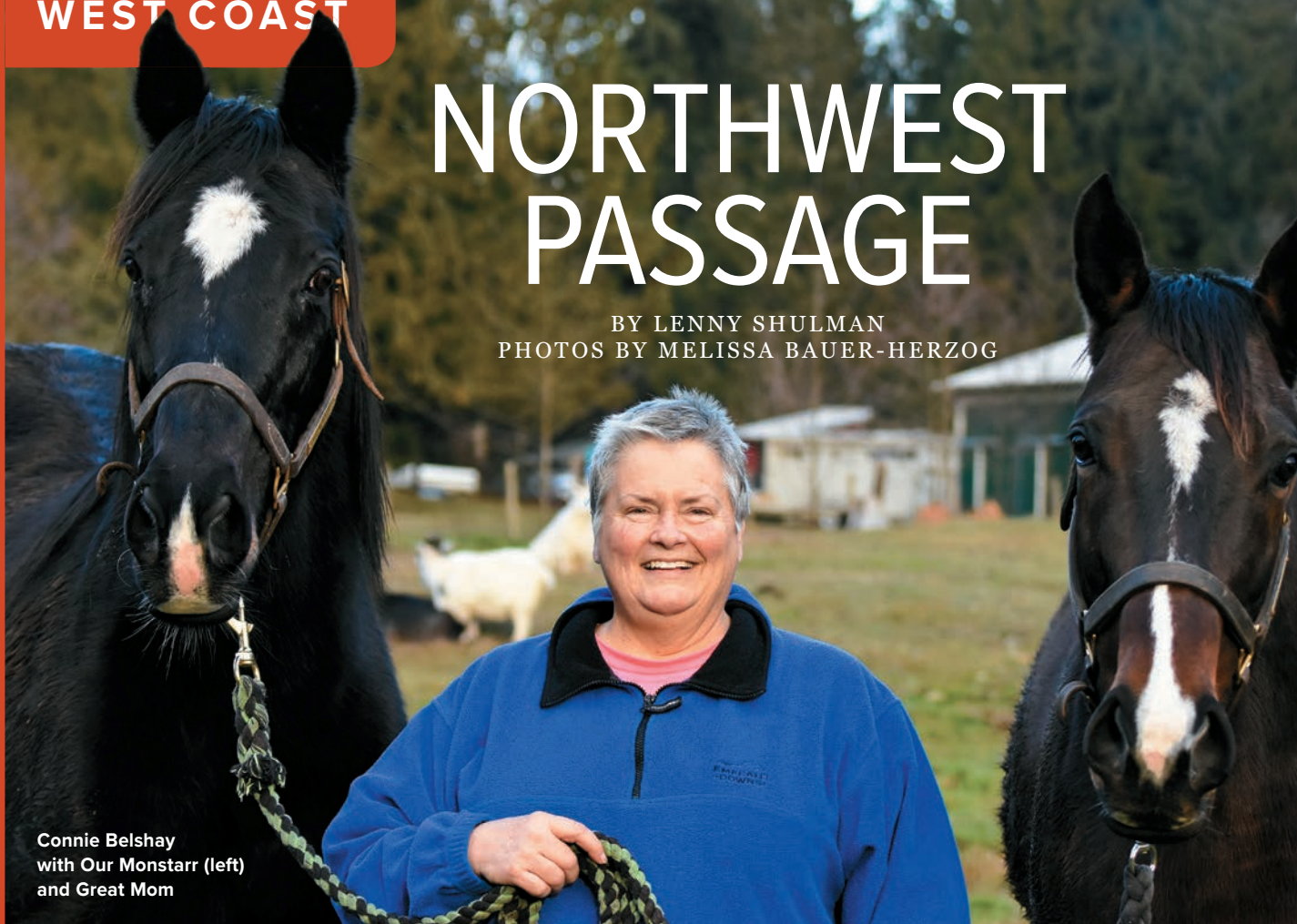


NORTHWEST PASSAGE

BY LENNY SHULMAN
PHOTOS BY MELISSA BAUER-HERZOG



Connie Belshay
with Our Monstarr (left)
and Great Mom

Small breeder Connie Belshay gets two stakes winners at Emerald Downs

AMIDST ALL THE BIG BUSINESS that drives the Thoroughbred industry, it's nice to be reminded that often it is lone individuals fueled by a passion for the horse that make this world keep spinning.

Connie Belshay of Graham, Wash., a dot on the map ("We just got our second gas station"), makes no bones about being on her own when it comes to breeding Thoroughbreds.

