



The  
New York Racing Association

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A Short History



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## Chapter 1

### Welcome to The New York Racing Association

On a crisp autumn afternoon in 1954, John Hanes began formulating an idea that would trigger a renaissance in New York thoroughbred racing.

For the most part, the prominent horse owner and member of the Jockey Club traveled to the New York metropolitan area's thoroughbred tracks in a chauffeur-driven limousine. Once at the track, he would sit in a box.

But on this day, Hanes was on a fact-finding mission to find out what it was like for most guests to visit the track. So he took the train to Belmont Park. Roaming the grandstand, he looked for a decent lunch and a good seat. He found neither. Nor could he even get near the paddock for an up-close view of the horses. "It was useless," Hanes told *Sports Illustrated* of his experience. "I never once got to a hot-dog stand, or to a \$2 window, or close to a horse—or within range of a comfortable seat."

What Hanes learned that day in 1954 was revealing. Despite New York's status as the nation's leading racing circuit, the facilities at the four major thoroughbred tracks—Belmont as well as Saratoga Race Course, Aqueduct Race Track and Jamaica Race Course—were deteriorating. Meantime, increasingly lean purses were compromising the proud tradition of the tracks in New York.

### The Roots of Rescue

The Jockey Club took note. Moving decisively, Vice Chairman Ogden Phipps named a three-person committee of people with demonstrated business expertise and a passion for thoroughbred racing to



Aqueduct Racetrack

develop a comprehensive, long-range plan to restore the luster of New York Racing. Hanes, a former U.S. Undersecretary of the Treasury, was one. The others were Christopher Chenery, chairman of the board of Southern Natural Gas Co. and later the breeder of record of Secretariat; and Harry Guggenheim, a director of Kennecott Copper Co.

By January 1955, the three men had developed a comprehensive reorganization plan based on a deceptively simple idea. New York racing would best be served if the four flat-racing New York tracks joined hands under the guidance of a single

organization to provide comfort, convenience and a good experience for guests. "In short," Hanes said, "invite them to come racing instead of inviting them to stay home."

The Committee called their new non-profit organization, The Greater New York Association, later renamed The New York Racing Association (NYRA). Chartered on April 28, 1955, the Association counted on the strong backing of New York Governor W. Averell Harriman, who in his 30s had owned a successful racing stable, Arden Farms, before turning to a career in government. The New York State Legislature complied, and in June 1955 granted NYRA a 25-year franchise grant that guaranteed it a minimum 4 percent of pari-mutuel handle at downstate tracks and 5 percent at Saratoga to be used for capital improvements. That enabled the association to borrow \$47 million on a 10-year loan from a consortium of 13 banks headed by the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company in the fall of 1955.



Saratoga Race Course

NYRA then bought the stock at New York's existing metropolitan tracks—Belmont Park, Jamaica Race Course, Aqueduct Racetrack, Empire City — and Saratoga Race Course, upstate. At Saratoga, there was concern that the Association would run a concurrent meet downstate and threatening the summer meet's routine week-day crowds of more than 10,000. But as part of the legislation that created NYRA, Governor Harriman prohibited a simultaneous downstate meet while guaranteeing a minimum of 24 days of racing each summer in Saratoga.

In the New York metro area, NYRA closed both Empire City and Jamaica and sold the Jamaica property for a housing development. Creating a corporation to be run by the racing officials who received no salaries, NYRA raised some \$45 million, which it earmarked for capital improvements at its tracks.

To secure bank financing, NYRA was granted a long-term franchise to operate the tracks. NYRA demolished the old Grandstand at Aqueduct, and in 1959, reopened the new facility. At Saratoga, the track and its drainage system were completely rebuilt, two new barns were constructed and 19 new bunkhouses and three kitchens were added. Racing at the Spa earned a further shot in the arm in 1963 when construction of the Northway provided a direct highway route from exit of the New York Thruway in Albany to Saratoga. Belmont Park closed as well, in late 1962, and the Grandstand there was rebuilt and modernized before reopening in 1968, just in time for the 100<sup>th</sup> running of the Belmont Stakes.

### **Resounding Success**

The rescue effort was a resounding success. On September 14, 1959, opening day at the new Aqueduct Racetrack, more than 42,000 fans filed into what was lauded as the most ultra-modern, racing facility in North America. Turf writer W.C. Heinz noted something more, namely what he called “a revolution in New York State that should interest taxpayers, legislators, horse lovers and horse racing throughout the United States,” as he wrote in *Reader's Digest*.

In those days, Aqueduct's autumn meet typically ended in mid-November, leaving New York's thoroughbred tracks dark until the following spring. Then, in 1975, Aqueduct opened a winterized, one-mile inner dirt track on the former site of the inner turf course to create a year-round circuit of racing on NYRA tracks. In 2011, after NYRA had undergone bankruptcy, Aqueduct Racetrack took another major step forward when Resorts World New York City Casino, operated by Genting New York LLC, opened at the track. As part of the agreement, NYRA created a capital improvement budget that it is using to upgrade the physical infrastructure of all three of its tracks.

In 2012, at the direction of New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo, a temporary publicly controlled body was put in place to transform the management of thoroughbred racing in New York. At the time the Governor signed the NYRA Re-organization legislation, he specifically noted the importance of New York State's racing industry as a major economic driver in the state. The racing industry is responsible for the generation of 17,400 jobs and the contribution of more than \$2.1 billion into New York's urban, suburban, and rural economy. NYRA is the cornerstone of this industry segment.

### **Significant Economic Impact**

The economic benefits are particularly apparent in Saratoga. A 2015 study by the Saratoga County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) shows that NYRA's annual summer meet at Saratoga Race Course generates \$237 million in economic activity and nearly 2,600 jobs across the greater Capital Region. The report concludes that the economic rewards from the operation of the race course generate as much as \$14.2 million in tax revenue for the city, the county and New York State.

These days, it's likely that the racing enthusiast of 20 years ago walking into a NYRA track would feel right at home while recognizing a host of improvements that have made thoroughbred racing in New York more accessible than ever. Both Saratoga and Belmont Park have playgrounds and a lot of family-focused special events to accommodate the many families who now attend the races. There are new restaurants and wagering facilities as well as a constantly expanding range of food and entertainment options, including Trakus at all three tracks; and in Saratoga, more picnic tables and a whole-hearted embrace of Governor Andrew Cuomo's "Taste NY" initiative. There are an expanding number of must-see, big event days from the Belmont Stakes Racing Festival and the Stars & Stripes Racing Festival at Belmont Park to Whitney Day and Travers Day at Saratoga. And thanks to track announcer Luis Granderson, a native of Panama, NYRA races are now broadcast in Spanish, helping to expand its brand among Latino fans.

