

HORSE handles

Stories behind
the sentimental,
creative and
quirky names
of racehorses.

BY ASHLEY
MAYOTTE

THREE PINK BOWS

"I thought it was fitting to name them after her. I still have the horses, but I didn't have her." Douglas 'Sonny' Rankin paused, took a deep breath and continued, "Just a way of remembering her."

Carol Alice, C A R, and Three Pink Bows are all named in memory of Rankin's beloved wife, Carol, who passed away on March 25, 2009 after an eight-month battle with pancreatic cancer.

The tie to the name Three Pink Bows may not be as obvious but it is equally as heartwarming. But, the story of how Three Pink Bows got her name is impossible to tell without mentioning her two older half-sisters.

After Carol's passing, Sonny acquired Keltic Sarah, a broodmare from his brother, Donnie. Her first foal was a pretty little chestnut filly that Sonny named Carol Alice. When the second filly was born, she was named C A R, which is an abbreviation for Carol Alice Rankin.

It took a trip to the winner's circle with Carol Alice and the help from some friends for Sonny to come up with a name for Keltic Sarah's next filly.

"Carol Alice turned out to be kind of a nice two-year-old filly," said the Nova Scotian horseman. "We won the



(KYLE BURTON PHOTO)

Atlantic Sires Stakes race at Inverness. We were out in the winner's circle and friends of my wife and I were at the races, Phonsie and Fran MacEachern. So Fran was down at the winner's circle and she said, 'Oh my God Sonny, would Carol ever be proud of this filly tonight.' And I said, 'Yeah, she certainly would.'

"Everybody would make fun of Carol because all her clothes were pink, either pink or purple, but 80 per cent of them were pink," he explained. "Fran said, 'I could just see her, she would have her mane full of pink bows.' And I said, 'Yeah. Yeah, probably she would.'"

That night, on the way home, Sonny decided to name the third filly Three Pink Bows.

"I think she would have really liked it," he said of naming the fillies after his wife of 33 years. "We have another one now that's just a yearling and her name is Imacaroltoo."

Although Carol had worked in financial services, she had a strong love for horses and was around them all the time. She would also never miss a race. And she probably still doesn't.

"I would say she is watching over them."

Tell us about your interesting horse names and they could be featured in a future edition of Trot's Horse Handles. Send your stories to brittney@trot.ca.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

During the month of November, I Love Canadian Harness Racing Fan Club members were asked to share the history behind the name of a horse they owned or helped to name. We received many heartfelt, entertaining and interesting stories about how horses were named. It was extremely difficult to select one winner, but in the end, the panel of judges decided that the story behind Milliondollarcell was very compelling. The Fan Club presents the winning submission, by Michel Blais of L'Ange-Gardier, Quebec.

Two brothers (Michel and Pierre Blais) become partners in the horse business after one saved the others life. An inspiring story where compatibility between two human beings takes on its full meaning.

Previously diagnosed with a leukemia cancer for which no treatment existed or possibility of remission or cure, Pierre's days are numbered in 2003. Researchers from the Institute for Research in Immunology and Cancer (IRIC), lead by Dr. Guy Sauvageau, attempt an experiment – the last hope: to find a fully compatible stem cell donor, wipe out Pierre's immune system and transplant the donor's immune system. This had yet to be done at the time. The challenge was to find that "one in a million chance" fully compat-

ible donor. You will have guessed that we found him, and that it was his brother Michel. The second attempt of the transplant was successful.

In 2008, with the arrival of a yearling on the farm, the brothers named the horse **Milliondollarcell**, in reference to their story. Even though the horse has been claimed, they both have a sentimental attachment and still enjoy watching him race.

Today, not a single trace of leukemia can be found in Pierre's stem cells. Grateful to the researchers, the two partnering brothers created the "Blais Family Fund" with profits going to IRIC. Since 2010, their annual golf tournament has raised more than \$150,000 for cancer research.