



Stage Flight

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY BARBARA D. LIVINGSTON

Phil Birsh brought the same dream into racing that every owner does when he bought his first two yearlings in 1991. He hoped to stand beside them one day in the winner's circle. But within six months one became a wobbler and was euthanized. And the other?

On her way to her first race, Birsh said, "she had the misfortune of being parked next to a truckful of live turkeys at a rest stop. She panicked, smashed her head against the ceiling, and never raced."

Coming from a world where dreams live, die, and are reborn day after day, Birsh was not deterred. He got even more involved in racing, and now, at 49, he breeds, buys, sells, and races Thoroughbreds. He owns a stallion, Mayakovsky, and an idyllic farm in upstate New York.

But Birsh is perhaps best known for his day job. He is president, publisher, and owner of *Playbill*, the handy magazine that tells theatergoers who's in each play and what the play's about. Its monthly circulation is nearly 3.9 million, and it sometimes prints up to 500 different editions a month.

Not only is *Playbill* by far America's most recognized theater magazine, but the company also has a large Internet site, Playbill.com, releases records through Playbill Records, and owns Playbill Radio, a Broadway-related music station.

Birsh, whose primary residence is in Manhattan, sees similarities between the theater and racing.

"Almost everyone in racing could be doing

something else and make more money at it, but they love racing," he said. "The people who work on Broadway love Broadway. They could be making more money and working more steadily doing something else—not as interesting, not filled with the romance that is racing and Broadway."

Birsh, a lifelong horse lover, spent his first five years in rural Staatsburg, N.Y., about two hours north of Manhattan. He was none too pleased when, suddenly, his life changed.

"One day I woke up in a two-bedroom apartment in the Bronx," he said. "That shouldn't happen to a kid."

The horses he saw after moving were on TV: the Aqueduct replay shows.

He was eight when his mother asked him whether he liked horse racing. He said not only that did he like racing, but that he would own racehorses when he grew up. He also knew, in his heart, that he would someday own an upstate farm.

When Birsh was 16 his father bought *Playbill*, and the younger Birsh watched his fa-

Phil Birsh moves smoothly between the worlds of theater and Thoroughbreds

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2007 Leading Sires in New York

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in New York (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 31, 2007. As supplied to The Blood-Horse by The Jockey Club Information Systems Inc., earnings exclude monies from Japan and Hong Kong. *Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners includes all countries. (A ♯ indicates a sire represented by his first crop to race).

Rank	Stallion (Foaling Year, Sire), Farm Standing	2008 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2007 Earnings	Cumulative			
								Foals	Stks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	GOLDEN MISSILE (95, A.P. Indy), Milfer Farm	\$7,500	154/77	3/5	0/3	(Cobalt Blue, \$329,433)	\$2,965,679	310	7	1.21	1.97
2	CHIEF SEATTLE (97, Seattle Slew), Empire Stud	\$5,000	140/89	6/10	1/6	(Bold Chieftain, \$283,950)	\$2,787,722	*275	9	1.29	1.41
3	ARTAX (95, Marquetry), Keane Stud Operations	N/A	136/69	4/6	1/4	(Diabolical, \$354,750)	\$2,215,645	305	6	1.17	1.48
4	FREUD (98, Storm Cat), Sequel Stallions New York	\$10,000	81/40	2/2	2/2	(Karakorum Elektra, \$111,993)	\$2,169,504	121	4	1.66	1.41
5	WESTERN EXPRESSION (96, Gone West), Highcliff Farm	\$5,000	95/46	2/5	1/2	(Stunt Man, \$347,739)	\$2,053,210	192	3	1.26	1.30
6	REGAL CLASSIC (85, Vice Regent), McMahon of Saratoga	N/A	125/59	2/4	1/2	(Half Heaven, \$158,065)	\$1,994,650	*920	43	1.45	1.59
7	ELTISH (92, Cox's Ridge), Keane Stud Operations	\$3,500	103/57	1/3	0/1	(Silk Ridge, \$369,240)	\$1,960,692	221	10	1.22	1.45
8	PHONE TRICK (82, Clever Trick)	Died, 2005	108/60	1/1	0/1	(Sort of Tricky, \$82,430)	\$1,939,354	*1086	52	1.54	1.55
9	DISCO RICO (97, Citidancer), Keane Stud Operations	\$4,000	57/43	2/5	1/2	(Pure Disco, \$285,050)	\$1,852,797	101	4	1.61	1.23
10	PRIME TIMBER (96, Sultry Song), Sez Who Thoroughbreds North	\$3,000	69/37	2/2	0/2	(Premium Wine, \$311,700)	\$1,826,941	112	3	1.30	1.47
11	A. P. JET (89, Fappiano), Sugar Maple Farm	\$5,000	108/50	1/1	1/1	(Sense of Speed, \$88,400)	\$1,697,161	*392	12	1.18	1.36
12	RIZZI (91, Afleet), Sez Who Thoroughbreds North	\$2,000	82/51	1/1	1/1	(Smash 'Em Sammy, \$143,098)	\$1,611,598	*344	16	1.28	1.30
13	AMERICAN CHANCE (89, Cure the Blues)	Died, 2004	81/44	2/2	2/2	(She's A Chance, \$90,091)	\$1,548,618	*408	29	1.49	1.32
14	GOLD FEVER (93, Forty Niner), Questroyal at Metropolitan Stud	\$3,500	86/42	2/4	0/2	(Planets Aligned, \$145,240)	\$1,274,351	*391	8	1.28	1.41
15	RAFFIE'S MAJESTY (95, Cormorant), Sugar Maple Farm	\$3,000	43/26	2/3	2/2	(Dr. V's Magic, \$284,510)	\$1,274,335	90	4	1.67	1.17