Today's NYRA fan is likely to be taking advantage of technology by following the races on their Smartphones or on big-screen, high-definition televisions in the Backyard of Belmont Park or Saratoga Race Course or at Longshots, Aqueduct Racetrack's 24,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art sports bar and simulcasting facility, which opened in 2014. And they are watching NYRA races using a range of digital wagering amenities, or even at home using Roku.

By working together, NYRA has been able to deliver on Governor Cuomo's desire to see tourism grow as a result of our horse racing operations. In doing so, it has created more jobs and more revenue—and a bright new future for New York's thoroughbred industry.

## Chapter 2

### My NYRA

by *Richard Migliore*



For as long as I can remember, I've loved horses. As a boy growing up in Brooklyn, horses took me on great adventures as I read *The Black Stallion* series by Walter Farley; I imagined that I was the Black's jockey, Alec Ramsey, competing at Belmont Park. Later on, horses took me on real-life adventures all over the world when I became a professional race rider.

As a native New Yorker, I was introduced to racing at Aqueduct Racetrack not far from where I grew up in Brooklyn. I fell in love with racing at Belmont Park. And when I got to Saratoga Race Course, I knew that I would spend the rest of my life with horses. Trainer Steven DiMauro put me under contract when I was 15-years-old, and I always like to joke that I finished 9<sup>th</sup> grade and then went to the University of Belmont. What an education it has been.

There are many things that make me proud of my career. But the fact that I started my career at NYRA racetracks, competing with the best and finished my career at those very same tracks, is the source of my greatest pride. I have many great memories of my life in racing: First, as a fan, seeing Forego catch Honest Pleasure on the Marlboro Cup at Belmont Park; being at Aqueduct on the day Seattle Slew in his final start streaked past the finish line in the Stuyvesant Cup; and being at the 3/8<sup>th</sup> pole at Saratoga when Affirmed and Alydar slugged it out in the Travers.

Then as a jockey, the New York racetracks served as a backdrop to many great moments for me: as a 17-year-old in Saratoga, breaking Steve Cauthen's record for earnings by an apprentice; riding Champion Hidden to victory in the historic Beldame Stakes at Belmont Park; and riding my 4,000<sup>th</sup> career victory at Aqueduct Racetrack, to name a few.

I have been fortunate to spend my life at the three NYRA tracks: Aqueduct, New York City's Racetrack; Belmont Park, the Taj Mahal of American racing; and Saratoga, the Mecca of Thoroughbred racing. I'm honored to be a part of NYRA's rich history as both a jockey and today as a member of the New York Racing Association's TV team. So flip through these pages, absorb the stories and I think you'll agree with me about how special racing in New York has been—and always will be.

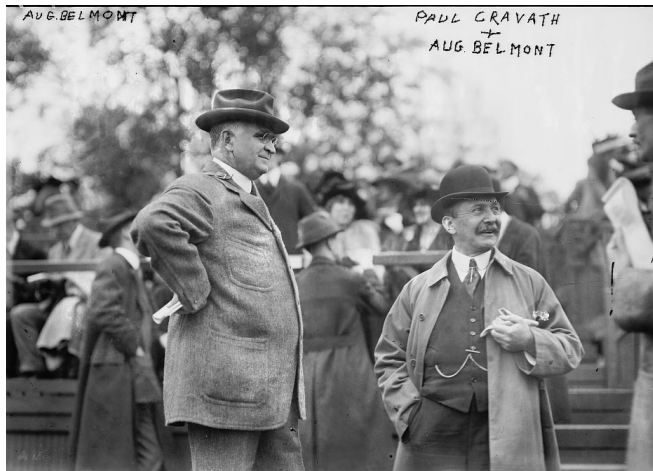
*NYRA TV Analyst **Richard Migliore** won 4,450 races in his 26-year-career as one of the leading jockeys in New York and California. In addition to winning several outstanding jockey and rider-of-the-year awards in New York, Migliore earned NYRA's 2003 Mike Venezia Memorial Award for sportsmanship and citizenship.*

## Chapter 3

# Our Tracks: At Belmont Park, Nothing Matters but the Horse and the Test at Hand

*by Paul Moran*

The heart of American racing, more than a century old, beats hard against the western edge of New York City, a modern-day Circus Maximus that became the nation's most important racing venue on the day it opened and remains without peer. But Belmont Park is more. It is the place



Paul Cravath & August Belmont II, 1913

at which the sport's past, present and future intersect; the stage upon which the greatest of the sport's stars, hooved and human, have shined for more than 100 years. This is home to The Test of the Champion. This is where immortality in racing is achieved, or denied.

The legends of the American turf, horses and humans, have woven a lush tapestry that remains tantalizingly incomplete as it was on the spring afternoon on which August Belmont II and his partners, in what remains the most ambitious development of a shrine to the thoroughbred horse ever undertaken on this continent, unveiled the result of their collective vision. They watch Sysonby, who would be Horse of the Year in 1905, and whose skeleton was later displayed at the American Museum of Natural History, and Race King reach the wire simultaneously in the Metropolitan Handicap, a one-mile race now one of the sport's oldest and most prestigious races. The thread of racing history on the Hempstead plain, often frayed, remains unbroken.

In maturity, Belmont Park is iconic, unique, a monument to a gilded age, something that could have happened only in New York at a time that was very right, a product of a new American aristocracy that emerged from the Industrial Revolution with what was then new money, some of which was spent on thoroughbred horses.

### Watershed Event

The construction of Belmont Park, which began just after the turn of the last century, was a watershed in the development of racing in New York and the nation. From concept to completion in its original form, the new racecourse that would be named Belmont Park in honor of the first August Belmont, was a project by, of, and for the American aristocracy, which was defined strictly by wealth, position and lineage. Joining Belmont in the movement to shift the Westchester Association's operations to Long Island included James Keene, William C. Whitney, J.P. Morgan, Thomas Hitchcock and William K. Vanderbilt.

Post time on May 4, 1905 was 2:30 p.m. By Noon, what is believed to have been the first traffic jam on Long Island developed, the roads leading to the new track choked by a combination of horse-drawn and horseless carriages, the status symbol of the era. Most arrived on the Long Island Railroad trains that pulled into a newly built terminal. By post time, more than 40,000 had made their way to the countryside for the first day in what has become more than a century of racing at Belmont Park that remains a work in progress.



