MAN O' WAR'S
100TH BIRTHDAY

BY AUDAX

MAN O' WAR, one of the two or three best racehorses in the history of the sport in North America, is celebrating his 100th birthday anniversary this year, and a special exhibition has been mounted in his honor at the National Racing Museum and Hall of Fame in Saratoga Springs.
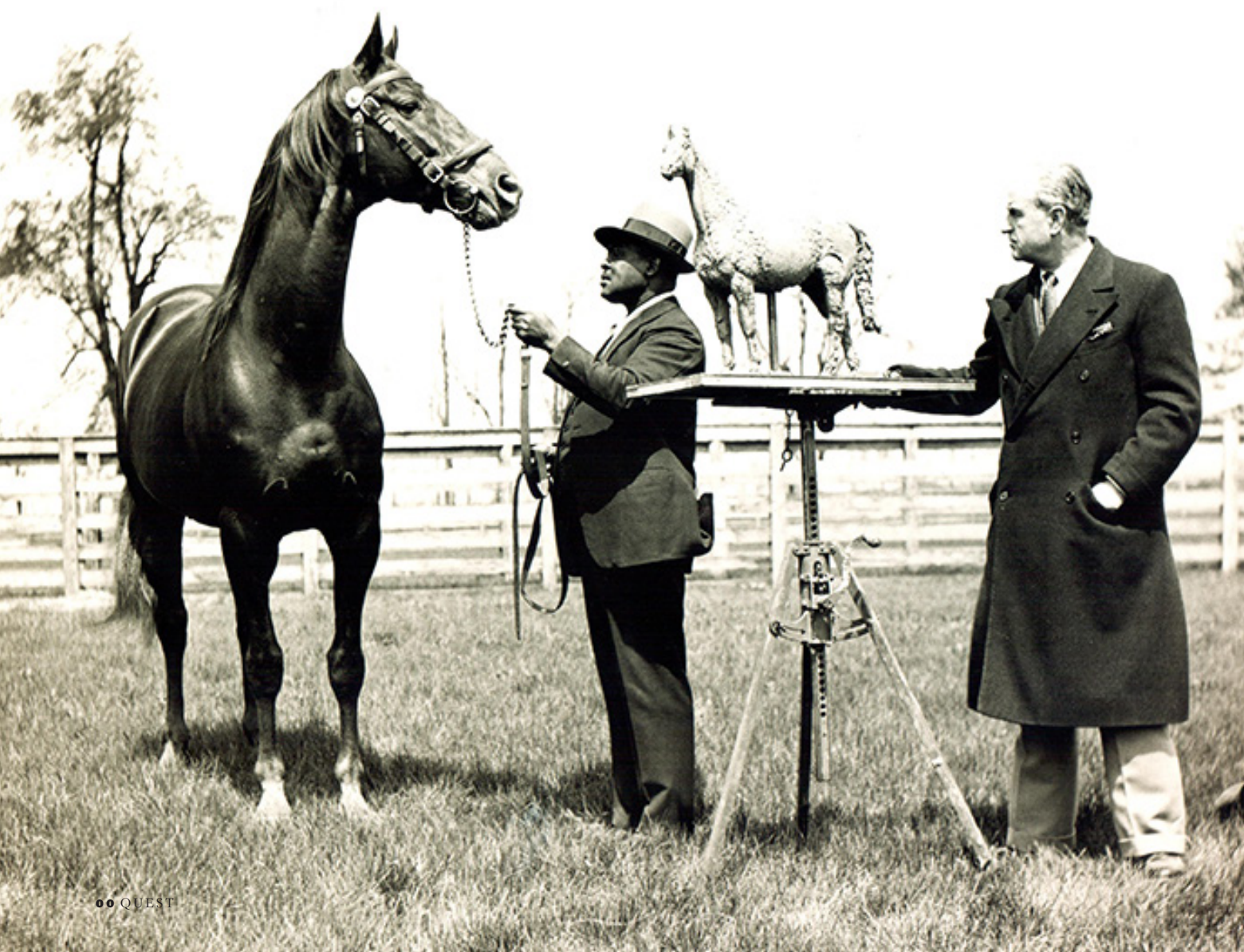
Called "the mostest horse that ever was" by his groom, Will Harbut, Man o' War won 20 out of 21 races in his storied career.

Bred at Lexington, Kentucky at Nursery Farm by Jockey Club chairman August Belmont II, Man o' War was sold when Belmont dispersed all of his yearling breeding stock and joined the Army, aged 65, to fight in World War I. While Belmont was

overseas, his wife named the foal Man o' War in honor of her husband. At the Saratoga yearling sale in 1918, Man o' War was sold at a final bid of $5,000 to Samuel D. Riddle, who brought him to his Glen Riddle Farm near Berlin, Maryland. Two years later, Riddle declined an offer of $400,000 for the horse.

