

## Tucked away in Lancaster County, he searches the globe for horses

By JUDITH LEE

**SHARTLESVILLE, Pa.** — At the end of a long afternoon, the sale barn is nearly empty. Two women, who had been careful bidders at the May 10 sale of Pennsylvania-bred thoroughbreds, stop purposefully at the stall occupied by the big bay horse.

“Oh, did you buy my horse?” asks Ed Price, the consignor of the 3-year-old gelding, Catch Fini.

A touch of straw in his hair and looking a little tired, Price still finds a friendly smile for Justine Howell and Kathy Antus, who affirm they are the winning bidders on this fine-looking son of Fini Cassette.

They ask if he bred the horse. Price tells them no, he bought it as a yearling at a previous Mountain Spring sale, and now has broken, trained and prepared Catch Fini for resale.

But Price’s demeanor is not that of a pinhooker who buys and sells horses for a living.

Rather, he seems like a proud parent, stroking the horse’s neck and telling Howell and Antus the 3-year-old gelding “has a good mind.”

In fact, that’s Price’s tone when he discusses any of the dozen or so horses currently in his Reinholds, Pa. barn, or the hundreds he’s bought and sold — here and in countries around the globe.

**ED PRICE** is, first and foremost, a man who loves horses.

“I really like the horses, especially the stallions. That is my specialty, I buy and sell stallion prospects. I also sell broodmares, do some breeding, and sell the youngsters at the major sales,” notes Price on a later date, as he strolls around his Reinholds farm.

He handles each animal like a hands-on horseman, which he and his wife, Sandy, most definitely are. And he’s always ready to present their most saleable points.

“This is a beautiful horse and he won \$700,000 at the track. We’re going to keep him and stand him in Pennsylvania,” Price said of Gouldings Green, a 2001 son of Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner Charismatic.

In another stall, a tall, gray stallion, Kennebunkport, is the son of Unbridled’s Song out of an AP Indy mare. Price says a potential buyer from South Africa is coming to look at him.

Yet another prospect, My Cat’s Gone West, is a 5-year-old son of Gone West out of a Storm Cat mare. “He has a great pedigree, but not much of a race record,” notes Price.

is modest, showing he has not lost touch with that kid who sold lead ponies to a track near his hometown in Massachusetts.

“I believe things are already going extremely well with the Pennsylvania program. I didn’t expect things to change overnight. It takes four to five years to really see the rewards that slots will bring,” Price notes.

He has already felt an increased interest from buyers in PA-bred horses, and experienced some success in this category, such as the sale of a PA-bred, Hook and Ladder filly for \$20,000 at Keeneland.

“We still need more time to develop the program. It will take two to three more years to see the full impact,” Price says.

Patient development of a market niche is Price’s strength. Over the past 30 years, he has shown an ability to recognize opportunities, react in a timely way, and forge lasting relationships.

“We’ve had some good success over the years, buying horses and selling them, first in the Midwest, because it was the only market I knew. Then I took out an ad in *The Blood Horse*, and I started getting calls from Puerto Rico and then South America. I found out there was an international market for American thoroughbreds,” he says.

**ON THE WALL** of his office, Price has a map entitled “The World.” There is a pin to represent every stallion he’s sold, and they are located on nearly every continent, with concentrations in South America and Asia.

Also on his wall are numerous framed letters and e-mails from satisfied customers, including this from a buyer in New Mexico:

“You have never let me down in the past. In fact, you have always exceeded my expectations every time. I certainly appreciate your unbridled commitment to integrity.”

Giangiulio calls Price “such an honest, good man.” About three weeks after purchasing the stallion, Bombadier, from Price, Giangiulio got a call from Price, who asked if Giangiulio had insured the horse. Giangiulio assured Price that he had taken the insurance immediately upon purchase.

“Ed said, ‘Okay, I will go ahead and cancel my insurance on him.’ Ed had paid for three extra weeks of insurance just for my protection. Now how many people would do that?” asks Giangiulio.

Price believes the extra care he gives to a customer satisfaction pays off particularly in foreign markets, where the numbers of wealthy buyers are small, and most of them know one another. Not only does he



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In a tour of his farm, Price demonstrates the traits that recently got him appointed to the board of directors of the Pennsylvania Horse Breeders Association (PHBA).

"Ed really is a special guy. He comes at this business from a different perspective, and one that PHBA needed to add. He is very involved in sales, both private and public, and he really understands marketing," says Peter Giangiulio, president of PHBA.

**GIANGIULIO SAYS** most PHBA members are breeders who race what they breed. However, as PA-bred purses and bonus payments to breeders continue to grow, so will demand for registered PA-breeds, both at auction and in private sales.

"The PA Fund has tripled in size, and in the same period, the PA foal crop has only grown by half [from 1,000 foals per year to 1,500]. It's a matter of supply and demand," Giangiulio notes.

He says that's why PHBA has brought in several new directors, including Price, who bring expanded expertise to the table: "They're going to teach us a lot."

But when asked about his new title, Price

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Price believes the extra care he gives to a customer satisfaction pays off particularly in foreign markets, where the numbers of wealthy buyers are small, and most of them know one another. Not only does he receive great referrals, they sometimes come from highly influential people.

During the early 1990's, when negotiating a sale to Costa Rica, Price was dealing with a gentleman he knew only as "Rafael." After several attempts to return a call, Price discovered he was talking with Rafael Ángel Calderón Fournier, then the President of Costa Rica.

"This was his hobby. He bought the horse, and he referred a friend from the Dominican Republic," says Price.

**ALTHOUGH PRICE** has traveled to meet with clients around the world, he does less of that now in the age of e-mail and the Internet. He appears to be content to spend as much time as possible at his Mohn's Hill Farm, and it's no wonder.

The farm is a gem of restoration, sparkling in the bright sunshine of a summer's day. The 1800's farmhouse is pristine, along with several old barns that were beautifully converted to stable valuable horses.

Price and his wife bought the 20-acre property two decades ago, in a move specific to racing in the Mid-Atlantic.



Photos by Judith Lee

*Photos from top: Price at his computer where today's bloodstock agents do much of their business; Price and Gouldings Green (by Charismatic); a barn that is one of several beautifully restored buildings on the farm.*

"We're located three hours or less from 13 different racetracks," he said.

Their move from New England to Pennsylvania seems a bit of genius now, as they find themselves well-positioned to participate in the PA-bred program. As Price chats amiably in his office, a call comes in from Bill Hedes, a trainer from Philadelphia Park, who is at a horse sale in Ocala, FL.

Hedes is bidding on a Wheelaway colt that

the Prices bred, named Big Wheel, who was sold as a yearling at Timonium for \$10,000.

Price is pleased when Hedes wins the bidding at \$20,000. Price points out that the colt's value has doubled in a year, due in part to the increase in demand for PA-bred horses.

"I'm glad Billy got the horse because it will come to Pennsylvania to race," says Price, "and we can use those breeder bonuses!"