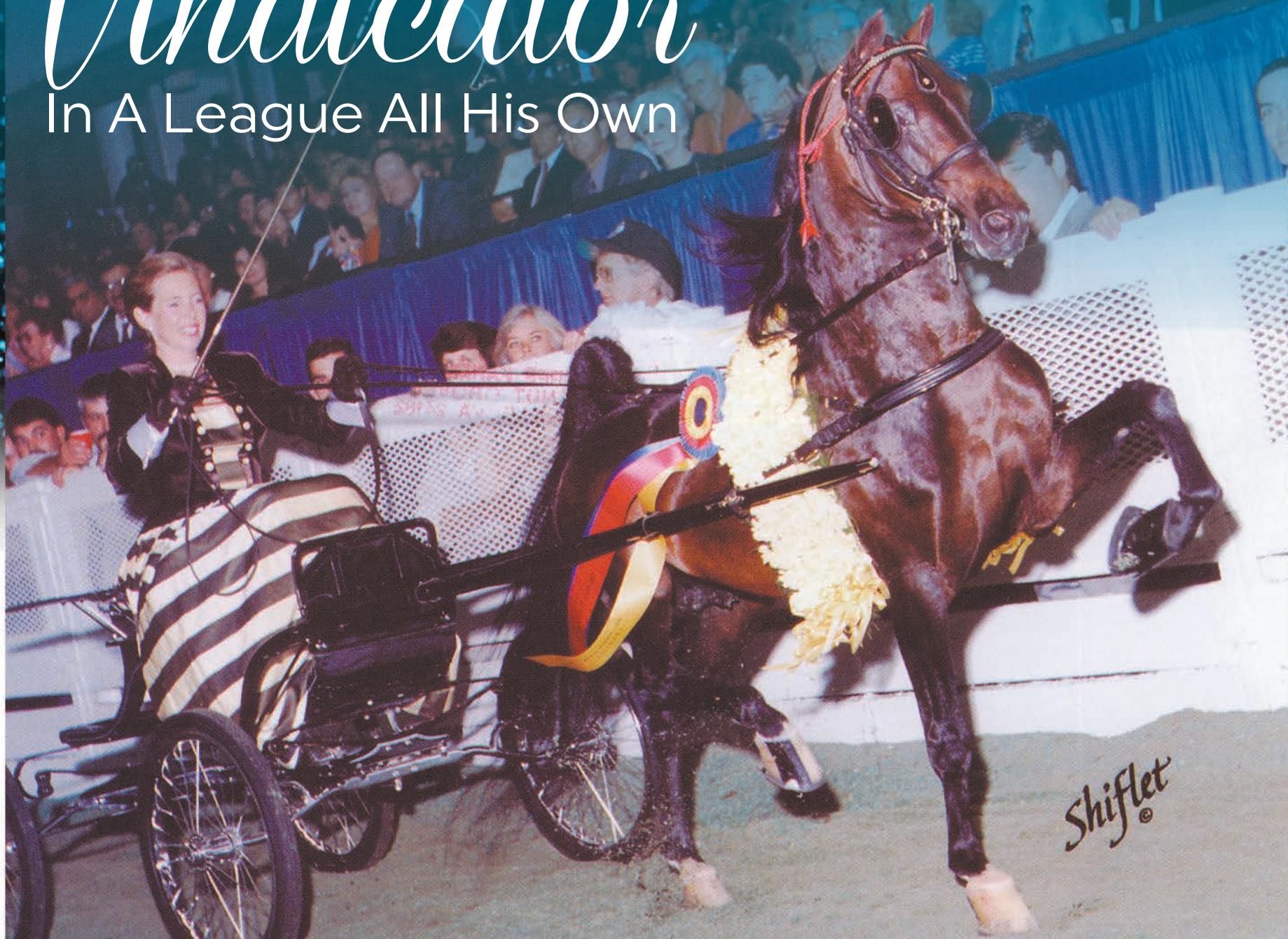


Vindicator

In A League All His Own



Vindicator and Karen Waldron won the World's Grand Champion Harness Pony title in 1994 (pictured) and with many world's and reserve world's titles in between, came back in 2007 to be the World's Champion of Champions Amateur Harness Pony team.

by Bob Funkhouser

"If I had not bought Vindicator I wouldn't be doing this today. I was in the right place at the right time. Fate put my main focus on Hackneys instead of American Saddlebreds," said Karen Waldron of the renowned stallion who passed away this summer at his longtime home Bent Tree Farm, at the age of 32.

