

Eastern Echo: A Tribute

by Hope Holland

Horse people live in a very small world. Never was that more apparent than on Tuesday, December 14th when I got an e-mail from a friend in California. I live at Shamrock Farm, and I handle broodmare watch here. Yes, in California my friend knew the sad news before I did, and sent me a link for this announcement:

"Eastern Echo, who was getting ready for his first year at Maryland Stallion Station near Glyndon, Md., after standing at Shamrock Farms near Woodbine, Md., died Tuesday morning of a heart attack.

"He was feeling fine beforehand, and we were looking forward to the new breeding season at the new farm," said a representative of Maryland Stallion Station (Don Litz, president). "He had a great disposition and was very fertile."

Eastern Echo, a homebred grade I winner for the late Paul Mellon, began his stallion career at William S. Farish's Lane's End Farm near Versailles, Ky., for a fee of \$10,000 in 1991. Lane's End is a partner in Maryland Stallion Station.

Eastern Echo is represented by 22 stakes winners, including grade I winners Buddy Gil and Swiss Yodeler. Buddy Gil was one of the top 3-year-olds the first part of 2003. He won the Santa Anita Derby (gr. I), San Felipe Stakes (gr. II), and Baldwin Stakes (gr. IIIT). He is stakes-placed twice this year and has career earnings of \$804,067. Swiss Yodeler's glory days came as a 2-year-old. He won the 1996 Hollywood Futurity (gr. I), Hollywood Juvenile Championship Stakes (gr. II), Best Pal Stakes (gr. III), and two other stakes at that age and earned a career total of \$761,442 in four years of racing. As a California stallion, Swiss Yodeler has achieved his greatest success as a sire of 2-year-olds.

Eastern Echo's other stakes winners include Western Echo, a graded stakes winner who earned \$608,716; Lady of the Future, who bankrolled \$507,182; and grade I steeplechase winner Popular Gigalo. Overall, Eastern Echo's runners have earned \$18.5 million.

A son of Damascus and one of four graded stakes winners from the grade II-winning Northern Dancer mare Wild Applause, Eastern Echo won all three of his starts, including the 1990 Futurity Stakes (gr. I), and earned \$93,960 as a 2-year-old for Mellon's Rokeby Stable. Wild Applause is out of Kentucky Broodmare of the Year Glowing Tribute and is a half-sister to Mellon's homebred Kentucky Derby (gr. I) winner Sea Hero.

Eastern Echo, who covered 35 mares in 2004, ranks 12th on this year's Maryland sires list, with earnings of \$1.1 million. He was buried at Shamrock." (www.stallionregister.com)

As announcements go, it is fairly concise and thorough, telling the value of the loss to the new Maryland Stallion Station. It tells you that the horse died quickly and without suffering, also a good thing.

What it doesn't do is tell the whole story. For that, you must read behind the lines a bit, to realize that this was a horse bred



by the best, kept by the best and treated his whole life to the finest lifestyle that a horse can expect. It still is a wonderful account of a horse bred to the purple that fulfilled all the expectations of those who dealt with him.

Again, that is only a part of the story. It doesn't tell you who Eastern Echo really was to those who knew him. He was a big horse, at 16.2+ hands--not the biggest, but big enough to be a problem if he wished to be. Many Thoroughbred stallions can be a problem, but it is never held against them if their attitude is justified by their wins and the winners that they helped to create. E.E.

did not have a bit of the attitude that he might have felt entitled to by blood and accomplishment. Eastern Echo, known on Shamrock Farm as E.E., was regarded by all as a thoroughgoing gentleman.

"He was a professional," says Jim Steele, the Shamrock Farm manager and a man who has dealt with many stallions in his life. "Eastern Echo was a smart horse, as smart as a whip, and he was a kindhearted horse as well. It's really a shame."

Craig Thompson, Shamrock's stallion manager and the man who handled E.E. more than anyone else during his life on Shamrock Farm, once told me, "Why, that horse is so nice, I'd feel comfortable jumping up on him with only a halter and a lead shank and going out turkey hunting on him."

During the months that I work at broodmare watch, I feed the farm as one of the last duties of my shift before the day workers get there. All of the stallions are different; some bounce about, raising the dickens in their stalls until they are fed, some pace and nicker, some try to grab the feed bag in their teeth as you dump it into the feeder. Eastern Echo stood quietly, courteously waiting for his feed. He watched you trustingly, never having known a problem with the people who cared for him. If you wished, you could take a second to rub his forehead and he would stop eating his breakfast to enjoy your company, then quietly go back to his meal.

On the day that the women from Rerun, the organization which rehabs racing Thoroughbreds into riding horses, came to get all of the stallions to do "paintings" for their funding efforts, I wrote this about Eastern Echo: 'Eastern Echo, a leading Maryland sire for several years, was, as always, a gentleman. He actually seemed to like the procedure, dipping his nose gently into the paints and dabbing the paint almost delicately onto the canvas, then looking at the paper in a reflective manner before choosing more paint and dabbing again.'

As I read these words again, I find them apt for this occasion as well. This was Eastern Echo, the gentleman horse, the professional, the quiet, good stallion who was liked by all who knew him, which is not a bad obituary for a man or a horse. When you think of it, how many of us know someone that we can say that about? ■