In fact, she's named her operation Only Me Thoroughbreds and has the same number of broodmares as Graham has gas stations. However, last summer at Emerald Downs, separated by three weeks, each of her mares had progeny that won stakes events, and that's a pretty strong daily double for the 62-year-old Washington native.

Living in the city of Tacoma as a child, Belshay remembers at age 6 watching someone ride a horse down her road, which fascinated her. Her family moved to the country a few years later and added some Shetland ponies to the family, which she started showing in various classes.

"Everyone else in the family outgrew the horses," she said, "but with me it was not going away."

While in high school, she took a job with a local veterinarian who had racehorses, and that was the final piece in establishing her love for Thoroughbreds. Belshay took a full-time position with the vet after she graduated. She began breeding a mare or two, but outside forces got in the way.

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for 2019**



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BY BELONG TO ME**

2019 Fee: \$3,000

*Property of Charles Fipke.
Standing at Daehling Ranch.*

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Won **Cigar Mile [G1]** – 111 Beyer.

First crop: 2018 Met Mile [G1] winner **BEE JERSEY**
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2018 LEADING SIRES IN CALIFORNIA



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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB, Sire), Where Stands	2019 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2018 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	STAY THIRSTY (08, Bernardini), Lovacres Ranch	\$6,000	149/87	4/5	0/4	(Mind Control, \$240,900)	\$4,174,513	*346	6	1.35	1.50
2	BLUEGRASS CAT (03, Storm Cat), Ballena Vista Farm	\$6,500	160/88	0/0	0/0	(Chris and Dave, \$181,530)	\$3,593,341	*898	32	1.20	1.62
3	SQUARE EDDIE (06, Smart Strike), Ocean Breeze Ranch	\$25,000	91/53	4/4	3/4	(B Squared, \$202,213)	\$3,119,993	175	13	1.52	1.06
4	I'LL HAVE ANOTHER (09, Flower Alley), Ballena Vista Farm	\$6,000	180/93	0/0	0/0	(Another Truth, \$228,682)	\$2,935,929	227	0	0.80	1.09
5	LUCKY PULPIT (01, Pulpit)	Died, 2017	177/77	3/4	3/3	(Pulpit Rider, \$272,817)	\$2,930,185	*448	10	1.38	1.08
6	MISUNUSAL HEAT (90, Nureyev)	Died, 2017	90/43	1/1	0/1	(Lynne's Legacy, \$160,609)	\$2,401,479	*812	45	1.89	1.19
7	TRIBAL RULE (96, Storm Cat)	Died, 2014	112/69	2/2	1/2	(Brandothebartender, \$170,072)	\$2,237,817	742	36	1.23	1.03
8	SMILING TIGER (07, Hold That Tiger), Harris Farms	\$6,500	57/32	5/7	2/5	(Spiced Perfection, \$455,125)	\$2,218,461	114	5	1.13	1.04
9	JERSEY TOWN (06, Speightstown), Daehling Ranch	\$3,000	69/39	2/3	0/2	(Bee Jersey, \$861,400)	\$2,198,445	*121	3	1.13	1.19
10	MINISTERS WILD CAT (00, Deputy Minister), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$4,000	119/70	3/4	1/3	(Fly to Mars, \$219,190)	\$2,131,371	443	18	0.99	0.90
11	VRONSKY (99, Danzig), Harris Farms	\$6,500	75/42	1/1	0/1	(Poshsky, \$115,930)	\$1,504,280	222	10	1.36	1.05
12	U S RANGER (04, Danzig), Rancho San Miguel	\$3,000	106/53	0/0	0/0	(Swing Thoughts, \$101,908)	\$1,424,076	*358	3	0.67	1.27
13	GRAZEN (06, Benchmark), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	38/25	2/2	2/2	(Just Grazed Me, \$208,260)	\$1,392,617	88	7	1.68	1.15
14	ACCLAMATION (06, Unusual Heat), Harris Farms	\$7,500	47/23	2/5	2/2	(Heck Yeah, \$284,000)	\$1,303,612	106	2	1.09	1.25
15	MISREMEMBERED (06, Candy Ride), Barton Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	58/32	2/3	2/2	(Remember Daisy, \$204,780)	\$1,248,870	91	3	0.97	1.38
16	EMPIRE WAY (09, Empire Maker), Heinz & Michelle Steinmann Farms	\$2,500	50/26	1/1	1/1	(Loving Lynda, \$153,545)	\$1,056,494	82	1	0.78	0.93
17	GRAEW'S TIZNOW (05, Tiznow), Rancho San Miguel	\$3,000	46/31	0/0	0/0	(Trapalanda, \$80,855)	\$943,437	99	3	0.99	1.04
18	DESERT CODE (04, E Dubai), Harris Farms	\$2,000	58/31	0/0	0/0	(Desert Law, \$70,597)	\$920,227	142	3	0.90	1.04
19	KAFWAIN (00, Cherokee Run)	N/A	67/41	0/0	0/0	(We Will Re Joyce, \$83,745)	\$913,797	*632	18	1.00	1.19
20	STREET HERO (06, Street Cry)	N/A	50/28	1/1	0/1	(Ms Fifty First St., \$105,400)	\$805,228	*262	6	1.14	1.00
21	HEATSEEKER (IRE) (03, Giant's Causeway)	Died, 2016	67/29	0/0	0/0	(Paprika, \$48,360)	\$765,396	*221	8	1.01	1.23
22	DECARCHY (97, Distant View)	Died, 2017	40/23	0/0	0/0	(One Fast Broad, \$141,663)	\$756,231	401	13	1.01	0.96
23	COIL (08, Point Given)	N/A	43/23	0/0	0/0	(Spring Heat, \$94,121)	\$692,512	121	0	0.64	1.23
24	BOLD CHIEFTAIN (03, Chief Seattle), Victory Rose Thoroughbreds	\$3,000	31/17	0/0	0/0	(J T's A. T. M., \$88,936)	\$678,761	66	1	0.87	0.92
25	SOUTHERN IMAGE (00, Halo's Image), Gray's Farm	\$1,500	48/27	0/0	0/0	(Jay Makes Us Laugh, \$99,435)	\$675,967	*508	7	1.03	1.14
26	MARINO MARINI (00, Storm Cat)	N/A	65/32	0/0	0/0	(Marjorie E, \$80,505)	\$621,506	376	4	0.78	0.94
27	CYCLOTRON (00, Grand Slam)	N/A	44/21	0/0	0/0	(Tune to Win, \$58,662)	\$621,187	133	2	1.06	1.21
28	EDDINGTON (01, Unbridled), Ballena Vista Farm	\$3,500	52/23	1/1	1/1	(Tap the Wire, \$89,400)	\$618,669	*443	11	1.17	1.40
29	THORN SONG (03, Unbridled's Song)	Died, 2014	51/20	1/1	1/1	(Shades of Victory, \$92,777)	\$614,817	120	2	0.56	1.25
30	COMIC STRIP (95, Red Ransom)	Died, 2017	27/14	1/1	0/1	(Bezy, \$72,375)	\$607,457	351	12	0.83	1.09

