

# THE CHRONICLE *of the* HORSE

HORSE SHOW ISSUE

44 LIVING LEGEND  
RALPH CARISTO

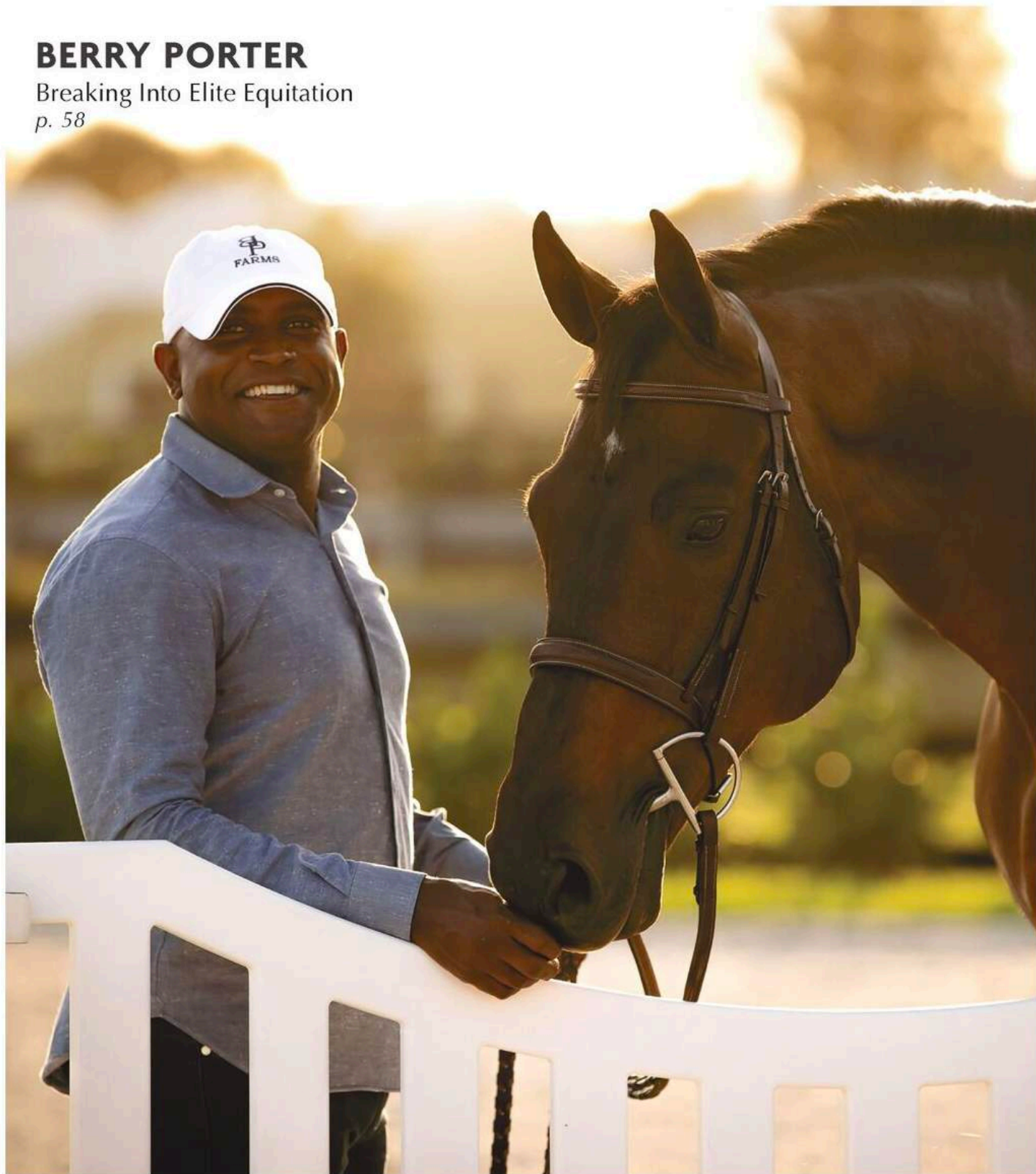
68 LAURA LINBACK'S  
AMAZING COMEBACK

162 TRIBUTE TO  
KENNY WHEELER

## BERRY PORTER

Breaking Into Elite Equitation

*p. 58*



## LIVING LEGEND: RALPH CARISTO

With over six decades in the horse industry, he's become a father figure to Zone 2 riders and beyond, modeling teamwork, integrity and kindness.