Man o' War, would make his first start for trainer Louis Feustel on June 6, 1919 at Belmont Park.

"Man o' War was unusually impressive from the time of his first start," says Ed Bowen, racing historian and a former editor-in-chief of BloodHorse. "He had an incredible aura, as compared to Exterminator and some of the other stars of the era. He was a
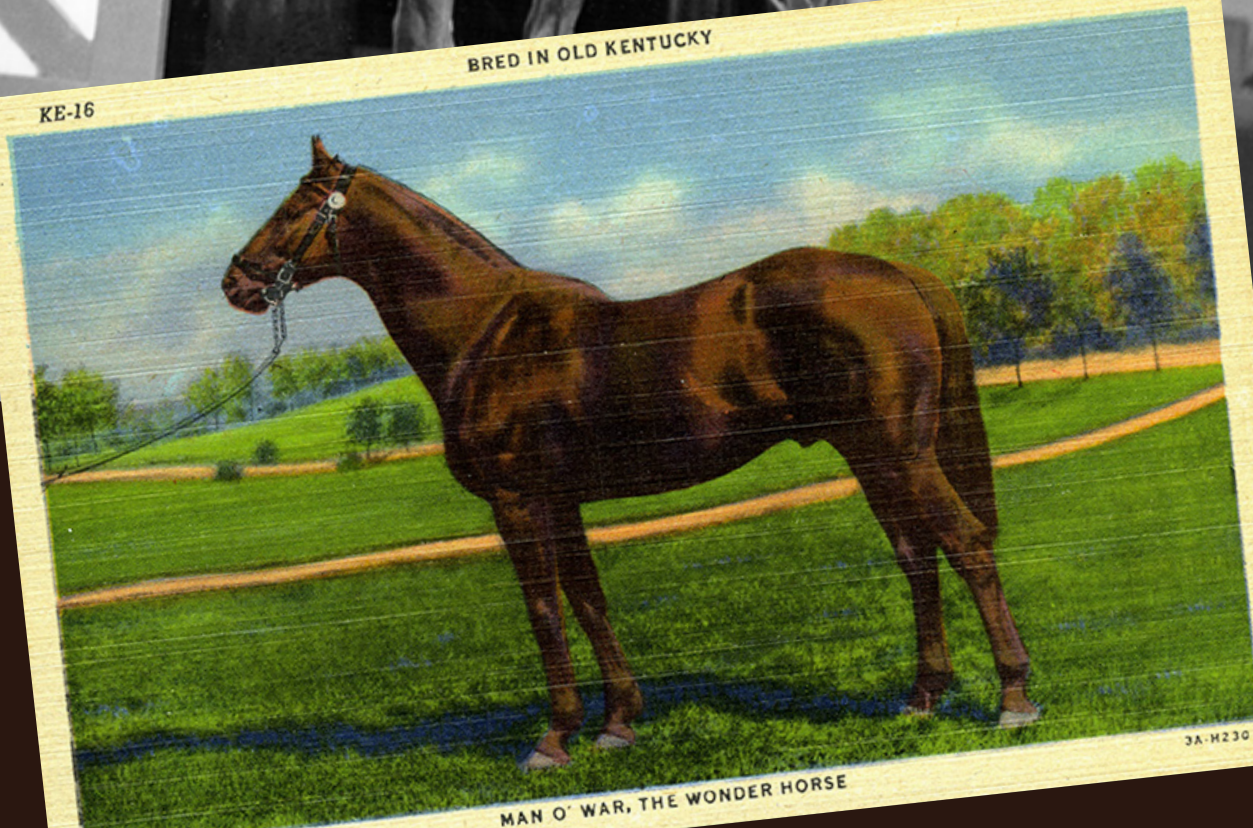
Opposite page: Will Harbut (center) holds Man o' War as sculptor Herbert Haseltine (right) makes a model of the champion racehorse. This page, from top: Man o' War taking the lead; Man o' War and his trusted groom, Will Harbut, at Faraway Farm; a painting of Man o' War, "Bred in Old Kentucky."

BRED IN OLD KENTUCKY

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MAN O' WAR, THE WONDER HORSE

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bright, luxurious chestnut with a high head and haughty manner, and he won most of his races with a great flourish."

Turf writer Joe Palmer wrote, "He could get in no position which suggested actual repose, and his very stillness was that of a coiled spring, of the crouched tiger." His stride was measured at 28 feet, believed to be the longest of all time.

In ten races during his 2-year-old season of 1919, Man o' War posted nine wins, none coming by less than a length. His only loss as a juvenile—and for his career—came in the Sanford Stakes at Saratoga, when he started slowly, was hemmed in traffic, and could not make up enough ground to defeat Upset.

