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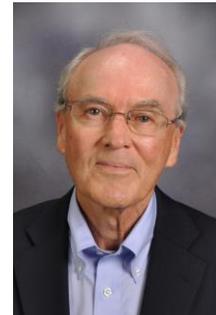
**Walt Anderson, AIF®**

Accredited Investment Fiduciary®

November 16, 2018

Dear Reader:

## Harry and Snowman



November 1958. The brisk chill in New York matched the excitement at Madison Square Garden. Flashbulbs popped as “the people that ran the world”<sup>1</sup> emerged from limousines in fur, diamonds, top hats, and tails. The pageantry of the National Horse Show at Madison Square Garden was the opening of New York’s social season (“back in the days of mink and manure”). Celebrating its seventy fifth year, that year’s eight-day event was the Diamond Jubilee. Inside, 20,000 spectators were gathering.

The last event each night was the most exciting: The Open Jumper class. Competition was fierce, and tied scores required that the fences be raised, again and again, until there was a winner. It was a daunting test of a horse’s strength, agility, and courage. It was also a test of a rider’s extraordinary horsemanship to center the focus of these Thoroughbred horses, bred to respond with explosive power. Mistakes made in Open Jumping could be career-ending, or even fatal.

By the end of the eight days, the National Horse Show Diamond Jubilee Jumper Champion would be named, as well as the Professional Horseman’s Association Championship and American Horse Shows Association Horse of the Year. Together this was the Triple Crown of show jumping.

Amidst this rarefied atmosphere, a horse named Snowman trotted into the ring, ridden by his owner, Harry DeLeyer. The big gray gelding seemed out of place. Unlike the Thoroughbreds, he was calm to the point of placid. With huge hooves, he looked more like a plow horse than an elite athlete. Because that’s what he was – a plow horse. Worse yet, a plow horse no one had wanted anymore. Two years earlier, after no one bid on him at an auction, he was crammed into a trailer with the other rejects, headed to the slaughterhouse.

That trailer was where Harry DeLeyer found him. He’d driven five hours to buy a lesson horse for the riding program at the Knox School for Girls. But a flat tire made Harry too late for the auction, and the only horses still there were in that trailer, about to leave. He stopped the driver. Could he please take a peek at the horses inside?

One horse turned, ears pricked up, and made eye contact with Harry. Their two souls connected. Seeing past the harness scars, filthy coat, and chipped hooves, Harry recognized an attentive, kind nature – and decided to save this horse. It cost him

\$80.<sup>2</sup>

Harry knew what it was like to be saved. Having grown up on his father's farm in Holland, he had seen his family's horses confiscated by invading Nazis in 1940. As a teenager, he helped the local resistance, crossing through checkpoints with food and supplies and burying the dead. One of those bodies was an American paratrooper. After receiving a letter from Harry's sister, praising the paratrooper for his sacrifice, the man's family decided to sponsor Harry and his wife so they could come to the U.S. They arrived in 1950 with Harry's saddle, boots, and little else.

When Harry returned home with his new steed, his children named the horse Snowman. They made it a family project to clean and fatten him up, while Harry started training him on the basics. He led him over wooden jump poles on the ground to make him less clumsy. He guided him to make smooth curving turns – a confusing experience, since he'd spent his life plowing straight lines. Then the eight-year-old gelding got a rider on his back for the first time. Harry was patient, and Snowman became a perfect horse for a beginning rider.

Harry's children adored Snowman, who pulled their sled during the winter, and took them swimming in the Atlantic in the summer, usually with six or more on his back, often serving as their diving board. But Harry's students always wanted to move on to prettier, more exciting horses. So, when a local farmer needed a gentle riding horse for his son, Harry sold him Snowman. He turned a small profit but made sure the farmer would sell him back if he didn't want him. He didn't want the horse he had saved to ever be in danger again.

The farmer's son didn't like riding, leaving Snowman stuck in a paddock, with nothing to do and no one to love. So, the former plow horse decided to go home to his family. One day Harry was shocked to discover that the horse had jumped his way across large solid fences through many properties to come home. And, when Harry returned him to the farmer, Snowman did it again.

So, Harry bought him back, and pledged to never sell him again – and to train this funny horse, driven by love to jump huge obstacles, to use that talent in the show ring! But Snowman stumbled over the training fences, showing no interest or talent – until Harry, on a dare, pointed him at a four-foot fence.

In an instant, Snowman awakened. Harry felt him transform – like a phoenix rising from the ashes – into Pegasus, the winged horse, empowered with a determined grace, jumping for the exhilaration of flight!<sup>3</sup>

Seventeen months later the rescued plow horse trotted into the ring at the Garden. So, here they were together, at the National Horse Show. Harry and Snowman again and again, immediately becoming celebrities. Dubbed "The Cinderella Horse," Snowman even walked across New York City to Rockefeller Center to appear on a live broadcast of the Tonight Show with guest host Johnny Carson.

The last night of the show, the German team won the International Jumping Championship, beating the U.S. by one point. When Harry heard the orchestra

playing *Deutschland über Alles*, he shuddered, flooded with painful memories.

Harry knew that on this night he and Snowman must show the world that the little guy, the neglected, the underestimated – the *survivors* – could rise up to meet the challenge and prevail.

The bond between Harry and Snowman was unbreakable that night as they moved in perfect harmony, soaring over the course. After the last fence, Harry dropped the reins and hugged Snowman's neck. The entire family came for the award ceremony when Harry and Snowman clinched the Triple Crown!

In 1959, they did it again – the first in history to win Horse of the Year back to back.

Soon they switched from the pressure of competing to the joy of performing exhibitions. They even flew to Europe, where Harry's dearest moment was showing Snowman and his family his old farm in Holland.

What had started with a simple, chance moment of eye contact became so much more. It strengthened a family, inspired a nation, and brought joy to all who encountered them, all over the world.

Sincerely,



W. Walter Anderson, AIF®  
Accredited Investment Fiduciary

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P.S. If there's any way I can help, please feel free to contact me at (502) 228-3900 or via email [walt@wwafn.com](mailto:walt@wwafn.com). I'd love to setup a time to meet with you!

<sup>1</sup> Youtube: 1959 National Horse Show. Narrated by George Morris, footage by Gordon Wright. [EquistrianCoach.com. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYfgVBnSzPl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYfgVBnSzPl)

<sup>2</sup> Film. Harry and Snowman. Dir. Ron Davis. Film Rise.

<sup>3</sup> Letts, Elizabeth. *The Eighty-Dollar Champion: Snowman, The Horse That Inspired a Nation*. 2011. Random House

Address: 10515 Meeting Street, Suite 105 | Prospect, KY 40059  
Tel: 502.228.3900 | 866.320.4364 | Fax: 502.228.3400  
E-mail: [walt@wwafn.com](mailto:walt@wwafn.com)  
Website: [www.wwafn.com](http://www.wwafn.com)

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