By Laura Lemon



MOULIE BAILEY PHOTO

Wandering through Glenview Stables' northern location in Saugerties, New York, you might notice, along the long center aisle in the 30-stall barn, the yellow Post-It notes. The horse list, laying out the day's assigned rides, displays a few of them. Others find their home on the corkboards with the week's schedule and emergency phone numbers, or in the trafficked office, where neon yellow pops out in between pinned photos and memorable articles.

The tradition started many years ago, whenever an inspirational message spoke to Ralph Caristo. He'd scrawl the message on the Post-It note and hang it in a highly visible place for the rest of his Glenview family to see.

On one he wrote T-E-A-M vertically, with each initial making up the message, "Together Everyone Achieves More."

His daughter Heather Caristo-Williams laughs as she describes this quirk of his, but she also admits that he lives by his chosen mottos. He leaves a broom on the floor of the barn or a water bottle on a fence post as a test to see who picks it up. He dresses up with slacks and a coat and tie for the North American Youth Championships and the Prix de States, where he serves as chef d'equipe for Zone 2. He offers encouraging words after a disappointing round, saying, "That's why there's erasers on pencils," and rides every jump with a client on the sidelines, muttering to himself, "Come on baby."

"He's just a fatherly figure to everyone. He wants you to be the best that you can be," says Caristo-Williams. "If we're at the ring, and I set a jump, and I maybe use a 9-foot pole, if I go to walk away, he will put that pole back in so that the jump is ready for the next person. He's always teaching, and he always wants us to do what's right."

Of all the messages that Caristo, 80, has scribbled and posted, he has a classic favorite pinned on the bulletin board. It's one he learned growing up in Long

Island, New York, and it's one he continues to impart during more than 60 years in the business.

"There's no 'I' in team," he says. "An old one but a very good one."

### NOTHING WITHOUT FAMILY

"I don't know what to tell you, but I'm going to tell you the truth," Caristo promises me as we settle into our respective places. I'm looking out a dreary winter window, but he's under the blue skies of Glenview's southern location in Wellington, Florida. He bought

this farm in Grand Prix Village in 1999 and once considered taking an offer on it, but the farm's sentimental value is priceless for Caristo and his wife Holly Caristo.

While everything might have a price tag for some, that's never been Ralph.

"He's very caring and soft hearted even though he might come off a little gruff," says Holly. "He'll do anything for anybody. He'll stop so I can grab

the turtle to cross the road."

Ralph lets out an "Oh my gosh" or a "Let me tell you," as he recalls a cherished memory, with his Long Island accent flattening and nasalizing the vowels. His throat tightens when he talks of his four daughters: Robin Dinger, Karen Caristo and Lynn Forgione from his first marriage, and Caristo-Williams with Holly.

"To me, if you don't have family, you have nothing," says Ralph. "You can have all the success, but if you don't have family, you have nothing. There's not a day that goes by that we don't all talk to each other. And here's something that's very interesting that I'm proud of, and I never had to tell them: When we say goodbye to each other, we say, 'Goodbye, we love you.' To other people they say, 'Eh that's BS.' That will never be BS. If your kids say that, and you don't have to tell them to say that, that's what family's all about."

His voice then slightly quivers as he says, "Now don't get me too emotional."

*You can have all the success, but if you don't have family, you have nothing.*

—Ralph Caristo





"To me, if you don't have family, you have nothing," says Ralph Caristo with his wife Holly Caristo (second from left) and daughters (from left) Robin Dinger, Heather Caristo-Williams, Karen Caristo and Lynn Forgiore. *KIMBERLY LOUSHIN PHOTO*

Born on Nov. 2, 1940, to Theresa and Ralph Caristo Sr. on Long Island, Ralph and his fraternal twin Robert Caristo completed the family as the couple's sixth and seventh children. His parents had emigrated from Italy—Naples and Calabria if Ralph's memory serves him right—and they landed in Edison, New Jersey, before moving to Brooklyn, New York, and finally settling in an apartment in Locust Valley on Long Island.