Bred by Ed and Jean Wilson, Vindicator was a son of the world's champion producing Cassilis Debonaire and Diamond Lil, a daughter of Reedann's Souvenir (by Dutch White's Souvenir). Adding to the great depth of his pedigree, Vindicator's second dam was by Carnation's King and his third dam was by King Of The Plain.

The Wilsons and their Twin Willow breeding program were strong supporters of the American Hackney Horse Society (AHHS) Futurity, which was held at Louisville at that time and like many of

their top youngsters, Vindicator began his career as a baby in hand.

"We showed him for the first time at Lawrenceburg; he was about 3 months old," said Ed Wilson. "He was a little show off from day one. You just stood him up and left him alone. He had a bigger than life attitude and was totally different.

"Redd Crabtree used to always remind me that he judged him as a weanling and would tell me 'he was something else.' A funny story about Vindicator was when Terry McKenzie and I took him to Louisville as a three-year-old we were stabled way out back in a tent and there had been several horses in the tents that got sick. Terry and I went to check on him on the day he was showing and he was flat out. We thought he was dead, but he was just resting. He came out and made a great show. Vindicator had a presence about him that said, 'here I am.'"

The fact that Vindicator was a reserve world's champion as a yearling and won his final two

world's titles as a 22-year-old, makes him one of the most prolific Hackneys to ever grace the show ring. Can you imagine he won world's titles in the '80s, '90s and 2000s?

Terry McKenzie developed Vindicator for the Wilsons and was reserve in the AHHS Three-Year-Old Harness Pony Futurity and then came back the following year to win the 1989 Junior Harness Pony World's Championship (only one class offered at that time), defeating his Futurity nemesis Gotta Lotta Pzazz.

That year Karen Waldron was going to skip Louisville and go to Indiana instead. However, plans changed and she ended up attending the World's Championship Horse Show where she saw McKenzie and Vindicator and knew she had witnessed something special.

"It was all about his presence," said Waldron. "He hit the ring like he owned it and he enjoyed



Karen Waldron and Vindicator were stars on the sport's biggest stages, making their best shows at Louisville, Toronto and Lexington Junior League (pictured).



One of Vindicator's most famous sons, Night Editor was the Three-Year-Old Harness Pony World's Champion with Lee Adams-Hudson and the next year was the World's Champion of Champions Junior Harness Pony with Karen Waldron.

being there. There wasn't a foot out of place. I thought to myself, 'this is what we need.'

"I introduced myself to the Wilsons and told them I was interested in purchasing Vindicator. They said they didn't want to sell."

Later that fall the Wilsons called Waldron and said they would consider selling the stallion. Eventually the two sides came together and Vindicator had a new home in Shawsville, Virginia with Lee Adams-Hudson as his forever trainer.

The trio went on to great success bringing world's title after world's title to Bent Tree Farm. Vindicator had a love affair with the show ring, particularly Louisville and Toronto where he fed off the crowds. World's Grand Champion Harness Pony, World's Champion of Champions Amateur Harness Pony and Canadian Harness Pony National Champion titles were all a part of his résumé.

"The year he won the world's grand championship was magical," said Waldron. "To be able to show in the open division and to go in there and thrive on the audience is something I'll never forget. He always enjoyed the adoration of the audience. Whenever he showed by himself, he was awful.

"At home he was lovely to drive but he wasn't easy in the stall. It took the right person handling him. He had to respect them. He could control any situation. As a breeding stallion he was an easy breeder, it was no big deal. He preferred going to shows over breeding.

"He showed until he was 22 and the one year we took off he was so depressed. We had purchased Ooh La La! and our attention had shifted to her that year. He didn't like it at all. Everything had to be about him."

Having been shown since a weanling, the stallion won his final two world's titles (his final two classes) at the age of 22. What was more amazing was what he overcame to get there. The year before he had been reserve in his Louisville qualifier, but the Bent Tree team knew something wasn't right.

