



## **Seldom Seen Inducted into the USDF Hall of Fame**

On April 21, 2006, USDF will have the ribbon cutting ceremony for the grand opening of the USDF National Education Center, at the Kentucky Horse Park. Held in conjunction with the National Freestyle Symposium, and the weekend before the Rolex Kentucky Three Day Event, April will be a big month

for the Kentucky Horse Park and USDF, as they celebrate the 2010 bid for the World Equestrian Games, where the National Education Center will have a front row seat.

The USDF Hall of Fame will have a place of prominence in the building, showcasing inductees. There was one inductee at the 2005 USDF Annual Meeting, the American-bred, 14-2 hand, Thoroughbred-Connemara cross gelding Seldom Seen. Today's Dressage Daily features the speech written and given by USDF President, Dr. Samuel Barish for Seldom Seen:

This year's inductee into the USDF Hall of Fame is Seldom Seen, Peg Whitehurst's American-bred, 14-2 hand, Thoroughbred-Connemara cross gelding. This honor recognizes his outstanding service as an ambassador for the sport of dressage, proving that a very small horse of common breeding, like many people have in their backyard, can compete against the best in the country. He was the everyman of American dressage.

Seldom Seen was named for being so small that he could not be seen over the grass as a newborn foal. He was affectionately named 'Brillo,' for his resemblance to an oversized steel-wool pad as a fuzzy foal.

Seldom Seen began his career as an eventing mount for Peg Whitehurst's pony clubber daughter, Kim, who is with us this evening. While event rider and future Dressage Olympian Lendon Gray was working for Mrs. Whitehurst in Alabama in 1975, as a favor to the family, Lendon rode the horse at a novice horse trial when he was five. The pair won, and that was the beginning of the partnership.

Eventually, the jumps were too big for Seldom Seen, and they focused strictly on dressage in 1976. When Olympian Hilda Gurney saw him that year, she said to Mrs. Whitehurst: "If you don't let Lendon take that horse to Grand Prix, I want him." The horse was very successful in competition and progressed at the rate of two levels per year. However, Lendon was insecure at the first show of each season wondering whether Seldom Seen would succeed since he was so small and not a warmblood. This was a time when many people were importing big warmbloods. Lendon said: "People would buy big, fancy horses, and I would come trucking in on a pony and beat them."

According to Lendon, "Since he was the first horse I trained to Grand Prix, we had to do things along the way, and I made a lot of mistakes. He was very, very forgiving. You could not have had a more patient, understanding horse. When he became a Grand Prix horse, it was great to compete him since he attracted a lot of attention because he was an average horse. He was not a special mover, and he was small. He was just a horse that was trained and competed well. He developed a huge fan club because of this. Seldom Seen brought dressage to everyone and showed it was for anyone."

The horse and Lendon had an outstanding record in competition. He placed first in the USDF Horse of the Year Awards at Prix St. Georges in 1981 and at Intermediare II in 1982. He was in the top six at Grand Prix in the annual Horse of the Year Award standings three times. In fact, Seldom Seen earned Horse of the Year Awards, and placed near the top, at every level from First through Grand Prix – from 1977 to 1987. He won the individual gold medal at the 1981 U.S. Olympic Festival in Syracuse, New York.

In 1987, in front of his fans and after winning the Grand Prix, the Grand Prix Special, and the Grand Prix Freestyle at Dressage at Devon, Seldom was officially retired in a ceremony at age 17. After that, he did exhibitions in front of thousands of spectators, including a Pas De Deux with a western horse. He passed away in Florida in 1996 at the age of 26.

Until now, only three horses have been inducted into the USDF Hall of Fame. Gifted, Graf George, and Keen are three of the most successful horses in international competition in the history of U.S. Dressage. As a Hall of Fame member, Seldom Seen will be in excellent company.

Seldom Seen's size, home-grown breeding, and enormous talent made him a crowd pleaser and an ambassador for the sport. According to Lendon, "He had such a huge fan club wherever he went. I still receive letters from people telling me how Seldom Seen gave them encouragement to try harder with their own horses." He was phenomenally popular and outstanding in competition. The horse made dressage accessible to a new generation of riders. We are honored to induct Seldom Seen into the USDF Hall of Fame.

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