"We were very much Italian in our upbringing for sure," says Ralph. "You better be there on Thursdays and Sundays for dinner, or we were all in trouble."

As a first-generation American family—and a large family at that—the purse strings were tight. He and his siblings had to work to help provide for the family, especially after the death of their father by heart attack when Ralph was 12. But looking back on those adolescent years, Ralph remembers the camaraderie and love that resulted from them all working together for the Caristo name.

"The thing is we all love each other too; everybody helped each other," he says. "If I did good, and my brother needed my help, he's going to get my help. It

was a great upbringing, and everyone was so close. So, it was OK. That's family again. It goes under the word 'family.'"

### FROM ROY ROGERS TO MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

Ralph discovered a curiosity for the horse with the help of cowboy legends Roy Rogers, Gene Autry and Tom Mix. No one else in his family showed much of a propensity, so with those inspirations, he sought out the one Locust Valley horseman, John Brennan, after school.

"I used to walk there and hang around, and he finally gave me a job, so I started working for him, learning from the ground up, from the stalls to the grooming, so on and so forth," says Ralph. "And no money—I didn't get paid—but I got to ride a horse every once in a while, and that was good enough for me.

"He used to hunt with the Meadow Brook Hounds [New York], and he was the first one that really introduced me to going out foxhunting. I really enjoyed it," Ralph continues. "I never knew what horse showing was at that time. That was my beginning."

And that blossomed into future endeavors: mornings at the track and weekends working for famed Long Island trainer Ralph Petersen.

Ralph says he was a troublemaker in his teenaged years—acting out and always testing the system—but he held a steadfast devotion to any corner of the horse world, even when he had to balance it against school and a job as a golf caddie.

"I'd get up at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning and get down at the track, and then when I was done, I'd go to school," he says. "Also I had a stint with the Standardbreds.

"I just loved horses. I loved everything about them," he adds. "We did the Quarter Horses. We did everything. I'm one of the very few guys that enjoys watching the five-gaited and three-gaited—I just loved every phase of the horse business. They're an animal I've just fallen in love with, and it doesn't make no difference. The good ones are the good ones. The bad ones are the bad ones, but they are a horse. And I just love everything about them."

Through his work with Petersen, Ralph found the horse show world, although he quickly learned that his forte wouldn't be in the ring.

"I loved foxhunting more than anything because I knew early in my career that show jumping wasn't for me. I couldn't see a distance if you wrote it on a piece of paper," he says. "I was not a good show ring rider, even though I did show. Show jumping wasn't my cup of tea. I loved training, but the show ring riding wasn't the best."

But he enjoyed the show life, especially the electricity and glitz of Madison Square Garden in New York City.

"It was just something about it. The aura that the building brought out," says Ralph, who first encountered the famed National Horse Show venue as a teenager. "As a kid growing up, Madison Square Garden, that was the horse show capital of the world."

He recalls working for Petersen and taking hunters to the Garden. "We were on the fifth floor—I always remember that—and we had to walk up the ramp with the horses," he says. "Here's what I really remembered: that a lot of the grooms at that time stayed with horses. We didn't go to hotels. We stayed with the horses right on the fifth floor, probably like in a tack room or on a cot. You got more camaraderie with that, getting to know the other grooms and stuff. Everybody would

hang out with each other, and that was always a great time. I was lucky enough to see all the famous riders, Frank Chapot, Billy Steinkraus and Hugh Wiley and the great Benny O'Meara, who was a friend also. That was everybody's goal, to show at Madison Square Garden. So, one of my greatest memories was just seeing all these famous riders from all over the world coming to Madison Square Garden to show."

### ALONG CAME HOLLY

Ralph worked under Petersen for over 10 years, and then with his mentor's blessing, he opened his own Homestead Farms with a friend. In 1968, Frank Alexander announced he wanted to devote himself to the Thoroughbreds and asked Ralph if he'd buy his business on Glen Cove Road.

