

“Well now. That’s How It’s Done.”

by Leeann Mione



Karen’s brother, David Swezey, bought CH Heartland Expectation back for her in April of last year and he joined her with the ribbons and the flower blanket after she drove Expectation to win their third Harness Pony World’s Grand Championship together.

Newly crowned Harness Pony World’s Grand Champion CH Heartland Expectation has been exceeding expectations since he was three years old, but chances are pretty good that when Karen Frickey’s number 1411 was called out as the winner with her beloved harness pony in the stallion/gelding class Wednesday night, nobody expected that!

Karen’s career in the Hackney industry is legendary. She and late husband Ed amassed a show string of ponies second to none and 23 years ago they teamed up with trainers Denessa and Randy Harper who had an incredible record of success already. Some of the ponies associated with the Frickey Farms dream team are Ballet, Fancy Ribbons, Bristol Fashion, Hazard County, Classical Dancer, Cowboy Magic, Catch Me If You Can, Nobu and the list goes on and on and on.

The Harness Pony World’s Grand Champion of 1995 and 1997, Ballet was a pony that Karen considered a once-in-a-lifetime pony and her career included eight world’s titles before her retirement at Louisville in 2004. The Frickey/Harper team knew in 2002 that Ballet was going to be retiring in a couple of years so Ed and Randy set out to find Karen a new pony.

At the 2002 All American Classic, they were sitting in the seats and when Beth [Campbell at the time] drove three-year-old Heartland Expectation to win the UPHA Harness Pony Classic they went back to Heartland Hackney Farm’s stalls to take a look. What they found was a line of people wanting to buy the handsome bay pony and Ed, in his inimitable style, said “I’ll take him.” If you knew Ed Frickey, you can hear him say that in a way that only he could say it.

Heartland trainer at the time, Rich Campbell, told Randy Harper “He’s very game and go forward so don’t touch him with a whip or you’ll be at the other end of the arena before you can blink an eye.”

They took Expectation to Kansas City to close out the 2002 season and with Randy driving, the three-year-old won the UPHA Harness Pony Classics Grand Championship. In 2003, Expectation earned his first world’s title; the Four-Year-Old Harness Pony Reserve World’s Championship.

Karen didn’t take over showing her pony until 2004 but they didn’t show at Louisville because Randy was judging. They did go to River Ridge that year where they won. Karen was nursing her father in the hospital when it came time for Lexington so she was unable to go. Ed therefore had opportunity to show her pony and they won the amateur class. Ed however got a little cocky and ahead of himself and when they went back in the championship he got the grand pony beat and they finished in third. That was the last time Ed ever showed Expectation.

The following year was a banner year for Karen and Expectation and they earned their first of many Louisville tricolors together when they won the Amateur Harness Pony World’s Champion of Champions title after finishing as the reserve world’s champions in the amateur ladies class.

Things were looking great for this team but there was definitely a lot for Karen to learn “Ballet had been so light in the bridle and she was so easy to drive but Expectation is so strong. Early on we showed at the ARHPA show and my hand-holds were too long so it took all my strength to hold him. I told Randy and Denessa that I wasn’t sure I could show him and Randy told me “Then you better start lifting weights. He’s your pony and you’re going to show him,” said Karen.

In the 10 years since his first Louisville win with Karen, Expectation’s career has been virtually unrivaled and it’s a heck of a story, but it’s the unexpected success of them at Louisville this year and, in fact, the miracle of how they came to be reunited that is the real story.

In 2008, after they won their second consecutive Harness Pony World’s Grand Championship, Karen decided to share Expectation. They had nothing left to prove together and it was time for him to make someone else’s dreams come true so she sold him to Priscilla Gise for Mary Gise to show under the direction of Andy and Lynda Freseth. They won the 2009 amateur championship and amateur ladies qualifier to add two more world’s titles to Expectation’s list of accomplishments. In 2010, Mary was reserve in the amateur ladies class at Louisville and then Lynda Freseth showed him back to win his third open world’s grand championship.

He was then sold in December to Tamra Arndt and he headed to North Carolina and West Wind Stables. Kim Cowart showed him in 2011 to the Harness Pony Reserve World’s Grand Championship. More wins followed in 2012 with Tamra Arndt showing him but in early 2013 she made the decision to put him back in training with Randy.

Karen Frickey was thrilled to have him back in her barn where she could see him every day. Randy showed him in 2013 and they had two great wins at Lexington. At Louisville he and Expectation were named the Harness Pony Stallion/Gelding Reserve World’s Champions. In the fall, Tamra’s niece Megan McClure showed him to the Amateur Harness Pony Reserve Championship at the Alltech National Horse Show.

Randy then set about getting him ready for the 2014 show season but soon he began to hatch another plan unbeknownst to Karen. Randy and Tamra eventually came to the realization that Expectation wasn’t going to work out to be the pony she needed and she decided she would sell him.

Enter David Swezey, Karen Frickey’s brother. David isn’t really a pony guy. He’s owned a few and shown a few, but it’s not his passion like it is for Karen. He travels the world and volunteers for American Foreign Academic Research (AFAR). The organization uses hands-on archeology to enhance education in science, technology, engineering and math in Belize, Spain, and Montana. He is helping to build a 32 student campus with a focus on Mayan archaeology in San Ignacio this year.

Last year he volunteered for the VEX International Robotics Competition held in April at Freedom Hall. The event brought 785 teams from 27 countries and more than 8000 elementary, middle, high school and college children and young adults to compete for three days in an effort to reach the finals.

