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## **A prominence long obscure**

by Rommy Faversham

Six members of the Racing Hall of Fame boast extraordinarily obscure pedigrees with some commonalities

One of the essential maxims readily acknowledged for a majority of Thoroughbreds that have earned induction into Racing's Hall of Fame in Saratoga Springs is that pedigree truly matters, particularly sire power and the strength of the immediate female family.

These are, of course, principles upon which the entire breeding industry has long been based. By one measure, 38, or almost 25 percent, of the 156 Hall of Fame inductees, who raced on the flat, were sired by an earlier Hall of Famer. Given the proportions involved, this is substantial affirmation of the strong link between pedigree and performance.

There are, on the other hand, an iconoclastic few that battled their way into racing legendry without the advantages of a promising ancestral register.

**PAN ZARETA**

HINDOO  
HANOVER  
BOURBON BELLE  
ABE FRANK  
MUNCASTER (GB)  
CHEESE STRAW  
CHEESECAKE  
IROQUOIS  
RANCOCAS  
ONTARIO  
CADDIE GRIFFITH  
BOSTON BOY  
BOSTON GIRL  
SALLIE JOHNSON



**RACE RECORD**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>STARTS</b>	<b>1ST</b>	<b>2ND</b>	<b>3RD</b>	<b>EARNED</b>	
1912	2	19		13	3	\$3,512	
1913	3	33		15	8	\$8,895	
1914	4	28		13	9	\$7,085	
1915	5	26		15	6	\$7,540	
1916	6	11		7	1	\$3,085	
1917	7	34		13	4	\$8,965	
<b>TOTALS:</b>		<b>151</b>		<b>76</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>\$39,082</b>

at 2: Senioritas S., etc.  
at 3: Rio Grande S., Chihuahua S., Chapultepec H., Juarez H.,  
at 4: **Female Handicap champion**  
at 7: Katonah H.

The beneficiary of world class speed as well as amazing durability and weight-carrying capacity, Pan Zareta spent most of her long and brilliant career competing on the fringes of North American racing while saddled with a pedigree that was not just

obscure but downright questionable for the breed.

Foaled in 1910 at the ranch of J.F. Newman near Sweetwater, Texas, Pan Zareta was the daughter of Newman's home stallion, a former Tennessee Derby winner, Abe Frank and the Rancocas mare Caddie Griffith.

In a pedigree predominated by undistinguished ancestors, the most enigmatic was Pan Zareta's third dam, a mare named Sallie Johnson, who was listed in the American Stud Book appendix as a non-Thoroughbred, since neither of her parents were of pure blood.

As it turned out, none of this seemed to have any bearing on Pan Zareta's ability to reach the winners' circle. Over the course of six seasons, she raced at 24 different tracks from Mexico to Canada and eight states in between. Starting in a total of 151 races, Pan Zareta claimed victory 76 times - more than any other distaffer in U.S. history.

Intelligent and gentle, "Panzy" as she was affectionately called, set or tied eleven track records from 4 1/2 furlongs to a mile. In 1915, at Juarez, Mexico, she shattered the world record for five furlongs in a time of :57 1/5, a mark that would not be bested for 31 years.

Even though Pan Zareta was rarely afforded the opportunities to face the better known runners of her day, she did earn a split from a pair of decisions at Oaklawn Park against former Kentucky Derby winner and future fellow Hall of Famer Old Rosebud.

When Pan Zareta was finally dispatched to New York by her new set of connections in the summer of 1917, she lowered the 5 1/2 furlong track record at Jamaica and then followed up with four more victories at Aqueduct and Empire City, winning with imposts as high as 140 pounds.

In 1918, it was decided to breed Pan Zareta, but when the lean chestnut mare failed to get in foal, she found herself back in training. Sadly, before Panzy would ever start again, she contracted pneumonia and died in her stall at New Orleans's Fair Grounds on Christmas Day. She was honored with a burial inside the track's infield.

