

NORTHEAST/MID-ATLANTIC

The Long Run

McGinneses stalwarts of the Maryland breeding scene

BY ALICIA WINCZE-HUGHES
 LYDIA A. WILLIAMS PHOTOS



Charles and Cynthia McGinnes at their Thornmar Farm near Chestertown, Md., with Tinsel

CYNTHIA MCGINNES LOVES a good history lesson. The co-owner of Thornmar Farm cannot speak about the mark she and her husband, Charles, have made on the Mid-Atlantic circuit without providing suitable background information regarding all parties involved. Yes, their operation is one of enduring stalwarts of the Maryland breeding ranks—successfully blending horsemanship, diligence, and sentimentality for more than four decades. But if one wants to get to the root of what has driven the McGinneses to weather some of the industry’s economic free falls, to remain dedicated to their region when others fled to the slots-rich lure of neighboring jurisdictions, Cynthia McGinnes cites one of her favorite pieces of historical data.

“I don’t think too many people know this, but when George Washington wanted horses, he always came to Kent County to buy them,” McGinnes said with a laugh, referencing the first President’s affinity for her Chestertown base. “He said that we raised the best horses in the country. So I say, ‘I’ve been trying to raise a horse that George Washington would be proud of.’”

The prideful way in which McGinnes speaks of her state’s horse industry is one she can apply to Thornmar, which counts grade I winner Ask the Moon among the most successful runners it has bred either solely or in partnership. In 2004 the farm had a banner year when six of the horses it bred won stakes races, and recent weeks have seen the McGinneses continue to be rewarded by the exploits of those raised on their grounds as Kiss to Remember, the 5-year-old daughter of Big Brown they co-bred, captured the Nov. 5 Chilukki Stakes (gr. II) at Churchill Downs two days before selling to JS Company

for \$500,000 at the Fasig-Tipton Kentucky November sale.

If there is a bittersweet note to seeing one of the babies they foaled become a graded stakes victor, it is in the fact that Kiss to Remember served as a reminder of how invaluable her dam, Taft Lil Queen, made herself to the McGinneses prior to her death in 2015. Purchased for \$48,000 at the 2001 Fasig-Tipton Adena Springs broodmare sale, Taft Lil Queen became the backbone of Thornmar’s breeding program over the last decade-plus, producing three stakes winners including For Royalty, dam of multiple stakes winner and grade I-placed Constellation.

Charles McGinnes recalled when he first saw Taft Lil Queen at the Adena Springs sale, his friend helping him shortlist horses urged him to pass on the daughter of Irish Open. She wasn’t fancy, but she had a good foundation to her and all the right mechanics McGinnes valued when it came to producing future racehorses.

In short, she was the embodiment of what Thornmar Farm has stood for.

“I went to the sale with a friend of mine from Ireland...and he didn’t like Taft Lil Queen at all,” Charles McGinnes said. “We went through and looked at the mares and picked out two that I really liked; one of them was Taft Lil Queen, the other was another mare that was a stakes winner. I ended up buying both of them.”