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ther's business with interest. Meanwhile, he ventured often to the Big A, a venue he jokingly refers to as "the testing ground for your true affection for horse racing." He studied racing, breeding, and, on more occasions than he's proud of, the fine art of gambling.

He's genial and loquacious, and laughter comes easily. Asked how he came to own such a major company, he said, "The old-fashioned way: nepotism."

After college, he worked on Wall Street in mergers and acquisitions for 12 years. In 1992, around the time of the birth of his second child, Abby, his father floated the idea of selling *Playbill* or having Phil join him in the family business. A few years later Birsh and his siblings bought a significant portion of the company. Their father remained as chairman of the board and, in 1994, Birsh took over as president and publisher.

He wasn't particularly passionate about Broadway, he said, although he can quote Gilbert and Sullivan with ease. What he was passionate about was racing, and the reasons were multifold.

"I love the horses first and foremost," he said, "but the people in racing are really remarkable. It doesn't matter who you are—you can talk to anybody in the sport. Billionaires can talk to grooms and have a wonderful conversation, and respect each other for what they both know.

"And racing is about dreams," he said. "So if you have dreams, and you have

the time, you have the chance to fulfill them."

He took the time. After his initial foray into buying yearlings failed, he kept on buying horses and also began breeding them. One of his earliest purchases was an in-foal mare named Democracy, whom Birsh bought at the 1993 Keenel- and January sale for \$9,000.

"I liked her looks," he said. "She was correct and well-balanced, and she was in foal to a solid sire named Irish Tower, who stood for \$7,500."

The resulting foal, a filly named Dahl, became Birsh's first winner, in 1995. The bay won three of 11 races, finished second or third in six others, and earned \$122,263. She was also three times stakes-placed, including a second in the grade III Cicada Stakes. Upon her retirement, Dahl joined Birsh's broodmare band.

"She was a very nice horse, ran her eyeballs out every time, and got injured every time because she was so crooked," Birsh said, laughing.

But with Dahl, Birsh began visiting winner's circles. The first time his mother accompanied him there, she yelled over: "Well, you did it! You told me you were going to do this when you were eight!"

Early on, Birsh befriended Mike Tobin, then manager of Sugar Maple Farm in New York's Hudson Valley region. At the time, Tobin worked with both Distinctive Pro, to whom Birsh bred mares, and Carr de Naskra, a stallion in whom Birsh owned shares.

Tobin freely admits he doesn't quite grasp Birsh's stature in the theater world. "My idea of a theater," Tobin chuckled, "is (a place) you get popcorn." But he recognized Birsh as highly committed, knowledgeable, and interesting, and the two became fast friends.

As *Playbill* flourished under Birsh's leadership, so, too, did Birsh's racing ventures. He bred Polly Jo, a 1997 Virginia Rapids filly who won the Twin Lights Stakes, and placed in three other stakes. She was to prove one of her sire's leading earners, garnering \$177,717.

Other runners brought more winner's circle visits, some by himself and others in partnership, but Birsh had even grander dreams. He wanted to buy a stallion, and he set his sights on what he calls a "sculpture."

