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2022 CMSA OVERALL WORLD CHAMPION

The Horse With Wings

*A story about an unlikely meeting, unplanned circumstances,
and triumph from tragedy*

By Kenda Lenseigne

"I have something I want to talk to you about", he said over the phone, "I'm making a trip out to Utah for some family business and if you're going to be home, I want to swing by your place on the way so we can visit in person about it".

"Uhm oookaaaay, that's about 12 hours out of the way, it's not just a swing by" I replied with a query in my voice. "It's okay, I'll talk to about it you soon," he said with resolute reassurance, "See you in a few days." and hung up the phone. I wondered what could possibly be on his mind as he was coming from Georgia, a 2000 mile drive out west, plus another day or two out of the way to 'swing by'.

He arrived at my place and I welcomed him in, we sat in my kitchen across the island from one another sharing a plate of thrown-together snacks and a drink. It was late May of 2022 and we began the conversation by reminiscing and chatting about the ups and downs of our past year and how fate, in its bizarre twisted way has brought us to this unplanned friendship.

Still unsure why he drove so far to look me in the eye for a discussion, I recalled meeting John Brandreth for the first time at the ammo table in Las Vegas at the CMSA Western Championship. It was July, 2021. I did not know him or his wife Samantha prior to this but had heard over the PA system that Brandreth Farms is located in Talking Rock, Georgia. I had plans to leave the shoot and head to GA for the taping of a television show that was to be filmed in Macon, about an hour and a half from their farm. In true Brandreth form, he fished a business card out of his pocket and offered a place to turn the horses out prior to the taping of the show if I wanted some downtime.

Fast forward through a few days of exhausting road travel with my greatest traveling pal, my dad. We pulled into the Brandreth's farm where we were warmly greeted by Samantha who had prepared a great dinner for us all. Needless to say, for those who have followed my story on social media, I did not get to actually eat that dinner, as I broke my leg in a dumb freak accident just 45 minutes after unloading the horses. I spent 5 weeks in their guest house in recovery while they treated me and my family who flew into care for me like, well, family.



Later that year, in another twist of fate, John broke his ankle at the 2021 CMSA World Championship, a shoot I was unable to attend for the first time since 1998 due to my own injury. When Samantha called to tell me the news, I shook my head and said "John, I know we are friends, but why are you trying to copy me?" I suppose we both have parallel war stories best told around the campfire.

So there we were, in a discussion around my kitchen table while John continued the conversation by telling me a story about his horse Charles. I knew very little about the big bay gelding, as being from west of the Rockies I hadn't traveled much in the east beyond the CMSA National Championship in Tunica over the past few years. I only knew of him as the horse that Sam Helms rode, a fellow Level 6 rider and well respected cowboy, loved deeply by so many, who sadly passed away in February 2021. Sam and I both served on the board of the CMSA Professional Horseman Association so we would chat often with regards to the club's business, but other than that I didn't know him well. I also didn't know much about the horse named Charles, other than I was always amused by his name.

John continued by telling me that Sam and Charles took a bad fall at the December 2020 New Year's Shoot in Florida. The two of them were in bad shape;

Sam suffered severe injuries including a shattered collar bone – and Charles was suffering from a crushed back hoof due to a severe case of thrush. When John picked up Charles in early February 2021 his injuries required months of stall confinement to get his hoof healthy again, which ultimately led to muscle loss. “After months of rehab and then miles upon miles of long trotting, Charles is finally fit again”, he said.

I said, getting to the point, “OK John, why are you here, and why are you here telling me all of this?” “Well,” he said, “Charles loves this sport so much, he



January 5, 2021, Charles collapsed back hoof

February 12, 2021 growing a new hoof takes months



loves to run, he loves attention” he continued, “he’s finally healthy again, fit and ready to run.... and Kenda, I’m 70 years old, I don’t want to go that fast! I can’t think of one person in this whole sport that I’d like to see riding him other than you”.

“Your calm demeanor sits well with Samantha, me, and Charles - it just seems to be a good fit. So, I came out here to see you and am asking you if you’d ride Charles – there are no strings attached. We don’t ever want to sell him, we don’t ever want to lease him, he’s going to retire on our farm but for now, he deserves to shine”.

