

# SUSAN AND JOHN MOORE'S TALE OF LOVE AND GLORY

Horses are running their hearts out for this Far Hills, N.J., couple deeply committed to animal welfare.

Story by Bill Finley. Photographs by Adam Coglianese.

In a whimsical mood, Susan Moore says that maybe her success on the race track has something to do with divine justice. She figures that if you're good to animals then you will be rewarded—that the animals will be good to you in return. She might just have a point.

Moore has devoted much of her adult life to caring for animals, including retired Thoroughbreds. The animals, at least the horses, seem intent on returning the favor.

Few horse owners have done more with less than Moore and her husband, John. The Far Hills, N.J., residents have a small stable based in New York with trainer Jimmy Jerkens and spend modestly at the sales, yet continue to produce a band of quality, stakes-caliber runners. This year has been the most impressive yet.

With just 11 horses in training, they have been represented by three stakes winners, including Zaftig, who defeated last year's champion 2-year-old filly, Indian Blessing, with a dramatic victory in the Grade 1 Acorn Stakes on the Belmont Stakes day undercard.

At the root of their success is a philosophy: Never cut corners while doing everything possible to give the horse the best care possible.

"We're very meticulous and we get very involved in the physical well-being of every horse," Susan Moore says.

It's exactly what you'd expect from Moore, who admits she "goes overboard" when it comes to anything that has anything to do with the welfare of an animal. Her love of animals began when she was a child growing up with cats. She bore

witness to a few acts of animal cruelty and vowed she would one day make a difference.

"I ended up being nuts about animals," she says.

By college, she was already putting cats ahead of herself. She scraped together enough money to buy a car, but wound up selling it so that she could pay the vet bills for the cats she had taken in.

Moore went on to be a successful businesswoman who made a sizable income in the mail order catalog business. That meant more money for the animals.

"When I started making enough money that I could afford to spend some money on animals I went overboard," she said. "And I started not only paying for my own animals, I rescued animals that other people didn't want or

couldn't take care of. I started taking care of veterinary bills for other people's animals. My name just got out there. I never advertised or did anything to say, 'Here I am, I'll help you if you have a problem.'"

Her work continues today. John Moore set up the Moore Foundation, which provides aid to sick or injured animals. The Moores accept donations, but the majority of the money spent by the foundation comes from their personal savings. John Moore estimates that he and his wife annually spend between \$150,000 to \$200,000 caring for animals.

In addition, the Moores' home has become a haven for unwanted cats. They currently care for 40 of them, all of them, for one reason or another, unsuitable for adoption. They have cats with cancer,



AIDs, with missing legs and eyes, and just about every other malady imaginable. These are cats that have no place else to go.

Horses weren't Susan Moore's focus until the late 1980s. A self-described workaholic who put in 100-hour weeks, she found a release in

handicapping. She was fascinated by that aspect of the sport and found a few hours each week to take in racing on Friday nights at the Meadowlands.

"The only thing that distracted me from my work was going to the Meadowlands," she says. "I lived in Manhattan and worked in Jersey and I went

to the Meadowlands on the way home. I could spend four or five hours there and handicap. There was enough information and statistics in the *Racing Form* that it kept me occupied. For a number of years it was my only form of entertainment."

It was there that a couple of breeders noticed her and

befriended her. They told her that they had some horses available for sale and that buying them would be a good way to get started as an owner. She agreed, but her first foray into ownership was not a good one.

"I told them I could spend \$100,000, so they sold me three



*Grand Champion (right) won the 2007 Maryland Million Sprint at Laurel Park.*



*Zaftig scored impressively in this year's Acorn Stakes-G1 at Belmont Park.*

horses worth \$10,000 for the \$100,000," she says. "I spent the next 10 years figuring out how not to get taken in the horse business."

Since her stab at ownership, a lot has changed for Susan Moore. She sold her business, which gave her the means to buy a better caliber of horse, and she married John Moore in 1996. Moore, who worked in investment banking, grew up on Long Island and made frequent trips to the harness races at Roosevelt Raceway. As he became more immersed in his professional career, he stopped following the races, but Susan's passion for the game reignited his interest.