Spectators at Belmont Park in 1907

## Hallowed Ground

More than a century after its opening, Belmont Park remains the keystone of thoroughbred racing in North America; hallowed ground on which every great American thoroughbred has claimed its place in history. It is racing's Broadway, destination of the immortal and merely great, a place defined not by its founders, but the horses who have run there—from Man o' War, Colin, Count Fleet, Gallant Fox, Whirlaway and Citation to Jaipur, Buckpasser, Kelso, Fort Marcy, Arts and Letters, Key to the Mint and Native Dancer. Their spirits live in the very winds that sweep the Hempstead Plain.

The history of the Triple Crown, which is central to American racing, is written in a century of defining moments in the Belmont Stakes, the Test of the Champion: Secretariat's epic tour de force in 1973, Seattle Slew's 1977 sweep of the series while still undefeated, Affirmed's survival of Alydar's last desperate onslaught in '78, and nine others who have won the most rare of America's sporting titles. The place echoes with the thunder raised in salute to memorable, charismatic horses who have been embraced by the racing fans of New York—Dr. Fager, Ruffian, Bold Forbes, Forego, John Henry, Lady's Secret,



On the Turf at Belmont Park

Easy Goer, Personal Ensign, Go for Wand, Sky Beauty, Cigar and a legion of others. On this lush, verdant expanse, almost every American champion of the last century and several from abroad have chiseled their legends into the bedrock of racing history.

Belmont Park, like the great city to its west, provides the ultimate test, exposes every flaw of the imposter. It is also a refuge for those drawn to the horse, entirely detached from human strife when important issues are settled by the best thoroughbreds of the day, cloistered from the world beyond the Charleston piers on those days when nothing matters except the horses and the test at hand—things judged exclusively within the context of a century of history, horses measured against those who have traveled this ground en route to residence in the pantheon of legend and whose auras linger in the ether.



## Chapter 4

### The Belmont Stakes: Heartbeat of Racing, Heartbeat of New York



American Pharoah on his way to a Triple Crown win at the 2015 Belmont Stakes

The Belmont Stakes, held annually in early June, is the third leg of racing's Triple Crown – and a whole lot more.

The Belmont Stakes, “The Test of the Champion” as it is commonly known, is a celebration of the pageantry, glamor and pulsating energy of thoroughbred racing at its best. For many, it's a gateway to summer, a big-time sports event that personifies the brashness and the bigness of New York. The Belmont Stakes, one complete lap

around Belmont Park's expansive 1½-mile track, even has an official drink: It's the Belmont Breeze, a distinctive blend of whiskey, sherry and citrus.

The 2015 Belmont Stakes was a race for the ages. It was the highlight of the inaugural three-day Belmont Stakes Racing Festival. Generating more than \$165 million in total wagering and attracting 100,749 fans during the three day period, the festival was the most successful event in New York's storied history of thoroughbred horse racing.

Before 90,000 fans and a nationwide television audience of more than 22 million, American Pharoah took the 147<sup>th</sup> running of the race to become the first Triple Crown winner in 37 years. Amidst a thunderous crowd, jockey Victor Espinoza brought home American Pharoah for a commanding five-length victory and perhaps the most elusive crown in all of sports.

Several months later, the 2015 Belmont Stakes won the prestigious *Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal* “Sports Event of the Year” award. NYRA earned top honors among a premier group of finalists that included Super Bowl 50, the FIFA Women's World Cup Final, NASCAR's Southern 500 and the Mayweather vs. Pacquiao prize fight.

How best to capture the excitement and the history of Belmont Stakes? Numbers are one way. Here are a few:

- **37:** As cited above, the number of years between American Pharoah's Triple Crown, and the previous one, brought home in 1978 by Affirmed.

- **31½:** The margin of victory in lengths by Secretariat on the way to his epic Triple Crown triumph in 1973. A blue-and-white striped pole inside the main track at Belmont Park — 31½ lengths from the finish line — commemorates the epic race.
- **13:** The number of horses winning the first two legs of the Triple Crown, the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness Stakes, since 1978, but not the Belmont Stakes.
- **12:** The Number of horses winning the Belmont Stakes on their way to the Triple Crown, perhaps the most elusive prize in American sports. The first horse to win the Triple Crown was Sir Barton in 1919.
- **6:** Most wins by a jockey in the Belmont Stakes, shared by James McLaughlin and Eddie Arcaro.
- **5:** The number of consecutive victories in the Belmont Stakes by trainer Woody Stephens, from 1982 to 1986. Stephens' legacy is celebrated in "Woody's Corner," just inside the main Belmont Park Clubhouse entrance, where fans can view many of his trophies and a painting depicting Stephens, aboard his pony, Rex, surrounded by his five Belmont winners.
- **3:** The number of fillies to win the Belmont Stakes, most recently Rags to Riches in 2007. The others are Tanya (1905) and Ruthless (1867).

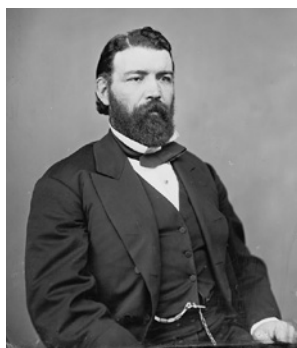


The Paddock at Belmont Park

## Chapter 5

# Our Tracks: Against the Odds, Saratoga Gets a Race Course for the Ages

by *Brien Bouyea*



John Morrissey

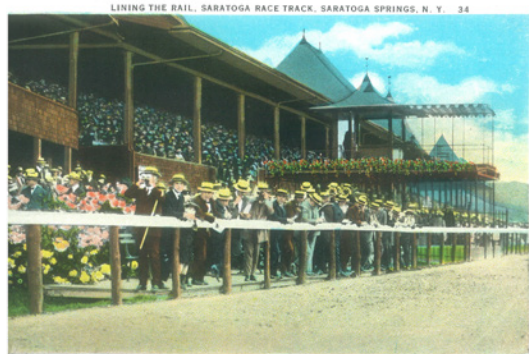
It was two years before the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution outlawing slavery and involuntary servitude was ratified when an unlikely individual pulled off an even more unlikely endeavor that forever altered the course of history for Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Exactly one month after the Battle of Gettysburg, a 32-year-old former bare-knuckle boxing champion named John Morrissey moved on his seemingly illogical plot of presenting the first organized thoroughbred race meet in Saratoga. It was August 1863, and the Civil War was tearing America apart during Abraham Lincoln's first term as president.

