



## DAVID CASSIDY PASSES AWAY



**David Cassidy leads Sweet Vendetta into winner's circle after 2008 GII Black-Eyed Susan S. | Horsephotos**

by Perry Lefko

For all he did in a celebrated entertainment career that began as an actor in the '70s TV show *The Partridge Family* and catapulted him into a teen idol and international stardom, David Cassidy had a life-long love and passion for Thoroughbred racing. He embraced the business as a breeder/owner-seller and, most of all, a fan.

Cassidy died Tuesday in a Florida hospital at the age of 67. He had been hospitalized for several days with organ failure and had been battling health issues that included dementia, which he publicly revealed earlier this year in announcing he would no longer be performing.

"David died surrounded by those he loved, with joy in his heart and free from the pain that had gripped him for so long," read a family statement released by publicist JoAnn Geffen. "Thank you for the abundance and support you have shown him these many years."

The news that he had been hospitalized affected friends and a multitude of fans in the entertainment world, but it particularly touched the hearts of the Thoroughbred racing world in which he had become someone who had become a student of pedigrees, talking about lineages with a depth of knowledge and understanding. **Cont. p3**

## 'DUDE' SEEKS REDEMPTION IN FALL HIGHWEIGHT

Veteran sprinter **Stallwalkin' Dude** (City Place) missed by a neck in last term's GIII Fall Highweight H. and aims to go one better in this year's Thanksgiving day renewal. Winner of the 2016 GIII Bold Ruler H., the 7-year-old captured the restricted Tale of the Cat S. at Saratoga Aug. 11 and faded to eighth behind champion Drefong (Gio Ponti) in that venue's GI Forego S. Aug. 26. Third in the GI Vosburgh Invitational S. Sept. 30, he checked in second in this year's Bold Ruler last time Oct. 28.

**Threfiveindia** (Street Hero) could be rounding into form at the right time for this test. A decisive optional claimer winner at Saratoga on GI Travers S. day Aug. 26, the chestnut checked in fourth last time in the GII Stoll Keenon Ogden Phoenix S. at Keeneland Oct. 6, beaten less than a length in a tight finish.

[\(Click to cont. to p7\)](#)

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## David Cassidy Passes Away (cont. from p1)

Cassidy bought his first yearling in 1974 and won numerous races in more than 35 years. Some of his trainers included Gary Contessa, Arthur Silvera and Jim Day. His most prominent victory came in 2008 in the GII Black-Eyed Susan S. with homebred Sweet Vendetta, trained by Contessa.

Silvera said Cassidy was someone he could call or randomly text and talk about anything, but primarily horses.

"Yeah he was my owner, but it escalated and turned into a good friendship," Silvera said. "At the racetrack, especially Saratoga, he was somewhat of a fixture there, always at Gary's barn, and the topic of conversation was 99% horses and horse racing. He wasn't a big guy in the breeding game, but he was very sharp about who he bred to, what he bred to and what the end result would turn into. He had so much passion for horses and horse racing. In Ocala, the first thing we'd do is visit his broodmares and babies and spent hours talking about who they are bred to, what he expects. He'd just go on for hours.




Gary Contessa and David Cassidy | Horsephotos

"I felt quite honored he had me name a few of his horses. The first I named for him was Angel In Harlem after the U2 song. Another one was Summer In Saratoga, which I think kind of summed up his [love affair with Saratoga]."

Cassidy delivered the keynote speech at the 2005 National Thoroughbred Racing's Hall of Fame induction ceremony at Saratoga. He annually spent summers at Saratoga, where he had a home and an owner's box at the track.


"I want to celebrate the fact that we are in the greatest race place of all time," Cassidy said in his speech. "It has been so for 120 years, and I hope it will be so for another 120 years. It has been a place that I have visited at least for one day, whether I was touring the world, being on Broadway, making films, being on tour in Europe, being in the west end of London, playing in Las Vegas," he said. "Every contract said, 'His week off is between Aug. 7 and Aug. 14.' That's no lie." **Cont. p4**



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“I want to be an ambassador for this sport,” Cassidy said. “We need an ambassador; we need a face. I would be delighted and honored if I could assist all of you in taking the next step to see that Thoroughbred racing becomes the No. 1 sport in our country again.”