"I've been divorced twice, and each time I got divorced I had a pregnant mare," she said. "When you're stuck out there on your own, the first thing to go is the horse. So I finally made up my mind after the second

divorce that if I was going to be involved in horses, I was going to do it on my own. Hence the name Only Me Thoroughbreds."

Sight unseen, she bought a Pine Bluff mare from Kentucky named What a Cook.

"I thought I knew everything," Belshay said. "She was a beautiful mare, but her babies couldn't run. I had no acreage and I needed a place to board the mare, so I approached Debbie Pabst of Blue Ribbon Farm, and she became my mentor. I'm like a Mini Me; if she tells me to do something, I do it. Fortunately for me, we've been successful. It's kind of like playing 'Survivor' if you get in the right alliance..."

After another mare or two didn't pan out, Pabst sold Belshay a Demons Begone mare she had bred and who was coming off the racetrack. Our Monstarr was the definition of a hard-knocking racehorse: 51 starts with 11 victories and 16 other in-the-money finishes, including a third in the 2003 Knights Choice Stakes at Emerald Downs.

"She used to come from the clouds and everyone knew her, which helps when you're trying to sell her babies," said Belshay. "She kind of turned things around for me."



Our Monstarr is the dam of stakes winner Money Inthe Starrs

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 2014 are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 31, 2018. As supplied to *BloodHorse* by The Jockey Club Information Systems Inc., lists 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 2017 is \$22,593 or 47% of the 2017 average purse in Japan. To put earnings on par, all Japanese progeny earnings are multiplied by 47% before being credited to a sire's progeny earnings. Hong Kong earnings are adjusted by 15%; Singapore by 68%. Current year stakes winners include all Northern Hemisphere black-type stakes results from all available countries. *Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners include all countries.

*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.



