

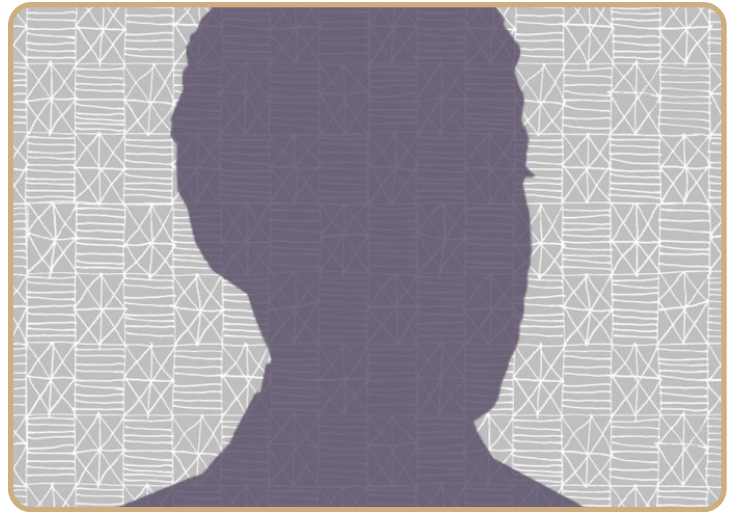
Sylvia Harris

Author: Michael Phelps,
Graduate Student Intern

Places: California; Orlando, Florida;
Chicago, Illinois; Wilmington, Delaware

Birth: Unknown **Death:** Unknown

Professions: Jockey



Racetrack Influence on Childhood

Sylvia Harris was born in Germany to military parents. She grew up in northern California, visiting racetracks with her father. While she fell in love with racing, she felt discouraged from pursuing a career in the industry. Instead, she went to college for two years until she had her first child. Harris led the life of a single mother, working odd jobs to make ends meet. Some of the jobs included work with horses but she was never riding like she had imagined.¹

Struggle to Break into Racing

Harris lost custody of her children due to her battle with bipolar disorder and lived homeless in Orlando. She was in her early thirties when she began her own career in the horse industry. Setbacks prevented Harris from competing in her first professional race until she was forty. She finally earned her big break in Chicago and entered a Thoroughbred race at Arlington. Finally, on her seventeenth mount, Harris found herself atop a winner. Harris achieved what she had always dreamed after years of struggling against the odds.²

Legacy and Book

Harris suffered a major setback when she broke her neck and shoulder blade. She was lucky to be able to walk again. In the summer of 2010, she climbed back atop a race horse to continue her life's love at Delaware Park.³ Harris published a book entitled *Long Shot: My Bipolar Life and the Horses Who Saved Me* about her struggles with bipolar depression, sexism within the horse industry and the redemption she found in her success.⁴ Harris would like her story to serve as an inspiration for others to reach for their dreams and to never give up. She further added, "And keep your determination, no matter what. It's not going to happen overnight. It may not happen when you want it to, but who are we to tell each other when your dreams should come true?"⁵

Sources

"Bi-Polar Jockey Finds Salvation In Racing." 2011. Tell Me More. WHY Philadelphia: NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2011/03/07/134332439/Bi-Polar-Jockey-Finds-Salvation-In-Racing>.

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"Sylvia Harris." n.d. The Female on the Horse. Accessed November 2, 2019. <http://www.femalejockeys.com/Sylvia.html>.

Footnotes

¹Shandler, "Harris' Long Climb to the Top."

²"Bi-Polar Jockey Finds Salvation In Racing."

³"Bi-Polar Jockey Finds Salvation In Racing."

⁴Harris, Long Shot.

⁵"Bi-Polar Jockey Finds Salvation In Racing."

