

Requiem for a Racetrack

by Phillip W. Weiss

Belmont Park as we knew it no longer exists. It is history. Belmont Park has become a huge demolition project. The transformation started with the construction of the UBS Arena and now incorporates the track. Too bad more people don't check it out for themselves. All the landmarks of that track, places where people met and congregated for years, are obliterated, with no fanfare, as if they meant nothing. Who knows what, if anything, has been preserved. What happened to that huge mural that stretched maybe fifty feet? What happened to all the pics and artifacts that were on display throughout the clubhouse, which is GONE? What happened to the winner's circle where all the great horses and great jockeys took their bows, where all the stakes' winners were applauded, the center of attention of the huge crowds of people who came from all over the world to watch horses win the Triple Crown? What happened to the famous dirt track where some of the greatest racehorses and greatest jockeys achieved greatness.

Belmont Park was built to last but didn't. The paddock and picnic areas are intact, but everything else has been reduced to a pile of junk, being moved by machines operated by workers who have their instructions. Demolishing Belmont Park is dangerous work. The grandstands were built of brick and steel beams, a lot of steel beams, all of which are now twisted hunks of metal. What took three years to build has been torn down literally piece by piece by a few machines. There is no garage sale because anything of value has been transformed into garbage, to be carted away, like the junk it has now become. So be it. The same thing will happen to Aqueduct, maybe not as dramatically, but with the same result - it will be gone.