**ROAMER**

MUSKET  
 TRENTON  
 FRAILTY  
 KNIGHT ERRANT  
 ST. SIMON  
 ST. MILDRED  
 LADY FITZ JAMES

BEND OR  
 BONA VISTA  
 VISTA  
 ROSE TREE II  
 MINTING  
 FANNY RELPH  
 ELM



**RACE RECORD**

YEAR	AGE	STARTS	1ST	2ND	3RD	EARNED	
1913		2	17	4	6	1	\$8,480
1914		3	16	12	1	2	\$29,105
1915		4	13	8	1	0	\$15,320
1916		5	13	1	6	1	\$5,705
1917		6	17	7	4	2	\$16,501
1918		7	16	6	6	2	\$21,950
1919		8	6	1	2	1	\$1,767
<b>TOTALS:</b>			<b>98</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>\$98,828</b>

at 2: Saratoga Special, etc.

at 3: **3 YO Colt champion and Horse of the Year**; Carter H., Brooklyn Derby, Midsummer S., Travers S., Huron H., State Fair S., Municipal H., Baltimore H., Washington H., etc.

at 4: **Male Handicap champion**; Queens County H., Brookdale H., Saratoga H., Merchants and Citizens H., Saratoga Cup, Havre de Grace H., National S., etc.

at 5 **Male Handicap champion**; Yonkers H.

at 6: Excelsior H., Saratoga H., Aqueduct H., Arlington H. etc.

at 7: Queens County H., Empire City H., Mount Vernon H., Saratoga H., Pierrepont H., etc.

At the same time that Pan Zareta was wowing crowds at small frontier tracks out West, Roamer, another runner with his own tawdry origins, became a legend at the much more heralded racing venues of New York and Maryland.

It is, perhaps, more accurate to describe Roamer as having been simply foaled, rather than bred with any of the customary human intent, since it is said his sire, the farm teaser Knight Errant, used his own initiative in jumping a fence to reach the blind mare and Roamer's dam, Rose Tree II.

Knight Errant was a well bred minor stakes winner who had been relegated to the undignified role of teaser at the Clay Brothers' Runnymede Farm in Paris, Kentucky.

Rose Tree II was an English import and former claimer with a tail-female line that had not produced a decent racehorse in five long generations. The small bay foal would be gelded early on in life.

Roamer's fortunes would soar after he was purchased for \$2,500 in the summer of his juvenile season by racing doyen, Andrew Miller, one of the founders of Time magazine.

Outstanding at almost any distance, the front-running Roamer captured a total of 39 races from 98 starts over the course of seven seasons. At age three, he was the nation's leading money earner when considered Horse of the Year. His notable sophomore victories included the Brooklyn Derby, the Travers Stakes as well as the Carter and Washington Handicaps against older horses.

Roamer would follow up with championship seasons again at four and five. His favorite racetrack was probably at Saratoga Springs where he annexed the Saratoga Handicap an unprecedented three times. It was on this surface in the summer of 1918 that Roamer, competing only against the clock, ran a two-turn mile in 1:34 <sup>4</sup>/<sub>5</sub>, breaking the great Salvator's mark from 28 years earlier.

Roamer was euthanized on January 1st, 1920 after breaking

a leg in his paddock when slipping on ice at his owner's farm near Red Bank, New Jersey. Ironically, Miller had succumbed to a heart attack at his home in New York City just hours earlier.

Despite his lowly parentage, Roamer's pedigree might find appeal with deep line-breeding enthusiasts since his sire, Knight Errant, his broodmare sire, Bona Vista, and three additional sires embedded within his ancestry all descend from the influential matriarch Rebecca (1831, fam. #4-b).

**ALSAB**

COLIN  
 NEDDIE  
 BLACK FLAG  
 GOOD GOODS  
 RADIUM  
 BROCATELLE  
 PIETRA  
 BROOMSTICK  
 WILDAIR  
 VERDURE  
 WINDS CHANT  
 FAIR PLAY  
 EULOGY  
 ST. EUDORA



YEAR	AGE	RACE RECORD				EARNED
		STARTS	1ST	2ND	3RD	
1941	2	22	15	3	1	\$110,600
1942	3	23	9	7	3	\$234,565
1943	4	5	1	1	1	\$4,650
1944	5	1	0	0	0	\$200
<b>TOTALS:</b>		<b>51</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>\$350,015</b>

at 2: **Juvenile champion**; Primer S., Mayflower S., Hyde Park S., Washington Park

Juvenile, Washington Park Futurity, Prairie State S., Eastern Shore H., Champagne S., S. Lowe Jenkins S., Walden S., etc.  
at 3: **3 YO Colt champion**; Preakness S., Withers S., American Derby, Lawrence Realization S., New York H., etc.

One of America's turf sensations during the early 1940s, Alsab was certainly another bred cheaply enough.

He was from the first crop of Good Goods, a decent handicap horse by the Colin stallion Neddie, considered a good juvenile but a poor sire. Commercial breeder, Tom Piatt, had accepted fifty percent ownership in Good Goods in return for standing him at his Brookdale Farm in Kentucky where his stud fee was set at "private treaty" - often a euphemism for free.

