

Ladies — stand up, be counted!



**ANNE
LANG**

My initial reaction to the prospect of writing a monthly editorial focused on "women in racing" was mild exasperation.

After all, if the ultimate goal for women is to elevate our societal status to

the point where gender is no longer an issue, then why on earth make an issue out of it here—in a trade publication that represents one of the few remaining industries where virtually all power is wielded by males?

But of course, that's the very reason why it's important. Better to have a forum for consciousness-raising than no voice at all.

Women.

In racing.

So, I started thinking about it.

Not surprisingly, the first mental image that materialized was the puckish grin of Julie Krone. To say the accomplished jockey has been an inspiration to skilled women who persevere in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds—well, it's all been said before about Julie Krone.

The sad fact is, Krone has held the unofficial title of Top Woman in Racing

for a long time, because scant few others have emerged to jostle her for position under the spotlight.

Oh sure, there are plenty of women in racing whose names we recognize from news stories: celebrated owners or breeders smiling graciously beneath oversized hats; women posed in drawing rooms before gleaming trophy cases or leaning casually on immaculate paddock fences, their priceless bloodstock cavoring in the background.

But who are the real heroes (or heroines, if you wish) among women in racing today?

Julie Krone is in a class by herself. Far more women fit the description of the unsung hero: women who, by their stubborn determination to gain a foothold in this exclusive fraternity, simply deserve credit for hanging in there.

Take, for example, the female backstretch employee. It's hard enough to drag oneself out of bed at four in the morning to work at a physically taxing, high-risk job, accepting a nomadic lifestyle for little pay—without having to endure the potential added stress of sexual harassment, salary discrimination or limited advancement.

Women working at other levels of the industry—similarly lacking in exceptional riding feats, homebred stakes

horses or altruistic efforts—often don't fare much better.

The good news is, the old men have finally been ousted from the White House. More modern attitudes are slowly beginning to pervade the racing world as well. Women can now be found in just about every facet of the industry, and their force is growing.

But their role models are still few and far between.

For every woman in racing who claims she suffers no mistreatment related to her sex, there are two dozen others with stories to tell.

I'd like to hear from women in racing across the country. Share some of your experiences with me, both the triumphs and the tribulations. We can create a collective voice for change, right here.

Write to me in care of this newspaper, and in this column we'll examine some of the challenges facing women in racing today. Requests for anonymity will be honored.

Women, let me hear from you. We won't topple the walls of this male dominated fortress overnight, but it's a good place to start.

Anne Lang is the Texas breeding correspondent for Daily Racing Form.

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