Rancho San Miguel



CURLIN TO MISCHIEF

Curlin – Leslie's Lady, by Tricky Creek

2019 Fee: \$3,500 LFSN

Half-Brother to Grade 1 Winners BEHOLDER, INTO MISCHIEF & MENDELSSOHN
By Leading Sire **CURLIN**

- » By two-time Horse of the Year/Leading Sire **CURLIN** (2019 Fee: \$175,000), sire of **GOOD MAGIC** (G1), **EXAGGERATOR** (G1), **PALACE MALICE** (G1), **KEEN ICE** (G1), **CONNECT** (G1), etc.
- » O/o Broodmare of the Year/SW **LESLIE'S LADY**, making him a half-brother to multiple Champion **BEHOLDER, INTO MSCHIEF** (2019 Fee: \$150,000), and **MENDELSSOHN** (2019 Fee: \$35,000).
- » First foals two-year-olds in 2019.



NORTHERN CAUSEWAY

Giant's Causeway – Getaway Girl, by Silver Deputy

2019 Fee: \$2,500 LFSN

Graded Derby Winner ranked among California's Leading Freshmen Sires!
SIX of His First SEVEN Starters have Hit-The-Board

- » First crop successes incl. 2-length Allowance winner **BIG CEAS** (\$80,121)—1st or 2nd in 7 of 9 starts with back-to-back MdSpWt and Allowance wins; plus Golden Gate maiden winner **SINAWAVA**.
- » One of 115 Graded SWs sired by Three-Time Leading Sire **GIANT'S CAUSEWAY** and out of a half-sister to Leading Sires **GHOSTZAPPER** and **CITY ZIP**.



RICHARD'S KID

Lemon Drop Kid – Tough Broad, by Broad Brush

2019 Fee: \$3,000 LFSN

California's Richest Racehorse at Stud, with earnings over \$2.4 Million!
#2 Second-Crop Sire by California-Bred Earnings in 2018

- » **Top Six Active Juvenile Sire in 2018** by California-bred earnings with undefeated **RICKEY B** (\$80,940, 4 wins in 4 starts), MdSpWt winners **SEDAMAR** and **KID CANTINA**.
- » **#2 Second-Crop Sire in 2018** by California-bred earnings with first crop winners like Del Mar & Santa Anita starter winners **MAMA'S KID**, **SAPPHIRE KID** and **LOLLY EXPRESS**; etc..
- » For more information contact Tom Hudson at 805-886-2804 or Tom-Hudson@hotmail.com



TOM'S TRIBUTE

Lion Heart – Halloween Fun, by El Prado (Ire)

2019 Fee: \$2,000 LFSN

First Foals Will Race in 2019 • First Yearling to the Ring Sold for 15X His Fee
Record-Equalling Miler – 1:31.78 • On-the-Board in 13 of 16 Starts–Eight Stakes

- » Won \$300,000 **Grade 1 Eddie Read Stakes** with **103 Beyer**, \$250,000 **Grade 2 Del Mar Mile**, Thunder Road S. **equalling the one mile course record of 1:31.78** with a **103 Beyer!**
- » Descends from **CHAIN BRACELET** (G1), family of **SWALE** (G1).
- » Versatile winner from 6 1/2 furlongs to 9 furlongs.
- » For more information contact Tom Hudson at 805-886-2804 or Tom-Hudson@hotmail.com

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2018 LEADING SIRE IN WASHINGTON



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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB, Sire), Where Stands	2019 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2018 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	ATTA BOY ROY (05, Tribunal), Blue Ribbon Farm	\$2,000	32/16	1/1	1/1	(Mr. Jagermeister, \$205,975)	\$481,540	68	2	0.61	0.72
2	COUNCIL MEMBER (02, Seattle Slew)	N/A	22/10	0/0	0/0	(Council Rules, \$76,474)	\$364,603	99	0	0.56	0.86
3	ABRAAJ (03, Carson City), El Dorado Farms	\$2,000	23/18	2/2	1/2	(Mixo, \$43,342)	\$327,942	54	5	0.67	0.71
4	PARKER'S STORM CAT (00, Storm Cat)	N/A	45/21	0/0	0/0	(Cross Creek, \$34,372)	\$296,585	*330	4	0.85	1.00
5	HE'S TOPS (93, Seattle Slew)	N/A	20/8	1/2	0/1	(Summerland, \$118,684)	\$259,324	322	9	0.53	0.63
6	COAST GUARD (05, Stormy Atlantic), El Dorado Farms	\$1,500	25/15	0/0	0/0	(Guardian One, \$32,875)	\$250,343	43	2	0.57	0.54
7	RAISE THE BLUFF (03, Pine Bluff), El Dorado Farms	\$1,000	19/11	0/0	0/0	(Cody's Choice, \$37,610)	\$209,754	95	1	0.55	0.47
8	PREACHINATTHEBAR (01, Silver Charm)	N/A	25/11	0/0	0/0	(Cheers and Prayers, \$55,821)	\$204,242	110	0	0.37	0.53
9	NATIONHOOD (02, Cherokee Run), Blue Ribbon Farm	\$1,500	19/9	1/1	0/1	(This Great Nation, \$28,826)	\$192,775	61	2	0.45	0.69
10	GOTHAM CITY (98, Saint Ballado)	N/A	15/7	0/0	0/0	(Gotham Desire, \$61,999)	\$186,821	187	0	0.68	0.80