The odds were against Morrissey for several reasons. Organized horse racing in America was at a standstill because of the war. Even finding enough quality thoroughbreds to stage the meet was problematic because the Union had requisitioned just about every horse it could find for the war effort.

Morrissey, however, was a daring and determined individual with a history of proving people wrong. He proceeded undeterred. His entrepreneurial vision, moxie and sheer will were traits that served him well.

### Health, History, Horses



On Saturday, Aug. 14, 1847, Saratoga entrepreneurs George Cole and Alfonso Patten opened the Saratoga Trotting Course. The inaugural race was won by the immortal Lady Suffolk, known as "The Old Gray Mare" in Stephen Foster's folk song.

Racing was sporadic in Saratoga during the years between 1847 and 1863. Several small courses came and went, although the Saratoga Trotting Grounds remained. Morrissey arrived in Saratoga in the early 1860s and

opened a gambling house on Matilda Street, now Woodlawn Avenue. He saw the opportunity to supplement his income through racing.

The charade of staging illegal race meets under the guise of a carnival, or labeling contests as speed exhibitions, was a thing of the past. Morrissey wasn't hiding anything. An advertisement in the *Daily Saratogian* proclaimed as much: "Running Races! AT SARATOGA." Two races were carded each day from Aug. 3-to-6, 1863. The curtain had risen on thoroughbred racing in Saratoga.

Morrissey convinced the top sportsmen in the country to back his meet. “All sections of the North and West, and some portions of the South will be represented by their best horses, and Canada will also contend for some of the various purses,” Morrissey said in his advertisement. “Excellent racing is anticipated.”

A crowd of more than 3,000 attended opening day. Admission was \$1. They watched the races from carriages, as there was no grandstand. A dark bay filly named Lizzie W. won the first contest of Morrissey’s thoroughbred meet by defeating the heralded colt Captain Moore in a best-of-three sweepstakes. More than 15,000 people attended the four days of racing. Lizzie W. capped the proceedings with another victory in the meet’s final contest.

Morrissey had delivered a winner. *The Spirit of the Times* said Morrissey’s meet “laid the foundation for a great fashionable race meeting at the Springs” and added “the formation of a competent club, and further proceedings, would seem to be a matter of course.”

### Success Begets Success



Morrissey moved quickly to build upon his success. He purchased 94 acres across the street from the Saratoga Trotting Grounds to construct Saratoga Race Course almost immediately after the conclusion of his inaugural meet. The original course was converted to a training track, which is still in use today and known as Horse Haven. Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt helped underwrite the cost of the new racecourse, while Morrissey brought in William R. Travers, Leonard Jerome and John Hunter to lend prestige to the new Saratoga Association.

The only place Morrissey was silent was in the official documentation. He owned the majority of the stock in the Saratoga Association and presided over the new track with an iron fist, but his name wasn’t on the books. Morrissey understood that his project would be more widely accepted if men such as Travers and Jerome were fronting the operation.

Saratoga Race Course opened August 2, 1864. The first race was the inaugural running of the Travers Stakes. It was won by the great racehorse Kentucky, owned in partnership by Travers, Hunter and Osgood. Kentucky became the track’s first equine hero, as he also won the first two editions of the prestigious Saratoga Cup.

A new era of racing excellence had been ushered in. The track was popular from the beginning and is now regarded as a pillar in the sport. Today, more than 150 years after Morrissey’s inaugural meet, Saratoga Race Course stands as the oldest active sporting venue in the country. It remains the standard by which all of American racing is measured.



The Paddock at Saratoga Race Course

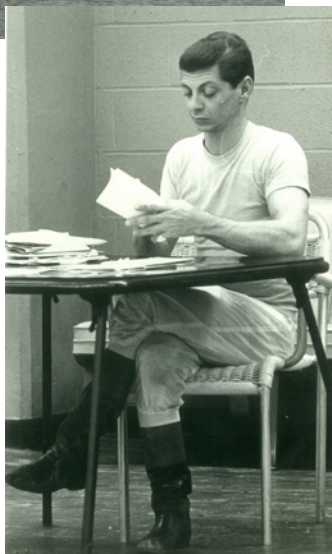
## Chapter 6

### A Day in the Life of a Jockey: Bill Hartack - 1964



Hall of Famer **Bill Hartack** already had won five Triple Crown races, including the 1960 Belmont Stakes, as he went about a typical day at Aqueduct in the Spring of 1964 trailed by NYRA Photographer Paul Schafer. After all, he was big news more than a half-century ago: Hartack and Northern Dancer would soon win the 1964 Kentucky Derby and the Preakness. But in a bid to take the Triple Crown that year, they would fade to third in the Belmont Stakes, six lengths behind winner Quadrangle. The race was run at Aqueduct that year while Belmont Park underwent renovations.

In a release that accompanied these photos, NYRA wrote that the series “portrays a normal racing afternoon in the day of the ambitious jockey.” Hartack won 4,272 races during his U.S. career, including nine Triple Crown races (but only that one Belmont Stakes); he died in 2007. “I only ride one race at a time,” Hartack once said, “and the one I’m most interested in is the next one.”



## Chapter 7

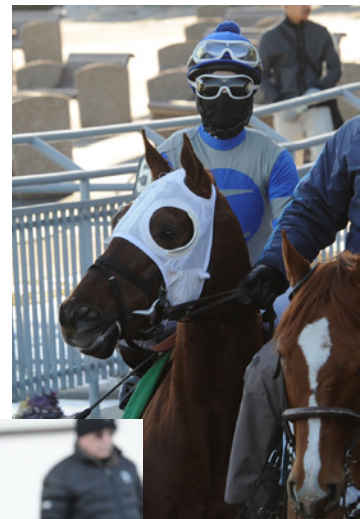
### A Day in the Life of a Jockey: Taylor Rice - Today



Apprentice jockey **Taylor Rice** found success quickly on the New York circuit: On Jan. 27, 2014, in her first winter in New York, she won four races on a single card at Aqueduct. A graduate of Florida State University, Rice kicked off her career as a jockey in 2013 at Presque Isle Downs and rode briefly that fall at Belmont Park before moving to Hawthorne Race Course and then full-time to New York. In doing so, the native of Ocala, Florida is following in the family business.