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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2016 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2016 Earnings	Foals	Cumulative		
									Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	FREUD (98, Storm Cat), Sequel Stallions New York	\$10,000	189/95	4/6	2/4	(Sharp Azteca, \$298,250)	\$4,895,593	*1054	43	1.59	1.27
2	BELLAMY ROAD (02, Concerto), Dutchess Views Farm	\$7,500	212/106	6/6	1/6	(Land Over Sea, \$598,500)	\$4,393,107	*501	26	1.17	1.29
3	BIG BROWN (05, Boundary), Dutchess Views Farm	\$10,000	164/77	4/4	0/4	(Dortmund, \$270,000)	\$3,432,490	*545	16	1.23	1.67
4	HOLD ME BACK (06, Giant's Causeway), Irish Hill Century Farm	\$5,000	124/68	5/5	3/5	(Voluntario, \$171,340)	\$2,782,716	200	6	1.13	1.22
5	BUSTIN STONES (04, City Zip), Waldorf Farm	\$2,500	71/49	2/3	2/2	(Bust Another, \$246,481)	\$2,190,209	146	4	1.35	1.43
6	FROST GIANT (03, Giant's Causeway), Keane Stud Operations	\$7,500	101/50	3/3	3/3	(Frosty Margarita, \$149,084)	\$2,187,823	*272	7	1.38	1.20
7	DESERT PARTY (06, Street Cry), Sequel Stallions New York	\$4,000	85/38	0/0	0/0	(Saharan, \$177,660)	\$1,867,195	144	3	1.02	1.45
8	DUBLIN (07, Afleet Alex), Keane Stud Operations	\$2,500	65/25	0/0	0/0	(Dr Blarney, \$178,100)	\$1,432,692	112	0	0.98	1.22
9	NOBLE CAUSEWAY (02, Giant's Causeway)	Died, 2014	66/27	0/0	0/0	(Samraat, \$165,100)	\$990,580	234	7	0.81	1.08
10	DISCO RICO (97, Citidancer)	Died, 2014	45/20	1/1	0/1	(Disco Partner, \$178,500)	\$944,920	262	12	1.35	1.21
11	COSMONAUT (02, Lemon Drop Kid), Keane Stud Operations	\$5,000	38/17	1/1	0/1	(Wonderment, \$142,060)	\$919,365	80	2	1.12	1.03
12	D' FUNNYBONE (07, D'wildcat), Rockridge Stud	\$2,500	32/18	2/2	2/2	(Nobody Move, \$109,224)	\$901,442	*46	2	1.08	1.24
13	HERE'S ZEALOUS (97, Dehere), Kaz Hill Farm	\$1,000	41/25	1/1	0/1	(Green Gratto, \$129,024)	\$856,195	190	1	0.99	0.99
14	COURAGEOUS CAT (06, Storm Cat), Questroyal North	\$6,000	38/16	1/1	1/1	(Feeling Bossy, \$159,048)	\$845,617	71	1	1.05	1.18
15	GIANT SURPRISE (09, Giant's Causeway), Rockridge Stud	\$5,000	21/13	2/2	2/2	(Super Surprise, \$177,500)	\$694,185	34	2	2.21	1.20
16	MR. SEKIGUCHI (03, Storm Cat), Irish Hill Century Farm	\$2,500	22/16	1/2	0/1	(Yourdreamsormine, \$200,535)	\$638,660	*90	2	1.01	1.23
17	MISSION IMPAZIBLE (07, Unbridled's Song), Sequel Stallions New York	\$7,500	21/7	1/1	0/1	(Silver Mission, \$179,102)	\$607,148	42	1	1.38	1.17
18	HERE COMES BEN (06, Street Cry), McMahon of Saratoga Thoroughbreds	\$7,500	35/12	0/0	0/0	(Benevolence, \$72,050)	\$447,728	62	0	0.62	1.14
19	JUSTENUFFHUMOR (05, Distorted Humor), Turkey	N/A	35/13	0/0	0/0	(Pretty Enuff, \$78,780)	\$437,093	58	0	0.61	1.12
20	TEUFLESBERG (04, Johannesburg), McMahon of Saratoga Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	25/14	0/0	0/0	(Good Bye Greg, \$57,500)	\$356,690	83	4	1.48	1.17
21	GOLDEN MISSILE (95, A.P. Indy), Milfer Farm	\$3,500	38/13	0/0	0/0	(Estrada's Girl, \$83,893)	\$329,297	*641	13	1.02	1.49
22	THE CLIFF'S EDGE (01, Gulch)	Pnsd	31/13	0/0	0/0	(Frazil, \$74,261)	\$291,741	244	4	0.80	1.16
23	MIRACLE MAN (02, Yankee Victor)	Died, 2015	6/4	0/0	0/0	(Je's Shooting Star, \$102,941)	\$291,231	8	1	2.05	1.55
24	CONGRESSIONALHONOR (01, Forestry), Sandy Way Farm	\$1,500	14/7	0/0	0/0	(Superling, \$77,828)	\$282,913	161	1	0.73	0.94
25	ALEX'S PAL (99, Valid Expectations)	Died, 2015	17/7	0/0	0/0	(Will, \$71,305)	\$281,934	106	2	1.22	0.92
26	BANK HEIST (07, Maria's Mon), Kaz Hill Farm	\$10,000	12/7	1/1	1/1	(Won Dozen Banks, \$96,280)	\$273,629	17	1	1.27	1.41
27	MARSH SIDE (03, Gone West), Dutchess Views Farm	\$2,500	21/6	0/0	0/0	(Dr Luber's Kiss, \$67,220)	\$221,191	*132	0	0.31	1.22
28	GRIFFINITE (98, Unbridled's Song), Monhill Farm @ Silvernails Farm	\$2,000	8/4	1/1	1/1	(Ribbonite, \$105,316)	\$168,145	68	1	0.61	0.88
29	DR LARGE (06, A.P. Indy), Oriskany Creek Farm	\$2,500	10/5	0/0	0/0	(Dr Smooth, \$37,960)	\$130,068	22	1	0.72	0.70
30	WICKED RICH (06, Yes It's True), Green Acres Thoroughbreds	\$1,000	8/5	0/0	0/0	(Combee, \$41,820)	\$108,590	10	0	0.49	1.43

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"Ms. (Virginia Kraft) Payson is a good friend of mine, and I always stay at her house during the sales. And at that point she had an advisor named George Smith. After the sale he called me up and said, 'This mare is dynamite.' I said, 'Which one?' and he said, 'Taft Lil Queen.' It turns out I was right, and he was right."

