

I'm Bob Marshall and I'd like to welcome everyone to the 20<sup>th</sup> annual New York State Auction of Stallion Services. All of this started with Mary Meixell more than 20 years ago in the late 80's. At that time Mary was a Central District Director of the New York State Morgan Horse Society. She had been to the Penn-Ohio club's stallion service auction and thought, "The NY club could do this." At that time the **AMHA** Stallion Service Auction did not exist. Mary started talking to her friends in the Central District. She and her husband Ed, Ron Chrétien and his wife Nancy, and Al and Jo Celecki all attended the 1988 Penn-Ohio stallion service auction together. On the ride home they talked about how to make it work in New York State. They created a committee made up of Mary, Ron, Al, and Phil Rhoades. Ron then had several conversations with Lynn Peeples who, along with Gary Horne, had created the Penn-Ohio auction in 1984. At that time interest rates were double-digit and they felt that if they invested the proceeds of an auction at those rates, that in five years there would be significant growth resulting in significant prize money for 4 year-old offspring. Lynn was generous with his time and experience gained with the Penn-Ohio Stallion Service Auction and was instrumental in helping to get the NY auction off the ground.

The committee met in Sarah Meixell's vet clinic in Ithaca to plan the first New York State Auction of Stallion Services. Interestingly, the issues they wrestled with are the same issues that today's committee deals with. How do we make it appealing to stallion owners so they will donate their stallion's service? How do we make the auction appealing to buyers so that they will pay well for the services? How much should we spend putting on the auction? Where should the auction be held? When should it be held? How to make the Sweepstakes classes appealing to exhibitors was easy. Just offer big prize money, but how much of the proceeds should go to prize money? Also, it was very important to the committee that their project not detract from the very successful NY Futurity and that it be an asset to the NY Regional show.

One of the first things the committee decided, to which the original members attribute their success, was to have 4-year-old Sweepstakes classes during the first show season following the first auction. They solicited stallion owners to donate services to the first auction by promising that a portion of the first year's proceeds would be distributed as prize money to the first sweepstakes classes at the NY Regional show and that all 4-year-old offspring of the stallions whose services sold would be eligible to compete. Many stallion owners also had 4-year-olds sired by their stallion and found the combination appealing. In 1989 Harry Embree, riding Woodland's El Dorado, sired by his stallion Chivas Regal, won the Sweepstakes Park class. Ron and Nancy Chrétien's horse, Wishing Well Contessa, sired by Dottie and Wally Holmes' stallion, Homespun Commotion, won the English Pleasure Sweepstakes.

The philosophy of the first Stallion Service Auction Committee was to spend as little money as possible on the auction so that as much of the proceeds as possible would be available for prize money in the Sweepstakes classes at the NY Regional. Much of the credit for the success of the first and subsequent Auctions is due to the organizational skills of committee chair Ron Chrétien who managed to pull it all together in less than a year. The first catalog was done on Ron's PC with first generation word-processing software. Ron credits the generosity of the stallion owners and said that they had several popular stallions that first year that they never expected to get. Ron made several trips up and down the NYS Thruway looking for suitable locations. The committee finally agreed to the VFW in Little Falls, NY, which was both inexpensive and close to the Thruway. With \$1000 in start-up money from the Board of Directors of the NYSMHS, the committee found volunteers to bring food and drink to feed and lubricate the bidders. Dottie Holmes, Mary Meixell, Jo Celecki, Roberta Marshall, and Nancy Elliot, and my lovely wife Roberta had kitchen duty at the VFW, while I poured the beer. Al Celecki registered the bidders and gave them numbers. Dan Young, with a cowboy hat and a

beard, was the auctioneer that first year and for many years after that. Club members helped to collect the bids. It was a family affair and we all had great fun.

One of my favorite memories is breakfast at a local diner in Little Falls. We had told them that there would be about 50 people there for breakfast on the morning after the auction. When we got there, there was one person working. She was expected to both cook and serve. We all knew each other, so some of us just jumped up and pitched in, helping to get everyone fed. I poured coffee this time.

The first auction in 1989 included the services of Immortal Command, who has been offered in all but one NY Stallion Service Auction over the past 20 years. It also included Saddleback Supreme, Savage Arms, and Fiddler's Trustee. These four were the top-selling stallions that first year. The first NY Auction of Stallion Services brought in \$16,300.

In 1994 the committee wanted to add a Weanling Sweepstakes class to the Regional show. The proceeds of the '94 auction were split so that a percentage went to prize money for a Weanling Sweepstakes class in 1995 and the rest was invested (at high interest rates) for the 4-year-old classes to be held in 1999. The 2007 Weanling Sweepstakes class at the NY regional had 23 quality entries, proving the success of the additional class. The NY Futurity also benefited with 24 entries in the Futurity Weanling classes at the 2007 NY Regional.

In 1998 the auction was moved to the Holiday Inn in Syracuse, giving us the use of a phone bank to allow phone-in bids, which greatly increased the revenue generated by the auction. In 2004 the committee made the bold move to Saratoga Springs. This was a radical departure from the original philosophy of spending as little as possible to put on the auction. It appears that it was the right move at the right time. Once again, revenue increased dramatically. Being closer to the New England states probably helped. This is our 5<sup>th</sup> auction in Saratoga Springs. In addition to taking bids over the phone, we made

use of on-line bidding this year, but here and now is where the action is. I'm delighted to see all of you here. We have 43 stallions for you to bid on this evening. Bid often, bid high, and most of all, have fun.