Rice's grandfather, Clyde Rice, grew up with D. Wayne Lukas in Wisconsin and owns race horses. Her father, Wayne, is a trainer and a former jockey; her mother, Gail, is a thoroughbred farm manager back home in Florida; and her aunt, Linda Rice, is one of the country's top trainers. "I didn't see any difference in being a girl," says Rice of the challenges of succeeding in a male-dominated sport. "I knew I could ride. All I needed was to get the time in and get better."

(Photos taken at Aqueduct Racetrack by Adam Coglianese.)



## Chapter 8

### In The Travers Stakes, There is No “Typical”

by Brien Bouyea

One of those classic Saratoga showdowns loomed in the 1962 Travers Stakes as a pair of elite colts—Jaipur and Ridan—prepared to slug it out for supremacy in the 3-year-old division. It was a typical warm August afternoon with a typical Spa Saturday crowd of 26,183 in attendance for the 93<sup>rd</sup> running of the race known as the “Midsummer Derby.”

Nothing about the race, however, was typical. Nothing about the Travers ever is typical.

George D. Widener’s Jaipur won the Flash and Hopeful at the Spa the summer before and was riding a five-race win streak—including a victory in the Belmont—entering the 1962 Travers. Mrs. Moody Jolley’s Ridan was also an established commodity thanks to wins in the Florida Derby, Arlington Classic and Blue Grass Stakes earlier in the year.



Jaipur noses past Ridan in the 1962 Travers

Lined up next to each other, Jaipur and Ridan both broke well from the gate and quickly engaged in an epic confrontation that spanned 1¼ miles around the famed Spa oval. Under Manuel Ycaza, Ridan took a half-length lead into the first turn, but the menacing presence of Jaipur and Bill Shoemaker lurked right behind.

There was minuscule separation between the two colts on the backstretch. Neither foe was willing to concede even an inch. Ridan carried Jaipur wide on the final turn, but Jaipur was unfazed as they thundered down the stretch in one of the most thrilling races Saratoga has ever hosted. As the tension reached a fever pitch in the final strides, Jaipur extended himself just enough to sneak his nose past the finish line ahead of Ridan in a photo finish for the ages.

Jaipur had broken Man o’ War’s 42-year-old stakes record and in the process essentially wrapped up the 3-year-old division championship.

The 1962 Travers is regarded by many historians as one of the greatest races in American history, but the Midsummer Derby has a long legacy of producing thrilling results. From its inaugural running in 1864 to the thrilling dead heat between Alpha and Golden Ticket in 2012 and Keen Ice’s dramatic win in 2015, the Travers Stakes is annually one of the premier events on the American racing calendar.

Several of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's top horses won the Travers, including Hall of Famers Harry Bassett (1871), Duke of Magenta (1878), Hindoo (1881) and Henry of Navarre (1894). The fourth edition of the Travers, in 1867, was won by Hall of Famer Ruthless. She was the first of three fillies—along with Liza (1895) and Lady Rotha (1915)—to win the Travers.

The Travers was not run in 1896, 1898, 1899 and 1900 because of financial reasons. And yet, the Travers has produced many memorable results. Here are some:

- **1881:** Hindoo, arguably the greatest horse of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wins the Travers. His victory is part of an 18-race win streak that was compiled from May through August. It was the first of a record four wins in the Travers for jockey James McLaughlin. Hindoo was trained by James Rowe, Sr., who won the race as a jockey in 1872. Rowe went on to win the Travers twice more as a trainer.
- **1920:** Man o' War, considered by many to be the greatest racehorse of all time, wins the Travers in 2:01 $\frac{4}{5}$ , a record time that stood until bested by Jaipur 42 years later. The Man o' War Cup, which Man o' War originally won by defeating 1919 Triple Crown winner Sir Barton in a match race, is now presented each year to the winner of the Travers.
- **1930:** Jim Dandy (*right*), at odds of 100-1, defeats Triple Crown winner Gallant Fox on a muddy track. It is the only loss of the year for Gallant Fox and Jim Dandy's only win from 20 starts. The result still ranks among the biggest upsets in racing history.
- **1941:** With Eddie Arcaro aboard, Triple Crown winner Whirlaway storms to victory. He remains the only horse in history to win the "superfecta" of racing—the three legs of the Triple Crown and the Travers.
- **1967:** Horse of the Year Damascus turns in arguably the most brilliant performance of his Hall of Fame career with a 22-length romp in the Travers.
- **1992:** Thunder Rumble becomes the first New York-bred to win the Travers since 1867.
- **2004:** Future Hall of Famers Nick Zito and Edgar Prado team up with Marylou Whitney's Birdstone to win a memorable running of the Travers as a powerful thunderstorm descends upon Saratoga and the race is contested in near darkness.





- **2012:** In the first dead heat in the Travers since 1874, Golden Ticket, at 33-1 odds, crosses the finish line simultaneously with Alpha, the favorite.
- **2015:** Keen Ice beats Triple Crown winner American Pharoah to the finish line before a roaring sold-out crowd and millions more on television. The upset gives jockey Javier Castellano a record fifth victory in the Travers while embellishing the legend of Saratoga Race Course as the “Graveyard of Champions.”

One of the great Saratoga traditions associated with the Travers, dating back to 1961, is the winning owner is given the honor of having their silks painted on a canoe that sits in the infield pond until the next year’s race. When Golden Ticket and Alpha finishing in a dead heat in 2012, two canoes were placed in the pond for the first time in the storied race’s history.



Keen Ice on his way to upsetting American Pharoah at the 2015 Travers

## Chapter 9

### Our Culture: What Makes Us Special

*There is a lot to like at NYRA tracks. Here are some of the things and people that make NYRA special:*

**Please *Don't* Remove Your Hats:** Hats and horse racing are joined at the hip, perhaps nowhere more prominently than at Belmont Park and Saratoga Race Course. Several of the best days for hat watching are Belmont Stakes Day, Fabulous Fillies Day and Travers Stakes Day.



Sentell "Sonny" Taylor

**Seen it All:** Sentell "Sonny" Taylor, who started at NYRA in 1964, is a placing judge, one of three racing officials who watch each race from high atop the clubhouse at Belmont Park, Saratoga and Aqueduct. His favorite track: "Belmont Park is beautiful and it's convenient, a seven-minute drive from my apartment in Glen Oaks," says Taylor. And Saratoga? "It's wonderful for all the friends I connect with from trainers and horse people to celebrities. Everyone's there. It's a magical place."