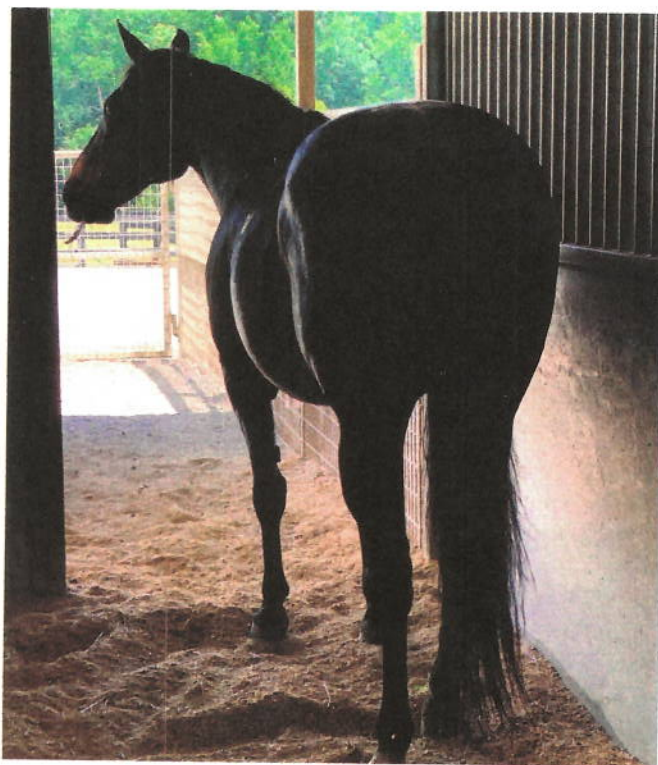
I didn’t reply at first, as, I have lived my whole career building my own horses. I typically do things the hard way - I choose the difficult road by finding diamonds in the rough and am OK with being on the last page of the standings if it means a solid horse in the end, and I’ve never competed long-term on an already made horse. At first, I wasn’t sure about the idea of it, but then John said, “the best part about Charles is that he’s registered APHA, so you can just ride him in the APHA class as a second horse and it won’t interfere with what you’re doing with your own AQHA horses”, Bingo. That was the buzzword for me, and I told him I

would consider it.

We both agreed at that point, that at the minimum I would fly to Brandreth Farms and meet this already famous horse for the first time, ride him, and see if we clicked.

FIRST DATE

The glossy-coat dark horse stood with a quiet presence in the stall and took in a big breath when I greeted him. I chatted with him and looked into his big kind eyes, he was sweet and friendly, nuzzled me with his upper lip and it was then that he ‘had me at hello’. There was a lot on my mind as I quietly saddled him and I recalled the story that John had shared with me about his history..... Charles has a past, I thought, he may have post traumatic baggage, what if he’s a wild monkey in the pen, what if he doesn’t mesh with my style of riding? As I buckled the breast collar, I brushed my hand over his neck and thought, these broad shoulders have withstood the weight of some horrifying circumstances that no horse should have to endure and yet, he stands here stoic with a smile on his face and instead of being wary he’s now searching my pockets for cookies. I think we will get along just fine.



The dark horse with a quiet presence



Three practice stages and we are a match!

THE HORSE FORMERLY KNOWN AS PIRATE

As a 6 month old and still on his mother's side, a little bay colt was confiscated by the authorities of ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) along with nearly 200 other horses as a result of gross neglect from a farm in Michigan. The horses went to auction and the little bay colt was scooped up with his mother by a family who, in time, rode him as a Western Pleasure horse. He was loved and cared for by a teenage girl who named him Pirate. She rode Pirate until she graduated from High School, and rather than leave him to stand in a pasture they decided to sell him and reached out to Sam.

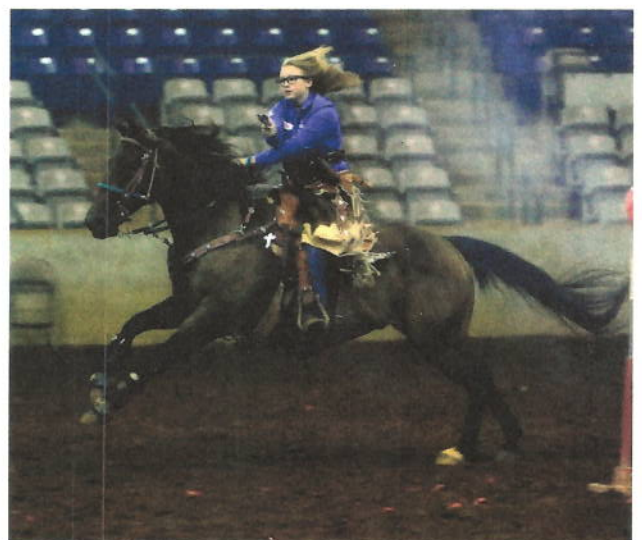


Sam had just picked up Pirate to sell him for the family when he came to Brandreth Farms to train the new-to-mounted-shooting riders John and his then 12 year old daughter Isabella (Izzy). Sam was giving lessons to Izzy on "the bay horse" (Sam was a true cowboy – they call horses by color and not by name). Izzy recalls "my first mounted shooting clinic was when I met Charles who was called Pirate at the time. The first ride we had we immediately clicked. His goofy personality and adoration for people showed instantly". John bought Pirate on the spot for his daughter as it was a clear match.

