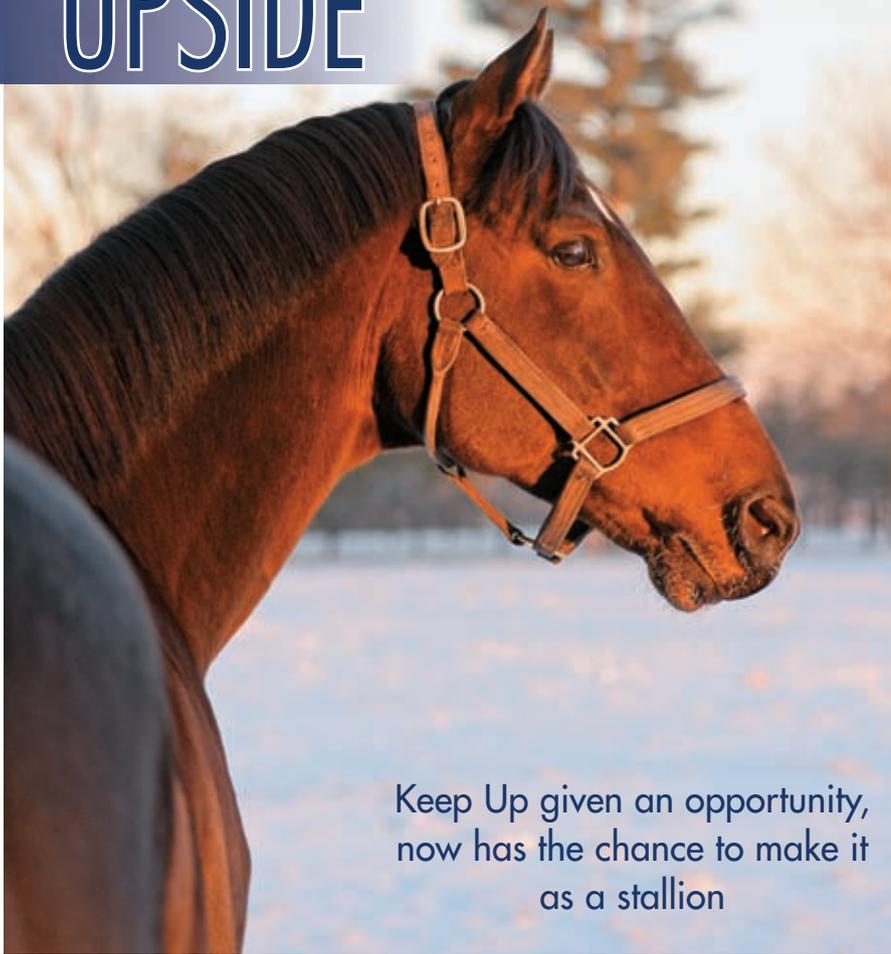


UPSIDE



Keep Up given an opportunity,
now has the chance to make it
as a stallion



COURTESY MILL RIDGE FARM

flect Mom,” said Bell, Mill Ridge’s managing partner. Alice Chandler, who founded the farm in 1962, recently turned 88. Her philosophies, Bell said, still guide Mill Ridge’s operation.

People who recall the Mill Ridge mare Begum will hear the echo of her story in the farm’s decision to persevere with Keep Up.

On April 4, 1981, Chandler’s mare Rullah Good gave birth to Begum, a filly from Alydar’s much-anticipated first crop. It should have been a moment of celebration: a filly by such a promising young stallion, and from a family rich in black type. Begum’s arrival was greeted with great hope and excitement, but that quickly turned to consternation when it became clear the newborn foal was blind.

“It was the first crop of Alydar and a \$50,000 live-foal season, which was a lot of money,” recalled Bell. “She just had a little tissue there for her eyes, tissue like a pencil eraser. But Mom, being compassionate, asked if there was a way we could make this work. Naturally, she had to pay the stud fee if the foal stood and nursed. It was a lot of money, but it was Alydar and out of a very good Bwamazon (Farm) mare. So we gave her a shot, and the Lord repaid us well.”

Chandler made it work. She put a bell on Begum’s dam, and when the filly ran into the paddock fence, Chandler arranged to plow along the fenceline so Begum would safely learn where the boundaries were.

Begum went on to become a productive broodmare whose influence continues today through her female descendants. She is the fourth dam of recent grade I winners Hymn Book and Data Link.

BY GLENYE CAIN OAKFORD

Things did not look good for Keep Up in August 2008. The yearling colt had appeared to have everything going for him—fashionable breeding, strapping physique, mature mind—until the morning he came in from his pasture with a fractured knee. Initial treatments failed, and Mill Ridge Farm owner Alice Chandler faced the wrenching prospect of putting down one of her most promising yearlings, a son of Unbridled’s Song and the 1998 Kentucky Oaks (gr. I) winner Keeper Hill (raced by Chandler; her husband, Dr. John Chandler; Audrey Otto; and Shug McGaughey).

Keep Up’s prospects were “not favorable,” in one veterinarian’s assessment, and another gave him just a 10% chance to recover and race even if he underwent surgery. Many breeders would have advised putting the colt down.