When the 2-year-old Mayakovsky broke Saratoga's 55-year-old record for 5½ furlongs in his first start (1:03.32), Birsh was captivated. A son of Matty G—Joy to Raise, by Raise a Man, the colt was not only blazing fast, but also stunningly beautiful. He was a young Black Stallion and Black Beauty rolled into one.

Mayakovsky raced just once more at 2, finishing second in the Hopeful Stakes (gr. I). He returned at three with a strong win in the Gotham Stakes (gr. III). Birsh, at Aqueduct that afternoon, was swept away again.

Mayakovsky never repeated that performance, winning three of nine starts through his 4-year-old season. But that was good for Birsh. He had tried repeatedly to buy Mayakovsky, but now, finally, he got his horse, and the black beauty headed to the Empire State in 2003.

By then, Tobin was the stallion manager at Anne Morgan and Tim Little's Mill Creek Farm near Saratoga Springs, and that is where Mayakovsky—and most of



The monthly circulation of *Playbill* is about 3.9 million

*Multiple Grade 1 Stakes Winner, Precocity,
Miler Speed, Class, Soundness, and Pedigree*

All Found in One Place

UTOPIA



- **Multiple Grade 1 Stakes Winner:** Earned \$4.9 and won four Grade 1 stakes, including the Derby Grand Prix at 1¼ miles
- **Precocity:** 3 wins in 3 starts on dirt as a 2YO by 19 lengths total, including the 1 mile, G1 All Japan Juvenile Championship.
- **Miler Speed:** Winner of Dubai's Godolphin Mile-G2 earning a 114 Beyer equivalent, and won Belmont's 2007 G3 Westchester H. in 1:33 1/5 (6f in 1:09 2/5) with a 107 Beyer, defeating **POLITICAL FORCE** (2008 stud fee: \$15,000) and **SUN KING** (2008 stud fee: \$10,000). Utopia was a mile record-holder in Japan.
- **Class:** Defeated millionaires or G1 winners **LAVA MAN**, **HAT TRICK (Jpn)** (2008 stud fee: \$15,000), **POLITICAL FORCE**, **SUN KING**, **ISLAND FASHION**, **EVENING ATTIRE**, etc.
- **Soundness:** Graded SW every year he campaigned; winner of 7 stakes without medication. **RETIRES SOUND**.
- **Pedigree:** By leading sire of sires **FORTY NINER** and bred like his best son **DISTORTED HUMOR** (2008 stud fee: \$300,000); out of a mare by **NORTHERN TASTE** (by Northern Dancer).

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1	NOT FOR LOVE (90, Mr. Prospector), Northview Stallion Station	\$25,000	177/100	11/17	8/11	(Talkin About Love, \$375,875)	\$5,784,263	548	42	1.85	1.52
2	OUTFLANKER (94, Danzig), Maryland Stallion Station	\$4,000	134/84	8/10	3/8	(Annabill, \$238,680)	\$3,530,010	316	14	1.40	1.17
3	LOUIS QUATORZE (93, Sovereign Dancer), Murmur Farm	\$7,500	163/101	4/6	1/4	(Tap Dancing Mauk, \$200,355)	\$3,027,450	*677	16	1.25	1.51
4	TWO PUNCH (83, Mr. Prospector), Northview Stallion Station	N/A	125/64	2/4	0/2	(Grand Champion, \$279,240)	\$2,744,761	*876	50	1.53	1.47
5	LION HEARTED (96, Storm Cat), Northview Stallion Station	\$3,500	104/64	2/3	1/2	(Maddy's Heart, \$194,194)	\$2,463,857	211	8	1.33	1.38
6	ALLEN'S PROSPECT (82, Mr. Prospector)	Died, 2003	148/74	0/0	0/0	(All Giving, \$101,835)	\$2,208,861	1049	68	1.31	1.35
7	YARROW BRAE (95, Deputy Minister), Murmur Farm	\$3,000	62/31	2/4	1/2	(Five Steps, \$148,440)	\$1,266,555	182	7	1.24	1.04
8	CROWD PLEASER (95, A.P. Indy)	Died, 2006	60/28	1/1	1/1	(Happy Surprise, \$103,045)	\$1,176,092	124	1	0.89	1.29
9	MOJAVE MOON (96, Mr. Prospector), Bonita Farm	\$2,500	69/37	0/0	0/0	(Bankbusted, \$101,329)	\$1,096,932	123	0	0.76	1.34
10	CITIDANCER (87, Dixieland Band)	Pnsd	44/24	0/0	0/0	(Citifest, \$100,437)	\$1,055,076	346	28	1.80	1.27
11	EASTERN ECHO (88, Damascus)	Died, 2004	82/33	2/2	1/2	(Marias Golden Rose, \$67,380)	\$961,956	*520	26	1.23	1.45
12	POLISH NUMBERS (87, Danzig)	Died, 2002	48/23	2/2	0/2	(One Eyed Joker, \$120,440)	\$949,822	513	51	1.56	1.65
13	CRYPTO STAR (94, Cryptoclearance), Murmur Farm	\$2,500	61/31	1/3	0/1	(Lexi Star, \$273,204)	\$939,760	141	2	0.99	1.11
14	JAZZ CLUB (95, Dixieland Band), Maryland Stallion Station	\$2,500	47/24	0/0	0/0	(Leave It to Cleve, \$108,920)	\$823,281	102	0	0.87	1.17
15	CARNIVALAY (81, Northern Dancer)	Died, 2007	33/16	2/4	1/2	(Carnival Chrome, \$196,948)	\$779,171	593	38	1.41	1.37