Alsab's non-winning and unproven dam, Winds Chant, by the Whitney stallion Wildair, was from an unsuccessful English family who had been purchased by Piatt for the paltry sum of \$90.

The small, but well-muscled Alsab was purchased at the 1940 Saratoga yearling sales for \$700, a price that would be repaid in purse earnings by more than five hundred fold. His lucky new owner, Chicago attorney and Hawthorne Park president Albert Sabath combined the initial syllables of his own first and last names to arrive at the colt's official title.

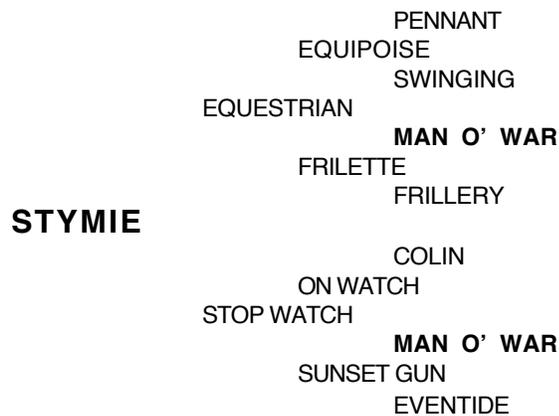
An undisputed champion at two, Alsab set milestones for juvenile colts and geldings by winning a total of 15 races, ten of them in consecutive stakes events. His season was highlighted by victories at Belmont Park over top rival Requested in a special 6 1/2 furlongs match race and then the one mile Champagne Stakes. In these two contests, Alsab recorded the fastest times by his age group in history (1:16 and 1:35 2/5, respectively). At the end of the season, eminent Turf historian John Hervey noted that Alsab's future was "...more eagerly looked forward to than that of almost any horse since Man o' War."

Alsab was, indeed, a champion again at three when his victories included the Preakness, Withers, American Derby,

Lawrence Realization, and the New York Handicap. A seasonal highlight for him was his famous nose victory over Horse of the Year Whirlaway in a 1 3/16 mile match race at Narragansett Park.

As a stallion, Alsab was decent (6% SWs), yet influential. His two best offspring were juvenile filly champion, Myrtle Charm, eventual third dam of Seattle Slew, and his tail-male heir, Armageddon. Alsab's male line, the only branch of Domino to have survived to the present, is currently represented by the sons of Broad Brush.

Interestingly, Alsab's pedigree features a 3X3 cross of the great Colin and his three-quarter sister Verdure. There was also inbreeding to the family of his sire, Good Goods.



RACE RECORD						
YEAR AGE	STARTS	1ST	2ND	3RD	EARNED	
1943	2	28	4	8	4	\$15,935

1944	3	29	3	5	10	\$36,325
1945	4	19	9	4	4	\$225,375
1946	5	20	8	7	4	\$238,650
1947	6	19	7	5	2	\$299,775
1948	7	11	4	3	2	\$95,275
1949	8	5	0	1	2	\$7,150
<b>TOTALS:</b>		<b>131</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>\$918,485</b>

at 4: **Male Handicap champion**; Grey Lag H., Brooklyn H., Butler H., Saratoga Cup, Continental H., Westchester H., Riggs H., Pimlico Cup  
 at 5: Grey Lag H., Whitney S., Saratoga Cup, Edgemere H., Manhattan H., New York H., Gallant Fox H.  
 at 6: Metropolitan H., Questionnaire H., Empire Gold Cup, Sussex H., Massachusetts H., Aqueduct H., Gallant Fox H.  
 at 7: Metropolitan H., Aqueduct H., Sussex H.

The stretch-running, crowd pleasing Stymie was part of a exceedingly deep group of handicap horses competing in the U.S. immediately after World War II.

Stymie was from the first crop of Equestrian, a minor son of the great Whitney runner and sire Equipoise. At the track, Equestrian could only muster two minor wins and \$1,580 in earnings, and except for Stymie, made little impression at stud, siring only one other stakes winner.

Stymie was foaled in April, 1941 at Robert Kleberg's King Ranch in Texas. His dam, Stop Watch, and his granddam, Sunset Gun, were unplaced in their nine combined lifetime starts, failing to ever earn a dime. Stop Watch's overall produce record is also worthy of note. Aside from Stymie, her ten other foals combined to win one race from 84 starts, earning a collective \$1,610. The rest of Stymie's immediate family was not much better.

In his third start as a two year old, Stymie was claimed for \$1,500 by leading trainer Hirsch Jacobs who already had a history of acquiring cheap horses and turning them into good winners.

While earning a fair living, ages two through four, Stymie did not truly blossom for the Jacobs family until the wartime ban on racing was lifted in May of 1945.

