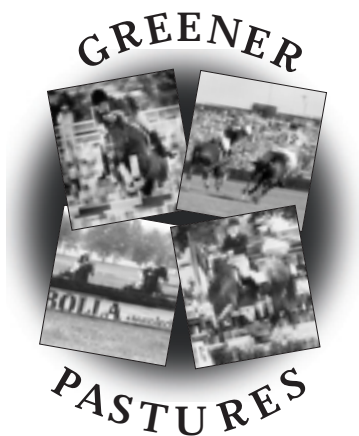


by JW EQUINE

Thoroughbreds are usually bred for a specific job, but thoughts of how long the horse will be useful are not always part of our breeding plans. When we do hear of horses that are useful beyond what we expect, many of us feel a little smile sneak on to our faces or into our hearts. Such was the case when I heard about a 21-year-old gelding named One for Max B., affectionately known as 'Max'.

Max was bred by Barton D. Heller and started his race career in California, the state where his ancestors ran. His sire, Gaelic Dancer, won the San Jose Stakes and the race named for his sire, the Native Dancer Handicap, for earnings of \$79,164. His dam, Estallee, raced at a modest level for a single win from 20 starts and earnings of \$7,644, but she was a half-sister to a record-setter at Del Mar. That horse, Most Determined, earned \$126,333 the hard way—no stakes races—and set a 7-furlong mark of 1:23.

Max's second dam, Most Miss, earned a mere \$2,150 from her six appearances on the track. She was, however, a half-sister to Most Bagdad, the winner of \$137,148 from a remarkable 132 starts without black-type. She was also a half-sister to Most Host, another tough competitor who started 100 times, winning or placing in stakes at two, three, four, five and seven years of age. At three, Most Host also equalled the Bay Meadows record for a mile and his wins included the William P. Kyne Handicap, the Charles H. Strub Stakes and the Berkeley Handicap. His stakes-placed efforts occurred in the San Mateo Stakes, the Tropical Hotel of Las Vegas Handicap, the Bay District Handicap, the San Fernando Stakes, the Golden Gate Handicap (three times), the Sacramento Handicap (three times), the San Gabriel Handicap, the Lakeside Handicap, the San Pasqual Handicap, the Coronado Stakes and, at seven years of age, the



Max/One For Max B. proves his owner Becky Galbraith's point that, "He's a pleaser... I even taught him to give kisses."

One For Max B.

South Bay Claiming Stakes, the Ormondale Handicap and the Brentwood Claiming Stakes.

In 1984, when Max was a sophomore, Don (D.K.) and Marlene Robins from Alberta were shopping for horses. California trainer Jerry Dutton told Marlene he had a horse she would probably like. That horse was One for Max B., registered as a dark bay, and Marlene did like him. Max moved north and continued racing. Marlene admits, "We had a lot of fun racing him here."

By the time he retired from the track with a pulled suspensory, Max had raced for five years (5-5-5 from 45 starts) and earned \$16,289. He was almost black and it supposedly took two people with chain shanks to lead him. But something was happening...Max's coat had started to change color. Marlene was thrilled. "I got my gray horse."

Because he was retired from racing, there was no reason to notify *The Jockey Club* that the gelding was no longer a dark bay. What difference would that make if he was just going to be a saddle horse?

D.K. and Marlene Robins liked to find uses for their retirees and Marlene says, "I was going to start riding him, but I was too busy." He babysat a few weanlings, but they felt he was being wasted. That meant that they would consider placing him with someone else, so the search began for the right person. That searching could more accurately be described as testing.

Enter a young Pony Clubber named Becky, who interviewed for the position of Max's new owner. She still recalls that day. "They wanted a good home for him, not a quick resale. I had to prove I had the abilities to care for him, and Don had a gruff exterior. I felt indebted that they allowed me to buy their horse, so I kept in touch with them and sent them pictures."

Becky's mother was the horseperson in the family—her father was less than impressed by anything equine, but they took their daughter to Pony

Club and realized how much she loved her first horse when they found her sleeping in the stall with him on more than one occasion. Becky's version of their relationship is evident when she announces, "He's a pleaser and he looked after his rider. I even taught him to give kisses," and promptly demonstrates.

Due to his old injury, Max was not the smoothest of rides. Becky was serious when she said, "He had the worst trot—really rough. He had a hitch in one hip and had a shorter range of motion on his right side. His right lead was rough too. I was the only kid in high school with a six-pack from having to sit up with the impulsion of his canter."

She laughs when she recalls, "He loved his carrots. He would probably roll over and play dead for a carrot. He'd do anything for one—anything. He eats plums and spits out the pits. He would also bug me when I was drinking Coke." Naturally, she gave him what he wanted and Max still drinks *Coke* from the can. "He wouldn't drink *Diet Coke*, only *Classic Coke*, but I had to wait until after the show to give him any. It would test."

A professional photographer saw the ritual of Becky and her *Coke* drinker, took some pictures and submitted them to the *Coca-Cola* Company, but nothing ever developed from it. "I thought it would be great advertising," said Becky, and you get the sense that nothing would have made her happier than to see her buddy become famous.