Man o' War was even better at age three, winning all 11 of his starts. Despite carrying high weight assignments in many of his starts that year, he set records in eight of them. Man o' War won the Preakness Stakes; the Belmont Stakes by twenty lengths; the Dwyer Stakes; the Travers Stakes; the Lawrence Realization by 100 lengths; and the Jockey Club Gold Cup before resoundingly defeating 1919 Triple Crown winner Sir Barton by seven lengths in the Kenilworth Park Gold Cup match race. That was his final career start on October 12, 1920, and Man o' War retired with a record of 20 wins and one second from 21 races.

Standing in retirement primarily at Faraway Farm in Kentucky, Man o' War sired the 1937 Triple Crown winner War Admiral among many other high-class racehorses. Man o' War died at age 30 in 1947, and his remains were moved from Faraway Farm to the Kentucky Horse Park during the 1970s. His gravesite and the iconic bronze statute nearby by sculptor Herbert Haseltine are among the most popular attractions at the park.

Kentucky horseman Ira Drymon said, "He touched the imagination of men and they saw different things in him. But one thing they will all remember was that he brought exaltation into their hearts." ◆

This page: Before the Triple Crown was established, Man o' War scared off his competition in the Belmont Stakes; the silks of jockey Samuel Riddle (inset).

A PROJECT NAMED FOR MAN O' WAR
TO HELP MEN OF WAR AND HORSES

A STUDY NAMED for Man o' War is now well under way that aims to help veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder by providing them with equine-assisted therapy, and in the process gives retired horses a valuable new purpose as well. The study is being funded by The Man O' War Project, a non-profit set up by army veteran and lifelong horseman, Ambassador Earle Mack, who had a hunch that stressed soldiers and horses would be a good match. Mack approached Columbia University's Department of Psychiatry with the idea. Columbia agreed to undertake a research trial that would put approximately 60 PTSD-suffering veterans through an equine therapy program.

James MacGuire, the Man o' War Project's chairman says, "If this Phase One trial is successful, we plan to take the program to a national level," eventually seeking grants and funding through the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Defense, and the Veterans Administration.

Anne Poulson, the Man o' War Project's board president added, "It is a crisis in our country when 20 veterans commit suicide a day. We have to broaden the ways to treat our veterans."

"Horses, by nature, are prey animals, and so they're hyper-vigilant and reactive to people's behavior," said Prudence Fisher, a professor of clinical psychiatric social work at Columbia, who has been co-directing the study for the past year.

In the study, three or four veterans at a time spend 90 minutes with two horses and two staff members once a week for eight weeks, slowly learning to interact with and become comfortable with the animals and learning about themselves through them.

"The veterans feel that the horses are mirroring what they feel," said Yuval Neria, a medical psychology professor at Columbia and the study's other director. "They are both fearful, initially, they are both apprehensive, initially, they avoid being together, and over time they develop the ability to be together."

The idea is to address PTSD, a signature disorder among veterans which has a host of emotional symptoms, from angry outbursts and difficulty sleeping, to trouble concentrating or avoidance of trauma-related triggers. Pharmacological and

Yuval Neria and Prudence Fisher (left); U.S. Marine Sergeant Matthew Ryba believes equine therapy could help troubled veterans (right).

traditional talk therapy are not always effective.

"There's a lot about trust, about being clear with your intentions," Fisher said. Describing one veteran who was terrified of horses in the first session, she said, "by the 3rd session the horse is putting his head on him and he's leaning on the horse." Another veteran, for example, was afraid to take the subway before the sessions. Now that fear has lifted.

Participants so far have ranged in age from 30 to 68. "We have Vietnam vets, they've had chronic PTSD for years, and never got treatment," Fisher said.

In fact, the horses themselves may also benefit from the program. The ones selected tend to be mellow, older horses, including some former racehorses, who appreciate having some purpose in their lives.

"When they retire they have nothing really to offer and they are sometimes slaughtered or live in very difficult conditions," Neria said. "Not all horses receive fair and appropriate treatment. It's a very fascinating opportunity to bring together traumatized horses and traumatized vets to interact and to overcome what they both suffer from."

To Matthew Ryba, a Marine Corps veteran who did tours in Afghanistan and Iraq, the approach makes sense. "A horse is a kind of animal that a lot of soldiers are able to identify with, as a military animal. Like soldiers, they're attuned to their environment. The way a horse feels when someone new is approaching them, it's kind of a reflection of similar emotions that a vet would be experiencing."

At one session Ryba was present for, a veteran entered saying he had a fear of horses. By the end of the ninety minutes, he didn't want to leave. To Ryba, that was a very good sign.

"I've lost friends to suicide," he said. "If they'd had this option, that's something that could have broken down some walls for them." —*Audax*