

# SELDOM SEEN

**In 2005, the United States Dressage Federation inducted the 14.2hh pony, Seldom Seen into the USDF Hall of Fame**

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In 2005, Seldom Seen was recognised for his outstanding service as an ambassador for the sport of dressage, proving that a very small horse of common breeding can compete against the best in the country. According to his rider and trainer, Olympian Lendon Gray, this American bred 14.2 hh Thoroughbred-Connemara cross gelding brought dressage to everyone and showed it was for anyone. Seldom Seen earned USDF Horse of the Year titles at Prix St. Georges and Intermediare I, won the individual gold medal at the 1981 U.S. Olympic Festival, and placed in the top six at Grand Prix in the annual USDF HOY standings three times.

This honor recognises his outstanding service as an ambassador for the sport of dressage, proving that a very small horse of common breeding, the like of which many people have in their own backyard, can compete against the best in the country. He was the everyman of American dressage.

Seldom Seen was bred by Peg Whitehurst and was named for being so small that he could not be seen over the grass as a newborn foal. He was affectionately named 'Brillo,' for his resemblance to an oversized steel-wool pad as a fuzzy foal.

Seldom Seen began his career as an eventing mount for Peg's pony clubber daughter, Kim. While event rider and future Dressage Olympian Lendon Gray was working for Mrs Whitehurst in Alabama in 1975, as a favor to the family, Lendon rode the horse at a novice horse trial when he was five. The pair won, and that was the beginning of the partnership.

Eventually, the jumps became too big for Seldom Seen, and they focused strictly on dressage in 1976. When Olympian Hilda Gurney saw him that year, she said to Mrs. Whitehurst: "If you don't let Lendon take that horse to

Grand Prix, I want him." The horse was very successful in competition and progressed at the rate of two levels per year. However, Lendon was insecure at the first show of each season, wondering whether Seldom Seen would succeed since he was so small and not a warmblood.

This was a time when many people were importing big warmbloods. Lendon said: "People would buy big, fancy horses, and I would come trucking in on a pony and beat them."

According to Lendon, "Since he was the first horse I trained to Grand Prix, we had to do things along the way, and I made a lot of mistakes. He was very, very forgiving. You could not have had a more patient, understanding horse. When he became a Grand Prix horse, it was great to compete him since he attracted a lot of attention because he was an average horse. He was not a special mover, and he was small. He was just a horse that was trained and competed well. He developed a huge fan club because of this. Seldom Seen brought dressage to everyone and showed it was for anyone.

The horse and Lendon had an outstanding record in competition. He placed first in the USDF Horse of the Year Awards at Prix St. Georges in 1981 and at Intermediare II in 1982. He was in the top six at Grand Prix in the annual Horse of the Year Award standings three times. In fact, Seldom Seen earned Horse of the Year Awards, and placed near the top, at every level from First through Grand Prix - from 1977 to 1987. He won the individual gold medal at the 1981 U.S. Olympic Festival in Syracuse, New York.

In 1987, in front of his fans and after winning the Grand Prix, the Grand Prix Special, and the Grand Prix Freestyle at Dressage at Devon, Seldom was officially retired in a ceremony at age 17. After that, he did exhibitions in front of thousands of spectators, including a Pas De Deux with a western horse. He passed away in Florida in 1996 at the age of 26.

Until now, only three horses have been inducted into the USDF Hall of Fame. Gifted, Graf George, and Keen are three of the most successful horses in international competition in the history of U.S. Dressage. As a Hall of Fame member, Seldom Seen will be in excellent company.

Seldom Seen's size, home-grown breeding, and enormous talent made him a crowd pleaser and an ambassador for the sport. According to Lendon, "He had such a huge fan club wherever he went. I still receive letters from people telling me how Seldom Seen gave them encouragement to try harder with their own horses." He was phenomenally popular and outstanding in competition. The horse made dressage accessible to a new generation of riders.