

## Ted Weg — the eyes have it

Did you know that a lot of harness drivers like to get hammered before they race? It's true, and as a matter of fact, the ones who get hammered the most usually drive the best. Did you also know that if you shine a flashlight into a horse's eye you can, if you know what you're doing, find out what's ailing the horse? Of course you would have to study this flashlight and eye method for years and years, but if you learn how to skillfully examine a horse's iris, and you employ the services of a driver who likes to get hammered every once in a while, you just might get yourself in the winner's circle a lot more often. Sounds crazy, right? That's what I used to think before I met a guy named Ted Weg.

It all started back in the early 1990's when I was training a horse for a very interesting, old character named John Squicciarri. His last name is only easy to pronounce when a dentist has that sucking thing hanging off your lip, so don't try it otherwise.

John was a retired, big band drummer who was born and raised in New Jersey, but somewhere between Las Vegas, Reno and The Copacabana, he turned into a Yosemite Sam kind of guy. He preferred western garb like cowboy hats, frilly denim-leather jackets with plenty of silver and turquoise bling. John was a major league eccentric to say the least, but he was an honest and generous gentleman who had a good eye for horses and a better eye for people. Somehow he found me and I started training his little horse named Texas Bound. Soon after he'd introduced me to Texas Bound, John introduced me to the aforementioned Ted Weg and within five years I was completely indoctrinated into the school of Weg-ology.

Ted came to my barn one morning to look at Texas Bound as a favour to John the cowboy. At first I didn't know what the heck was

going on. Who was this strange little man with the white beard? Why did he have a satchel slung over his shoulder, and moreover, why was there a wooden mallet sticking out of it? Then I saw Ted looking into the horse's eye with a small flashlight and my curiosity overcame me, when he said to John, "You know, I just got through hammering Angel Cordero over at Belmont Park. I hammered his wife too. I think it really helped them." "That's nice," replied John. "But what about my horse's eye?"

"He's showing me right front foot, and something intestinal," said Ted with the exactitude of a 1950s B-movie atomic scientist. "Hmmm...very interesting," continued Ted. "He shows right front foot and intestinal trouble, but it looks like it's just starting."

A few days later, Texas Bound came down with a minor impaction and a major quarter crack in his — you guessed it — right front foot. Was this a self-fulfilling prophecy? I chalked it up to coincidence, and when Ted came back the next week he genuinely felt bad for the horse. I was surprised by his humility. Aren't psychics supposed to say things like, "I told you so!" If Nostradamus were alive today, do you think he would be saddened by the realization of his quatrains? Of course not! He'd be saying things like, "You stupid people, could I have been any more nonspecific? Didn't you know that the serpent's tongue represented Pearl Harbor?"

In any event, I assume that people who predict stuff are happy



when their stuff comes true regardless of the horror that might be involved. How is a psychic supposed to stay in business if the plane doesn't crash or the Zeppelin doesn't explode? This opinion of mine does not include end-of-the-world predictions, however, because when that happens nobody will know except Skeeter Davis. Now that's what you call an obscure reference but somebody reading this will get it.

So anyway, my initial opinion of Ted was that he was some kind of psychic and that the flashlight in the eye routine was his schtick, but it wasn't schtick, it was an ancient practice called iridology. The idea behind iridology is that the iris of the eye is divided into many parts and each part represents an area of the body. A person trained in iridology learns to find changes in the iris that correspond to certain illnesses or conditions in various areas of the body.

Of course iridology is dismissed by the medical world as a pseudo science, and some have called it outright quackery, and while Ted never makes curative claims, there is a line of people from Yonkers to Yokohama who want him to have a look at their horse.

Oh, I forgot about the hammer. One of Ted's things is that he knows exactly where pain relief pressure points are on the body so he carefully hammers each one with a wooden peg and his mallet. It doesn't hurt at all and all one hears and feels is a gentle knocking. The horses love it, but the drivers and jockeys seem to like it even more. Jack Moiseyev and Jimmy Marohn are two drivers who like Ted's hammer, and there have been several times when Ted's horses have won big when both driver and horse were hammered prior to the race. I trained a world champion horse by the name of Kissin Prince for Ted and that horse loved to get his back and shoulders hammered. I'll tell you more about Kissin Prince later.

Throughout the '80s and '90s, Ted was a fixture at New York and New Jersey racetracks and even today he has clients all over the world. It was only a matter of time before people starting pulling him aside and asking him to look into their eyes. Ted always reminds them that horses are different from people and that no matter what he says; they should

seek the advice of a real doctor. But with that disclaimer aside, I couldn't help but remember the time old John the drummer asked Ted to look into his eyes because he was having a problem — a private problem that he did not reveal to Ted.