"The only thing he said to me, and to this day I'll honor it for the rest of my life: 'Please don't change the

## THE POWER WARDROBE

The quintessential Ralph Caristo look goes as follows: dress pants, some form of red or blue tie, a jacket and a team Zone 2 hat. Every team championship, without fail, he puts on the wardrobe.

One year in Chicago, the heat index crept to around 100 degrees—or at least it felt like it. And even then, Ralph kept all parts in place. Two other chefs d'equipe walked up to him and inquired.

"I remember these two chefs coming up to me and saying, 'What's with the coat and the tie?'" says Caristo. "I said, 'You know what, if these kids can dress up for me, with their whites and their beautiful jackets, I can dress up for them. I want them to know that!'"

Ralph recalls their retort: "What do you think? That's going to get the gold medal?"

"I said, 'You're going to be surprised,' and sure enough we won the gold medal," he says. "After that, almost every chef wore a coat and tie on those three days."





After nearly 45 years of marriage, Ralph and Holly Caristo have never gotten into an argument and are rarely seen apart. *MOLLIE BAILEY PHOTO*

While at C.W. Post College of Long Island University, Holly boarded her horse and worked at Glenview, and her riding talent soon became a great asset to Ralph's horse dealing business. Eventually a friendship and relationship unfolded, with the couple marrying on June 12, 1976.

Holly jokes that she changed Ralph's life—and he admits it's true. Professionally, Holly checked off bucket list items for Ralph, an early one being in the form of Madison Square Garden

glories on a Quarter Horse jumper, Copper Kahn. With Holly in the saddle, his dealing and training business took off, with the couple moving to a bigger farm on Long Island a year after they married.

"The main part of me being so successful is my wife," says Ralph. "She was a very good rider, and we were fortunate enough to have nice horses and did a lot of winning. That drew people in who had seen that we had been successful.

"I got the best wife in the world, and I'm so lucky that I always relate back to family," he continues. "I got the best family in the world. Here's a regret that I have, I wish that I could have been a good rider. [But] if I was a good rider then maybe I would have never met Holly. So, it's OK."

After almost 45 years of marriage, the Caristos walk as a pair, rarely one without the other. When I call Ralph or Holly with a question, I'll hear the other one in the background.

"Someone said to me the other day, 'How do you stay together for so long?'" says Holly. "I said, 'You know, you have to like the one that you love.' Like them, like being with them and like them as a person—and then love them."

And Ralph agrees.

"I don't like to do anything without her, and she doesn't like to do anything without me. It's always been like that since we fell in love," says Ralph. "I know

name. Please keep the name Glenview," says Ralph. "I said I would do that, and that's how I got Glenview. Then the rest is history."

From that farm, tucked in between the Glen Cove Highway and the Long Island Railroad, he ran a lesson program and helped provide horses for the summer camps.

"That little place was amazing," says Ralph. "When it blew the horn, we knew that that train was going to come right by where all the lesson horses were [while I was] giving lessons. The horses, they got so good, they would just stand still as the train went by. So finally, I said, 'You know I'm going to put up a sign facing the road because these people were all sitting there looking out the window when they go by.' You can't believe how many people we got from that train going by all the time seeing that we offered riding lessons."

During these early years at Glenview, one of Ralph's most pivotal moments occurred in the form of a flat tire.

"The first time I met Holly was we were at a horse show on Long Island, and her mother and her had a two-horse trailer, and they had a flat tire," says Ralph. "I had seen her, so I was like, you know I'm going to see what's going on here. Anyways I changed her flat tire, and then, lo and behold, we started talking. She said she was going to a little college [in the area], and I told her I had a farm."

this sounds silly, and it's hard to believe, [but] we've never had an argument—never. This is what we do: If there's something bothering me or something bothering her, we'll say what we have to say. She walks that way, and I walk that way, and that's it. Then we don't talk about it anymore. If you've married your best friend, you've got a good marriage."

### GIVING BACK WITH INTEGRITY

At first, Ralph earned his judge's license as a way to help his horse dealing business. On someone else's dime he could fly around the country and observe new horses. If there was a horse that piqued his interest during those long hours, he would inquire after the show.

"I had never been to California, so I got to go to California and other states," says Ralph. "Not only for that, but then you see how they ride in the different parts of the country as opposed to where you are."