“But I couldn’t do that,” said Chandler of the colt. Five years later Keep Up has returned to take up stud duties at Mill Ridge after a remarkable comeback that made him a graded stakes winner. This time he’s stabled in Gone West’s old stall. It would be extraordinary if Keep Up went on to make as deep a mark on the

breed as Gone West, who died in 2009 and has sired 101 stakes winners. Don’t count the young stallion out.

To help Keep Up launch his career, Mill Ridge is offering its first-ever “Share the Upside” program that sets his stud fee at \$4,000 for a two-year breeding commitment. Without “Share the Upside” participation, his live-foal fee for 2014 is \$5,000.

As Chandler’s son Headley Bell pointed out, Keep Up has beaten some long odds before.

“All of the things about this story re-

ANNE M. EBERHARDT

X-rays of Keep Up from August 2008 show his fractured knee (A) and the three bone screws inserted to stabilize the fractures



Arlington Park's Swoon's Son Stakes at 6, closing out his career with seven wins and \$300,545 in earnings.

Keep Up drew some interest from international studs, but the Mill Ridge team balked at sending him too far away.

"He's sound, and we were going to stand him," Bell explained, "and then we had an inquiry into buying him for India. Then it was like, 'Hell, we don't want him to go to India.'"

Bell explored the "Share the Upside" idea and came to the conclusion that the program, founded several years ago by Spendthrift Farm owner B. Wayne Hughes, could allow Keep Up to attract enough mares in Kentucky's fiercely competitive stallion market.

"We've got the facility here, we've got the reputation for proper horses from standing Gone West and Diesis, and this will let us blow the cobwebs off Gone West's stall," Bell explained. "What's special for us is that this is our family horse. When you look where stallions come from, you never know. This horse has enough going for him with the Unbridled's Song and with Deputy Minister as the broodmare sire of Keeper Hill, and Keep Up is inbred to (blue hen mare) Killoe. And with his talent? We're excited."

"I told Mom all along, 'Mom, you can't bring a horse home if he hasn't won a grade I.' I chilled her out about it for three or four years. I have to try to run a business. But when I told her what we were going to do, she said, 'Well, that's what you were supposed to do.' She knew all along he ought to be here."

Bell said he believes Keep Up will breed about 80 mares in 2014, a fair number for a young sire in the world's most demanding stallion market. That provides some evidence that Chandler and Bell made a reasonable business decision after all when they persevered with Keep Up. But the decision to save the colt, Bell and Chandler readily admit, was never about business.

"It's all about the horse," Bell said. "All of our horses are for sale, but situations come up sometimes where we might keep them. Keep Up really was a proper horse, and then to overcome all these things—it just allows us to want to believe in him and give people a chance to believe in him. It's energized all of us." **BH**

"It's her second nature to love the animal," Bell said of Chandler. "She was born with the horses and gravitated to the horses, and the idea of not giving a horse a chance is not within her or our makeup."

No one knows for certain how Keep Up injured himself overnight in June 2008, but he was not bearing weight on his left front leg when Hagyard Equine Medical Institute's Dr. Stuart Brown examined him June 19. The knee was swollen, and X-rays revealed several fractures. Brown's colleague Dr. Robert Hunt initially prescribed 60 days of stall rest, bandaging to immobilize the knee, and a course of anti-inflammatories. But, by August, the knee was still swollen. Brown's follow-up letter to Bell describing the colt's condition at the time was dotted with gloomy observations: "instability," "continued injury," and "poor healing." Brown's conclusion was sobering, but it also held out a faint hope.

"Consultation from Dr. Robert Cope lan over the current radiographs also has confirmed our fears over his long-term prognosis," Brown wrote, "but also has supported our recommendation for surgery as a viable option at this time."

That was hope enough for Chandler and Bell, and the yearling Keep Up underwent surgery to insert three bone screws to stabilize the fractures.

Many commercial breeders would not have invested more time and money in a colt whose prospects—physically, at least—seemed so poor. But Chandler said her decisions not to give up on Keep Up and Begum were natural ones.

"I can't do that," Chandler said. "You love the horses, and this is the best you can do for a horse. And this horse has got

some things that are assets. So you need to give him a shot."

Those assets, Chandler and Bell said, included the horse's pedigree, his conformation, and his personality.

Keep Up's mental fortitude was crucial to his successful recovery, which required him to be on stall rest for seven months—a prison sentence to an energetic young colt.

"That's a significant test of who and what a horse is," Bell said, "and he was a big horse, a man, even before this occurred. To see how he acclimated and adjusted to that life was something. It was like he said, 'I get it.' He turned into a patient."

Bell also credits the Mill Ridge staff's dedication, as well as patient handling by trainer Alex Clarkson, for Keep Up's recovery and successful racing career.

Keep Up debuted at 3, placing third in a pair of maiden special weights before drawing away for a 3/4-length win at Gulfstream Park. Keep Up ultimately made 18 starts, and he got better with age. He won two stakes, the River City Handicap (gr. IIIT) at Churchill Downs at 5 and



Mill Ridge broodmare Begum in 1998