Becky and Max were



One For Max B./Max in the winner's circle at Northlands Park (Edmonton, Alberta) on August 10, 1986.

always in the ribbons at Pony Club events and at horse shows. They went to Spruce Meadows and won a little piousness at 4'9" and they went to Provincials in dressage. The highlight of their career came in 1998, when they went to Manitoba (see picture) for a test event for the Pan Am Games facilities for eventing. They were fourth in the Preliminary Division in North America. By then Max was 17 and Becky had obtained a younger horse from the Robinses.



Max/One For Max B. competing in the Preliminary Division of the Pan Am Games Test Event at Manitoba in 1998.

Everyone on the circuit knew Max and as he aged, he became known as 'Grandpa Max.' In Becky's words, "Max didn't necessarily have the most ability, but what he lacked in ability, he made up for in heart."

The following year, Max became a tutor. "He was 18 and didn't owe me anything," said Becky, but he was sound and clean. She didn't want him to just become idle when he was so full of life, so she sought another option. "I was particular about who would ride him and he

had to go to someone in my barn." He was a schoolmaster for Becky's mother and was leased to Becky's student, Rochelle Hudson for a season.

Yes, thanks to Max, Becky had progressed to the point where she was not only competing, but was giving lessons and coaching other riders, something she still does. She remembers her competition days with Max fondly. "He may have refused two cross-country fences in his entire life. He loved cross-country. If he misses anything, that would be it."

By now you have likely guessed that Marlene Robins was right when she said, "Max has a home for life. We couldn't have found a better home for him." He still gives kisses and he still gets the occasional can of *Coke*. He also trained Becky by punishing her if she didn't pat him first. "I would feel guilty and bring him a peace offering and he'd forgive me." Did I mention that Max is a smart horse?

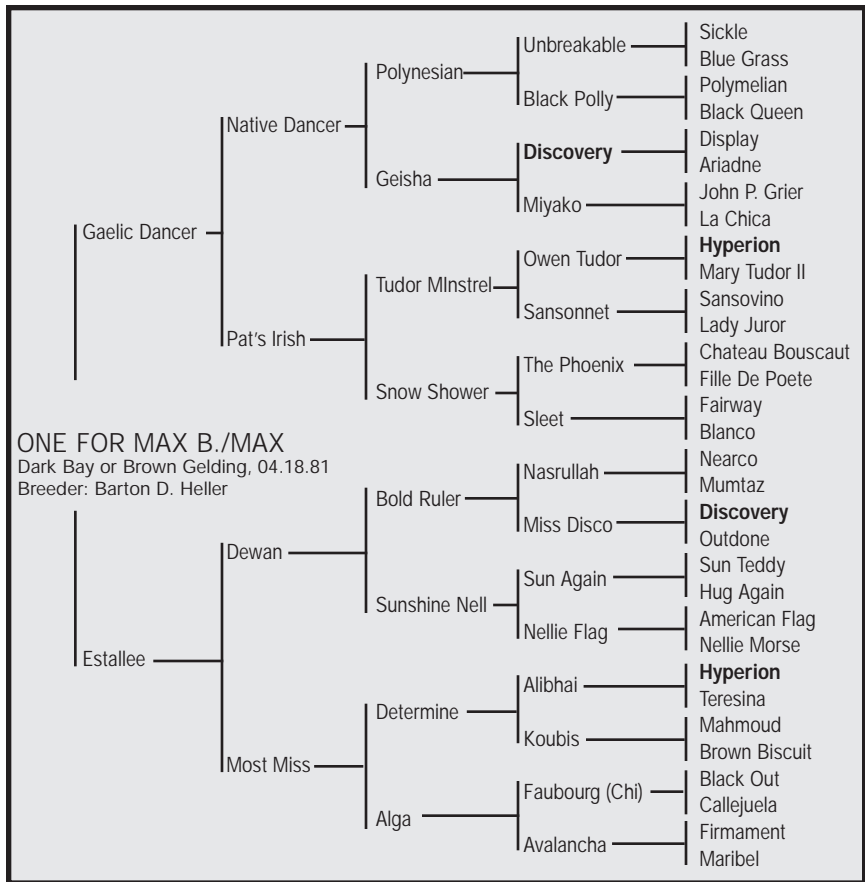
When it comes to

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GREENER PASTURES Continued

roles for horses, Max filled one that most people wouldn't imagine. He converted Becky's anti-horse father. "He has a way of endearing himself to people," Becky reports, "He loves them and is always checking out what they are doing." Her parents, the Gagliones, now own a 45-acre farm and have been breeding horses for the past eight or nine years. And that's where Grandpa Max fills his current role. He socializes the youngsters, and is quite happy doing it. "He loves his babies."

Becky is now married to Ken Galbraith, a fellow Pony Clubber, and is very busy with their horse business, but she still takes pride in showing Max to visitors, including this journalist. Meeting the nearly white 21-year-old most assuredly puts that satisfied smile on your face and gives you an understanding of just how he has been of service for more than two decades. Let's hope he has many more years ahead of touching people's hearts.



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