Cassidy had a horse Mayan King on the Kentucky Derby trail in 2005. “That was a big highpoint in David's horse racing career,” Silvera said. “He was just over the moon about his situation that Mayan King could be possibly pointed towards the Derby.”

An injury sustained in a prep race prevented the horse from running in the Derby.

Cassidy gave generously of his time as an entertainer to support industry causes.

“For years I ran an annual fundraiser for the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation and David was my first call when I was looking for experiences to auction off,” said Sue Finley, Senior V.P. and Co-Publisher of the *Thoroughbred Daily News*. “He never turned us down, donating parts on TV shows, concert tickets and performing at our events. He was as down-to-earth and he was generous and raised tens of thousands of dollars to help retired racehorses.”

Award-winning photographer Barbara Livingston tweeted: “David sure loved racing and he knew it well. And he was always so nice to fans along the way, flashing that famous smile.”

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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

David Cassidy and I met and became friends over 35 years ago. Becoming friends was easy, as we shared three of my passions-- thoroughbred racing, Saratoga, and Broadway.

We are the same age and met in our thirties, so I missed his days of the Partridge Family TV show and playing stadiums. He was still performing (just at smaller venues), but also looking to navigate the horse racing world. He loved racing, breeding, and a bit of betting. Sounds familiar I'm sure.

A few of my favorite David memories:

I got endocarditis through dentistry in October of 1989, and got very sick, eventually requiring a heart valve replacement in 1990. Safely Kept, the champion filly I owned with Rich Santulli, was running the table, and was headed for the 1989 Breeders' Cup at Gulfstream in early November. I was confined to home, and on daily intravenous antibiotics for a month. My horse-loving doctor gave me permission to go on race day, only if I promised to have an easy day and “stay calm.” My partner, Rich, provided a jet to Fort Lauderdale Saturday morning, and I arrived in time for the Sprint, then the first race. I had arranged to spend the day with David, my first day out of the house in a month. I arrived in the paddock wearing a long sleeve shirt covering my intravenous drip, having lost 30 pounds, with coloring best described as greenish grey.



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After a big hug and a once over, David observed, “you don’t look like you’re alive, you look like sh\*\*.” He helped keep me calm as Safely Kept got beat the last jump (calm, really??). He ran my bets starting with a \$200 exacta, paying \$35,000, and going up from there on the day. He had money coming out of every pocket, as I had promised my doctor that I wasn’t going to bet. We both survived and laughed about it for years.

There was the Matchmaker Christmas Party where he was the surprise guest in the mid 80’s, but that story is still covered by a statute of limitations.

My sons, Josh and Brad, recall a Broadway trip to see *Blood Brothers* in 1994, where he starred with his brother Shaun and Petula Clark. The show was great; his performance was fantastic. We were back stage pre- and post- show and we all went out after. It was a very special day. He really loved my twins.

The night in London in 1988, with his wife Sue Shifrin and Harry Herbert at Blake’s where he commandeered the piano and Sue worked on a song she was writing.

The night went on for hours and we all thought we contributed to her craft. Fast forward to the next year, while having lunch at a New Jersey diner, I was amazed to hear the next table play Cher’s new hit on their table jukebox “All because of you,” the song partially written that night in London. Where are those royalty checks? And countless days at horse sales, or sitting in the box at Saratoga, reading Thoro-Graph sheets, picking winners, and enjoying the day with our sons, while watching them grow up. We both loved that we shared fun with our boys who got to know each other and also become friends.

It’s ironic, losing two friends to organ failure in one week. There were many nights in NYC when Franklin Cummings got David and me home safely. Maybe Franklin

and David are saying hello again now.  
RIP my good friend, and a great friend to racing.  
--Barry Weisbord



Sue, David and Beau Cassidy | Horsephotos

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# Wilkes back on 2018 Kentucky Derby trail with Gotta Go

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*Gotta Go (LEFT) wins the Street Sense Stakes to become Shanghai Bobby's third first crop Stakes winner*



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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Perry Lefko

For the past few days, I have been writing about the life, and sadly, the passing of entertainer David Cassidy. He was someone I knew briefly, having written a story about him about seven years ago.