After the sale went through, the Brandreth's agreed that a horse this special should have a more appropriate name, so John suggested that they change his barn name to reflect the legacy of Charles Goodnight, who, in the 1800s was famous for the first, legendary cattle drives in Texas. From then on, he was Charles – his barn name; but when digging deeper, Pirate Charles Goodnight didn't have a registration certificate due to his mottled past of neglect, confiscation, and auction, so the barn name was just that.

That's when John and Samantha went to work. "We first tried going through ASPSA, then through the Michigan Dept of AG, but no one could find any papers on this horse. It's no surprise because there were 200 horses out in a pen together so who knows what was what", John continued, "Samantha and I took a number of trips to Fort Worth (from Georgia) to get APHA papers. We submitted DNA samples and brought boxes of donuts and treats for the break room to help speed the process along. We knew that the Dam was correct because he was still with his mother, but the DNA indicated that it was the wrong sire time and time again. DNA tests finally confirmed the sire and we had ourselves a solid color APHA (American Paint Horse Association)", John laughed, "we were able to then choose his registered name, so we called him JB's PDQ – that is, "Pretty Darn Quick".

There's no question that he is PDQ with racing bloodlines, strong legs and a giant heart. From that point on the pair of Izzy and Charles flourished. After her first Double Down win at her first major, her mother Samantha recalls Izzy coming out of the arena and said, "Mom, I didn't know if I was going to live or die, but, this horse has wings".



*Isabella Brandreth
with Charles as a L1*

AND WINGS HE DOES

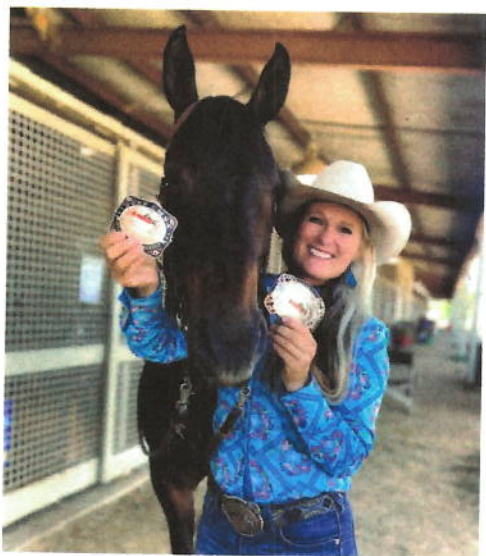
On March 17, 2015 the Farm sustained the nightmare of all nightmares for all horse people. The power meter on the barn exploded and caught the barn on fire in the early morning hours. Tragically, 5 horses did not survive. Charles was one of the horses rescued from the fire but as John recalled, "The horses that survived were like us, very traumatized from the experience and will never be the same".

Sam Helms, trainer, and close friend of the Brandreth's worked out of their facility while the barn was being rebuilt. Izzy soon went off to boarding school and after Sam's own horse Jolene blew her hoof by way of abscess, he was loaned Charles to compete on and the pair rose to the top over the course of 4 years. He rode Charles to the noteworthy accomplishment of the 2020 CMSA Winter Championship Overall Cowboy, and was recently inducted into the 2022 CMSA Hall Of Fame. The partnership that Sam and Charles had runs deep and the two will always be remembered as a driving force and a team of champions.

WITH WINGS THEY SOAR

Reflecting back on the last 5 months, it is difficult not to marvel at how fortuitous life can be. I met Charles under unlikely circumstances; I wasn't searching for him, he wasn't searching for me, and yet somehow it seems meant-to-be.

Our debut together was at the 2022 CMSA Appalachian Championship in Lexington, nine months after smashing my tibia in four places, where we took the Overall Cowgirl title. I had only ridden him that one weekend prior when I visited the Brandreth's farm to take him for a test drive, so there were some nerves a-flowin' as I swung a leg over the saddle. With a little bit



First shoot CMSA Appalachian Championship, Overall Cowgirl and L6 Class Winner

of luck, some courage, and a lot of mental management we pulled it off. After the shoot, I gave him a smooch, waved goodbye, and said, "see you at the next one buddy".

