

Page from the past

1978 Blue Grass Stakes



An April afternoon 30 years ago is among Keeneland's most beloved memories.

Keeneland sent a station wagon to Calumet Farm, the track's neighbor to the east with the famous white fences, to transport the farm's aging owners, Admiral and Mrs. Gene Markey, to the track so they could see their star colt Alydar run in the Blue Grass Stakes (now the Grade 1 Toyota Blue Grass Stakes). The station wagon parked on the Clubhouse lawn near the outside rail, where the Markeys stood while jockey Jorge Velasquez guided Alydar near them during the post parade.

"Here's your baby," Velasquez said to the Markeys. "Doesn't he look pretty?"

Seated in the station wagon, the Markeys listened to the start of the race

on the radio. They returned to the rail to watch Alydar sweep by them en route to a 13-length win.

Alydar is one of six Blue Grass winners for Calumet, the winningest owner in race history. The others: Bull Lea (1938), Ocean Wave ('43), Faultless ('47), Coaltown ('48) and eventual Kentucky Derby winner Forward Pass ('68). Calumet also bred 1991 winner Strike the Gold, another Derby hero.

Alydar, who famously dueled Affirmed in each of the 1978 Triple Crown

Before Alydar's win in the Blue Grass Stakes, Admiral and Mrs. Gene Markey of Calumet Farm (above, at right) received a close-up view of their star colt.

races, was trained by John Veitch, who today presides over Keeneland races as chief steward of the Kentucky Horse Racing Authority.

You can watch a video of the Markeys' Keeneland appearance at www.toyotabluegrassstakes.com. 🐎