

MEET THE NYTHA BOARD

FINDING ENOUGH HOURS IN THE DAY

A racing stable is a 24/7 operation, but trainer Pat Kelly somehow fits his role as husband and father into the schedule. On top of that, he serves as vice president of the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association, and sits on the boards of the Jockey Injury Compensation Fund and the Backstretch Pension Fund.

How does he do it?

"You can always find time for the important things," Kelly said.

The second-generation horseman did not intend to get involved in the politics of racing. From an early age, the eldest son of Hall of Fame conditioner Tommy Kelly was focused on the horses.

"I was four or five when I first started coming out to the racetrack," he recalled. "Pop used to come pick me up on the pony when we were in Chicago. We lived in a trailer at Arlington--that was one of his first big jobs, with Adele Rice in Chicago--and he'd ride over from the barn during the break."

The family traveled the circuit together, following the horses from track to track before the days of equine air transportation.

"When I was a kid, we'd put the horses on the train over here at Belmont," Kelly remarked. "They'd leave for Hialeah, and we'd all pile into the old Buick and go down 301 and U.S. 1, there was no I-95, and drive like hell for two days to get to Florida."

After he graduated from high school, Kelly briefly considered a career away from the track. He attended the University of Miami, but it wasn't the curriculum that convinced him to enroll.

"The reason I went to Miami was so I could work at Hialeah in the winter," he confessed with a smile. "Well, that plus the weather."

"I thought about other jobs," he added. "I got a degree in business administration, it was actually a pre-law degree, which was

intriguing, but I never went any further with it. I went to work on the track right after college. I graduated and drove straight to Delaware Park. I was my

Dad's assistant from '70 to '78, then I started training. I've been doing it ever since."

The racetrack is more roller coaster than merry-go-round, but Kelly's career has had its share of ups. The early '90s were especially rewarding, highlighted by the success of the Live Oak duo of Solar Splendor and his year-younger brother Sultry Song. Between them, the two captured six Grade I races and earned more than \$3 million. Grade I winner Christecat and graded-stakes winners Binary Light, Jaded Dancer, Token Dance and Wortheroatsingold were also in the Kelly barn at the time.

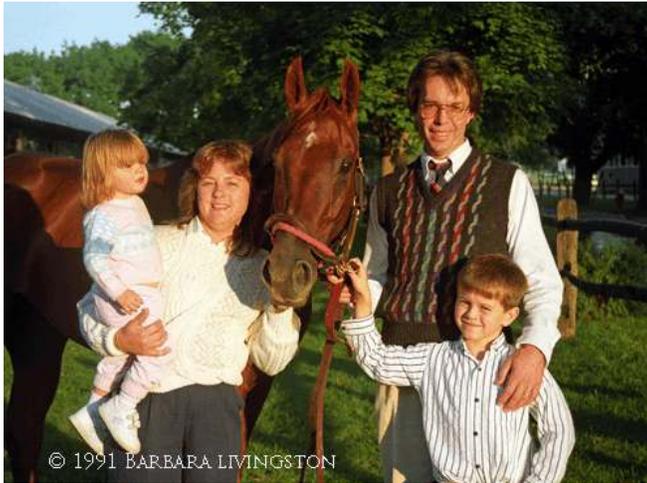
The two brothers provided the headlines, however. On Oct. 6, 1991, Sultry Song scored by a neck in the GII Jamaica H. and Solar Splendor came back two races later to take the GI Turf Classic Invitational by the same margin. The pair outdid themselves the following season. On Sept. 19, 1992, Solar Splendor led every step of the way in the GI Man o'War S., and Sultry Song used identical tactics in the very next race to post the upset over Pleasant Tap in the GI Woodward S. The occasion was memorable for another reason.

"That was also the day [Live Oak owner Charlotte Weber's] daughter got married," Kelly explained. "We were on the sports pages and the social pages of the *New York Times*. I was alone at the track, nobody else was there. My son Kenny was the ring bearer--everybody was at the wedding."

"This was before they had cell phones, but they had car phones, so the chauffeurs were calling out, 'You won the first one!' and then, when they were coming out of the church, 'You won the other race!' It was a big deal, a big, big deal. I did make it to the reception in the city that night, and it was quite a party. I'm not even sure where it was, they just threw me in the car and sent me. I do remember I took the next day off. We had a good time."

More recently, it was the indomitable Evening Attire who ruled the Kelly string. The much-loved gray raced every season between 2000 and 2008 and earned \$2,977,130. His 11 stakes wins included the GI Jockey Club Gold Cup in 2002 and, in his very last start at the grand old age of 10, a track-record-setting 8 1/4-length romp going a mile and a half in the Greenwood Cup at Philadelphia Park.

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Katherine, Karen, Pat & Kenny Kelly with Solar Splendor

Barbara Livingston photo

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Finding Enough Hours cont.

"I think Evening Attire was the coolest horse," Kelly said. "He had such a great personality. He loved being around the barn, he loved to train. The few times we tried to give him a vacation, the guys at the farm would call us up and say, 'This horse isn't acting right. We turn him out and he comes up after an hour and stands by the fence and watches the other horses train.' He just loved being at the track."



