

# Profile: In Ethan's Honor

by Jessica Simmons



## Honored

Ethan Barreto may be gone, but In Ethan's Honor keeps his spirit alive



The horses were at the halfway mark in the 2007 Breeders Crown elimination for 2-year-old pacing colts when In Ethan's Honor, a 45-1 shot driven by Ron Pierce, looked to be in a great position to score with a second-over trip. Anticipation swept over Scott Alberg as his horse fought to maintain his pace.

By the three-quarter mark, however, the intensity and speed became too much for In Ethan's Honor, and the other horses left him far behind in their wake. Although the pacer finished last, Alberg does not consider it a wasted effort, for no horse has brought him more joy or enabled him to spread the excitement of racing further.

He was, after all, named in Ethan's honor.

**NAMESAKE:** In Ethan's Honor, named after the late Ethan Barreto (inset) broke his maiden last year at Freehold for owner Scott Alberg (arms crossed). The colt later started in the Breeders Crown.

The original Ethan, Ethan Barreto, was diagnosed in 2005 with anaplastic ependymoma, a malignant brain tumor. At the age of 4 he underwent an extensive surgery that left him needing a feeding tube, yet still allowed him to return to school and carry on his daily activities. Things seemed to be going well until 2006 when the cancer returned, and Ethan's doctors were unable to control its spread.

The doctors said he had two to three months left to live.

That's when Alberg came into the picture. A mutual friend shared with him Ethan's story, after which Alberg immediately contacted the Barretos to show his concern and offer support.

"It took us aback a bit," admitted Ethan's father,

Tom. "At first we thought, 'Who is this guy?' Then we found out he knew our son's preschool teacher—and we were more receptive to meet him. We were grateful he had the heart that he had, because he fell in love with our son, and our son took to him as well."

Alberg has been a fan of racing ever since he was a teenager visiting The Meadowlands in 1978. Since then he has owned eight horses, with In The Paint and Stage Avian being the most notable names.

"Once I bought my first horse it was a dream come true and an amazing thrill," he said. "Although I've never made money in the business, it's hard to take harness [racing] out of your blood once it's in you."

Yet, while Alberg loves the sport of harness racing, he says that coaching Little League is his passion, and he has been involved with the Weehawken Cal Ripken Youth Baseball League for 19 years. During his years as a coach, Alberg's passion quickly transformed into compassion and he has been using his influence in the community to help

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**HAPPIER TIMES:** Ethan Barreto with his parents, Tom and Maria.

and support those in need in any way he can.

"I like to help disadvantaged kids that have tons of adversity to overcome," he said. "If I find out about a tragedy, whatever it is, I want to offer my help. I can only do so much but I want to be there."

Alberg met with Ethan as often as he could during his final months. Eventually Ethan's seizures became too intense, leaving Alberg with no other choice but to say his final goodbyes. Ethan died in early 2006, just shy of his fifth birthday.

After Ethan's death, a heartbroken Alberg decided to carry on Ethan's memory by dedicating his 2006 Little League season to him, just as he did in 2004 for 11-year-old Kenny Benkovic Jr., who died of brain cancer that same year.

After the season was over, however, Alberg felt there had to be more he could do to honor Ethan, so in October he purchased the Life Sign yearling, Emotional Life, and renamed him In Ethan's Honor.

Bred at Brittany Farms in Versailles, Ky., In Ethan's Honor was put under the care of George Barsa, and Colleen and Michael Posner, who took to him right away.

"I've worked with In Ethan's Honor ever since he was a baby," Barsa said. "I broke him. He's like a little kid—he tries very hard and always does the

right thing. He wants to race, wants to be on the tracks."

As a 2-year-old, In Ethan's Honor made eight starts, with one win and four third-place finishes. He took a 1:56.4 mark in a qualifier at Gaitway Farm and finished the year with \$12,793 in earnings. Yet to everyone who knows about Ethan and the memory the horse holds for him, winning isn't necessarily the highest priority.

Barsa remembers the Barretos' visit

to In Ethan's Honor as a particularly powerful moment.

"They started crying and couldn't believe they had a horse named after their son," Barsa said. "It was a very emotional thing seeing [In Ethan's Honor] being happy and jumping around in the stall, and they felt really good about it. They were very happy."

"[The Barretos and I] go out periodically to the farm to see In Ethan's Honor and that's the greatest thrill of all," added Alberg. "Just seeing the horse meant the world to them, and they are so grateful, but I'm not sure they understand how good I feel doing this. To me, it's like, how can you not do these things?"

After hearing stories about Ethan, though, it is no surprise that anyone would be so determined to carry on his memory.

"He was a very wise young man," Barreto said about his son. "He'd do anything for a laugh. Argue his points to the point where you would give up or give in. He put others' concerns in front of his own. He had a very giving, loving soul. He was a great kid."

In Ethan's Honor has returned to the track as a 3-year-old, and those around him hope he will continue to spread the hope and inspiration that come from the memory of a small boy who left too soon.

**"Just to know that there's somewhat of a legacy of our son out there is enough for us,"** said Tom Barreto.

"I have no expectations," Barreto said. "Throughout life if you expect things to happen, they generally don't happen the way you want them to. Just to know that there's somewhat of a legacy of our son out there is enough for us."

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