BREEDING QUALITY

Heeding their collective instincts—both when to stick to their gut feelings and

when to alter course—has served Thornmar well since its inception in 1972.

While their broodmare band has fluctuated from around 30-35 in the early 2000s to the 20 or so Thornmar currently houses, the McGinnesses have maintained a philosophy of making a living by selling their yearlings. They have carved out a reputation for bringing good, sound babies to the marketplace that have been raised in the "let horses be horses" vein, even if it meant their offerings get dinged for perceived commercial imperfections.

Where Thornmar used to be able to focus on breeding mostly for the local market, however, the shifting landscape of the sales arena prompted the farm to have to look beyond the mainstay Timonium auctions in order to keep pace financially.

"Some of (the yearlings) we sell in Kentucky and generally the ones that sell in Kentucky are earlier, more mature," Charles McGinness said. "So we choose ones that we think will sell well in those sales and then the others we sell in Mary-

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The main residence at Thornmar



A third of the broodmares at Thornmar are homebreds

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Dutchess
VIEWS
Farm

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land, basically the ones that are more local. Generally, of the 20 mares, 11 are going to Kentucky stallions and nine are bred to Maryland stallions.”

Added Cynthia McGinnes, “You have to really be careful because you have to breed quality now. We used to breed for the market and we’d be happy to get between \$25,000 and \$50,000, and that doesn’t really do it anymore.”

Their venerable stallion Horatius helped put Thornmar on the map and kept the operation going when the Maryland breeding industry found itself struggling to keep pace as neighboring states had their purses and breeding programs bolstered thanks to slots-generated cash. A graded stakes winner on the track, Horatius retired to Thornmar in 1981 and went on to sire 25 stakes winners, most notably his champion daughter Safely Kept, heroine of the 1990 Breeders’ Cup Sprint (gr. I).

Two years after Horatius’ death in 2006, the first bit of aid emerged for Maryland’s storied Thoroughbred industry when voters approved video lottery terminals. With the state getting similar revenue that aided racing in Delaware, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, the incentive program for breeders surged and has played a massive role in keeping Thornmar and its comrades in the game.

According to the Maryland Horse Breeders’ Association, Thornmar earned \$100,775 in breeder bonuses for 2015 and led all breeders with a state-high \$138,936 in bonuses the year before. With breeder bonuses paying out 30% of a horse’s share of the purse to any registered Maryland-bred who finishes first, second, or third in any race in the state, it has made it possible for farms to rack up tremendous supplemental income even from horses that

never break out of racing’s lower levels.

“One of the most successful breeder bonus horses we had never ran for higher than \$7,500,” Cynthia McGinnes said. “It took him 10 times to break his maiden but he had seconds and thirds. And once he broke his maiden, he ran for another year and a half running second and third. We got well over \$20,000 in breeder bonuses from him.

“What is helping the Maryland breeder is they can run in cheaper races and can still make it worth their while and have a lot of fun with the breeder bonus rewarding them.”

If there is a drawback to the resurgence



Thornmar stallion Horatius sired 25 stakes winners prior to his death in 2006

of the racing industry in the Old Line State, according to the McGinneses, it is that the purses have reached a level where they are now luring top-class operations from outside jurisdictions, making the days of running in so-called easy spots increasingly a thing of the past.

“The only downside to what we have in Maryland is we only race three days a week and it really limits the opportunity,” Charles McGinnes said. “And with the increased purses, we’re getting a lot of peo-

ple from New York that ship horses down to run in the better races. When you see (trainers) Todd Pletcher and Bill Mott and Shug McGaughey running horses at Laurel in order to win a maiden special weight, you have to have a pretty well-bred horse because of the competition.”

HEART AND SOUL

The endgame for Thornmar Farm hasn’t shifted much over the decades.

“We’re just trying to at this stage of our lives sell enough to make enough money to keep the farm going and run a few,” Cynthia McGinnes said.

What also hasn’t changed is the fact that operating Thornmar has been as much a passion project as it is a business.

About a third of the broodmares Thornmar has are home-breds, with a handful of those being mares the farm bred, kept tabs on during their racing careers, and then bought back. “They’re like children...and you like to see them come home,” Charles McGinnes quipped.

