

Queen and Stronach shared equestrian passion



25 years ago this past June, Frank Stronach's horse, Awesome Again, won the Queen's Plate.

It wasn't the first time Stronach had been in Woodbine Racetrack's winner's circle, nor would it be the last ? but his 1997 win was rather special: Queen Elizabeth II was on hand to present her namesake trophy.

It was the first meeting between the two individuals with a strong passion for racing and thoroughbreds, but it would not be the last.

Stronach is among the few individuals to have hosted the late monarch in a private capacity.

Following the Queen's death in Scotland last Thursday at the age of 96, Stronach shared his memories of the monarch.

?There were a lot of people [at Woodbine] and we had a little chat, but a few months later I got a call from her staff asking if I could meet with her,? said the founder of Magna International. ?They said the Queen was visiting Kentucky and she would like to drop by my farm [to see] my famous stallions and she did.

?She came at the time she said she would, there were some security staff there standing further away, but she and I spent almost an hour alone in the barn ? with a stable hand so she could see the stallions.

?First of all, she's a great lady, very gracious. She loved horses and had a very good understanding of the horses: their confirmation, their pedigrees, etc., and I think she was planning to send some mares for the stallions. It was a lovely afternoon, very down-to-earth and normal and we had a great chat about the horses.?

Conscious of her official role throughout The Commonwealth, Stronach says in this capacity the Queen had a ?little bit more restrictions,? but on the farm, away from cameras, and sharing their passion, ?she was like a regular person ? but with a lot of grace.?

?Nature takes its course,? he says. ?It doesn't matter how famous you are or how important you are, you'll die one of those days but I think she was such a respected person that the whole world recognized that and they expressed their feelings. Whatever duties she had, they were done within the framework of democracy, within the framework of fairness ? and her great mark was she had a lot of

grace.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter