In Part I of *C&I's* Famous Horses series, we present seven who have the timeless quality of all great equines: the power to make life better.



THE PIE

In many ways, it was a horse who first brought an exquisite 11-year-old actress named Elizabeth Taylor to the public's attention, propelling her into stardom and forever changing her life. In her first starring role, as Velvet Brown in the 1944 film *National Velvet*, the young girl whose violet eyes would entrance millions for decades to come climbed aboard a chestnut Thoroughbred horse named The Pie (for his piebald color). Velvet, the heroine from the 1935 novel by Enid Bagnold, eventually rides to victory in England's greatest racing event, the Grand National Steeplechase. And Elizabeth Taylor rode into our hearts.

It was the horse who brought her to our attention, and it was Taylor who brought King Charles to the attention of Hollywood. She met the show hunter and jumper, who was trained by world-famous horseman Egon Merz, at the Riviera Country Club in West Los Angeles when the owner offered to let Taylor ride him. The young actress's fondness for the horse eventually got King Charles (sometimes erroneously identified as the grandson of Man O' War) a part in the classic. A girl and her horse was a time-honored

convention even then, but the story's focus on the power of the animal-human bond in *National Velvet* was decades ahead of its time, as was its storyline of an ordinary young girl whose dedication allowed her to accomplish an extraordinary feat. The experience of making the film with the horse would forever affect Taylor, well beyond the permanent injury to her back suffered in a fall.

"The relationship between King Charles, the horse's real name, and me was so special," Taylor told *Cowboys & Indians* through her spokesperson at The Elizabeth Taylor HIV/AIDS Foundation. "He was given to me on the last day of shooting and it is a memory that I cherish. There never was a sweeter, more noble animal, and caring for him was a great source of responsibility and happiness. We trusted each other. We loved each other. He lived at stables in Pacific Palisades, California, and I rode and visited him whenever I could. Every little girl deserves the kind of miracle experience that I enjoyed while doing *National Velvet* and bonding with that magnificent soul. My heart still swells whenever I think of him, and I still do—often."

And so do millions who have been touched by the book and the movie—and the horse—that made Elizabeth Taylor famous.



TRIGGER

In 1942 Republic Studios declared Roy Rogers the King of the Cowboys. He became an American western icon indelibly linked to his golden palomino stallion Trigger. “There are all kinds of stories about Trigger,” remarks Roy “Dusty” Rogers Jr., son of the famed western star. “He was housebroken, so they could take him into any theater. They even used to put rubber shoes on him and once took him into the freight elevator at Children’s Hospital...right up to the ward where the kids were,” says Rogers, who is based in Branson, Missouri, where the Roy Rogers Family Trust is located. “The kids would get a chance to pet him and Dad would run through a few tricks—in those days there were so many kids with polio.”

Trained by the late Glenn Randall Sr. (who was also the horse trainer for *Ben-Hur*), Trigger had a wide repertoire of tricks. Among the first horses to fly across the Atlantic (he traveled by ship to Hawaii), Trigger made a guest appearance in London. “He went right into the lobby of the hotel, up the stairs and into Mom and Dad’s room,” says Rogers. “He didn’t stay there, of course, but he walked

Trigger will be sold on July 14 or 15 in Manhattan at the High Noon & Christie’s Roy Rogers & Dale Evans Museum Sale (estimated price \$100,000–\$200,000), the final sale of the most important and iconic pieces from the now-closed museum. “Trigger looks regal,” says Linda Kohn Sherwood, co-owner of High Noon. “He’s an American icon. [Now] he’s going to a new home.” For more about the collection and sale, which also include Dale Evans’ horse Buttermilk and Bullet The Wonder Dog, see page 41.

right up the carpeted stairs. They could take him about anywhere he could fit under a doorway. He was only about 15½ hands high.

“Trigger had kind of a sense of humor,” says Rogers. “Dad had made this crouper mount I don’t know how many times, and he would always say, ‘Stand, Trigger.’ One time I guess Trigger saw him coming and just as Dad started to put his hands on the rear end to jump up into the saddle, Trigger moved and Dad ran into the fence!”

“Dad did all his 88 movies and 104 half-hour shows on that same horse. He was an amazing horse. We could walk underneath him and hang onto his tail. He was terrific around children, which was kind of unusual for a stallion.” Trigger was a stallion until his death at 33 in 1965. “When he passed away, for my dad it was like losing one of the kids. It was really bad,” recalls Rogers. “Dad couldn’t tell anybody. Finally, about a year later, he told us, and by then, of course, he’d had him beautifully mounted.”

THE BLACK STALLION

“The budget on *The Black Stallion* wouldn’t even pay for most TV commercials these days,” says Tim Farley, son of the late author Walter Farley, whose vision of a wild black horse, a boy, and their amazing journey has touched millions around the globe for nearly 70 years. Partially penned on a kitchen table when the author was just 16, the story grew into 30 novels in 22 countries, three motion pictures, the *Arabian Nights* theatrical dinner attraction in Orlando, Florida (where the official Walter Farley’s Black Stallion performs live nightly), and a vibrant program from the Black Stallion Literacy Foundation that combines reading books and actual horse visits. The literacy project has also translated Farley’s once out-of-print *Little Black, A Pony* into Navajo.

As for the Black Stallion’s life-altering influence, consider the story of Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, president of the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), the international





horse sport organization overseeing the World Equestrian Games in Lexington, Kentucky, and daughter of the late King Hussein of Jordan. Sharing some personal insights with the local *Lexington Herald-Leader* newspaper about the impact of Walter Farley's *Black Stallion* books on her early life, the princess said that as a sleepless child following her mother's death, the novels were a source of consolation. It was Walter Farley's books, she said, that led her to the horse country of the United States. www.theblackstallion.com.

Debuting in June: the brand-new Al-Marah Arabian Horse Galleries at Lexington's Kentucky Horse Park. The museum features The Black Stallion Experience, a 326-square-foot exhibit devoted to Walter Farley's beloved classic that includes five giant step-inside "books," each devoted to a theme. Visitors can also see artifacts and memorabilia belonging to Farley, along with a working captain's wheel, harking back to the horse's dramatic sea voyage. There are movie clips, too, from the 1979 Francis Ford Coppola film: of the Black Stallion being fed sugar cubes before the ship capsizes, and of the famous ride on the beach where a young Kelly Reno, portraying Alec, gallops on the Arabian stallion Cass-Olé (who was trained by the late legendary Hollywood horse trainer Corky Randall, whose father, Glenn Randall Sr., trained Trigger). *The Black Stallion Returns* section features more film clips from the 1983 sequel, and a section based on *The Black Stallion and the Girl* uses the Hopeful Farms theme to teach aspects of farm management and horse racing. The last part of the exhibit, devoted to Walter Farley's beloved *Little Black Pony* series, allows children to act out the Black Stallion of their imagination with wooden toys created by an Ohio model maker. www.purebredarabiantrust.com/galleries_info.asp.



SECRETARIAT (1970–89)

In 1973, Secretariat became one of the biggest sports and news stories of the year when he blazed to a Triple Crown win with a 31-length record-setting 1.5-mile time in the Belmont Stakes. In a single week, he appeared on the cover of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Sports Illustrated*. But Secretariat was a superhorse for reasons beyond his race record (a record that still stands, by the way). When he was autopsied after his death, it was discovered that his heart was more than two times the size of a normal Thoroughbred's.

Secretariat was never a long shot, but the woman who owned him was. If Penny Chenery hadn't taken over her father's Meadow Racing Stable when his health failed and jumped into a male-dominated business, would "Big Red" (Secretariat's nickname) have fulfilled his destiny? Secretariat started his career by losing his maiden race. He lost three more in his third year: Woodward Stakes, Whitney Stakes, and the Wood Memorial, yet he clearly wasn't meant for coming in behind. "They said after each loss he would go into his stall and literally sulk," says Leonard Lusk, president of Secretariat.com.

This fall, Walt Disney Pictures' *Secretariat* will hit the big screen with Diane Lane as Chenery; John Malkovich as Lucien Laurin, the veteran trainer behind Secretariat's career; and real-life jockey Otto Thorwarth as Ron Turcotte, Secretariat's Triple Crown-winning jockey. "There's a great scene with Diane Lane watching the Belmont Stakes," Lusk says. "If you look to Diane's right, also in the crowd, there's Miss Chenery. It's a cool moment to see the real Penny and the Hollywood Penny." www.secretariat.com.

POKEY

The year an 80-foot-tall Gumby showed up in the Hollywood Christmas Parade, with creator Art Clokey and his son, Joe, traveling alongside in a car, people screamed out, "Where's Pokey?" nearly every block that they passed. One of the great duos of all time, Pokey and Gumby became the Laurel and Hardy of clay animation when the orange clay pony pal debuted in the 1956 *Gumby* episode "The Little Lost Pony." Joe, now president of Clokey Productions/Premavision explains: "Pokey was born because my dad wanted Gumby to have a best friend. They were opposites in personality. Pokey was more of a realist and Gumby was an idealist." The grandfather of clay animation, Art Clokey (who died in January) created a world of adventures for the two friends, which found Pokey spouting the phrase "Holy Toledo!" and yearning for ice cream cone jaunts. (Pokey didn't freeze up like Gumby did).

"My dad's personality was a lot like Pokey's. He was more skeptical about things," Joe says. Art was also the voice of Pokey. "What you do is speed it up on the tape recorder and my dad's voice naturally becomes Pokey's voice. We were in the recording studio about six years ago and switched the knobs. It was like Pokey was alive and talking."



If you're headed to Lexington for the World Equestrian Games this fall, check out the Secretariat Look-Alike Contest on October 2 at the Bourbon County Secretariat Festival in nearby historic Paris, Kentucky. The \$5,000 cash prize is split among three ringers for "Big Red." The winner of the 2008 contest appears in the upcoming Disney feature film *Secretariat*.