Evening Attire Rick Samuels

"He was very competitive, but he was good--if he didn't like the track or something, you'd know," the trainer continued. "Over at the far turn, he was either picking them up and going after them, or he was just lollygagging around in the back. He was a neat horse, one of my favorites."

A suspensory injury finally KO'd Evening Attire's career, but he has settled into retirement at Akindale Farm in Pawling, New York.

"He's doing fine now," Kelly confirmed. "A pony befriended him when he first went to the farm. They're good buddies."

Evening Attire's long and fruitful career was even sweeter because he shared each triumph with his dad, who bred and co-owned the gelding with Joe and Mary Grant.

"He came along when Pop was retiring," Kelly said. "That was cool."

At one time, it seemed unlikely Kelly's children would carry on the training tradition. His daughter Katherine took a career path that led away from the track; she now works as a teacher. His son Kenny couldn't be anywhere near a horse when he was young.

"When he was born, he was so allergic to horse dander that I'd have to come home and change clothes and take a shower before I could give him a hug," Kelly said. "But he outgrew that, and he has been helping me out at the barn. He thinks he might want to pursue a career in racing."

Dedicated to his family and his horses, Kelly also feels an obligation to the backstretch workers, and he has never been shy about sharing his opinions in defense of racing, qualities that compelled his fellow trainers to encourage an interest in the politics of the sport.

"[Trainer] Jimmy Picou actually asked me to run for the NYTHA Board," Kelly said. "They were looking for young people to get involved back when it first started. Then the Pension Fund people came around, and, of course, NYTHA was instrumental in getting the Jockey Injury Fund up and running."

Kelly sits on eight NYTHA Committees, and serves as the chair for the organization's Benevolence and Office Committees.

"I didn't pursue it, things just built and built and built, and all of a sudden I've got a lot of hats now," he said. "Hopefully, that's because of my reputation over all these years, speaking my mind for the people on the backside and the horsemen."

Over the years, Kelly has been on board as NYTHA navigated through the NYRA bankruptcy, and the long, long wait for VLTs. On the front burner currently are health-care and social services for backstretch workers.

"We've got a great health-care program for the backstretch here in New York, funded by NYTHA and NYRA and run by the Backstretch Employee Service Team, and we want to make sure we can maintain that going forward," Kelly said. "It's important for the employers and the people we cover. We also have a wonderful daycare center on the backstretch, Anna House, which has been a real success, and the Racetrack Chaplaincy runs a very popular recreation program that is sponsored by NYTHA."

In addition, Kelly emphasized the importance of the industry to the local economy.

"I'm sure our tracks, Aqueduct and Belmont, are two of the biggest economic engines in the area, as far as producing taxes and revenue and generating jobs," he said. "Grumman [Aerospace Corporation, the largest corporate employer on Long Island until the early 1990s] is closed, and the big industries aren't doing much out here these days, so we're a big piece of the economy. We need to keep it vibrant."

With New York racing in a constant state of flux, it's imperative the NYTHA Board stay on top of the issues. Kelly has devoted more hours to that effort in recent years.

"I'm getting a little older now, I'm winding down," he said. "I don't have as many horses as I used to have. It's a little easier to find the time, and I don't mind doing it. It keeps me in the loop, and it's nice to have the chance to help everybody on the backside who needs help, from top to bottom."

B.E.S.T. Update

B.E.S.T. Brings Free Tax Filing Assistance to Backstretch...

Bethpage Federal Credit Union and the Backstretch Employee Service Team joined forces to provide free tax filing assistance this tax season to the backstretch community, through the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA).

The month-long Mobile VITA program kicked off Mar. 4, offering its services to the backstretch workers on select Mondays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. throughout the month of March and the first two weeks of April.

Workers from Aqueduct and Belmont filled the B.E.S.T. office every week to have their taxes filed electronically. Robert Suarez, Bethpage's Community Relations Assistant Vice President, and Ever Martinez, Community Relations Director, were on hand to answer tax-related questions and to help with the returns. Backstretch workers learned they could be eligible for special tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit.

"Having this service here is wonderful," said hotwalker Daniel O. "I usually pay \$80 to file my taxes."

Others disclosed that they've paid between \$100-\$325 to file with outside agencies. The last VITA session on the backstretch was held Apr. 9. In total, 46 workers took advantage of the free service, with expected IRS refunds averaging between \$1,000-\$3,000 per filer.

No Smoking, Please...

B.E.S.T. has launched a free smoking cessation program, which provides clinical intervention, one-on-one counseling and pharmacotherapy to help backstretch workers kick their smoking habit.

Those who wish to quit smoking can enroll in the 12-week program. They will be assessed by Dr. Frederic Cogan, medical director of the B.E.S.T. Clinic, and quit plans will be developed for each individual.

Whether the plan calls for nicotine replacement therapy or prescribed non-nicotine medications such as Wellbutrin or Chantix, those enrolled in the program will be seen regularly for counseling sessions with B.E.S.T.'s New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) certified counselors.