Any horse that comes off Thornmar Farm is fair game for a future homecoming.

One of the retirees bouncing around the paddocks is the stakes-placed runner The Prince, a son of Taft Lil Queen the McGinneses bred, then bought back for \$1,500 when they saw him toiling in the claiming ranks a few years ago. They sent The Prince to Stuart Pittman Jr. of the Retired Racehorse Training Project to try and make a second career for the Not For Love gelding. While those aspirations were squashed due to The Prince having lost an eye at some point during his racing career, the McGinneses are happy to have a few pasture pets as part of the equation when it comes to taking care of their own.

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Special Note For Sire Lists:

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in the states featured in this section (stallions that are dead or exported prior to 2012 are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 4, 2016. As supplied to BloodHorse by The Jockey Club Information Systems Inc., include adjusted money from Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Adjusted earnings are put on par with average North American earnings from the previous year. For example, the average North American purse in 2015 is \$21,782 or 50% of the 2015 average purse in Japan. To put earnings on par, all Japanese progeny earnings are multiplied by 50% before being credited to a sire’s progeny earnings. Hong Kong earnings are adjusted by 17%; Singapore by 57%. Current year stakes winners include all N.H.-foaled stakes winners worldwide and any S.H.-foaled horses that won a N.H. stakes. *Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners includes all countries. (A † indicates a sire represented by his first crop to race).

*AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX and COMPARABLE INDEX: Lifetime AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX indicates how much purse money the progeny of one sire has earned in relation to the average earnings of all runners in the same years; average earnings of all runners in any year is represented by an index of 1.00. COMPARABLE INDEX indicates the average earnings of progeny produced from mares bred to one sire, when these same mares were bred to other sires. Only 32% of all sires have a lifetime AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX higher than their mares’ COMPARABLE INDEX.