The next time I saw Charles was 5 weeks later when he arrived at the South Point arena in Las Vegas for the 2022 CMSA Western US Championship. For the second time in two shoots together, he again carried me to the Overall Cowgirl win.



CMSA Western US Overall Cowgirl and L6 Class Winner

A month later, we met again at the 2022 CMSA Eastern US Championship where the big bay beast smashed a world record by 6/10ths of a second during the first round of the Eliminator. Remarkably, the previous record had held for 7 years. I recall riding into the arena that day, reminding myself that I didn't have to steal the show, I just needed to turn in a solid run to make it to the second round. Evidently I forgot to tell Charles about that plan and he sailed through the course like he was on rails to take the win.

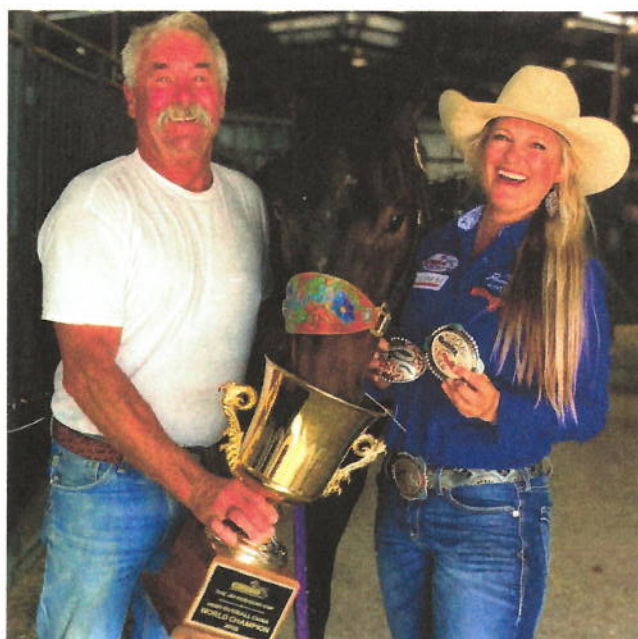
A self-inflicted bobble by yours truly in stage one of the main match took us out of the race for the Overall, but Charles continued to shine and together we won the Ladies Eliminator finals during the Friday night showcase.



World Record Holder CMSA Course #32

THREE WEEKS LATER, HISTORY WAS MADE

In 2009 I rode Lieutenant Justin into the CSMA history book by being the first and only cowgirl to win the high overall at the World Championship. All of us cowgirls dream of it and know we have the talent in our own arenas, but perhaps we don't truly realize that it's actually within our grasp in the big pen. If you're young or aged reading this, know that it IS possible. Anything is possible, and if you're in doubt, just think on the little bay colt plucked by chance out of a pen of 200 horses, who came by the name of Pirate Charles Goodnight Brandreth the Pretty Darn Quick, a paint that ain't that was given a chance simply because someone believed in him. He's already won in life by way of auction, a fire, and by carrying his previous rider to legend status. And now, he's fulfilled his destiny as The World Champion.



Kenda Lenseigne is the 2022 Overall World Champion. The only woman in the sport who has won the Overall World Championship not one, but two times.

2022 Marks the 5th Overall World Champion Cowgirl title for Kenda (on three different horses)

- 2009 High Overall and Overall World Champion Cowgirl (with Lieutenant Justin aka Justin)
- 2014 Overall World Champion Cowgirl (with Lieutenant Justin aka Justin)
- 2017 Overall World Champion Cowgirl (with My Familys Famous aka Sparky)
- 2018 Overall World Champion Cowgirl (with My Familys Famous aka Sparky)
- 2022 High Overall and Overall World Champion Cowgirl (with JB's PDQ aka Charles)

Training regimen and next steps:

The Brandreth's grow their own hay and Charles is supplemented with Purina products (Outlast and Impact Professional). Samantha has fine-tuned his nutrition over the years and it shows bright in his performance, coat and hooves.

Charles continues to live at Brandreth Farms and is on a fitness plan that would amaze even the greatest horsemen. John, now age 71 long trots the big gelding 8 miles per day, three days per week around the pastures of the farm. "I don't know who is more fit, him or me from all this posting", John laughs, "we keep each other in good shape".



When asked about her plans for next season and if they include Charles, Kenda smiled and said "let's start with more than 11 Minutes 44 Seconds and see how it goes". 11 minutes and 44 seconds is the total time the two have actually spent together in competition, on course.

Charles is planning on snow-birding at Kenda's ranch in Arizona this winter and spring so the two can throw out their speed dating card, get to know one another, and continue to become the best team they can be.