**Oh Say, Can You Sing?** For NYRA Vice President & Controller Jelena Alonso, the answer is a resounding "yes." Since 1993, Alonso has periodically performed both *The Star-Spangled Banner* and *O Canada*, the National Anthem of Canada, at home games of the New York Islanders. "It's always a lot of fun and really invigorating to sing in front of big crowds who appreciate what you do," she says. Alonso also performed *The Star-Spangled Banner* at Belmont Stakes Day in 2011 and at Saratoga Race Course. And she has appeared in theaters across the U.S. and Europe in musicals including *West Side Story*, *Evita*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Phantom of the Opera*.



Jelena Alonso



Chaplains' Rock, Belmont Park

**Chaplains' Rock:** The plaque sits inconspicuously on a large rock between the Clubhouse and the racing office at Belmont Park. It honors four chaplains—Methodist Reverend George L. Fox, Rabbi Alexander D. Goode, Roman Catholic Priest John P. Washington and the Reformed Church of America Reverend Clark V. Poling—who were among the 672 Americans who died in the North Atlantic from the sinking of the *Dorchester* in World War II. According to the plaque, they "gave their life jackets so that four soldiers might live. (As the *Dorchester* sank) the four men were linked arm in arm, heads lifted up in prayer."

**What Becomes a Legend Most:** Jockey Legends Day at Saratoga honors some of the greatest living riders, among them Angel Cordero, Jr., "The King of Saratoga," speaking to guests in 2014.



Angel Cordero, Jr.



**The Walk of Fame:** Honoring and showcasing the achievements of those who have made significant contributions to the sport of thoroughbred racing and to the advancement of Saratoga Race Course is the Saratoga Walk of Fame. The covered structure, which features the traditional Saratoga turrets and is located by the Carousel, is the culmination of a new tradition which began at Saratoga in 2013 to recognize the greats of the game with an emblematic Saratoga red jacket and a commemorative plaque. The structure itself opened in 2015, with several of the red-jacketed honorees in attendance, including (from left) trainer D. Wayne Lukas; jockeys John Velazquez and Angel Cordero, Jr.; trainer Jimmy Jerkens, appearing on behalf of his father, the late H. Allen Jerkens; and longtime NYRA race announcer Tom Durkin. They are joined by NYRA CEO and President Chris Kay.

**Gates:** Not just any gates, but the exquisitely detailed wrought iron gates of the late, great Jerome Park Racetrack in the Bronx, preserved on the fourth floor of Belmont Park at the entrance to the Garden Terrace Restaurant. In 1937, the gates bearing an illustration of the first Belmont Stakes—from 1867 at Jerome Park—were donated to the track by August Belmont II's son, Perry Belmont.



Gates from Jerome Park Racetrack in the Bronx



175 year-old white pine that shades Belmont Park's paddock.

**The Belmont White Pine:** The only thing anyone knows for sure about the huge Japanese white pine that shades Belmont Park's paddock is that it's old, very old. NYRA horticulturists cite its age at 175 years, while according to a 1968 NYRA historical publication, the tree was planted in 1826, long before Belmont Park was built. The tree was officially incorporated into the official Belmont Park logo in 1968, the year the new grandstand was opened.

**Channeling Cole Porter:** Hear a familiar show tune emanating from the Clubhouse at Aqueduct or Belmont Park? Chances are it's another impromptu show tune performed by Peace Officer Rudy Baffa, whose nearly 50 years at NYRA has included entertaining guests with time-tested favorites he breaks into at a moment's notice. In the 1940s and '50s, Baffa was "Mr. Val," a well-known New York nightclub singer and dance instructor. Those talents are evident when Baffa breaks into a Cole Porter number on the fly. "Belting out a few lines of an old tune and making somebody smile is a part of who I am," says the Brooklyn native. "And I hope it makes a trip to the track a little more special for people."



Rudy Baffa

## Chapter 10

### Our Tracks: Aqueduct Racetrack is “The Big Race Place”

You could argue that Aqueduct Racetrack has two birthdays, not one. Opened September 27, 1894, the original track was a utilitarian kind of place, even in the choice of its name. Operated by the Queens County Jockey Club, Aqueduct was named for its location: a property in South Ozone Park, Queens on which a conduit belonging to the Brooklyn Water Works delivered water to New York City from the vast Hempstead Plain.



Big crowd at the “Big A” in 1978

At the time, the future looked challenging for Aqueduct. New York was full of fledging tracks, from Gravesend Race Track and Sheepshead Bay Race Track in Brooklyn to the more glamorous Morris Park Racecourse in the Bronx and upstate at Saratoga. But from the get-go, Aqueduct seemed to find a way, as in 1895 when a wealthy tugboat skipper, Captain William Carter, endowed the track with a significant amount of money to stage a major race. The appropriately named Carter Handicap, still run today, enabled the Jockey Club to begin drawing top horses, and it helped turn a bare-bones track into a respectable, long-term racing attraction.

Fast forward to September 14, 1959 when 42,473 fans including New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller helped to inaugurate the “new” Aqueduct, quickly dubbed “the Big A,” after a three-year \$34.5 million renovation project that featured a new four-tier grandstand. Designed by the renowned track architects Arthur Froehlich and Associates of Beverly Hills, California, the remodeled track was state-of-the-art for its day from the 18 escalators and elevator to 20,000 seats and another

14,000 in air-conditioned restaurants and lounges. The *Associated Press* called it “the world’s most modern and luxurious horse plant.”



### “Big Race Place”

From 1963 to 1968, Aqueduct hosted the Belmont Stakes during the reconstruction of Belmont Park. On November 6, 1973, Secretariat was retired at the track; ridden by Ron

Turcotte, he paraded before 30,000 fans before leaving racing for his new life at Claiborne Farm in Kentucky. And on October 6, 1995 a day fortified by brilliant sunshine and a cloudless blue sky, Pope John Paul II said mass before a crowd of 75,000 at Aqueduct.

Aqueduct's Wood Memorial Stakes has long been New York's premier preparation for the Triple Crown, with the majority of winners going on a month later to the Kentucky Derby. While 11 Wood Memorial winners have gone on to capture the Kentucky Derby, several other thoroughbreds have done the opposite: failing to take the Wood and then winning the Derby. Secretariat—yes, Secretariat—finished third in the 1973 Wood. Meantime, four Triple Crown winners were also Wood champions: Seattle Slew (1977) as well as Assault (1946), Count Fleet (1943) and Gallant Fox (1930).