He has a passion for archaeology, travel and volunteering. He also has a passion for family, especially his sister Karen, and he seized the opportunity to make yet another dream of hers come true.

In April of last year, on a typical Saturday morning at the barn with Frickey Farms clients in the arena watching Randy work Expectation, he asked Karen if she



Randy and Denessa Harper both knew that Expectation could do it again this year. Teamed with Karen Frickey for 23 years, their success with her ponies is legendary. Randy told announcer Peter Doubleday as Expectation prepared for his Saturday night victory pass that it would be his final Freedom Hall appearance.

wanted to take a turn driving him. She got in the buggy and around they went - just like old times. When they parked in the middle, Randy asked her if she wanted to show him. Not really understanding the question, Karen asked "Tamra's going to let me show Expectation?" Randy's answer was "No. You're going to show your pony. He belongs to you."

As she burst into tears, the realization that David had purchased her beloved Expectation back for her so he could live in his now-forever-home sunk in. And so another chapter in Expectation's life began.

This pony that Randy had known and trained for so long now had to set about getting back in the groove with Karen. "He has such a big heart," said Randy. "He was born to be a great pony, you just have to stay out of his way."

When asked what he and Ed saw in him all those years ago as a three-year-old Randy replied, "He made the same pass, took the same step every time. There wasn't one good step then one bad step, he just was incredibly consistent. He also never turned an ear back and he was just a baby. That's what impressed me."

By the time Expectation and Karen got to Louisville last year, they had earned several wins and they kicked off that week in Freedom Hall Sunday night by being named the Kentucky County Fair Harness Pony Reserve Grand Champions to close out the 2014 season.

This year, relatively early, everyone seemed to feel a sense of anticipation. Expectation just kept working better and better. Denessa Harper had worked Expectation occasionally over the years and for several months this winter and spring while Randy was ill and recuperating from heart surgery. She was one of the first to feel like he had it in him to win the big one again. "I had occasionally worked him in those years when Randy was president of the UPHA and president of AHHS which took up so much of his time. It all came very natural to this pony and we always knew he was a pony we could count on. He made it very easy and it was just up to the person standing in center ring."

"I kept saying 'He's better than ever. He can win it again.' I tried to get Randy to let me keep him on my show string since he was working so good, but he very adamantly and very quickly said 'no'", she laughed.

There have been many secrets to Expectation's success but both the Harpers and Karen agree that one of his most unusual traits is that he takes care of himself. "It's not unusual to see him lay down flat out in his stall after a workout and sleep for four or five hours. He never frets or paces or gets himself worked up," said Randy.

Randy also realized early on that Expectation knows exactly what to do and he knows exactly how he wants to do it. "Part of the reason he is so strong is because he likes to brace himself against the bit. It's like his security blanket. When he was four, I decided I was going to change him and give him a soft mouth so he'd be easier to drive. It totally backfired on me and it took me six or eight months to get him back. He was trying to find the bridle and I was trying to keep him out of it. I learned my



Sixteen-year-old CH Heartland Expectation won Wednesday night's Harness Pony Stallion/Gelding World's Championship and brought Karen to tears. She was all smiles however as she gave him a peppermint.

lesson about his steering right quick. He's never been a pony that would adapt to the amateur driver. They have to adapt to him. You're going to take a deep seat and go on and just hope it works out."

Karen agrees. "Randy always had confidence that I could show him even though he's so game and go-forward because he's the best thinking pony in the world. He never did anything bad, never jumped off his feet. He'll walk through fire for you and his attitude is 'I'm going down that rail and if you want to go with me you better hang on.'"

Many people in the show horse industry call on Equine Psychics to see if they can provide any insight into the mind of their animal. Karen, Denessa and Randy thought it certainly couldn't hurt so they gave it a try. What she said about Expectation was astounding, but it didn't come from him. It came from another pony in the barn who was stabled right next to him.

That pony told the psychic that he really didn't like Expectation and he didn't want to be stabled next to him. When she asked him why he said because every time Expectation returned to his stall after being worked or after a horse show, he always announced to the other animals "Well now. That's how it's done!"

Heartland Expectation has beaten every other pony he's ever shown against but going into Louisville this year with Karen was different than all those years they showed and won together, according to Randy.

"The difference is that people expected him to win before. I don't think people thought he was 100 percent this year. Nobody expected him to win except us. He was working so good at home and I had faith in him. When I got to Louisville Saturday night about 5:30 he was laid out in his stall, in all that chaos that is the North Wing, and he was absolutely dead to the world and sleeping so soundly that he was snoring. I thought to myself, 'He hasn't done this in 10 years' and I knew then that he knew it was time and he was going to make a great show."

And that's exactly what they did. After claiming the Harness Pony Stallion/Gelding World's Championship Wednesday night, they hit that blast of cold air as they entered Freedom Hall Saturday night, 10 years after winning their first Louisville championship tricolor, and they never looked back. This pony that never had a bad day and had never taken a bad step marched down the rail like the champion he knew he was and Karen did everything right. Nobody expected it but when her number was called out as the World's Grand Champions the cheers from the crowd were deafening.

"I've been very fortunate and I've had a lot of great ponies to train, but he's the best pony I've ever worked in my life. He came in like Clark Kent and went out like Superman," said Randy.

And so their career in Freedom Hall came to a close. Karen and her second "Once-in-a-lifetime" pony earned their third world's grand championship together, his ninth Louisville win, 17th world's title and a place in the history books.

"Yep... that's how it's done."