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1	REAL QUIET (95, Quiet American), Penn Ridge Farm	\$10,000	133/71	4/11	1/4	(Midnight Lute, \$1,368,000)	\$4,158,973	*395	10	1.24	1.32
2	LITE THE FUSE (91, Buckaroo), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$3,500	126/74	5/8	1/5	(Going Ballistic, \$690,140)	\$3,089,116	371	22	1.40	1.26
3	PARTNER'S HERO (94, Danzig), Castle Rock Farm	\$2,500	118/63	3/5	2/3	(Heros Reward, \$515,826)	\$2,769,834	293	13	1.32	1.48
4	PATTON (91, Lord At War), Castle Rock Farm	\$2,500	68/35	2/3	1/2	(Kelly's Landing, \$1,313,000)	\$2,289,726	356	13	0.95	1.16
5	WHEATON (90, Alydar)	Died, 2006	80/56	2/3	1/2	(Miami Sunrise, \$187,773)	\$2,107,653	288	12	1.26	1.06
6	SERVICE STRIPE (91, Deputy Minister), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$3,500	109/59	2/2	1/2	(Joan's Rose, \$107,215)	\$2,102,106	248	13	1.38	1.19
7	BANKER'S GOLD (94, Forty Niner), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$3,500	116/59	3/3	0/3	(My List, \$213,187)	\$1,942,905	320	10	0.99	1.42
8	SIPHON (BRZ) (91, Itajara), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$5,000	117/57	4/4	1/4	(Wedded Woman, \$136,329)	\$1,807,708	*460	12	1.00	1.72
9	BUDDHA (99, Unbridled's Song), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$5,000	137/46	3/3	1/3	(Hisse, \$123,581)	\$1,616,465	*255	3	0.62	1.63
10	DELAWARE TOWNSHIP (96, Notebook), Land of Believe Farm	\$4,000	71/39	3/7	0/3	(Electrify, \$295,530)	\$1,424,359	129	4	1.34	1.30
11	SNOW RIDGE (98, Tabasco Cat), Regal Heir Farms	\$5,000	66/44	1/1	1/1	(Banga Ridge, \$88,000)	\$1,302,914	111	2	1.13	1.42
12	POWER BY FAR (95, Power of Mind), Castle Rock Farm	\$3,000	21/14	1/1	1/1	(Power by Leigh, \$126,668)	\$718,254	53	1	1.33	1.35
13	COASTAL STORM (99, Storm Cat), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$2,500	31/17	0/0	0/0	(Tatocac, \$100,620)	\$623,746	89	2	1.03	0.84
14	FLYING CHEVRON (92, Carson City), Woodvale Farm	Died, 2007	33/21	0/0	0/0	(I Can See, \$117,460)	\$598,221	132	6	1.23	1.24
15	WILL'S WAY (93, Easy Goer), Pin Oak Lane Farm	N/A	46/25	0/0	0/0	(Elinodemisijos, \$49,627)	\$590,832	163	5	1.17	1.14

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Birsh's broodmares—took up residence.

Birsh promoted the young stallion aggressively. He bought mares, advertised, and tried something more akin to show business than to racing: He gave away, by the thousands, a pinup poster of Mayakovsky. While Birsh acknowledges that most of the posters probably ended up in the hands of young horse fans, mainly girls, they created buzz and were fun.