Aqueduct has undergone a steady series of embellishments through the years. In 1975, it opened its winterized, one-mile inner dirt track on the former site of the inner turf course; and on October 11, 1981, it unveiled one of the largest restaurants in New York City, the multi-tiered Equestris. In 2011, the Big A underwent perhaps its most sweeping change with the opening of the multi-level, 415,000-square-foot casino, Resorts World Casino New York City, operated by Genting New York LLC. The casino, which occupies the former grandstand, opened in October 2011.

What endures at New York City's only race track is some of the best autumn and winter racing in the U.S. In the meantime, the New York Racing Association continues to add new features to the track, including in 2014, Longshots, the 24,000-square-foot state-of-the-art sports bar and simulcasting facility.

Also in 2014, the track hosted a series of artists who added color inside and outside the Grandstand with a series of racing-themed murals, many of them tied to the greats who raced there. A giant 60-foot-by-80-foot rendering of Secretariat and his jockey Ron Turcotte, on the east side of the Grandstand has become a landmark visible from the Belt Parkway. Other smaller murals that include renderings of the great filly Ruffian and various track scenes, dot the grandstand and clubhouse areas, adding splashes of color to a facility where history and excitement are always on display.



A giant 60'x80' mural of Secretariat and jockey, Ron Turcotte displayed on the east side of the Grandstand at Aqueduct.

## Chapter 11

### NYRA Goes To The Movies

That man pictured in June 2013 at the rail of Belmont Park looks a lot like Bill Murray. Wait, it *is* Bill Murray, among a steady stream of actors and actresses through the years to have filmed parts of movies and television shows at New York Racing Association tracks.

In *St. Vincent de Van Nuys*, released in the Fall of 2014, Murray plays the title role as a raffish, hedonistic neighbor of an 11-year-boy played by Dario Barosso to whom he becomes an unlikely friend and mentor. The film, written and directed by Theodore Melfi, also stars Melissa McCarthy, Naomi Watts and Chris O'Dowd.



Film makers have long gravitated to New York racetracks. From the days of Clark Gable and Jean Harlow whose blockbuster hit, *Saratoga*, was filmed in part at the Spa to films of more recent vintage like *Seabiscuit* and *Secretariat*, NYRA tracks have been popular places for filming parts of both films and television shows. And it secures a place in the U.S. cultural landscape for all three NYRA tracks.

As with *St. Vincent de Van Nuys*, there are many other examples. In February 2014, a crew from the independent film, *Alone*, spent several days at Aqueduct shooting scenes from the story of Freeman (played by Mark Kassen), a 35-year-old veteran battling PTSD who finds kindness and comfort in the company of a rebellious New York City high-school student (Sophie Turner). Their growing friendship happens much to the dismay of her father (Ray Liotta).

### Legends on the Screen, Legends at the Track

Not surprisingly, the beauty of Saratoga Race Course and Saratoga Springs itself has for years been a draw for filmmakers. As it turned out, the 1937 film, *Saratoga*, was the last of the seven collaborations of a couple of Hollywood legends, Gable and Harlow. Toward the end of filming, which took place in Saratoga, Kentucky and Hollywood, Harlow collapsed on the set and died several days later.

The film was later completed using stand-ins, often obscured behind hats or binoculars, and released less than a month after Harlow's death. The public, grateful to see Harlow in her last role, lined up in droves at the box office, making *Saratoga* one of the year's biggest hits. The *Saratoga* movie line up also includes the 1938 film, *A Slight Case of Murder* based on the Damon Runyon story; and in more recent years, *Seabiscuit*, *The Horse Whisperer*, *The Way We Were*, *Billy Bathgate*, *Ghost Story* and *My Old Man*.

Scenes for the Woody Allen movies, *Mighty Aphrodite* (1995) and *Melinda and Melinda* (2004), were shot at Belmont Park, as was a paddock scene for the 1990s remake of the film *Gloria* (1999) starring Sharon Stone and George C. Scott. Filmed at Aqueduct was the beginning of the film *Lucky Number Slevin* (2006) as well as scenes from the Robert De Niro film, *A Bronx Tale* (1993) and an episode from *The Sopranos* about a horse named Pie-O-My, in 2002.

Murray made the most of his time while filming *St. Vincent de Van Nuys* at Belmont Park, even finding his way to the Winner's Circle where he presented Trainer Shug McGaughey with a trophy for his win with Boisterous in the Man o' War. Multiple photos of Murray around the track made their way onto social media, including a picture of him handicapping the races in the *Daily Racing Form*.



*Belmont Moment:* Bill Murray presents winner's trophy to Shug McGaughey.

## Chapter 12

### Building A Bright Future

By incorporating a series of institutional reforms and operational changes during the last three years, the New York Racing Association's new board and management team are building the organization's long-term economic viability. And in doing so, they are making sure that NYRA will be able to combine its storied past with a bright future.

In areas from equine safety to capital improvements, the enhanced quality of racing, the guest experience and overall financial stability, NYRA has reestablished its place as an industry leader. Some examples:

#### Equine Safety:

- NYRA closed 2015 with a catastrophic injury for thoroughbred flat racing of 1.09 injuries per 1,000 starts—well below the national average and less than half its 2012 rate of 2.2 injuries per 1,000 starts.

#### Backstretch Capital Improvements:

- NYRA is committed to improving working conditions on the backstretch of Belmont Park, Saratoga Race Course and Aqueduct Racetrack for the benefit of horsemen and employees. To that end, NYRA has spent \$42.39 million in capital improvements in the past several years to significantly upgrade the barns, training areas and dormitories in the backstretch areas for the horsemen and their employees. The result is a safer and more desirable backstretch at all three of our tracks.
- Among the recent enhancements at Belmont Park in 2016 was the opening of a new main training track, which increases the width and provides better drainage than its predecessor, resulting in greater safety for the horsemen and horses, as well as greater convenience. The project widens the stretches by about 17 feet, the far turn by 18 feet, and the first turn by about 13 feet. Also at Belmont Park, NYRA has renovated 660 stalls and built 249 new stalls, bringing the total stall capacity at Belmont Park to 2,447. Also, in 2016, it opened a three-story dorm with 47 living units, each with two beds and a bathroom for backstretch workers.
- At Saratoga Race Course, NYRA has renovated 25 cottages on the backstretch; including most recently, the renovation of four more dorms on the Oklahoma side of the backstretch, which opened before the 2016 summer meet. At Aqueduct Racetrack, NYRA built the Horsemen's Lounge, a modernized area for competing owners and trainers, which is directly above the Paddock and offers a sweeping view of the entire track.