Their first major success came with Lager, a Virginia-bred son of Pleasant Tap whom they claimed for \$45,000 in 1998 along with trainer Danny Lopez. A year later, Lager was having problems and Lopez wanted out. The Moores bought his half interest in the horse for \$7,500 and turned him over to Jerkens.

Under Jerkens, Lager took on a new life as a 6-year-old in 2000, winning his first start that season for a \$35,000 claiming tag and then moving up to top handicap competition. He won the Excelsior and Stuyvesant Handicaps (both Grade 3), was runner-up to Belmont Stakes winner Lemon Drop Kid in the Brooklyn Handicap-G2, and third (to Lemon Drop Kid and Behrens) in the Suburban Handicap-G2.

Despite having had such success with a former claimer, the Moores knew the best way to build a successful and profitable stable was to concentrate on better bred, more expensive horses. Working together, they decided to focus on the sales in hopes of finding prospective stakes winners in the mid-price ranges.

Not every one has worked out, but a remarkable number have.

Zaftig (by Gone West), purchased privately after she was bought back for \$190,000 at the 2006 Keeneland September Yearling sale, is the stable star, but the 2-year-old Bernstein filly Doremifasollatido, winner of Belmont Park's Matron Stakes-G2 on September 13, isn't far behind. Lady Marlboro, who finished in a dead heat for victory in the Grade 3 Sabin Stakes at Gulfstream in January, rounds out the Moore's trio of 2008 stakes winners.

Zaftig led up to the Acorn with a victory in the Nassau County Stakes-G3 and has three wins in five career starts for earnings of \$308,700.

After winning the Acorn, Zaftig came down with a minor foot bruise. It was the sort of thing that could have been dealt with and she could have quickly returned to training. Instead, she was given most of the summer off. The Moores believe that in the long run she will be better off because they didn't rush things.

That should mean that Zaftig will be a major force in the older mare division next year. The 113 Beyer figure she earned in the Acorn was, through mid-September, the fastest number turned in by any 3-year-old of either sex this year.

Doremifasollatido, meanwhile, picked up the tempo. Second in the Adirondack Stakes-G2 prior to her breakout performance in the Matron, she was a \$110,000 Keeneland September Yearling sale purchase. Never worse than second in four starts, she has earned \$217,000.

The 4-year-old Lady Marlboro (by Smoke Glacken), a \$65,000 Keeneland September sales yearling, finished second to Rite Moment in her only other start this season, the Bed o' Roses Handicap-G2 at Aqueduct in April; her career earnings total \$263,144.

The Moores' roster of stakes winners also includes:

- Smokey Glacken (a Forestry daughter and half-sister to sprint champion and leading sire Smoke Glacken), purchased at the 2002 Keeneland September Yearling sale for \$150,000, won eight stakes (five graded) and earned \$656,960.
- Iron Deputy, a Silver Deputy colt purchased for just \$45,000 at the 2000 Fasig-Tipton Kentucky July sale, won the 2003 running of the Brooklyn Handicap-G2 and two other stakes and

earned \$370,900. He now stands at stud at Walnford Stud in Allentown, N.J.

- Tiger (by Storm Boot), a \$100,000 purchase at the 2003 Fasig-Tipton Midlantic May 2-year-olds in training sale, won the 2006 Bold Ruler Handicap-G3 in his stakes debut, after being sidelined by injury for lengthy periods earlier in his career.
- Grand Champion (by Two Punch) got his name because he was pinned grand champion at the 2004 Maryland Horse Breeders Association Yearling Show judged by Jonathan Sheppard. The Moores bought him a few weeks after that for \$115,000 at the Fasig-Tipton Kentucky July Yearling sale. The Maryland-bred, who didn't make his first start until last at age 4, registered back-to-back victories in the 2007 Maryland Million Sprint Handicap at Laurel and Fall Highweight Handicap at Aqueduct. His earnings to date are \$299,490.
- Tinseltown (by Pine Bluff), a \$90,000 buy at the 2003 Keeneland September Yearling sale, developed into a stakes winner of \$181,337. The most they have spent on a horse is \$250,000 and the average price they have paid is \$112,000. In this day and age, that's not a lot of money, but they keep finding winners. Since 2000, the Moores have won with 25 percent of their