Competing on a regular basis against the likes of Armed, Assault, Pavot, Devil Diver and the great racemare Gallorette, Stymie's dramatic style and durability made him "the people's horse". Twice he won the Metropolitan, Saratoga Cup, Gallant Fox, Grey Lag, Aqueduct, and Sussex Handicaps.

He retired with world record earnings of \$918,485.

A superior mudder, Stymie's greatest victory may have come at age six in the 1947 Gold Cup at Belmont Park when he stormed from behind to catch Natchez at the wire, leaving champions and former tormentors Assault and Armed in his wake.

Stymie was the first major winner closely inbred (3X3) to the great Man o' War - and it is interesting to note that the compact chestnut shared the same high head carriage, so characteristic of the Man o' War tribe.

Stymie never demonstrated at stud the quality and consistency he embodied in the handicap ranks and, so, the perpetuation of his male line was never much of a concern. The most influential of his offspring was the multiple stakes winner and important matron Rare Treat.

	EQUIPOISE
	SWING AND SWAY
	NEDANA
SAGGY	
	HYPERION
	CHANTRESS
	SURBINE
<b>CARRY BACK</b>	
	BLENHEIM II
	STAR BLEN
	STARWEED
JOPPY	
	TEDDY BEAU
	MISS FAIRFAX
	BELLICENT



YEAR	AGE	RACE RECORD				EARNED
		STARTS	1ST	2ND	3RD	
1960	2	21	5	4	4	\$286,299
1961	3	16	9	1	3	\$565,349
1962	4	18	5	5	3	\$319,177
1963	5	6	2	1	1	\$70,340
<b>TOTALS:</b>		<b>61</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>\$1,241,165</b>

at 2: Cowdin S., Garden State S., Remsen S. etc.

at 3: **3 YO Colt champion**; Everglades S., Flamingo S., Kentucky Derby, Preakness S., Jerome H., Trenton H., etc.

at 4: Metropolitan H., Monmouth H., Whitney S., etc.

at 5: Trenton H., etc.

Like Stymie, Carry Back was another Cinderella horse - loved by the public, but doubted by many horsemen as well as others in the media. This “blue-collar” superstar thrived in the new age of television, often keeping his fans on the edge of their seats with his breathtaking stretch runs.

Carry Back was bred in Florida at Ocala Stud. His breeder, Jack Price, came up with \$400 to breed to Saggy, a world record holder at 4 1/2 furlongs whose claim to fame was being the only horse to beat Citation during his sensational Triple Crown winning three year old season. Saggy was a son of the Equipoise stallion, Swing And Sway, a decidedly poor sire.

Carry Back’s dam Joppy was a non-winning daughter of an unraced mare who had been acquired by Price for \$150 along with the release of another \$115 or so in past due board

bills. To make a dismal pedigree worse, both Joppy's sire and broodmare sire, Star Blen and Teddy Beau, were non-stakes winners who would, indeed, never sire a stakes winner. No surprise, Carry Back's female family was devoid of any significant blacktype as well.

Unlike the five others on this list, Carry Back always remained in the hands of his marvelously outspoken owner, breeder and conditioner, Jack Price. The brown colt improved throughout his two year old season to capture the Cowdin, Remsen, and Garden State Stakes. At year's end, he ranked only below the brilliant, but unsound Hail To Reason for divisional honors.

Named after the old income tax expression, Carry Back enjoyed his own championship season at age three. when he won the Everglades, Flamingo, Florida Derby, Kentucky Derby, Preakness, Jerome, and Trenton Handicaps, all in thrilling, late flying fashion.

At age four, Carry Back defeated champion Kelso with record times in the Metropolitan and Monmouth Handicaps, and won the Whitney under 130 pounds.

As a sire, Carry Back was not much better than average (4 % SWs) and was shown to have very little influence on the breed. He died at Price's Dorchester Farm in 1983, but remains one of the biggest fan favorites in the history of contemporary racing.

