

It was 1975, a year that just happened to land right smack in the middle of racing's golden decade. Just two years earlier, Secretariat had shown that the dreams of ages could still be realized when he became the first Triple Crown winner in a quarter of a century. Affirmed and Alydar, the great rivals of the 1978 Triple Crown series, were foals frolicking alongside their dams during that magical, memorable summer of 1975.

The year 1975 also showed that a Derby winner could be bought for a song, which was what Karen and Mickey Taylor did when they paid \$17,500 for eventual Triple Crown champion Seattle Slew at the Fasig-Tipton Kentucky summer yearling sale. San Diego businessman John C. Mabee was hoping to cash in on some of those dreams himself when he took the profits he made from his grocery store chain and other thriving businesses and invested in a few yearlings at the annual Saratoga sale.

Three years earlier, in 1972, Mabee bought 200 acres near Ramona in North San Diego County and established Golden Eagle Farm. Now he needed to fill those pastures and barns with the best bloodlines he could buy with his money. He came home from the 1975 Saratoga yearling sale with a dark bay Never Bend filly that he purchased out of the Spendthrift Farm consignment for \$62,000. That filly was Rare Lady.

"She had to be one of the most expensive horses I ever bought," Mabee recalled recently. "But she had bloodlines that I liked very much in a filly. Never Bend is an excellent broodmare sire, and her maternal grandsire, Double Jay, was also very good."

Mabee was obviously looking ahead to Rare Lady's value in the breeding shed, which was another good thing. Not the soundest of runners, she never amounted to much on the track but has become a priceless broodmare for Golden Eagle Farm and for John and Betty Mabee.

In the 27 years since the Mabees first bought the property in Ramona, Golden Eagle has grown to encompass more than 500 acres and has been home to such outstanding California-bred champions as Best Pal, Individualist, Bel's Starlet, Yearly Tour, Fleet Lady and Avenue of Gold. General Meeting, the state's current leading stallion and sire of the outstanding three-year-olds Excellent Meeting and General Challenge, holds court there, as do the top young stallions Avenue of Flags, Half a Year and Half Term. The Mabees were the nation's leading breeders on several occasions and have become internationally famous when they sold their Del Mar Futurity winner Worldly Manner to the

Rare Lady voted Broodmare of the Year; Magical Allure wins Valkyr Award

Maktoum brothers of Dubai for \$5 million last year. Now this likeable couple from San Diego has jumped right back into the spotlight, because Rare Lady was voted California's Broodmare of the Year and her graded stakes-winning daughter Magical Allure became the latest recipient of the prestigious Valkyr Trophy.

Rare Lady was retired from breeding in 1998 and is now a pensioner at the Ramona farm. She has had a stellar career as a producer, foaling 12 winners and four stakes winners from 14 foals. Moreover, some of her daughters and grand-

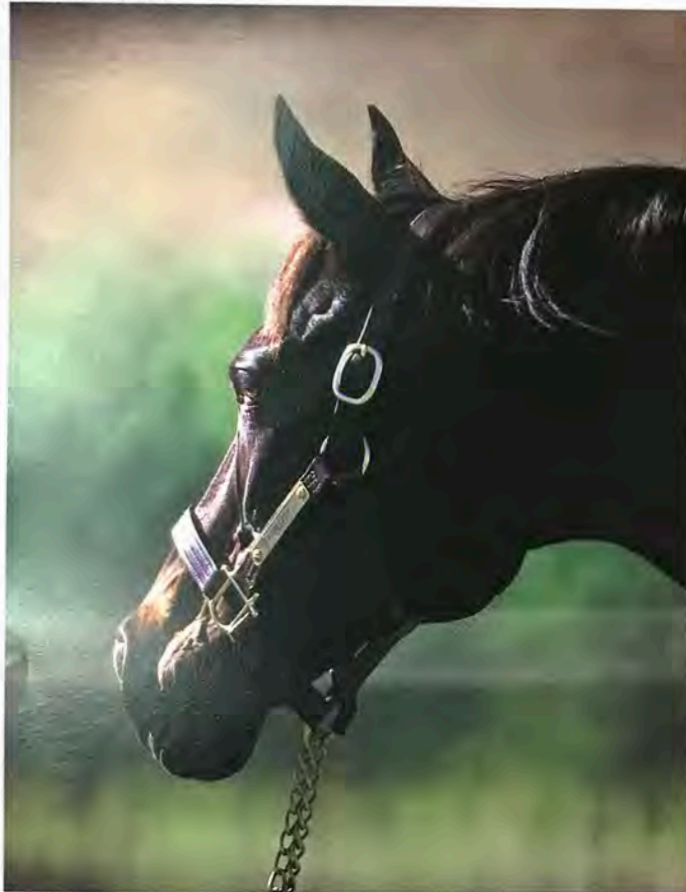
Continued on page 20

BROODMARE/VALKYR Continued

daughters have now produced stakes horses of their own.