### Enhancing the Quality of Racing:

- Similar to the successful strategy created for the Belmont Stakes Racing Festival, NYRA continues to bundle stakes races into big-event weekends for the Whitney and Travers at Saratoga, Jockey Club Gold Cup Day at Belmont Park and Cigar Mile and Wood Memorial Day at Aqueduct Racetrack.
- Achieved significant improvements in its racing program for 2-year-olds.

### The Guest Experience:

- Established record for the 2015 season at Saratoga—for all-source handle, track handle and paid attendance.
- Worked with Saratoga businesses to develop and expand the Saratoga Season Perks program.

### Financial Stability:

- In 2014, NYRA registered its first operating budget surplus in 13 years, a \$14 million turnaround in one year. NYRA concluded 2015 with a second consecutive operating surplus of \$3.5 million, achieving its first back-to-back operating profits in 15 years.
- In 2016, NYRA expanded its presence in the national marketplace through an enhanced national wagering platform, NYRA Bets; and a greatly expanded television strategy with *Fox Sports*, *MSG* and *Altitude Sports*, in addition to NYRA's ongoing relationship with *NBC Sports*.
- Continuing to embrace high definition video streaming; and integrate emerging technology that fans of other major sports have become accustomed to, but previously had been missing from horse racing coverage.
- Expects to launch a new HD app in late 2016.

In 2015, more than 1.75 million people attended live races at NYRA tracks. Factoring in nationwide off-track wagering, the average daily betting handle on NYRA races totaled nearly \$11 million. Stay informed by visiting [www.NYRA.com](http://www.NYRA.com). Stay connected with New York Racing by following NYRA on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.



And They're Off! The 2016 Belmont Stakes, won by Creator, ridden by Irad Ortiz, Jr. (center, white silks with star).

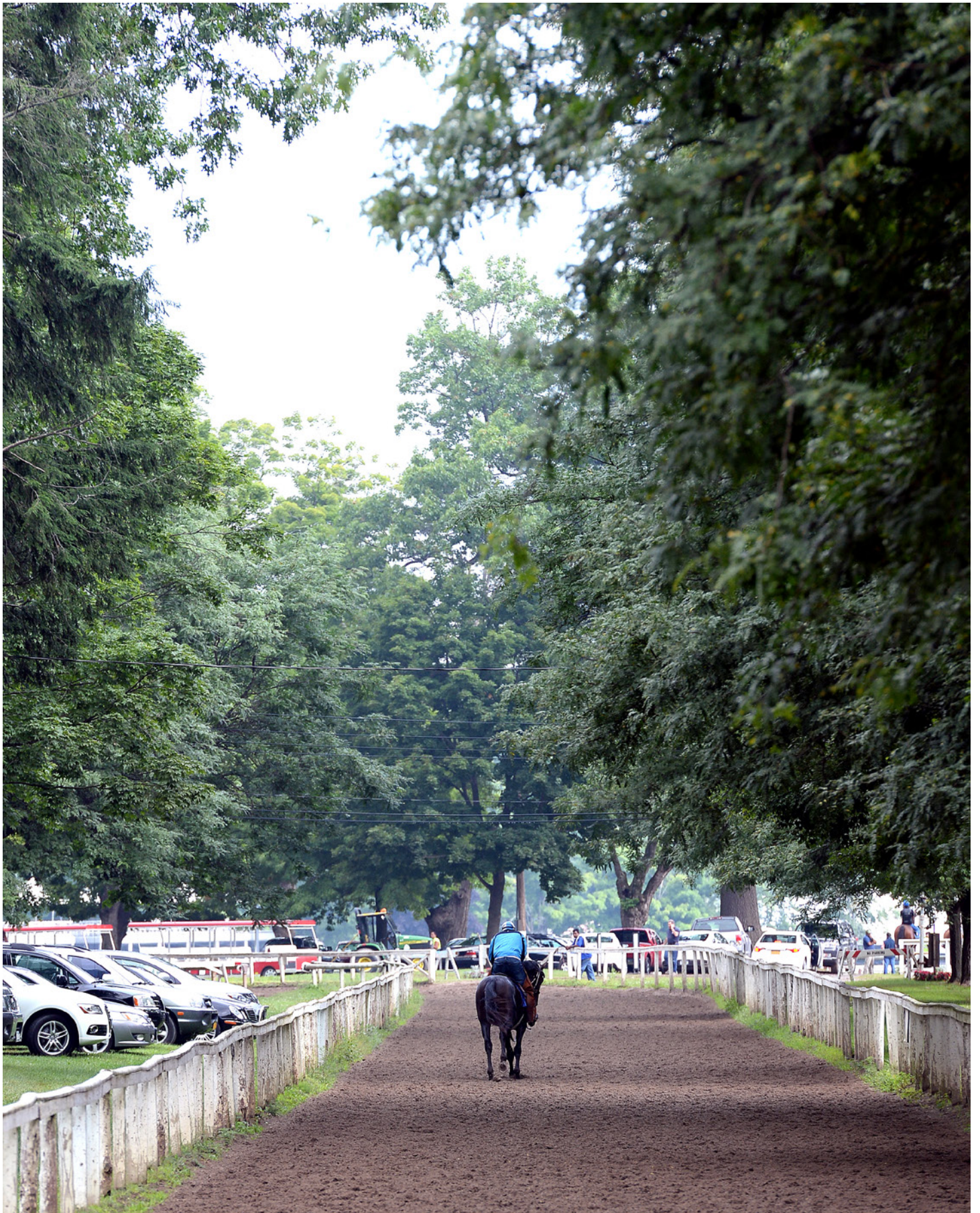
## Contributors

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**Bob & Adam Coglianesi** are the father-and-son team who serve as official track photographers for the New York Racing Association. For half a century, the Coglianeses have captured enduring images of thoroughbred racing's greatest stars.

**Paul Moran** earned two Eclipse Awards for outstanding coverage of thoroughbred racing during his tenure at *Newsday*, from 1985 to 2007. Moran who passed away in 2013, also covered racing for *espn.com* and *The Associated Press*.

**Susie Raisher** is a Web & Social Media Specialist.



Morning on the Saratoga Backstretch