

MEET THE NYTHA BOARD

Tina Marie Bond: Home is Where the Horse is

By Andy Belfiore

Why did Tina Marie Bond get involved in Thoroughbred racing? "I believe Winston Churchill said it best. 'The outside of a horse is good for the inside of a man,'" she explained. "There is something about a horse that just captures your heart."

Bond made her rookie foray into politics in 2014, dropping her name into the hat for the NYTHA Board election, and was voted in as one of five owner/directors for the organization. But she is no newcomer to the sport. The New York native grew up near Finger Lakes Racetrack, and met trainer Jim Bond while working her way through college at a neighborhood restaurant. Bond presented his future wife with her first horse, a New York-bred weanling purchased at the State Fair Grounds in Syracuse in 1983, and she was hooked.

"That was it - I fell in love with this little guy that I named Murtie," she recalled. "Murtie was my first racehorse and my first winner at NYRA."

He was not, however, her first love. Jim and Tina Bond were married in 1984, and settled into their newly built home on Song Hill Farm in Victor, NY, about 10 minutes west of Finger Lakes. Living on the farm, Bond said, "I began to learn how wonderful horses are."

A graduate of the Bryant & Stratton Business Institute, which boasts such illustrious alumni as Henry Ford, R.J. Reynolds and John D. Rockefeller, Bond did not immediately make a career in horse racing. She started out with the Foreign Exchange Department of Eastman Kodak before joining ESL Federal Credit Union, Kodak's bank, as an investment specialist. She continued to work after sons Kevin and Ryan came along, juggling what she says is, "the most important job I will ever have in my life – being a Mom," with her business profession.

In 1990, Jim Bond relocated his stable from Finger Lakes to Belmont Park and Saratoga, with winters spent in Florida. The move, while a positive milestone for the operation, was hard on the young family. "Jim was always traveling," the New York horsewoman offered. "It was difficult because we didn't get to see him very much."

They found a way to make it work. But, heading home from a memorable trip to the inaugural Dubai World Cup in 1996, after their New York-bred L'Carriere ran third to the great Cigar, Bond realized a change was in order.

"I decided to leave the corporate world and enter the world of horse racing full time," she said. "I began taking over more of the stable's office work. My work in finance helps me to run the corporate end of the business. Living on the farm helped me to understand the breeding side of the business. We had mares and foals; we raised them on the farm until they went to the racetrack. I began to learn the many different aspects of the horse industry."

The children were Priority #1, but when they graduated high school and went off to college, there was more time to devote to racing. The Bonds purchased 100 acres in Stillwater, NY, in 2005, and built their new farm, Song Hill Thoroughbreds, LLC. Once the horses had moved in, they built a home on the property as well.

"Now I am totally immersed," Bond said. "I oversee the broodmares, foals, and yearlings at the farm. We also do sales prep and rehabilitation at Song Hill, and we have room for our retirees. Ruffino and Tommasi were claimed from us, but we brought them back home to live out the rest of their days at Song Hill."

Sons Kevin and Ryan have also returned to their roots, and now work full time as assistant trainers for the stable.



Jim and Tina Marie Bond

"When they were young, they both worked at the barn with their father whenever they could," Bond said. "They love horses."

Bond insisted they earn college degrees before focusing on the family business.

"Kevin has a bachelor's degree in business management from Lynn University; Ryan has a bachelor's degree in finance from Florida Atlantic University," said the proud mom.

With their future success intertwined in that of the New York racing industry, Bond felt it was time to dip her toe into the political waters.

"I believe that having both of my sons choose careers in racing made me decide to run for the NYTHA Board," she said. "I want to do what I can to help the industry grow and become stronger. It is a great sport that needs more positive exposure to all, especially young people. We need to bring the integrity back to the sport and stop the negativity. We need to promote the good people and the good things about our horses."

The aftercare of those horses is one cause of great importance to Bond.

"We are so grateful to our wonderful clients - they give us the time to find good homes for many of our retired racehorses," she said. "It is so wonderful to see them go on to have second careers. Some are performing as jumping horses, some as dressage horses, some as lesson horses, and others as trail horses. Pleasant Breeze, who was a graded stakes winner and earned over \$1.2 million, is our stable pony. He loves his work and I think he remembers his race days when he hits the main track at Saratoga. It is important that we take care of our retired racehorses. It is so very rewarding."



Kevin, Jim and Ryan Bond

She also serves on the Backstretch/Safety, Finance and Women in Racing Committees for NYTHA.

Once again, Bond is balancing a full field of responsibilities, but there is always time to cheer on the runners carrying her royal blue and white silks, and she has words of advice for those looking to delve into the game.

"I would tell someone who is considering Thoroughbred ownership to start out in a small group," Bond said. "Treat it like it is a membership to a club. Experience as much as you can and see if it is what you thought it was going to be."

She added, "Owning a horse is an investment, but a successful stock

has never made me jump up and down and yell like a racehorse has. I feel so fortunate to have experienced the excitement that only a racehorse can give you. I have had people come to me and ask to buy into a horse of mine, and it gives me great joy to be able to give people the opportunity to share in the ownership of a racehorse. It is an experience of a lifetime."

Bond brings that enthusiasm, and a lifetime of experience, to her first term on the NYTHA Board.



Tina Marie Bond with retirees Tommasi and Ruffino