A daughter of the Double Jay matron Double Agent, Rare Lady is a half-sister to the multiple stakes-winning fillies Deceit and Double Deceit. Sweetly Scheming, another half-sister, later became the dam of 1983 Coaching Club American Oaks winner High Schemes and the second dam of 1987 Breeders' Cup Sprint victress Very Subtle. Rare Lady's own racing career spanned just over a month at Hollywood Park during the late spring of 1977 and was quickly forgotten.

Katey Barrett photo



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She was assigned to Gary Jones, who would later train Golden Eagle's beloved Best Pal. Unraced at two, she made her debut under Bill Shoemaker on May 13, 1977. Rare Lady was coupled in the wagering with Society Woman, and the Golden Eagle entry was sent off as the 3-1 third choice in a field of 11 maiden three- and four-year-old fillies going six furlongs on the main track. The Never Bend filly turned in what appeared to be the start of a very promising racing career. She led at every call to score a 2 1/2-length victory with her entymate finishing second.

Rare Lady's next start came two weeks later in a six-furlong allowance contest for non-winners of two races. Although she broke alertly and

raced in contention for most of the way, she faded in the stretch to finish seventh in the field of 10. This nondescript allowance race turned out to be a key contest for future stakes performers, since the winner Prestissimo, runnerup Drama Critic and sixth-place finisher Goldie's Goldian all earned black-type later in their careers.

That effort pretty much finished Rare Lady, who was on the delicate side anyway. She was eased in the stretch of a 1 1/16-mile allowance race on June 15 and never raced again, retiring with that single maiden win from three starts and \$5,500 in earnings.

Sent to Kentucky, Rare Lady was first bred to Quack in 1978. The son of T. V. Lark won eight of 23 starts for earnings of \$514,400 and was the only other three-year-old besides Round Table to capture the Hollywood Gold Cup. The result of that mating was a colt named Golovine, who sold for \$55,000 at the 1980 Fasig-Tipton Kentucky summer yearling sale. Sent overseas to race, Rare Lady's first foal registered six wins in Belgium and was never heard from again.

The mare dropped a bay colt by champion Wajima in 1980. This colt was also earmarked for sale and fetched \$50,000 from New York-based trainer Nick Zito at the 1981 Saratoga yearling sale. Named Write Off, he became Rare Lady's first stakes winner. Write Off captured the Bensalem Handicap at Philadelphia Park and the Spectacular Bid Stakes at Gulfstream for career earnings of \$183,120.

Rare Lady's third foal, the 1981 Caro (Ire) filly Rare Gal, was the first offspring from the mare to race for the Mabees. She campaigned three years in England and North America, winning two races from 15 starts for earnings of \$29,542. Rare Gal was eventually retired in California and became a successful broodmare for Golden Eagle Farm, producing stakes-winning Lady Lavinia to the cover of Habitony and stakes-placed Sizzling Summer by Avenue of Flags. Lady Lavinia, who won the Filomena Galea Handicap and placed in two other Northern California stakes for earnings of \$97,450, is the dam of Classic Holiday, second in the 1997 California Cup Juvenile Fillies.

The Czaravich colt Super Hope, her 1982 foal, won two races from 27 starts and earned just over \$6,000. Her fifth foal, the Cresta Rider filly Cresta Lady, won six races from 19 starts

California Thoroughbred

and earned \$81,605. Rare Lady dropped another colt by Czaravich in 1984. Teddy Bear Hug won four of 17 starts and \$86,900 before he was exported to Mexico in 1991.

Bred next to Triple Crown champion Affirmed, Rare Lady produced her second stakes winner, Floral Magic, in 1985. The dark bay filly captured the 1989 Los Altos Handicap at Bay Meadows for Golden Eagle Farm and placed in four other added money events, including the grade III Santa Ynez Stakes, for earnings of \$144,990. The Mabees sold Floral Magic to Japan in 1991, where she is the dam of stakes-winning and classic-placed Narita Top Road, an earner of \$1,164,892.

Rare Lady was bred to the Kentucky stallion Hero's Honor in 1985 and came home to California to drop that foal at Golden Eagle Farm. It is here where she would wind down her career as a broodmare. Rare Hero, her first California-foaled offspring, won four races and earned \$18,890. Her next, the 1987 gelding Devine Force, by Golden Eagle stallion Habitony, won six races from 28 starts for career earnings of \$82,054. Included in his career total is a victory in the Flying Lark Memorial Stakes at Grant's Pass in Oregon.

None of Rare Lady's next three California foals were successful at the races. In 1992, she produced the hard-knocking Habitony gelding Glittering Event, who won seven races from 40 starts and earned \$153,826.

The mare was then bred to General Meeting in 1992 and 1993, producing two colts who died as yearlings. She finally struck gold in a third mating with that Seattle Slew stallion, foaling a striking bay General Meeting filly at Golden Eagle Farm on April 4, 1995. Magical Allure is that filly's name, and she became the first daughter of a California Broodmare of the Year to be voted the Valkyr Trophy in the same year since Melrose Nugget and Melair accomplished that feat back in 1986.

