



Saving
JUMPERS

THE RESCUE STORY
OF A FILM ABOUT A
RESCUED HORSE



**HARRY &
SNOWMAN**
DOCUMENTARY

© GEORGE (WILK) WILKINSON

Saving JUMPERS

The Rescue Story of a Film about a Rescued Horse

Harry deLeyer had arrived late to the Pennsylvania horse auction. In fact it just ended. The remaining unclaimed horses were being loaded onto a truck en-route to their final destination, the slaughterhouse. A beat up dirty plow horse about eight years old was just being loaded as Harry approached the truck, making eye contact. *"He had the kindest eyes I'd ever seen,"* recounts Harry.



Rescued animals seem to know when they have been rescued, remaining indebted and loyal. While the Long Island riding instructor had merely been seeking to acquire another horse for his students to ride, Harry deLeyer literally was in for the ride of his life. Whereas Harry perceived his new horse as another horse in his stable, the gray perceived Harry as his savior. The horse was named *Snowman* when he was led off of the truck in the falling snow.



A year later when Harry sold the gelding to the neighboring farm for one of his students, the horse was having none of it - jumping fences to return to deLeyer's barn. His years under the plow as the beast of burden had clearly led to the development of exceptionally powerful hindquarters, creating a natural jumper.



When Harry bought the horse for \$80, and ultimately purchasing him back from his neighbor - Harry could have never dreamed the extent to which his life would be enriched. *Snowman* became Champion of the National Horse Show in New York City just two years later, in 1958.

The story of *Snowman* is legend. He eventually earned three more championships culminating in his admission into the Show Jumping Hall Of Fame, an appearance on a Johnny Carson Show, two books, a Breyer horse model, and finally the forthcoming feature-length documentary movie in his honor - *Harry & Snowman*.



Harry & Snowman

Within this story of *Harry & Snowman* there lies another story that connects lives across decades through a shared love of both film and horses, specifically jumpers.



WOMEN AND HORSES

What is it about horses that cause some women to devote their lives to the promotion, understanding and welfare of an entire species? It's love created from that first special bond between a girl and her horse. Consider the daughter of the legendary August "Auggie" Busch Jr., Elizabeth Busch, who inherited her father's love of horses, particularly hunters.



Vincent Wholey, Elizabeth Busch Burke and Eugene Mische

In 1967, Elizabeth Busch Burke was directly responsible for what became Anheuser Busch's long-term sponsorship of show jumping, eventually bringing the sport to television. Ultimately, she became a driving force that brought the FEI Show Jumping World Cup Final to Las Vegas and Budweiser's sponsorship in 2000, 2003 and 2005 with national television coverage.

THE INTERSECTION OF HORSEWOMEN

Karin Reid Offield's promotion of dressage came via show jumping through her "Offield Farms" sponsorship of the Las Vegas FEI World Cup Dressage Final in 2005. Along side Elizabeth Bush Burke they enabled national television coverage of the dressage event. Today Karin has redoubled her efforts to promote Elizabeth's favorite sport, within one of the most compelling stories to the broadest possible audience.



Karin Reid Offield, Dressage Sponsor at Las Vegas World Cup 2005

Karin's film *JUMPERS* was an unreleased documentary filmed in the late 70's and early 80's about equestrian show jumping. The film focused on three of the top Grand Prix riders, and the top jumping horses of the day. As her fate would have it, one rider was Harry deLeyer, among the winning competitors on the circuit at the age of 53.

***JUMPERS* is now interwoven within the story of *Harry & Snowman*. It was a long journey and that's the story behind "Saving *JUMPERS*".**

JUMPERS

Karin knew of Harry's success with *Snowman* having heard the story as a little girl. She captured him retelling it on film. Combined with her high-quality action show jumping footage of him in competition, Karin effectively created a time-capsule featuring Harry's first-person account of the *Snowman* story.



Karin's desire was to capture the action of her sport in slow motion to show the power and grace of a horse and rider as never seen before. This requires shooting film at a high rate of speed through the camera, the most costly approach to filmmaking in that day. That year was spent traveling to numerous locations, resulting in 40,000 feet of film "in the can". A seven-mile trail of celluloid.

Filmmaking may seem glamorous to some, yet the life of an independent filmmaker is a life spent raising money, with occasional shooting and editing, governed it seems by Murphy's Law.

By 1982, Karin had run headlong into the money trap of post-production. Throughout the years of residing in New York City, she knocked on every door meeting with the highest level of advertising, corporate and television executives. Karin found only "future interest" and "good luck" in their responses. Simply said this horse girl from Aspen, Colorado could not close the distribution deal.

THE DEATH OF A DREAM

The death of a dream is a slow process to accept. Some never fully do and hold onto it for a lifetime. A loyal and dedicated film crew, having poured heart and soul into Karin's vision, were faced with the reality that her money had run out and their work would not be seen.

All of that beautiful footage and priceless interviews were now held hostage to the absence of funding. The starkest reality hit when an equine industry veteran admonished: "*If you ever hope to finish your film Karin, you're going to need to pay for it yourself*". *JUMPERS* was shelved as Karin continued with her truest passion of all, riding horses.



Chase The Clouds

For years the footage languished in a Manhattan film storage vault. In the early 1990's she wrote to the vault asking for detail to digitize the 16 mm footage and she received the letter back unopened. She eventually discovered that the storage vault had declared bankruptcy. All of her original *JUMPERS* footage stored in New York City had gone missing.



Finding the locations of the boxes and recovering her footage became an immense undertaking. Apparently multiple un-named creditors from five different states had confiscated it. Over the years she ran ads in both the "Chronicle Of The Horse" and "Back Stage" magazines in search of anyone willing to take on the task of tracking down and returning her footage.

"I find it fascinating that original film footage can be treated so lightly by the professionals who were given a duty to care for it in storage. I am very curious as to what happened to the thousands and thousands of boxes of films that did not belong to me. Have other filmmakers started their search?"

*Karin Reid Offield
July 21, 1993 letter to investigator*

Thanks to an unwavering determination and a very special investigative Production Manager, Emily ultimately regained control of all her film footage. *"I remember the exact day they called and said the films had all been found."* Karin exclaimed, *"What a St. Anthony moment that was for me."*

THE FINALE

At last all of the pieces came together in the winter of 2012 in Florida. Partnering with former equestrian and filmmaker Ron Davis, Karin became the Executive Producer for Docutainment's *Harry & Snowman*. Her long-stored archival footage has become invaluable in the depiction of the documentary feature film. Karin's dream never died...and now it has come back to life.



Harry & Snowman

"When I lost my film my confidence did not waver. Now being able to finish the film within the story of Harry deLeyer and the legendary Snowman is an absolutely perfect ending." The days, weeks and months of independent filmmaking have all come together.

All of us who resonate with the theme of perseverance will be drawn to share in this touching tale. The rescue story of a film about a rescued horse is now more relatable across a wider demographic audience, well beyond the equestrian world. *"For me, as a promoter of Grand Prix Jumping, Dressage, and all things "horse" - this is a dream come true."*

"My film JUMPERS has legs like a thoroughbred race horse! I want to thank all of my crewmembers and friends that worked on JUMPERS. It is because of you we can say 'It's a Whopper of a Horse's Tale!' I hope audiences around the world will enjoy and share the movie!"

CONTACT INFORMATION



[Email Karin Reid Offield](#)

[Click for more about the Saving JUMPERS story and photographs](#)

[Click for more about the Harry & Snowman movie](#)

[Like us on Facebook](#)