One of his trainers, Arthur Silvera, who is based at Woodbine, is a friend of mine and put me in touch with David to write about his interest in horse racing. Arthur forwarded the message to David to call me.

"Hi, Perry, it's David Cassidy," he said over the phone when he called.

That ranked second only to the time I received a call from Donald Trump to interview him about a book I was writing about Doug Flutie, who was one of his players when he owned a franchise in the United States Football League. That is the same Donald Trump who is now President of the United States.

David impressed me with his knowledge of breeding, going into great detail about lineage. He wasn't just a famous entertainer who was in the game for the show.

I wrote the article for a Canadian-based publication called *Down The Stretch Newspaper*, whose editor, Peter Gross, started it after a couple he knew won \$16 million in a lottery

and gave him the funds to start the paper. Peter is a longtime Toronto broadcaster who loves racing and is particularly fond of betting. His paper reflects his personality, which is to say it's extremely funny and irreverent. Peter once "starred" in a film called *Rip Off* about four high school friends who essentially form a band and live a communal life, which is to say they smoked weed.

But I digress.

In 2010, when Silvera had an unnamed 2-year-old Canadian-bred gelding by Max Forever he was training for David, I suggested the name Peter The Gross, a kind of opposite of Peter The Great. Arthur proposed the idea to Cassidy, who good-naturedly agreed. Peter The Gross debuted in a \$40,000 maiden claiming race going six furlongs. During the course of the race, track announcer Dan Loiselle said, "Peter The Gross is running with short, choppy-luck strides like his namesake."

The horse finished up the track and couldn't win for trying in 10 races at Woodbine, although he did finish second once. When the racing season ended, the horse was sold by Silvera to an Ohio-based trainer, William Hackney, a horseman in his 70s. Prior to Peter's first start, a friend asked Hackney if the breeder was the famous entertainer.

"I didn't know that David Cassidy had anything to do with horses," he told me during the interview.

## Latest Winners....



▲ **\$575,000** yearling **Cool Bobby** earned an 88 Beyer winning a MSW at Del Mar for **Peter Eurton** on 11/11



▲ **Shanghai Noon** broke his maiden at Gulfstream Park on debut for **Mark Casse** on 11/19

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Apprised that Cassidy has been involved in horse racing as a fan, owner and breeder for several decades and had some success, Hackney was impressed.

“It’s like a disease,” Hackney said of the racing bug. “He’s on a different end than we are. We’re hands on with everything. I’m sure he’s got the knowledge, but it’s different. I’ve been around these things since I was a little tiny three- or four-year-old kid. We always had horses on the farm. You pick up a lot of stuff.”

Peter The Gross did little in his first start at Mountaineer Park, was given a layoff of four months after that and bombed as the 4-5 favorite in his return. He placed second in his next start and on May 21, 2011, history was made as Peter The Gross led from gate to wire, breaking his maiden and 60% of the \$17,600 purse. He rewarded his backers with a \$9.40 payoff. Twenty days later, Peter was entered in a sprint allowance race and sent postward at 14.50-1 odds. This time he came from far off the pace and dead-heated for first.

Peter The Gross had turned into Peter The Great.

He went on to win one more race in his career, which consisted of 56 starts, in which he recorded three wins, nine seconds and four thirds and total earnings of \$30,903.

Don’t know if David Cassidy ever made it to Mountaineer Park, but one of his homebreds did and he made everyone get happy!

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## Dude Seeks Redemption in Fall Highweight

*(cont. from p1)*

New Jersey-bred **Green Gratto** (Here’s Zealous) scored a career high when winning the GI Carter H. in April, but has failed to hit the board in his six starts since. The dark bay tired to seventh in the Vosburgh and faded back to sixth in the Bold Ruler.

[\(Click to return to p1\)](#)

### FALL HIGHWEIGHT H.-GIII, 3yo/up, 6f

PP. Horse	Sire
1. Great Stuff K	Quality Road
2. Hey Jabber Jaw	Mineshaft
3. Stallwalkin' Dude	City Place
4. Threefiveindia	Street Hero
5. Schivarelli	Montbrook
6. Green Gratto	Here's Zealous
7. Life in Shambles 	Broken Vow
8. Ready for Rye 	City Zip
9. Seymourini	Bernardini

**(see Graded Stakes Entries)**

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