



## Helen Pitts

**Born:** May 23, 1974 in Monkton, Md.

**Resident:** Louisville, Ky.

**Family:** Single.

### Helen Pitts' record at Keeneland

**Total wins:** 5

**Stakes Wins (2)**

- Saddled first Grade 1 winner when Sweet Talker won the 2005 Queen Elizabeth II Challenge Cup.
- Won her second Grade 1 race with Einstein (Brz) in last year's Gulfstream Park Breeders' Cup Turf Stakes.
- Won Lexus Raven Run Stakes (G2) last fall with Leah's Secret.

Helen Pitts won her first Grade 1 race a little more than three months into her training career. That notable achievement came in Keeneland's prestigious Queen Elizabeth II Challenge Cup with Sweet Talker in a three-horse photo on Oct. 15, 2005. The victory also enabled her to become the first woman to saddle a Grade 1 winner at the Lexington track, giving her permanent bragging rights.

She took over training Ken McPeek's stable on July 1, 2005 when he decided to become a bloodstock agent. He has since returned to training.

Her first two stakes victories as a trainer came on the same day, Sept. 24, as Sweet Talker won the Martha Washington Breeders' Cup at Laurel and Durban Thunder (Brz) captured the Kentucky Cup Turf Dash at Kentucky Downs.

Sweet Talker was then sold at that fall's Keeneland November sale for \$1.15 million to Don Adam's Courtlandt Farm, who transferred her to Graham Motion's barn.

Pitts also saddled French Park to win the Pocahontas Stakes (G3) on Nov. 5 and three weeks later the Golden Rod Stakes (G2), both at Churchill.

For those six months, her stable earned \$1,163,642. It was a terrific beginning.

Last year, Pitts won her second Grade 1 race, the Gulfstream Park Breeders' Cup Turf, with Einstein (Brz) as well as three stakes with Leah's Secret.

For the year, her stable won 34 of 210 races with 31 seconds and 25 thirds for earnings of \$1,314,009.

"Kenny (McPeek) gave me a wonderful opportunity," Pitts said. "I've been very fortunate. I believe things happen for a reason."

In late-January, she had some 30 horses in training either in Florida or at the Churchill Downs training center. She was expecting "quite a few 2-year-olds" to join her, some of whom she was involved in selecting at Keeneland and other sales venues. By the time they arrive, she'll have "forty-some" horses in training, she said.

Einstein, who had not raced since finishing fourth in the Woodford Reserve Turf

Classic (G1) last May, was gearing up for a return to competition on Jan. 31. After a six-furlong work on Jan. 18, Pitts said: "He is doing incredibly well. Not only did he work great this morning, but you should have seen what a handful he was trying to cool him out after he got back to the barn."

"Right now we just want to test him on dirt again and see how he does against top competition. If things don't work out, we can always go back to the grass."

She reported Leah's Secret was "doing super" in January, with an intended season-opener on Feb. 17 at Gulfstream.

And Gatorize, her first Breeders' Cup starter last year when 12th in the Juvenile Fillies, got a little time off and was nearing the beginning of her 3-year-old campaign. Pitts said she owns a half-interest in the 2-year-old half-brother to Gatorize.

She also has a pair of 3-year-old colts she has high expectations for in 2007—For You Reppo and Curlin.

Pitts grew up on a horse farm in Monkton, Md., just outside Baltimore. Her father, Clinton Pitts Jr., was a steeplechase rider and a racing steward in Maryland, New York and Hong Kong. Her mother, Avla Pitts, trained steeplechasers, fox hunters and show horses.

"My mom trained the steeplechase horses and my dad rode them," Helen said.

She told Claire Novak in the fall 2006 Keeneland magazine: "I did fox hunting, showing, pony racing, rode a few steeplechases ... it wasn't all handed to me, but I worked for what I wanted. I ate, slept and breathed horses."

She worked for steeplechase trainers Charles Fenwick Jr. and Jack Fisher. "You do everything with steeplechase trainers," she said, tasks that included being an assistant trainer and riding the horses.

She attended Washington College in Chestertown, Md., for two years. During that time, she was going home every weekend to ride and show horses. So she transferred closer to home, to Villa Julie College and obtained her degree in business administration.

After graduation, she worked for trainer Francis Campitelli for five or six years, she said, exercising horses for him and serving as assistant trainer.

One winter when Campitelli didn't go to Florida, she went anyway and hooked up with Kenny McPeek. She elected to stay with him, exercising horses and becoming his assistant until mid-2005.

Last year, Pitts won three stakes with Leah's Secret. The first came in July in the Lazer Show Handicap at Churchill. She then won the Raven Run Stakes at odds of 18-1 during the Keeneland fall meet.

After the Raven Run, Pitts said: "It was (a) very tough (field), and I hoped that I hadn't overfaced her. But I always knew she was a very nice filly and it was just a matter of catching straight 3-year-olds at the end of the year and hope we'd get by with it."

Rider Mark Guidry said: "We had a great trip. I was in the catbird's seat all the way. I was first to the outside overlooking the inside speed. Turning for home, I pressed on her and she responded gamely."

Leah's Secret followed that up with a victory in the Anne Arundel Stakes at Laurel in November.

"It's really great to come home where I started and win a race like this," Pitts said after winning the Anne Arundel. "It's doubly special for me."

"If anything, it's a little advantage to go from Polytrack to dirt, because you've got to be a big horse to run well on Polytrack," said Pitts after Leah's Secret had two races over Polytrack before shipping to Laurel for the stakes win.

Leah's Secret, who had raced just once at 2, is huge for a filly. "She's great to get on in the morning," Pitts said. "It's like being on a colt."

She still gallops from three to six horses each morning. She said it "was a big advantage," to be able to ride her own trainees. "You can see a lot on the ground, but when I exercise them I know how they're going, how they feel, whether they're happy."

"My Mom and Dad are very proud of me," she said. "Dad didn't really want me to go work at the racetrack, I don't think, but the way things have worked out, he thinks it's fine now."

"My mother is a very good horsewoman. I learned a lot from her and I've picked up a lot from other people over the years and that's pretty handy."

When asked what goals she has, she replied: "I'd love to do really well with Einstein and win more graded races with him and further my career."

Pitts was quoted in Keeneland magazine as saying: "I'm in this business because I love it. I don't think I would ever want to do anything else."