So Ted puts the flashlight to John's eye as a crowd gathers around and Ted's commentary goes something like this. "Let's see — your lungs are telling me that they're the lungs of a 20-year-old kid, and your liver is telling me that it's the liver of a guy half your age. Your heart is shouting like the heart of a teenager and your kidneys are telling me that they couldn't be any better." So John finally says sheepishly, "Uh, while all these organs of mine were busy talking did my... uh... you know... get a word in?" "Oh, that?" Ted replied. "You're old and you have erectile dysfunction. It's natural. You want I should embarrass you in front of all these people?"

Of course, Ted ended up being an owner in my stable and without a doubt he was and still is the smartest, kindest, most generous, and caring man I have ever had the privilege to know. Together we won a lot of races, but most of it was Ted's doing. Having Ted around is like having one of those giant, intergalactic craniums that allow you to scoff at stupid human monkeys. If Ted were an Octopus he would have 12 tentacles.

The way Ted became one of my owners is kind of funny. One day he asked me if I wanted to train a horse for him. Of course I refused because I feared that there would be a line of weird people outside my barn looking to get their horse's eyes looked at, and I honestly feared that regular owners would not take me seriously if I took him on. Even one of my best friends told me that Ted was a kook and that I shouldn't hang around with him. Today that same friend considers Ted to be a genius and the greatest owner a trainer could ever hope to acquire. It's funny how that always seems to happen with Ted. First it's like, "Who is that nut?" Then it becomes, "Get me that nut!"

So anyway, Ted wanted to give me a horse who was coming back after a badly broken coffin bone. A horse coming back off a serious injury and a series of layoffs was not what I needed at the time. I begged off and begged off but Ted persisted and told me the horse was Kissin Prince. At

the time the name meant nothing to me, but then Ted told me that Kissin Prince was the fastest gelding in the history of harness racing. Okay, so now I was listening.

Ted bought Kissin Prince for a song because a horse with a shattered coffin bone is in pretty dire straits, but Ted saw something in Kissin Prince's iris that convinced him he could help the horse with his herbal remedies.

Did I mention that Ted is a master herbalist? The iris diagnosis and hammer aside, Ted's thing is that he is an herbalist of the highest order. Ted's Manhattan apartment is one big pile of herbs. Even his wife and kids are covered in a greenish dust. He spends his days formulating herbal stuff for people all over the world who keep coming back for more. And if Ted tells you something will help your horse, it usually does. In the case of Kissin Prince he concocted a remedy that not only cured his foot, it put him back on the track in a big way

I trained Kissin Prince down and each day I was sure to give him all the herbs Ted provided. It got to the point where the horse wouldn't eat if you didn't put the herbs in his mash. If you've ever used Ted's herbs you'll start to notice this phenomenon, and my own best guess is that the horses either like the taste or they like the effect the herbs are having on them. Excuse me, would you like some fresh ground herbs with that?

To be blunt, Kissin Prince did not train down well. After a few months he still would not beat 2:20 on the mile track and if you tried to go two trips with him he'd look back at you as if to say, "You're joking, right?" But he was sound and solid, and later I found out from a former groom that Prince hated to train and to just go ahead and qualify him. Now how do you qualify a horse after a 2:20 mile? Granted it was about the fifth time I trained him in 2:20, but then it dawned on me. Each mile was 2:20 - never a second more and never a second less. To me that meant Kissin Prince was getting over on me. He had a calculator in his head and 20 was his favorite number.

So I put him in a qualifier at Yonkers with Rejean Daigneault down to drive. Rejean is a nice enough guy, but he has a way of looking at you that's kind of frightening. He should be in James Bond

movies or something. As we walked him up the ramp to the track Rejean asked me a few questions that I only half answered but I really wanted to blurt out, "Okay, okay, I only trained him in 2:20 but he's sound and... please don't hurt me."

It was a miserable day and the track, listed as "good," was trying to recover from the previous night's heavy rains. I said to Ted, "Watch him go in 2:20. I'm going to look like an idiot." In the end I did look like an idiot because Kissin Prince won by 20 and Rejean came back angry with me for not rigging him enough to be held. Kissin Prince actually won the qualifier by 20 even lengths in 2:00 and he wanted to go more — poor Rejean.

Overall, Kissin Prince raced another five years for us and earned about \$100,000. He won in 1:53 with a well-hammered Jack Moiseyev in the bike, but he did most of his racing at Yonkers where he bounced around in conditioned races. He won the last race of his career in a leisurely 2:00 and eventually Ted donated him to the Standardbred Retirement Foundation who did a great job of finding him a permanent home with a young rider.

A lot happened during my five-year tenure with Kissin Prince because all the while I was getting the credit, Ted was busy looking into eyes and buying horses for me to train. He never paid a lot for any of them but they all did really well. I remember one in particular.