But he possessed a talent for the role and garnered a reputation for sticking to the black and white. With his "R" license in hunter and jumper seat equitation, he's judged every top championship—from the curtain call at Madison Square Garden to Devon (Pennsylvania) to the USHJA International Hunter Derby Championships (Kentucky) to USEF Show Jumping Talent Search—East, to name just a few.

"He doesn't lean towards anybody. He leans towards the great round, and he really teaches you that even when you judge with him," says good friend and fellow trainer and judge Susie

# Quite possibly the most effective joint and lameness supplement for your horse!



- ✔ Promote Joint Health and Soundness
- ✔ Reduce Damaging Inflammatory Proteins PGE-2 and MMP's
- ✔ Potent Antioxidant Support
- ✔ Clinically Utilized and Research Supported
- ✔ Fast Acting with Clinical Improvement in Less Than One Week!
- ✔ Critical Levels of Curcumin 95%, Turmeric Oleoresins, and Boswellia 65%

**Cur-OST Pure EQ**  
**Change your approach to joint soundness and change your results.**

**Cur-OST**  
 Protecting & Rebuilding Health

Learn more at:  
**1-800-476-4702**  
**www.curost.com**





Ralph Caristo (*far right*) made Zone 2 a powerhouse in the youth jumping championships. Here he's pictured with (*from left*) Scott Cook, Romel Montaga, Jimmy Doyle, Richard Padilla and Holly Caristo, with a team of Amanda Gumberg, Heather Caristo-Williams and Jill Gumberg. PHOTO COURTESY OF RALPH CARISTO

Schoellkopf. "We all had our 'R's and everything, but he really teaches that part of it: You judge each round as it is, not who won the day before and who was horse of the year or whatever. He's very matter of fact. And he's a stickler for details—rubbing the jumps. He's really good at his job. When you judge with him, it makes you better."

His reputation for honesty and respect for the animal and humans continues in his sales, too.

"I think a lot of people send Ralph horses to sell because he is so honest," says Schoellkopf. "And he's very upfront with what the horse is. There are a lot of people that aren't exactly like that in the horse business, and he's very honest with whether he thinks its overpriced or underpriced or whether the horse needs to get donated or whatever it is."

Caristo-Williams explains that when they're helping a client find a horse for the next step, they'll take their current horse back to sell as well. "That's something that I really appreciated learning from my father is that, it's not just about one sale," she says. "It's about

the relationship between the client, the owner, the horse, the trainer, and bringing the person along for the long run in the horse show world—just trying to have the sale be sustainable so it makes people want to keep looking for the next step and appreciate the business and the horse. It's not just a commodity with us."

#### EXPANDING THE MEANING OF FAMILY

A former trainer and family friend all assured Krysia Nelson that Ralph would be the one to provide answers, so at 13, she dialed his number and asked for help with her dangerous, rank horse. Ralph didn't know Nelson, and he didn't have much excess time between his dealing and training duties, but still he showed up with his truck and trailer.

"By all rights he should have been like, 'I'm sorry kid, I can't help. How am I going to help *you*?' " remembers Nelson. "Today that would be a little bit like some kid with a backyard horse calling up like Andre Dignelli or John Madden and being like, 'I have this horse in my backyard, and I'm scared of it.' Ralph was this big deal,

and here I was this 13-year-old kid calling him myself. He doesn't know me from Adam, and he shows up with a horse trailer to take the horse away from me."

He gave Nelson sales horses to ride since she didn't have the money to invest in a replacement of her own. And she wasn't the only one—countless riders who cycled through Glenview over the decades felt that same compassion, from Norman Dello Joio to Jenny Fischer.

"I came from a family with no money to even really afford lessons. Ralph did it all," says Fischer, who is now a trainer herself. "Did the Medal and Maclay with him on borrowed horses. He really launched my career totally. He was an amazing sponsor and trainer and lifelong friend."

Even if a person didn't hold any grand aspirations in the horse industry, if they wanted work, Ralph would provide opportunity.

"All my cousins, if they needed a job, they came and worked at the barn," says Forgione. "Needed to make some extra money, they'd come and do stalls. He was always there to give everybody a job. He's always given to others that might not have had an opportunity. I think he knew what it felt like, and he was sympathetic to people because he was certainly in those shoes."