"Dr. [Scott] Bennett looked at him and said he had cancer," said Waldron. "We were devastated. Several vets looked at him and they all said it would kill him. I happened to be at the University of Tennessee talking to a dog vet and I was telling him about Vindicator's cancer and he said, 'I know what to do.'"

He treated the stallion and Vindicator made a complete turn around, again yearning to be back in the show ring. When he won those final two world's titles the next year, Waldron remembers him "loving every minute of it. He loved feeding off people's energy."

Vindicator didn't care much for retirement. Thirty minutes was about as long as he would tolerate being away from his stall, which was located where he could see every horse and pony that was brought out to be worked.

2007 World's Champion of Champions Amateur Harness Pony
 2007 World's Champion Amateur Ladies Harness Pony
 2006 Reserve World's Champion Amateur Ladies Harness Pony
 2004 Reserve World's Champion of Champions Amateur Harness Pony
 2004 Reserve World's Champion Amateur Ladies Harness Pony
 2003 Reserve World's Champion of Champions Amateur Harness Pony
 2003 Reserve World's Champion Amateur Ladies Harness Pony
 2002 Reserve World's Champion of Champions Amateur Harness Pony
 1999 World's Champion of Champions Amateur Harness Pony
 1999 Reserve World's Champion Amateur Ladies Harness Pony
 1996 Reserve World's Champion of Champions Amateur Harness Pony
 1996 Reserve World's Champion Amateur Ladies Harness Pony
 1995 Reserve World's Grand Champion Harness Pony
 1995 World's Champion Harness Pony Stallion/Gelding
 1994 World's Grand Champion Harness Pony
 1994 World's Champion Harness Pony Stallion/Gelding
 1993 Reserve World's Grand Champion Harness Pony
 1993 World's Champion Harness Pony Stallion/Gelding
 1992 Reserve World's Grand Champion Harness Pony
 1991 Reserve World's Grand Champion Harness Pony
 1991 World's Champion Harness Pony Stallion/Gelding
 1990 Reserve World's Grand Champion Harness Pony
 1990 Reserve World's Champion Harness Pony Stallion/Gelding
 1989 World's Champion Junior Harness Pony
 1988 Reserve World's Champion AHHS Three-Year-Old Harness Pony Futurity
 1987 Reserve World's Champion AHHS Two-Year-Old Stallion/Gelding Futurity
 1986 Reserve World's Champion AHHS Yearling Stallion/Gelding Futurity

"He screamed at the other horses as they came by," said Waldron."

Since he had such a long show career and Waldron bred him lightly for herself, Vindicator only had 80-some foals. Even with small foal crops he became a highly successful sire. He was the number one Hackney Futurity Sire from 1989 to 1993. World's and national champions sired by Vindicator included his highly successful stallion son, Night Editor, CH Pure Country, Intercessor, Megabucks, Zeus, Julianna and My Sweet Georgia Brown, among others.

Perhaps Vindicator's greatest contribution as a sire came through his daughters. Their offspring carry the same genes as Vindicator when it comes to presence, athleticism, and durability. My Sweet Georgia Brown (Vindicator x McKenzie's Dominique) is the dam of four-time World's Grand Champion Harness Pony Giselle, the champion short-tail Exhilarating and the combined driving/dressage champion Tosca.

"With Tosca we wanted to show people that Hackney ponies can do multiple disciplines," explained Waldron.

The former road pony Julianna (Vindicator x Green Acres April Showers) is the dam of world's champion harness pony Go Daddy and world's champion road pony Outside The Lines. A daughter of Vindicator and Twin Willow's Tina Marie, Twin Willow's Arianna is the dam of two of the winningest harness ponies of the past decade, world's champions Twin Willow's Handsome Dan and The Remington.

One of Bent Tree Farm's newest stars is the explosive road pony In The Moment who is by Par Excellence out of the Vindicator daughter, Bagheira. "We have found that Mark Of Excellence sons and Vindicator daughters are a good cross," said Waldron.

Vindicator stayed active even in retirement. There was never a soundness issue with him so he was jogged regularly up until he was 30.

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