



Eugene Joseph Johnson

"CAPTAIN SEAWEED"

BY BOB FUNKHOUSER

One of the horse show world's most colorful and fun-loving personalities passed away from natural causes Wednesday, May 13, in a hospital near Ithaca, New York. He was 78.

Known far and wide as Captain Seaweed, he grew up in the nation's Capitol and began working at Jack's Boat House on the Potomac River early in his teens. A stint tending the mules that pulled the small barges and boats on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in this National Historic Park along the Potomac brought him into the equestrian world.

Seaweed had been a part of the American Saddlebred and Hunter/Jumper worlds for decades and in addition to giving riders and

drivers a shout out for their home state as they exited the ring, he was also well-known for always having a disposable camera with him and putting montage boards of candid photos together and hanging them at the shows.

"Seaweed traveled the horse show circuit all year, cooking in the food tent at shows, grooming horses for the show ring, and working at every single job available on a busy show grounds," stated longtime friend Peter Doubleday. "He travelled by bus, aka "the outbound dog," and by train, as well as being a frequent hitchhiker on the commercial vans crisscrossing the country.

"He survived in most parts by small financial donations, the constant generosity of friends and second hand clothing brought to the shows to keep him properly attired through all conditions. He was always happy in his world and ours.

"Everyone has a Seaweed story. Everyone, famous or infamous, knew him from corporate executives, to Olympic riders, world renowned personalities, and most of all, the gang on the 'back side' of a horse show facility. Seaweed enjoyed steady work with the American Saddlebred stable of Jan Lukens in Ravena, New York and was looked after by one super friend, Randy Johnson, from Maryland. The Weed made you smile and

then shake your head – one of the best. He will always be remembered in the horse show world."

"I've known Seaweed since the early '60s," said Jan Lukens. "Peter Doubleday introduced us. "He went to shows with me for years and worked here at the farm. He entertained us, but he was also a really good worker and the harder it was, the better he was. As a younger man he was an excellent rider.

"There are so many good stories about Seaweed. One year at Eastern States we had 12 horses going in one session, one right after another. Seaweed was great, but he couldn't read so we had wrong saddles on horses all that session. We got through it with a few good laughs.

"He's probably the most well-known horse caretaker in the Hunter and Saddlebred worlds."

Captain Seaweed is no doubt holding court in Heaven just as he did from the most famous show venues in the country. We could use a good dose of the Weed about now. As Peter Doubleday said, he had friends from corporate executives to the guy who cleaned the bathrooms at the fairgrounds, and treated both the same.

Rest in peace our friend and thank you, for all the years of service to our animals and most of all your spirit for life.