Through this, Ralph and Holly wove a family-oriented culture into the mission of Glenview. The Caristo daughters worked at the stables and taught lessons, with Ralph's eldest Dinger running the barn and the breeding operation. In the fall, the indoor arena hosted Halloween square dances, and at shows, everyone stayed in the camper with Holly and Ralph, eating tacos and pasta. When it came to the competitions—even if the prospective buyers were watching his horse—Ralph maintained a positive focus.

"He gives the most confidence of anybody I've ever known and the most support and the most encouragement," says Fischer. "He always made me feel like I could do anything. I used to get on sale horses and difficult horses and walk in the show ring, and he'd say, 'You got this; you can do this.' And I kind of did it.

He made you believe in yourself."

By the same token, he encouraged hard work and manners. He'd give more riding opportunities to the kid who showed up at the barn at 8 o'clock on a Saturday as opposed to the one who rolled in at 10. He expected top horse care and presentation—and if shavings poked out of the horse's tail, up the long hill back to the barn the rider would walk. The Caristos also checked in on schoolwork, making sure that their juniors weren't neglecting their studies in favor of the equines. He encouraged his own daughters to earn a college degree to expand their sphere beyond his own.

"I was expected to have made sure my homework

was done," says Nelson. "I worked very hard, but they were definitely the second sort of surrogate family that was as demanding as my own but who I really wanted to please."

"Growing up he instilled in his daughters a very strong work ethic. We always had to make sure we did a lot of the things ourselves, for us as his daughters to become good horsewomen," says Forgione. "We never wanted to disappoint him. The students wanted to earn his respect, but as children we always wanted to do things right and earn his respect also."

#### INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

In the mid-1990s, the individuals in charge of Zone 2 show jumping approached Caristo-Williams and asked if she would compete in what was then called the North American Young Riders Championships. Ralph and Holly had never heard of the competition before, but followed along to train and cheer on their daughter. By the end of that weekend, Ralph had talked himself into another job.

"I can't remember who the chef was at that time, but they said, 'I don't want to do this anymore. Would you be interested?' " remembers Ralph. "I said, 'Too much work—I don't know.' That was the first day she was talking to me about it. But as I saw it evolve, I said, 'This is one of the greatest things that could

*He always made me feel like I could do anything."*

—Jenny Fischer





"The main part of me being so successful is my wife," says Ralph Caristo of Holly Caristo. "If you've married your best friend, you got a good marriage." JACK MANCINI PHOTO

be for these kids. They don't ride in a team-oriented [setting ever]. I finally said, 'You know what, I might be interested.' And here we are 26 years later."

The next year, Holly created matching T-shirts, embroidered show jackets, saddle pads, baseball caps and a banner with Zone 2 lettering. And as chef d'equipe, donning a coat, tie and Zone 2 hat, Ralph rallied his team to the gold medal—despite being a knot of nerves.

"I was a nervous wreck, and I said to myself, 'Why the heck am I even doing this?'" says Ralph. "I wanted the kids to do really good, so I put more pressure on myself. It was not like I was training them—we were the cheerleaders. I had to make them not be nervous, [but] I was more nervous than they were."

Prior to 1995, little attention or funding went to the young rider show jumping teams. But with Ralph at the helm, that changed.

"He really put the show back in that whole program. He put the life back in it," says Schoellkopf, who headed Zone 2 at the time. "He really brought it back to where other teams were like, 'OK, you know what, this looks really important. We're going to do this.' Where before it was sort of starting to fall apart. He made it an important part of the junior's career."

His mission, then and over a quarter century later, doesn't just revolve around the gold medals in the Prix de States at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show or the North American Youth Championships. He uses the backdrop of show jumping to teach camaraderie in a way that extends beyond the equine. He hosts team dinners; he talks of stars like Rodney Jenkins and Michael Matz, and he shows how to carry oneself with respect even off the horse.