**JOHN HENRY**

PRINCEQUILLO  
PRINCE BLESSED  
DOG BLESSED  
OLE BOB BOWERS  
BULL LEA  
BLUE JEANS  
BLUE GRASS  
BALLADIER  
DOUBLE JAY  
BROOMSHOT  
ONCE DOUBLE  
INTENT  
INTENT ONE  
DUSTY LEGS



### RACE RECORD

YEAR	AGE	STARTS	1ST	2ND	3RD	EARNED
1977	2	11	3	2	2	\$49,380
1978	3	19	6	2	3	\$120,319
1979	4	11	4	5	0	\$129,864
1980	5	12	8	3	1	\$925,217
1981	6	10	8	0	0	\$1,798,030
1982	7	6	2	0	2	\$580,300
1983	8	5	2	2	0	\$652,100
1984	9	9	6	1	1	\$2,336,650
<b>TOTALS:</b>		<b>83</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>\$6,591,860</b>

at 2: Lafayette Futurity

at 3: Round Table H. (G3), Chocolatetown H.

at 4: Henry P. Russell H.

at 5: **Male Turf champion**; Hollywood Invitational H. (G1), San Juan Capistrano Inv. H. (G1), Oak Tree Inv. H. (G1), San Luis Rey H. (G1), Hialeah Turf Cup (G2), Brighton Beach H. (G3), San Gabriel H. (G3), San Marcos H. (G3)

at 6: **Male Turf champion, Male Handicap champion and Horse of the Year**; Arlington Million Invitational, Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1), Santa Anita H.(G1), Oak Tree Inv. H. (G1), Hollywood Inv. H. (G1), San Luis Rey H. (G1), Sword Dancer H. (G3), San Luis Obispo H. (G2)

at 7: Santa Anita H. (G1), Oak Tree Invitational H. (G1)

at 8: **Male Turf champion**; Hollywood Invitational H. (G1), American H. (G2)

at 9: **Male Turf champion and Horse of the Year**; Budweiser Million (G1), Turf Classic S. (G1), Ballantine's Scotch Classic H., Hollywood Inv. H. (G1), Golden Gate H. (G3), Sunset H. (G1)

It would not be possible, in this space, to even come close to account for all of the racing accomplishments of the amazing John Henry whose pedigree and early chronicles forecasted a life of mediocrity, certainly not one of such celebrity.

John Henry was bred in 1975 at Golden Chance Farm in

Paris, Kentucky where his sire, Ole Bob Bowers, a fair handicapper at best, had been assigned the role of second-string stallion, deferring to the farm's former Derby winner Dust Commander. Only months after John Henry was foaled, Ole Bob Bowers, a horse with a nasty disposition and an apparent taste for human flesh, was banished to Michigan when auctioned off for the nominal amount of \$900. His own sire, Hollywood Gold Cup winner Prince Blessed, had already proved to be a resolute failure at stud (2% SWs) out in California.

John Henry's female family, a once potent clan developed in the early part of the century by H.P. Whitney, was also in a prolonged state of decline lasting over four decades. Back in its heyday, John Henry's fifth dam, Miss Whisk, had been a stakes producing full sister to John P. Grier, one of Man o' War's top rivals. Soon thereafter, however, the tail-line began to weaken resulting in a lack of any significant relations under John Henry's first three dams by the time he was bred.

Scrawny, light-boned and back at the knee, the young foal was almost immediately marked by his farm for culling. He was offered at the 1976 Keeneland January mixed sale, where he fetched all of \$1,100. Having inherited much of his sire's antagonistic personality and not showing a lot of improvement in his physique, he was returned to the same sale a year later where his value was shown to have doubled to the tune of \$2,200.

As a two and early three year old, John Henry switched hands several more times, was gelded, failed a vet's exam or two and generally gave not a scintilla of the impression that he would transcend into racing's biggest star in the ensuing decade.

By the time John Henry's racing career was complete, the ornery, but highly intelligent, bay gelding had collected a record \$6,591,860 in earnings, 25 Graded stakes victories, 16 of them in Grade One events, seven Eclipse Awards, along with two Horse of the Year trophies, the second attained at the unthinkable age of nine. There is, of course, no measure on the number of thrills he generated along the way.

Earlier this year, on March 9th, the venerable old champion reached his 31st birthday, another milestone that was celebrated at his home in the Kentucky Horse Park with a small cake reception.

If there is a salient bloodlines tie that connects this band of Cinderella horses, it might be that the last four, those bred since WWI, all carried strains developed by the illustrious stud of Harry Payne Whitney. Alsab's breeder, Tom Piatt, is to have remarked, "just get some of that Whitney blood and you'll do all right."

The 'Yin and Yang' in all of this is, simply, that these relatively few, but often popular, genetic overachievers provide some valuable counterbalance to the formidable notions of immediate ancestry, not to mention the herd mentality of fashion.

If one can assume, it is, indeed, the exception that makes the rule, then, without these remarkable upstarts there would be no rules or principles to even discuss.

The entire issue would have been a given. Thoroughbred pedigrees would conform to an exorbitant elitist standard and the John Henrys would never be bred.

And that doesn't sound like very much fun.

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