"Racing is filled with people who have given such stuff a fling, because none of this is our milk money," he said. "Intelligently, you wouldn't spend the kids' tuition money on a stallion. So, I'm fond of saying, it's the greatest volunteer army in the world. You can get yourself into all levels of trouble and commitment, but it's fun.

"There's nothing more exciting in the

world than potential, nothing sexier than what might be," he said. "There's nothing more fun than to look at a stallion, or at a weanling or young yearling, and wonder: 'Is it the one? Can this be the one we'll all remember the year for?'"

Mayakovsky's first crop reached the races in 2007. Of his 25 named 2-year-olds, nine have started, and three have won. He is currently the fourth-leading first-crop sire in New York, with much smaller crops than those ahead of him. Two of his winners are stakes-placed, and, curiously, as the distances increase, the performances have improved.

"We're such geniuses," Birsh said of himself and Tobin, chuckling again. "We combed the catalogs for mares—because we're experts—for precocious sprinters who would run their eyeballs out for six

furlongs. The results: all of Mayakovsky's horses are winning at a mile or more. So we pedigree specialists, we just really know our sport. We're just smarter than anyone else we know—putting speed on speed for short distances and creating winners at a mile, and grass horses winning at a mile and a sixteenth. Pure genius, no?"

But even a band of broodmares, racehorses, and a stallion weren't enough to fulfill Birsh's big dreams. So in early 2005 he bought a farm like those on postcards and travel brochures. The 90-acre spread near Charlton, about 20 miles from Saratoga Race Course, included a white Federal home from the 1820s and a large red dairy barn built in the 1890s. Tobin was hired as manager of what he calls "the Birsh family farm"—Birsh has not yet christened

Sugar Maple Stallions

2008

Barbara Livingston photo



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FRIENDLY ISLAND

CRAFTY FRIEND – ISLAND QUEEN, BY OGYGIAN

Grade 2-winning millionaire sprinter
 Runner-up in the TVG Breeder's Cup Sprint (G1) & the
 Gulf News Dubai Golden Shaheen (G1)
 Won his debut at Belmont by an astonishing 17 ¼ lengths!

\$5,000 LFSN



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GREELEY'S GALAXY

MR. GREELEY – ASCOT STARRE, BY ASCOT KNIGHT

Winner of the \$500,000 Illinois Derby (G2)
 Only graded stakes winner by **MR. GREELEY**
 to stand in New York

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ONE NICE CAT

STORM CAT – JEWEL PRINCESS, BY KEY TO THE MINT

Winner on both dirt and turf
 Out of champion older mare **JEWEL PRINCESS** (\$1,904,060)

\$3,500 LFSN



Barbara Livingston photo

PERFORMING MAGIC

GONE WEST – PERFORMING ARTS (IRE), BY THE MINSTREL

Nine winners to date, including
 2007 multiple stakes-placed juvenile **Piquante Cat**

\$5,000 LFSN



Barbara Livingston photo

RAFFIE'S MAJESTY

CORMORANT – RAFFINIERTE, BY SURUMU

#1 Sire by 2007 New York-bred Miler earnings
 #2 Sire by 2007 New York-bred Route earnings

\$3,000 LFSN



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Birsh's farm, like those on postcards and travel brochures, is a 90-acre spread near Charlton

it—and renovations began.

The barn was completely renovated to house horses, and now there are 17 airy stalls, each offering a broad view and automatic waterers. There is an oversized wash rack with warm water and extra large foaling stalls. Poured concrete floors were covered with thick rubber padding, and the aisles were made extra wide to accommodate indoor “turnouts.”

And after a year's efforts, the horses arrived: two Clydesdale mares, three ponies, and Thoroughbred mares and lay-ups. Among them is one of Mayakovsky's first-crop winners, Rapprocher, a daughter of the turkey-fearing filly, Rekindled Romance, from so long ago.

Birsh wanders north from Manhattan about once a month, often accompanied by his family—his wife, Odile, and four children, ages four to 18. The kids scamper around the hay bales and play hide-and-seek, or they climb aboard a pony or Clydesdale.

“It's just so much better than watching them argue over video games or having to hold their hand as you walk down the street in Manhattan hoping they won't learn to be scared,” Birsh said.

He keeps Mayakovsky and his wean-

lings at nearby Mill Creek and sends his young horses to Cathy Perkins and Wayne Mackey in Paris, Ky., for breaking and education. His trainer is Jimmy Jerkens, and it was Jerkens who provided Birsh several standout moments in 2007.