"I want them to be aware not only of the stars of yesteryear and know who they were, but I also want them to learn, especially the young riders, what the word 'team' means," says Ralph. "They always ride for themselves, and you'd be surprised how many of them don't have any idea how to ride with each other. That's what I think drives me to keep on going. They have got to learn to know how

to not only to ride for themselves but to ride for team members also. And I think that's probably something they should think about in life also."

"When you went to [the NAYC], it obviously is about winning a gold medal," says Georgina Bloomberg. "But he also puts so much importance on learning everything about the sport and how being a part of a team is so much more than just focusing on wins. He [puts an] emphasis on team dinners and team spirit and getting to know each other as a team. [Also he taught] how you present yourself in a championship, the way that the setup at the barn should be, the way that you can present yourself through the jog, how you need to go and thank sponsors or the host. It was about so much more than just going in the ring and putting in a clear round. He was really training us to be able to go on to other championships."

With Ralph as cheerleader, Zone 2 has collected 10 team gold medals at the Prix de States and 14 team golds at NAYC.

"He was just as quick to give you a pat on the back when you needed it, as when you won a gold medal," says Bloomberg. "It was just immediate team spirit because you were all there for the same reasons; you all wanted to do the same thing for the same person. Nobody was there riding for themselves. Everybody was there riding for Zone 2 and for Ralph Caristo."

"I call him the fairy godfather; he just found a way to bring you up," says Lillie Keenan. "It made me realize that our sport at the highest level as a team is so important, and there was kind of the equivalent of patriotism but for our region. We had this collective respect for Ralph and a collective desire to make him proud."

Keenan's most prominent memory of Ralph occurred when she was 16, as she walked out of the ring at NAYRC one year aboard her horse Londinium. "I had jumped clear, and I needed to for a gold medal," she says. "And there were tears in his eyes when I came out of the ring—just joy. The joy that it brought to him that his team had risen to the top, that's something that for sure, every time I see him, that's what I think of. That expression that he had. Because you realize it meant a lot more to him than just a result. It was never just going through the motions. He always went that extra mile."

Because of his devotion to team camaraderie, sportsmanship and horsemanship, Schoellkopf, Susie Humes, David Distler and Leo Conroy established the Caristo Cup in 2005 in his honor. Each year at NAYC, it's awarded to the chef d'equipe who best exhibits

Ralph's qualities.

"He was up there half crying, and I'm trying to take some pictures," remembers Holly. "I think Frank Madden was giving it out to him, and it was very emotional. He refuses to take it again because he wants to give it to a different chef d'equipe each year."

Since their days on the Zone 2 team with Ralph, riders like Caristo-Williams, Bloomberg, Keenan, Brienne Goutal, Jessica Springsteen and Reed Kessler have gone on to compete at the senior level and represent the United States.

"He's just so interested in the future of the sport," says Caristo-Williams. "He's not just out here for himself. He's not just out here for his own glory. That's how I know he loves horses and horse showing so much, because it's not just about us doing well. It's about the sport evolving and growing for us as a country because a lot of these younger riders go on to U.S. team competitions. It's such an integral part of the growing process of a young rider, learning the team part of it and being able to represent first the zone and then the country."

SETTING THE STANDARD SINCE 1978

Complete design services and fine craftsmanship  
Custom barns, arenas, garages, and living quarters



1-888-354-4740 | [www.kingbarns.com](http://www.kingbarns.com)



## FOR THE WHISTLE

Nelson can't recall the year, the show or even the horse she was riding, but she remembers the feeling, and she remembers the whistle.

Whenever you laid down a particularly stellar round, Ralph whistled. And for this one class in particular in the 1980s, Nelson still hears that sound.

"I remember putting in a good round that I felt really good about, and I landed, and Lynn is clapping, and in the distance I hear the whistle," she says. "To this day, I don't remember what ribbon I got in that class. Did I get one at all? Did I win it? I don't know. I remember that he whistled for me. I remember how it felt. At the end of the day, I think for a lot of us Glenview family, that's what it was about. That's what we remember. We don't remember the ribbon, and we're not riding for the ribbon—we're riding for the whistle."

