



Another Man's Treasure

Yeah Me Do: A Chance Reunion

by **MARCIE HEACOX**

California-bred Yeah Me Do is nearly white at age 29, but his story is that of a real life Black Beauty—an odyssey of love, neglect and joyous reunions.

In 1983, Roy Andolfo bred the grey or roan gelding by Macarthur Park out of the winning Decidedly mare Romanically. He then raced him in partnership with his wife, Sue, until they lost him in a 1989 claiming race. A year later, the couple saw the man who had claimed Yeah Me Do, and when they asked how their horse was, the man said he had died.

Yeah Me Do's official race record shows six wins on the Northern California circuit before a career finale at Rockingham Park in New Hampshire on Nov. 30, 1990. His lifetime earnings were \$72,930.

Contrary to what the man had said, Yeah Me Do was alive and resurfaced 11 years later at a 2001 auction in Cleburne, Texas, where many older horses landed when slaughter plants were active. In a stroke of good luck, a man bought him as a parade and trail riding horse for his family. However, the man couldn't afford the horse's upkeep eight years later and contacted nearby Remember Me Racehorse Rescue in a last ditch effort to avoid returning him to the sale.

Louisiana and California-based trainer Dallas Keen, wife Donna Keen and farm manager Lilly Armstrong head the 501 (c) 3 nonprofit at Keen Farms in Burleson, Texas. They've rescued more than 100 ex-racehorses since the rescue's inception in December of 2008, but few cases were as desperate as this.

When Yeah Me Do's owner sent Donna Keen photos showing the severely underweight gelding, her response was, "How soon can you get him here?" The horse arrived at the rescue May 18, 2009, so malnourished his hooves were splitting apart horizontally. He also had many missing or badly

deformed teeth that prevented him from chewing normally. With the quick help of veterinarian Dr. Gene White and farrier Pat Burton, Yeah Me Do was nursed back to full health within two months.

"Within a week you could see a difference in not only his appearance, but his attitude as well," Keen wrote on her blog. "I knew he was going to make it."

Using gender, age, color and the few legible digits of his lip tattoo, the farm was able to identify him with the help of the Jockey Club. Keen then posted about "Yammi" on the Alex Brown Racing Internet forum, a major network for horse rescue efforts. Forum member Viktoria King-Steele saw the story and notified her partner, Joe Shell, who had trained Yeah Me Do's dam for the Andolfos. A "very surprised" Shell notified the Andolfos, now retired in California, that their horse they'd thought dead for 20 years was still alive.

The Andolfos were reunited with Yeah Me Do on a December 2009 visit to Remember Me and continue to make financial contributions to his care, as does Shell. Keen said the horse is fairly low maintenance now, but the farm could still use more help, especially as he ages.

Though Yammi's the farm's oldest equine resident, Keen said he "thinks he's a 10-year-old" and is sometimes ridden bareback and bridle-less. She plans to bring him on Remember Me's Racehorse Rescue's annual trail ride to help raise awareness of older horses.

"Yammi is my hero because of all he has been through. He allowed us to help him when he needed help, even though I know he didn't feel good," Keen said. "I hope his story will cause owners and breeders to be more aware that these horses can live for a very long time."

And what a story Yammi could tell. 🐾



With Donna Keen in October 2011



An allowance win in December 1987



With Roy Andolfo in December 2009