Remember Dahl, Birsh's first winner? She produced a stakes-placed filly named La Femme Galante on her first try. And her third foal, Dina, was three times stakes-placed by 2007 when, at 5, she gave Birsh his first New York stakes victory. The Dynaformer mare romped home $4\frac{1}{4}$ lengths clear in the Rare Treat Handicap at Birsh's beloved Aqueduct. All told, she earned nearly \$200,000 and, in November, Birsh sold her at Keeneland for \$230,000.

Weeks after that financial windfall, Birsh's racing dreams were fueled anew when his Melissa Jo, a 2-year-old Fusaichi Pegasus filly, finished a promising third in the Demoiselle (gr. II) at Aqueduct. Melissa Jo was not a homebred, but a \$30,000 Keeneland September yearling purchase. She is owned in partnership with his friend Bill Gildin.

Tobin shakes his head in admiration of Birsh's eye for a horse.

“Phil bought Democracy for \$9,000 and she ended up being our foundation mare,”

Tobin said. “It's just unbelievable, the luck he's had.”

Tobin tells this story about Melissa Jo: “So Phil's at Keeneland last year, and there's this ‘Fu Peg.’ Phil's looking down, he's looking up, she's a little crooked, but it's a Fu Peg, and he's got a \$125,000 stud fee. Phil said, ‘\$30 (thousand). I'll just go and bid.’”

So far, Melissa Jo, who's won or placed in each of her three starts, has earned \$61,600. She's another filly who has rewarded her devoted owner.

“I really love the girls,” Birsh said. “And ultimately, the end game—because I think about racing from beginning, middle, to the end—the end game for fillies is a little bit more palatable for me (than that for colts). I really enjoy the fact that I raise a filly and know that she's going to end up breeding, and I can then have a continuing relationship with that horse.”

Those relationships, however, don't last forever, as Birsh knows well. Dahl died in 2006, and Rekindled Romance in 2007. “In order to survive racing,” he said, “you have to make certain that you believe everything is borrowed, because ultimately it all is going to go away. Whatever joys are in the world aren't necessarily fleeting,

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photo by Lydia Williams

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He laughed again, a contented, easy laugh.

"I have yearned for 44 years to have a

place in upstate New York," he said, "and after working for 25 years, toiling away, I am proud and happy to say I have my life-time dream: a farm. Hopefully we'll breed a lot of good horses here, but mostly we want to breed happiness." 

Northeast/Mid-Atlantic

REGIONAL NEWS

COMPILED BY AMANDA H. DUCKWORTH

■ TBANJ ANNOUNCES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Three new directors have been elected to serve on the Thoroughbred Breeders' Association of New Jersey's Board of Trustees.

Judith Batcha, Jane Gilbert, and Bo Smith began their three-year terms Jan. 1, after the election results were announced during the TBANJ annual year-end meeting held Dec. 4.

Batcha and her husband, Frank, own Batcha Farm near Pennington, N.J. She is a past member of the board.

Gilbert and her husband, Charlie, own and operate a small breeding farm and race their homebreds. Gilbert is a former president of the New Jersey Horse Council, board member of the New Jersey Horse Park, and board member of ReRun Thoroughbred Retirement group.


Smith and his wife, Stella, own and operate Smith Farm & Stable near Millstone Township, N.J. He has raced and bred horses in New Jersey for more than 20 years, both as Smith Farm & Stable and as separate racing/breeding partnerships that he uses to bring new owners into the industry. He previously served on the board as treasurer.

■ MINOR PURCHASES HISTORIC PROPERTY

Virginia entrepreneur Halsey Minor has purchased a historic property in the state and plans to use it for a Thoroughbred breeding operation.

Minor bought Carter's Grove Plantation, an 18th-century mansion, for \$15.3 million from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. The property includes a Georgian-style mansion and 400 acres that are subject to a conservation easement, as well as 76 acres adjoining the property.

The 35-room home and land have been owned by the foundation since 1969. Citing financial pressure, the foundation announced plans to close Carter's Grove to the public in 2002. The home was shut in 2003.

Recently, Minor purchased two-time grade 1 winner Dream Rush for \$3.3 million at the 2007 Fasig-Tipton Kentucky November mixed sale. Former Virginia Thoroughbred Association president and Virginia-based bloodstock agent Debbie Easter signed the ticket on behalf of Minor. A daughter of Wild Rush, Dream Rush was consigned by Hill 'n' Dale Sales Agency, agent. 

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