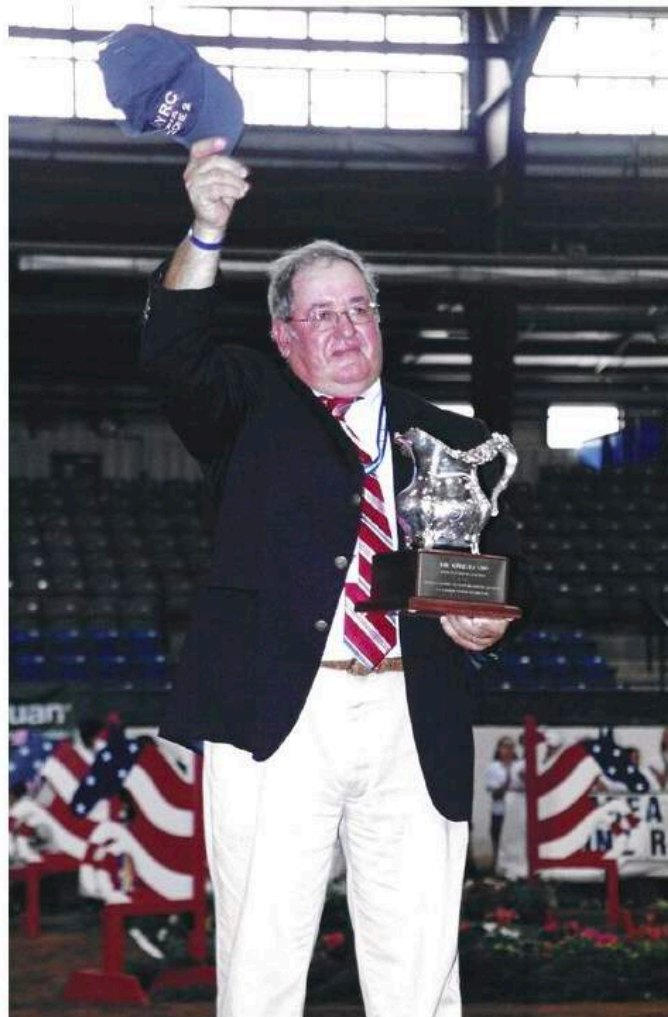
Similarly, on team championship days, rally mottos go, "Do it for Ralph."

"There are plenty of people I've dealt with in my life where you don't want to let them down," says Keenan. "But there can be this fear of disappointment—and that's not Ralph. Ralph was someone that you didn't want to let him down, but it was less a fear of letting him down; it was this innate belief that you were going to rise to his confidence in you. There are plenty of people in my life that I don't want to let down—all I'm worried about is disappointing them—and that's just as debilitating as someone that doesn't believe in you. You're crippled by this anxiety of, 'Oh, I can't disappoint them.' But he managed to do that without making you question yourself, which I don't think I can name another person that has truly shown me that."

Bloomberg says he showed her a different side of the sport. "He made me believe in being a team member and a teammate in ways that I never would," she says. "He made me see that you can be passionate about something and love something and be a good person in the sport. It's not just about riding and putting in clear rounds. He taught me so much more than riding skills. He taught me life lessons as to how to be a good teammate and how to be a good person."

In 2013, Ralph was awarded the USHJA Jane Marshall Dillon Award. He was inducted into the Show Hunter Hall of Fame in 2016, and in 2018 he received the USHJA Lifetime Achievement Award.

But as Holly puts it, "Amongst everything, he's just a good person."



In 2005, Ralph Caristo was awarded the first Caristo Cup, named in his honor and given annually to the chef d'equipe at the North American Youth Championships who exemplifies his sportsmanship and horsemanship. *BRANT GAMMA PHOTO*

He waits a tenth of a mile out from the finish line so that he can run alongside Caristo-Williams as she completes her first marathon. He quietly goes into a horse's stall after a long day to brush it off. He looks in awe around his Florida property as he thinks of his parents working their way up in America. And he beams with pride as he talks of horses he's sold and former Zone 2 riders now competing under the lights on grand prix night in Wellington.

After I hang up the phone, I too want to do it for Ralph.

"I want them to always know that family first," says Ralph. "I want them to know that I always had the biggest love for the horse. That I was a kind man not only to my fellow beings, but the horse meant the world to me, and it was because of the horse that's the reason why I'm here today." 🐾