

Off-Track Thoroughbreds

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Riding away from cancer with a zest for life

By Susan Salk on May 2, 2013



Anna and her other OTTB, My Guy

horses has remained central in her life. And now, with health concerns looming and the need to stay positive, her passion and determination have joined forces to keep her in the saddle, in every sense of the word.

For Beeson, it has always been, and still is, the iconic American racehorse, possessed of indomitable spirit and the “look of eagles,” that makes her heart beat just a bit faster and lifts her spirit.

“I’ve always loved the tenderness, responsiveness and inquisitiveness of the Thoroughbred,” she says. “Their beauty of motion, fluidity and eagerness, never ceases to thrill me.”

Riding all day through the Kenyan wilderness, passing zebras and gazelles in her quest to keep on moving, the 70-year-old Texan, and recovering cancer patient, wasn’t trying to be a hero about her health. But she wasn’t about to take her 50-50 prognosis lying down either.

Anna Beeson considers herself to be lucky.

“I’m a member of a Stage 4 cancer survival group, and when I read their emails and they write about all their worries,” Beeson says. “I think they should all get out of the house and go do what they love. Everybody in life ought to have a passion, and horses are mine.”

Since that first Shetland pony ride she took as a kid, Beeson’s love of

ESMA 2013 Awards



Off-Track Thoroughbreds won Third Place in the Equestrian Social Media Award for Best Blog! Thank you to friends and fans who support this site.

Upcoming Stories



Fiumes, pictured in this photo by Nancy Fay, was a sad little ex-racehorse when Marylou Neilson took pity on him. She bought him, sent him into training with Beth Spatz and Jennifer Brennan. And last weekend, re-made, he showed at Devon. Look for this story soon.



Helium Risin' (Jockey Club name: Begone JoJo) just won the High Point OTTB Award at The Spring Event at Woodside in California. In an upcoming story, his rider Kelsey Devoyille talks about the lovely Thoroughbred and their work together.

An avid horseman, Beeson enjoyed retraining off-track Thoroughbreds in the mid 90s, carving out a sideline that helped support her own riding, and the care for her beloved OTTB T For Daddy Dee, whom she calls My Guy.

T For Daddy Dee
New name: My Guy
Sire: Cesar T.
Dam: Cherie Note
Foal date: May 16, 1993

Effour
Sire: Limehouse
Dam: Deputy Commander
Foal date: April 6, 2010

So dedicated was she to her horse habit, that in March 2011, after testing positive for cancer, her first thought was, “Damn! There goes the show season!”

“After I had a lumpectomy and was put on a series of infusion chemotherapy drugs, I was so happy that the only side effects were hair loss and a slight metallic taste in my mouth, because I told my doctors that I wasn’t going to do anything that would keep me off a horse,” Beeson says.

After six months of treatment, and just beginning a new round of oral chemotherapy she decided to keep her promise to a friend, and embarked upon a horseback riding tour of Kenya.

“At the point that I planned the trip, I was in remission, but two weeks before the trip, during a regularly scheduled CT scan, it showed the tumors were growing in my liver again,” she says.

“The oncologist tried to talk me into skipping the trip, but since I felt perfectly fine, she put me on the oral chemo and wished me luck.”



Anna, while taking oral chemotherapy, rides through Kenya

take a chance on getting dumped from a hot horse,” she says. “I was looking for an older horse, around 8-years-old, and one who was quiet.

“I found one, but he didn’t pass the vet. Then I found a rescue horse, and he didn’t pass either. Then I found Effour.”

An unraced gelding named after the EF 4 tornados that ripped through Oklahoma, Effour was stabled at Donna Keen’s well-respected facility, Remember Me Rescue, happily minding his own business, when Beeson arrived one day, as though on a mission. After persistently calling and emailing to get an appointment, she made her entrance in a hail of dust, as she sped up the driveway in her truck.

In no time, after meeting and riding Effour, she knew that this was indeed, *the horse*.

“He’s amazing. Nothing bothers him. The second time I rode him, another horse was tearing around the other side of the fence, and although he raised his head to look, he didn’t react to the commotion,” she says. “He has Mr. Prospector in his lineage, and he was known to be a calm horse.”

The 16.2-hand liver chestnut was considered quite ugly by yearling standards, but with his great bone structure, fantastic movement, and unflappable personality, he’s absolutely *perfect* for Beeson.

Explaining that though she will never be considered clear of cancer, (she is in remission) she must get on with life. And at the top of her bucket list, after her Kenyan adventure, was a hunt for a new, gentle-riding off-track Thoroughbred.

“At this point in my life, I didn’t want to

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Beeson and Effour enjoy a little jaunt

She kicked it harder, bumped his nose— which was busy sniffing out lush grass— and still, *nothing*.

Finally, in total disbelief that she couldn't get a rise out of him, Beeson tossed the ball up into the air, and watched it land with a smack on his butt.

He didn't even swish his tail.

He just carried on with his munching, ignoring the annoying object being directed his way.

That's when she knew she'd met her match as well as a kindred spirit in the form of a 1,200-pound racing machine.

"When I was looking for Effour, I only would look at Thoroughbreds," she says. "People tried to get me interested in Warmbloods or Quarter Horses, but I felt a Thoroughbred always gave 100 percent."

And maybe they gave her a little bit of courage too.

"In a way, I feel horses partly helped me go into remission, along with diet changes," Beeson says.



Anna receiving the USEA Ironmaster Award for her bravery. Photo courtesy Anna

As unflappable as his new horse mom, Effour refused to be ruffled during an experimental exercise with a Jolly Ball. Her previous horse had been terrified of the toy, but Effour didn't even give it a glance.

When Beeson kicked it toward him, nothing happened.

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Stables

- Greenfields Family Stable LLC

Rehoming Organizations

- Akindale Thoroughbred Rescue
- Angel Acres Horse Haven Rescue
- CANTER
- CANTER Mid Atlantic
- CANTER New England
- Equine Encore Foundation
- Exceller Fund
- Little Brook Farm
- Mid Atlantic Horse Rescue
- New Vocations
- Race2Ring
- ReRun, Inc.
- Second Call Thoroughbred Adoption and Placement Program
- Southern California Thoroughbred Rescue
- Thoroughbred Placement and Resources, Inc.
- Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation
- TROTT USA
- Turning For Home

Racing Blogs

- Jessica Chapel/Railbird
- Kentucky Confidential
- Paulick Report
- The Brock Talk
- The Rail

OTTB Trainers

- Lisa Molloy Training Stables
- The Covert Farm LLC

"Horses kept me from feeling depressed, and they gave me a reason to get up each morning.

"All of the cancer literature tells us to stay calm and not get anxious or depressed: the horses do that for me."