Magical Allure was sent to trainer Bob Baffert, and unleashed just once at two to win a six-furlong maiden race at Santa Anita on Oct. 3, 1997. A stress fracture in her right hind leg was detected soon after this race, and she was put away for some healing time at the Ramona farm. She returned to the track to launch her racing career in earnest the following summer. Beginning with a six-length victory in a 6 1/2-furlong allowance test at Hollywood Park last June 25, Rare Lady's daughter went on a tear and

A 'Rare Lady' Herself

Carrie Drake, Golden Eagle Farm's broodmare and foaling manager, has a special place in her heart for Rare Lady.

"I started crying when I heard she was selected broodmare of the year," Drake admitted. "I am so proud of her. It is a well-deserved honor."

Drake has worked at Golden Eagle since 1990, following stints at the San Luis Rey Vet Clinic and Helen Woodward Animal Center.

"This is my dream job," said the Mesa College graduate. "I could never dream of doing anything else with my life."

Numbered among her chief responsibilities at the farm are foaling mares, supervising the growth and development of babies and seeing to it that the horses in her care are healthy and happy. Jason 'Spud' Hall assists Drake in the daily chores of providing quality care to one of California's most valuable broodmare bands.

Although 25-year-old Rare Lady is no longer producing babies, she has one at her side these days. The orphan colt, by Avenue of Flags, is never far away from his adoptive mother.

"She took right to the foal," Drake related. "It really touches me that she so easily took to the responsibility of being a mother to a foal that is not hers. A lot of mares simply can't handle that situation."

"Rare Lady has a fantastic disposition," she added, "and she passes that personality on too. All of her offspring are easy to get along with."

With her producing years behind her, and a broodmare of the year title in tow, Rare Lady is free to live out her life under the watchful and sometimes tearful eye of Drake.

"Each day I look forward to making her life as good as I can," Drake said, fighting back tears. "But I feel like that about all of them. I just love what I do. These mares mean the world to me."

There is no doubt the matriarchs of the Golden Eagle broodmare band feel the same way about Drake.

—Michael Compton

Continued on next page

BROODMARE/VALKYR Continued

captured four consecutive stakes events which included an 8 1/2-length romp in the restricted Torrey Pines Stakes at Del Mar and an impressive victory over older distaffers in the grade II Lady's Secret Breeders' Cup Handicap at Santa Anita.

Victory in the Lady's Secret extended Magical Allure's unbeaten record to six straight wins. While there was talk about sending the filly to Churchill Downs for the Breeders' Cup last November, her connections were not keen on sending a three-year-old out against the likes of Sharp Cat and Escena at this point in her career. So Magical Allure stayed home and became the marquee attraction for California Cup IX.

The Golden Eagle filly was entered in the 1

as she held off a fast-closing Gourmet Girl to win by a half-length. Magical Allure's accomplishments on the track last season earned her the vote as California's outstanding three-year-old filly of 1998.

Magical Allure has continued to perform well in 1999, but the winner's circle has so far eluded her this season. She recorded two seconds and a third against the likes of Manistique at Santa Anita and then picked up another runner-up effort behind Victory Stripes (Arg) in the Hawthorne Handicap at Hollywood on April 25. She has not run since, though, having come up with a suspensory injury which sent her home to Golden Eagle Farm.

"We'll evaluate her in about 60 days and make a decision then," Mabee said. "We would

love to bring her back to the races, but she's too nice a mare to take chances with. With her mom now pensioned, we just might make Magical Allure into a broodmare to keep that family going."

With lifetime earnings of \$620,480 for seven wins and five placings in 12 starts, Magical Allure is firmly established as Rare Lady's leading money earner. Her dam produced a full sister to the Cal-bred champion inn 1996, but that foal died as a yearling. Rare Lady was barren in 1997, but dropped

a colt by Half Term last year which will turn out to be her last foal.

"We retire our mares before most other farms usually do," Mabee added. "She was in her mid-twenties and her reproductive system has taken a beating. Rare Lady has served us well. Magical Allure and her other daughters will now carry on for her."

Rare Lady is not going to spend her retirement in complete idleness. She has been assigned to babysit foals who have lost their mothers.

"Most older mares get very particular and won't take on foals that aren't their own," he said, "but Rare Lady adopts them quite readily. We put all our orphaned babies with her. She's such a great mom." 🐾

Katey Barrett photo



Magical Allure (center) has earned more than \$600,000 thus far in her racing career and is Rare Lady's leading money earner.

1/16-mile Matron, but neither the Mabees nor Baffert bargained on the toughness of Belle's Flag. Ernest Auerbach's five-year-old Avenue of Flags mare had won the Matron as a three-year-old in 1996 and was back again last year to regain her title after spending nearly a year on the sidelines and surviving a freak accident at Hollywood Park which very nearly ended her racing career. Magical Allure caught the older mare at the three-eighths pole, but never got past her. Belle's Flag had her head in front when they hit the wire, denying Magical Allure her seventh consecutive win.

Beaten, but far from broken, Magical Allure returned to her own age division for her final start of 1998. In the grade I La Brea Stakes on Dec. 27, she led a Cal-bred sweep across the wire