



CTBA Member
PROFILE

**BUILDING
TRUST WITH
EVERY FOAL
HE BREEDS**

KEN MILES

BY JACK SHINAR

Ken Miles, breeder of Old Pal, winner of this year's Snow Chief Stakes Presented by City National Bank Stakes, says he tries to keep one thing in mind as his young horses are preparing for the eventual sales ring.

"A horse may have many owners during its lifetime; you never know what will happen after leaving you," he said. "But it will only have one breeder. Your name will always be attached to that horse."

Getting a young charge to accept the "human touch" is one of the most important qualities he can instill in order to forge a successful transition to racehorse, says the Washington breeder. Beginning as early as possible in a young horse's life, Miles wants a weanling to become accustomed to being handled.

"Not only do I love it (playing with the foals), but it's to their benefit—I really believe that," he said. "Over time, it builds a lot of trust." Even if the horse only has a short career or never makes it to the track at all, it will have a better life by responding positively to people, Miles emphasizes.

Miles, who lives in Bellevue, across Lake Washington from Seattle, is not a big-time breeder. In the 20 years or so that he's been involved, he's had two broodmares: Old Pal's dam, Athina Lee (by English Channel), and the second dam, Time for Magic (by Pentelicus). He knows the family tree backward and forward, knowledge solidified through countless hours of pedigree research.

"Horses have been a passion of mine for a long time," said Miles, who has worked most of his adult life for

candy maker Brown & Haley, creators of Almond Roca. "When I was a kid, I went to (Longacres) with my sister. I was enamored with watching horses in the paddock, how they reacted to their handlers. It was fascinating, and I told myself one day, if possible, I'm going to do this."

During his years breeding horses, Miles developed an eye for a potential standout. Watching Old Pal at six months gallop about with other young horses in an open field at Mary Lou Griffin's Griffin Place in Buckley, Wash. (where Miles sends all his horses), he knew the bright chestnut with a long white blaze had the makings of a turf star. Miles appreciated the California-bred Grazen colt's graceful full stride and the way he carried himself.

"He has always been all class," Miles said of the horse he co-bred with Sheridan Jones.

Old Pal was named in honor of Miles's late parents.

"It was the pet name they used for one another as they were getting on in years," he explained.

Old Pal sold for \$160,000 to Blinkers on Racing Stable and a multitude of partners at the 2021 Fasig-Tipton California yearling sale, the most Miles has ever received at auction.

Trainer Mark Glatt and Blinkers On founder Scott Sherwood followed Miles's advice and took their time with Old Pal, opting not to race him at 2.

"None of the horses from this family are what you would call precocious," Miles said. "I always tell people that



COURTESY OF KEN MILES

Ken Miles holds his homebred Native Son, and stands with consignor Stormy Hull

are interested in buying any of them, ‘If you’re in a hurry and can’t wait to get them on the track, don’t buy because they are going to need time.’ That was one of the things that impressed me about Scott. He listened.”

Fellow Washington horseman Stormy Hull of Critter Creek Farm consigned Old Pal, as he has for most of Miles’s sales horses.

“Stormy has done all the breaking of my horses for the last 20 years,” Miles said. “He’s very good at getting my horses ready for the sales. I speak with him nearly every day. I owe Stormy a ton of gratitude—he and his brother Guy, too.”

After debuting in mid-February, Old Pal was making his fourth lifetime start and stakes bow in the \$151,000 Snow Chief, a 1½-mile test on turf. While rating on the rail under jockey Juan Hernandez, he displayed both patience, then courage in the stretch as he charged through an opening to win by three-quarters of a length. It was his second victory to go with two prior placings.

Old Pal is the fourth winner from four starters for Athina Lee, and is her first stakes winner. Athina Lee’s first foal, Zabracadabra, a 2017 Washington-bred gelding by Harbor the Gold, has earned nearly \$320,000 racing in allowance company mostly in Maryland. Owner Frank Sample picked him up for \$22,000 as a yearling at the 2018 Washington Thoroughbred Breeders’ Association sale. A second gelding, the multiple stakes-placed Cal-bred Ferrarino, by Mshawish, earned \$115,620.

Old Pal has a full sister named Miss Will, a 2-year-old filly who recently had her first published workout. Athina Lee, who lost a foal by the up-and-coming stallion Not This Time in 2022, is currently carrying a colt by Texas stallion Mr Speaker.

Almost none of it happened, however. Athina Lee was the \$80,000 sales topper for Miles at the 2010 WTBA yearling sale to Shawn and Todd Hansen. But a nagging foot injury limited



COURTESY OF CHERI WICKLUND

Old Pal, a California-bred son of Grazen, poses at 6 months of age

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COURTESY OF KEN MILES

Athina Lee, the dam of Old Pal, has a 2021 Grazen filly named Miss Will

her career, and she was claimed out of a \$3,500 race at Emerald Downs in August 2014 by longtime Washington horse owner Jack Zaborac.

Months went by with no sign of Athina Lee on the track. Sensing the end of her racing career, Miles sought to make an offer for her with plans to retire her for breeding. But numerous attempts to reach the 90-year-old Zaborac, a well-known owner of a family bowling center in nearby Kent, went unheeded.

As the 2015 racing season was near-

ing its end, Miles was frustrated.

“Finally, one day I got a call from his son Dennis, who told me, ‘My dad wants to give her back to you. But first, he’d like to talk to you.’ It turned out that all the time I was trying to find out about him, they were asking around about me. Anyway, they gave me the mare.” Two weeks later, Zaborac died.

That gift horse turned into Miles’ sweet broodmare. And not surprisingly, she loves his attention, just like her foals. **CTB**