*Two-year-old star Doremifasollatido took Belmont's Matron Stakes-G2.*



*Lady Marlboro (right) and Golden Velvet dead heated for victory in the Grade 3 Sabin Stakes at Gulfstream Park.*

starters and their starters have finished in the money 59 percent of the time.

To find these horses, the Moores work with a team of advisors, including Cecil Seaman, an expert in biomechanics, and veterinarian Patricia Hogan, who checks and rechecks every horse the Moores are interested in to make sure they are buying a sound animal.

"You won't find a more hands-on owner than us," John Moore says. "We are very careful about who we buy. The vet work that we do when we select our horses is extraordinary. We 'double vet' every horse. We only buy clean horses. We rarely buy a horse who has had prior surgery or prior problems. A lot of people will buy those horses because they will get a discount if the horse had any problem. A lot of veterinarians will tell them they can fix the problems. That's not something we're comfortable with."

Once the horses begin their racing careers, the Moores are every bit as vigilant. No expense is spared and whenever a horse has a problem they will do everything to correct it. Many times that means consulting with a team of experts. They will never run an unsound horse, but also they want to give every horse they have a chance to recover from an injury and to reach his full potential.

"Half of our graded stakes horses would not have become

graded stakes winners if they were owned by many other owners," Susan Moore said. "Tiger, who currently holds a track record at Gulfstream Park and won a graded stakes race, bowed a tendon twice before he did that. Many people in this industry would not have given him a year off or give him all the surgeries to help him. They would not have sent him to training centers and rehab centers to get him back."

"They are so committed to their horses," Hogan said. "They're not counting on running it as a 2-year-old, 3-year-old or even a 4-year-old. They'll do whatever is required to do what's best for the horses so they can compete at a comfortable level. Say a horse is ready to race and everyone has their hopes up and the horse comes up with a filling or a chip; they'll stop on the horse and treat it. Nothing ever gets beyond them. I'm given a free rein to do whatever is best for their horses as far as medical treatment and I spare nothing in doing so."

Their recent run of success has come at a good time. The Moores recently launched a racing syndicate, M and M Thoroughbred Partners. The idea is to expand the stable by bringing in owners who want to share in the Moores' success.

"We manage 10 to 12 horses at the track right now and we'd like to manage 30 or 40 horses at the race track," Susan Moore

said. "We could apply everything that we learned to a larger stable, but we would own 10 or 20 percent of each of the horses rather than 100 percent."

They can't promise the partners that they will be buying into the next Zaftig or Doremifasollatido, but they can guarantee that each horse will be pampered, both during his racing days and beyond. The Moores are still actively involved in their efforts to care for cats and to provide financial assistance to those who can't pay their veterinary bills, but horse welfare has become a major issue to them.

They rarely run horses in claiming races because they fear that could lead to a horse eventually slipping through the cracks and winding up with an owner and trainer not concerned with providing them with a humane retirement. Should a horse ever get claimed away from them they will follow the remainder of

the horse's career and buy him back any time they fear the horse is in danger.

The Moores have personally taken in dozens of horses from the track that needed a home and have paid for their care. John Moore is a member of the board of directors of the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation, an organization the Moores have supported with several generous donations.

"Other people should do what we do and take responsibility for their horses in retirement," John Moore said. "You see now that organization-by-organization, they are starting to take some action on the drug problems racing has. People need to press these same organizations, like The Jockey Club, TOBA and the NTRA, on this issue. It can happen. The members need to demand that more be done on welfare. These organizations have the power to do a lot more than they're doing." \*