TOP: Voted one of the top sports photos of all time, this shot captures Secretariat winning the Triple Crown at Belmont in 1973. **ABOVE:** Secretariat winning the Gotham Stakes as a colt ridden by Ron Turcotte in 1973. **LEFT:** Gumby creator Art Clokey's son, Joe, notes Pokey's smarts: "He has horse sense."



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After Gumby's initial heyday in the 1950s and '60s, there was a revival in the '80s and '90s. The reach of the clay duo was worldwide: According to Joe, Gumby and Pokey have been seen in some 140 countries, and soon, their fame could be even greater. "The scripts I'm working on include Pokey as a star just like he was in the 1950s."

Who will voice Pokey next? Nicolas Cage would be good, Joe says with a laugh, noting that the actor appeared on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* a few years ago, not only talking about Pokey, but ad-libbing in what he calls his "Pokey voice."

"The friendship between Gumby and Pokey is what made *Gumby* last these 50 years," Joe says. "What I like about Pokey is that he's smart. He has horse sense. He is the epitome of a best friend."
www.premavision.com.

MISTER ED

When MGM released the DVD collection *The Best of Mister Ed*, the incredible antics of a palomino horse who spoke only to his owner were preserved for future connoisseurs of acting equines. The 1960s sitcom, filmed in black-and-white with a hilarious script and now-quaint portrayals of life at the time (the wife fixes lunch), starred Alan Young as architect Wilbur Post and a former parade horse as the talking Mister Ed.

Originally named Bamboo Harvester, the horse was purchased for \$1,500. "Two days later, his name was officially changed to Mister Ed and he was gelded—a procedure that happens to many of us when we enter show business," jokes Young in his 2007 memoir, *Mister Ed and Me and More!*

The voice behind the talking horse was Allan "Rocky" Lane's. Before effectively becoming Mister Ed, Lane had been a studio leading man and the star of many cowboy B-movies in the '40s and '50s. Lane's identity was initially a secret, and Mister Ed was credited on the show with the line "Mister Ed, Played by Himself." The credit line stuck. And so did the theme song: "A horse is a horse, of course, of course...."

But Ed wasn't any horse, of course. He commuted to the studio in a custom trailer driven by his trainer Lester (Les) Hilton, who worked for Will Rogers as a young man. "I lived rather close to where Ed lived, so I'd follow behind. People would honk," says Young, who admits to fabricating the story that it was peanut butter under the horse's lip that made him "talk."

"The big trick was to make him *stop* doing tricks. [Lester] had to train him *not* to pick up the phone





until he cued him." A "perfect animal" in Young's assessment, "Ed always got it right on the first take." And it was human error behind the rare mishap, like the scene when Mister Ed had to nudge Wilbur's arm and then pick up the phone. By the third take (actor errors), the horse was confused. "The phone rang; he nudged the phone and picked up my arm," says Young, whose yell scared Mister Ed. It took 15 minutes to get the normally unflappable horse back on the set.

Among Mister Ed's many admirable attributes, Young notes, "He never went to the bathroom onstage."

When *Mister Ed* stopped shooting in 1966, ending its five-year run on CBS, the palomino star had earned four PATSY Awards (the animal-performer's Oscar) and a life of retirement with his trainer. Translated into eight languages, *Mister Ed* still airs worldwide and is especially popular in horse-loving Australia. www.mister-ed.tv.

SCAMPER (AND HIS CLONE, CLAYTON)

When Gills Bay Boy was bought from a cowboy at the feedlot by a dad for his daughter, little did the cowboys know that there was a future world champion in their midst. The horse was given to an 11-year-old horsewoman who would grow up to be the one and only Charmayne James. Despite the horse's contrary reputation, he and the girl hit it off. As James' father put it, the horse could "scamper" around the barrels. The nickname stuck. From 1984 to 1993, Scamper and James (above) won 10 Women's Professional Rodeo Association World Championships, making James the all-time leading money



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earner in barrel racing and the first million-dollar cowgirl. She was 14 when they earned the first title; Scamper was 7.

An American Quarter Horse gelding at the top of his game for 10 years, Scamper could do just about anything—but reproduce. James handled that. Scamper, now 33, is cloned. Clayton, the clone (above), will be 4 in August. "It was an unusual decision that wasn't made overnight," says James. "We wanted to further the bloodlines that were lost. This was an unbelievable athlete mentally, physically, and the genetics and bloodline were lost. The mother is dead."

American Quarter Horse Association rules do not presently allow clones to be registered, and James isn't planning to try to duplicate Scamper's competition career with Clayton, a stallion. Still, James keenly tracks their similarities: "There's a place when you run your hand up behind his ears; they both move their head from side to side, exactly the same way," she says. They are also both alpha horses. "They have met, and Scamper does not like him in any shape or form."

It seems like a story Hollywood would jump on, and, in fact, there's a screenplay by Jeanne Rosenberg (*The Black Stallion*, *White Fang*) based on James' career with Scamper. "So many people don't realize what he did and his longevity," James says. "The more horses I see, the more I'm aware that Scamper's greater than we thought in what he did and what he accomplished." www.charmaynejames.com, www.breedtoclayton.com.

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