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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2016 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2016 Earnings	Cumulative			
								Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	JUMP START (99, A.P. Indy), Northview PA	\$10,000	183/95	4/6	2/4	(Disco Chick, \$260,500)	\$5,005,033	*1266	41	1.48	1.33
2	ROCKPORT HARBOR (02, Unbridled's Song)	Died, 2013	152/84	4/6	1/4	(Majestic Harbor, \$391,060)	\$3,615,807	470	25	1.33	1.42
3	SILVER TRAIN (02, Old Trieste)	Died, 2013	112/59	1/1	1/1	(Lucabunny, \$120,308)	\$2,311,109	*503	11	0.97	1.27
4	FAIRBANKS (03, Giant's Causeway), Northview PA	\$2,500	102/44	0/0	0/0	(Cosmic Destiny, \$166,800)	\$2,115,070	213	3	1.09	1.27
5	LORD SHANAKILL (06, Speightstown), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$5,000	72/30	1/2	0/1	(My Dream Boat, \$792,890)	\$1,417,167	130	1	1.22	0.93
6	WEIGELIA (01, Safely's Mark), WynOaks Farm	\$3,500	38/16	1/1	1/1	(Fat Kat, \$158,562)	\$1,290,853	*75	4	1.37	1.00
7	CORINTHIAN (03, Pulpit), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$4,000	123/55	0/0	0/0	(Pancake, \$71,695)	\$1,283,550	*478	11	0.75	1.41
8	TALENT SEARCH (03, Catienus), Diamond B Farm	\$2,500	55/19	1/1	1/1	(Rolin With Olin, \$99,425)	\$900,692	*107	2	0.97	1.24
9	MEDALLIST (01, Touch Gold), Northview PA	\$2,000	40/16	2/2	1/2	(Love Came to Town, \$121,900)	\$845,800	193	7	1.27	1.39
10	RIMROD (00, Danzig), Castle Rock Farm	\$1,500	28/19	0/0	0/0	(Candid Cathy, \$105,520)	\$743,325	101	2	1.34	1.15
11	BULLSBAY (04, Tiznow), Northview PA	\$3,000	29/12	2/3	1/2	(Greatbullsoffire, \$130,390)	\$682,995	46	3	1.57	1.29
12	ALBERT THE GREAT (97, Go for Gin), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$2,500	33/14	0/0	0/0	(She's Chubs, \$99,262)	\$586,733	*379	8	1.13	1.13
13	LOVE OF MONEY (01, Not For Love)	Died, 2012	37/14	0/0	0/0	(Money for Maria, \$68,704)	\$493,297	124	1	0.96	1.27
14	CITY SHARPSTER (99, Carson City), Woodvale Farm	\$1,000	24/8	0/0	0/0	(Poderosa, \$106,710)	\$458,937	59	0	0.71	0.70
15	PARTNER'S HERO (94, Danzig), Castle Rock Farm	\$1,500	22/7	0/0	0/0	(Two Notch Road, \$126,138)	\$432,358	451	15	1.19	1.32
16	GIMMEAWINK (00, Elusive Quality), Mountain Springs Racing Stable	\$2,500	35/11	0/0	0/0	(Gimmeaclue, \$110,575)	\$419,893	*223	1	0.77	1.04
17	WISEMAN'S FERRY (99, Hennessy)	Died, 2015	29/10	0/0	0/0	(Tough Weather, \$119,989)	\$409,703	*293	6	1.64	1.06
18	ANDIRON (06, A.P. Indy), Xanthus Farms	\$2,000	18/8	1/1	1/1	(Roxbury N Overton, \$199,180)	\$389,288	38	1	0.96	0.55
19	LITE THE FUSE (91, Buckaroo)	N/A	21/10	0/0	0/0	(The Fazz Man, \$68,437)	\$368,168	548	22	1.22	1.17
20	GOT THE LAST LAUGH (04, Distorted Humor), Diamond B Farm	\$2,500	16/7	0/0	0/0	(Dixie's Last Laugh, \$81,612)	\$341,530	44	0	1.18	1.19
21	TRAJECTORY (97, Gone West), Mountain Springs Racing Stable	\$3,500	24/11	0/0	0/0	(Line of Best Fit, \$95,925)	\$337,321	372	14	1.08	1.34
22	AISLE (99, Pulpit), Whirlwind Stables	Private	13/9	0/0	0/0	(Kohl, \$45,398)	\$228,270	85	0	0.80	0.77
23	ACTIVIST (94, Wild Again), Godstone Farm	Private	16/8	0/0	0/0	(Pink Elephant, \$54,750)	\$223,392	178	3	0.92	0.88
24	EMPEROR TIBERIUS (04, Storm Cat), Mountain Springs Racing Stable	\$1,500	4/2	1/1	1/1	(Saratoga Jack, \$154,830)	\$208,330	12	1	1.76	0.75
25	MORE SMOKE (02, Smoke Glacken), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$1,500	7/5	1/1	0/1	(Raging Smoke, \$111,550)	\$201,973	53	1	1.04	1.19
26	SNOW RIDGE (98, Tabasco Cat)	Died, 2012	17/9	0/0	0/0	(Overland Park, \$60,678)	\$198,644	*288	5	0.99	1.14
27	IN THE WOODS (04, Forest Wildcat), Xanthus Farms	\$1,500	10/3	0/0	0/0	(Through Appalachia, \$70,465)	\$158,188	21	0	0.64	1.26
28	STONECOLD BROKE (98, Unbridled), Hope Hill Farm	\$1,000	8/4	0/0	0/0	(Ghazi's Stone, \$56,259)	\$148,782	50	0	0.60	1.16
29	SIR SHACKLETON (01, Miswaki), Dana Point Farm	\$1,000	15/6	0/0	0/0	(Ameridude, \$48,354)	\$143,757	*98	1	0.72	1.03
30	FORMAL DINNER (88, Well Decorated)	N/A	15/9	0/0	0/0	(Formal Class, \$58,600)	\$142,539	*639	23	1.07	1.09

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"We tend to get attached to our families," Cynthia McGinnes said. "We have The Prince and he's a character. He races around the field and has a good time. We also have a yearling out of Boudicca (a daughter of Taft Lil Queen) that we decided to keep, so that will be a third generation out of the mare. I wish we had more of the family."

In detailing the rise, fall, and most recent ascent of the Maryland racing and breeding industry, Cynthia McGinnes again provides a story as to why those like

herself have stuck with it.

With the same enthusiasm she speaks of her own farm, McGinnes tells the background of trainer Gina Rosenthal who, while working for trainer John Robb, bought a yearling of her own in 2007 she would name Bigdaddysgirl that would go on to earn more than \$195,000 in her career and produce the stakes-winning filly Outwithbigdaddy.

Now with her own trainer's license and own Maryland-based farm, Rosenthal is making a go of it and providing for her four children in no small part because of the

bonuses that have allowed modest-sized operations to carry on the state's legacy as one of the heirlooms of the Thoroughbred industry.

"Gina now has her own farm and a few other horses and this is what used to make Maryland," Cynthia McGinnes said. "She has done it all from scratch. I mean, this is what is the heart and soul of Maryland racing.

"The first horse races in America were run here and people here love racing. We do raise some good horses so...George Washington was right." **BR**



Weanlings strike a reflective pose at Thornmar



The broodmare barn at Thornmar

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Bill Gross

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