One day, Ted and I found ourselves in the Freehold paddock for some reason. A gray filly caught his eye and it was only a matter of time before he was looking into hers. The filly was a two-year-old named Lingerie Hanover. At the time she was in the very capable hands of Sean Bier, but he wanted to sell her. She was on the lazy and small side, so Ted made Sean a small offer and he took it. I mentioned to Ted that Sean was not only an up-and-coming driver, he was also a pretty keen trainer. Ted knew this but he said that he saw immaturity in her ankles and that she just needed time. Ted added that she had a "classy eye" — something he also said that about Docs Fella and Good Time Georgio when he looked at them in their respective yearling sales. Ask Tommy Haughton, he'll tell you all about it. He rarely uses the "classy eye" thing, but I've heard him say it about three times and he

was right each time.

So I worked with Lingerie Hanover for a few months, but Ted was worried about her ankles because as far as his flashlight could see, they were still bothering her. I mentioned to Ted that she was sound as a dollar and that she was just slow and lazy. Finally Ted asked me to ask the vet to inject her ankles. I had her ankles injected and the laziness miraculously vanished. She finished up her career with 32 wins and \$136,845 in earnings. In one of her last races she was claimed and the people who claimed her treat her like Dick Cheney — she is constantly being kept in an undisclosed location. Ted can't see her or buy her back no matter what he offers — it's weird.

Okay, so I saved the best Ted Weg horse story for last because it's so crazy. There was a mare named Kassa Girl racing at Freehold who was an absolute train wreck. She had a little back class but nothing earth shattering that would make you take a second look at her. Being by Kassa Branca she was not headed for the Armstrong Brothers or Hanover, but she was a nice looking mare with a pretty head. Unfortunately her lines and her knee were not so pretty. She was racing poorly at Freehold in \$4,000 claimers and for the life of me I couldn't figure out why Ted wanted to buy a cheap horse like that.

I was told to offer the trainer \$2,500 to which the trainer agreed, but he noted that she was in to go

that day and the sale would have to take place after the race. She finished last that afternoon and came back with a big, bloody knee. She'd been clobbering that knee for most of her career and the first time I saw that knee it looked like Mt. St. Helens with extra lava.


Later that afternoon Ted and I took a ride to the trainer's barn to pay the money and take the horse. "You still want her," the trainer said with astonishment. I didn't but Ted did and I became the proud trainer of the worst \$4,000 claiming mare at Freehold Raceway. It's pretty hard to be the worst \$4,000 claiming mare at Freehold because all of them are trying as hard as they can to earn that title. I later asked Ted why he wanted her so badly and he said that he had looked at her many months before for the trainer and that she had a classy eye, but the trainer wasn't really interested in anything Ted had to say.


"Put her on this herb and that herb, and tell the vet to inject her stifle," Ted said. To be honest, I actually found that stifle problem, but Ted reaffirmed it when he looked again into her eye. Keep in mind that Ted is not only a believer in himself, he

has complete trust and confidence in the trainers he uses, and if you want to do something he lets you do it. It's definitely not a one-way street.

Kassa Girl gradually started winning her way up the ladder to the \$20,000 claimers at Yonkers and finished fourth in the preferred pace for mares. As she wound her way back down the ladder she was claimed and never heard from again.

This week, Ted was talking about getting me another horse for old time's sake. Ted doesn't get out of New York as much as he used to, but he has promised that he's going to look into a few eyes and see what he comes up with.

Ted recently told me that he has a secret, handwritten book he's scribbled over the years. In this book he's itemized of all his remedies and how to make them. He told me that when his time comes, I am the sole heir to that book of wisdom. It's nice to know that I will inherit something that's so important to him, but I think that all those potions and notions are pretty much worthless if Ted himself is not there to employ them, because when all is said and done, Ted Weg is his own best ingredient. 



## OSS & Trillium Series 2009 PAYMENT DATES

**FEBRUARY 15, 2009**

**3-Year-Old Sustaining Payment**  
Ontario Sires Stakes #36 .....\$600

For Ontario-sired three-year-olds (foals of 2006) that were nominated to the program.

**Trillium Series #36**  
Sustaining Payment .....\$300

For three-year-old fillies that are 100% Ontario-owned and which were nominated in 2008.

**MARCH 15, 2009**

**2-Year-Old Sustaining Payment**  
Ontario Sires Stakes #37 .....\$400

For Ontario-sired two-year-olds (foals of 2007) that were nominated to the program.


**MAY 15, 2009**

**Yearling Nomination Payment**  
Ontario Sires Stakes #38 .....\$50

For yearlings (foals of 2008) sired by a stallion registered with the OSS for the 2007 breeding season.

Cheques to be made payable to:	By registered mail to:
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