Belshay can't devote all her time to the horses because she works a shift beginning before dawn at Continental Mills, which makes dry mix products for cakes, brownies, and muffins. With just five acres near Graham, Belshay keeps her mares with Pabst at Blue Ribbon Farm, where they foal. However, the yearlings come to Belshay for sales prep.

"When we first met, Connie had a couple of ordinary mares," said Pabst, "and I sold some yearlings for her. The thing I noticed was her yearlings always looked good. She did a great job of raising them, which isn't always the case with breeders.

"She wanted to improve as a breeder, and she asked the right questions; the big questions. And I told her the mares she had were good to start out with and get experience, but that it was time to get some that were actually worth having."

Belshay first sent Our Monstarr to Benchmark in California, and she produced a filly that Belshay sold for \$7,500 as a yearling at the Washington sale.

"She was a beautiful filly, but I got frustrated because I can't even raise them for that money," said Belshay. "But we bred Our Monstarr to Nationhood, who was one of Debbie's stallions, and we sold that filly for \$30,000, which was great and allowed me to stay in the horse business."

Our Monstarr has a habit of getting in foal every other year, and so Belshay decided to take part of those earnings and invest in a second broodmare. Pabst went down to the Barretts' sale in California to shop for her friend.

"When you have a limited budget, you have to be clever," said Pabst. "I looked

through the catalog and saw 30 mares that looked like they were worth owning. I felt Pioneerof the Nile had the potential to be a major horse—this was before American Pharoah got to the races—and I saw a big, good-looking mare by him who hadn't made the races. She clearly had some is-



Belshay purchased Great Mom, a daughter of Pioneerof the Nile, for \$10,000

sues, but you have to take a chance. She was a young mare and was carrying her second foal, and we got her for \$10,000."

Said Belshay, "I'd like to take credit for Great Mom, but she wasn't even on my long list. I watched online as she went through the ring and she looked lovely, and I figured we bought her because she went through for \$10,000.

"I like the old-style Thoroughbred: big, tall, long neck. I went to a seminar years ago in Oregon and (Hall of Fame trainer) D. Wayne Lukas was speaking and said

his thing was they've got to have a long neck. And I took that to heart. The neck is probably the most important thing for me. I like a long neck and a nice, deep hip, probably because I used to have Quarter Horses. And Great Mom fits the bill. She's really lovely."

Belshay sold the Papa Clem filly that Great Mom was carrying at the sale for \$12,000. Named Squeeze Me, she won her first two races, including a stakes, stylishly but never ran again. Meantime, Belshay has worked at getting her farm in shape to raise her yearlings. She cleared trees and fenced and cross-fenced the acreage.

"I have Debbie foal everything out for me because I start work at 2 a.m., and it's really hard to do mare and foal watch that way," Belshay noted. "Even with electronics, it doesn't do me much good if I see something if I'm 40 miles away. The mares and babies come back after the 45-day check, and then everybody lives here. I do all my own sales prep, which I love.

"They can be squirrely as weanlings, but I love when they become yearlings and you can work with them. It brings me back to my days in 4-H and showmanship."

All of Belshay's work paid off last summer. Great Mom's son by Nationhood, who brought \$15,000 as a sale yearling, won the WTBOA Lads Stakes for 2-year-olds at Emerald Downs Aug. 12. His name is This Great Nation. And Our Monstarr's 2-year-old Abraaj filly, named Money Inthe Starrs, who had been a \$6,200 sale yearling, won the Sept. 2 Washington Cup Juvenile Filly Stakes at Emerald.

"It was amazing," Belshay said of that

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month to remember. “This Great Nation was 48-1, and if you’d had a camera on me during that race, you would have thought I’d just won the Breeders’ Cup. I make it a point to get to the track when my kids run, and I sure went crazy when he won. I’m a very modest bettor, but it didn’t matter because it was still a nice payout. He’s the longest-priced stakes winner ever at Emerald Downs. So that was pretty exciting, because you don’t expect it.”

Said Pabst, “That’s an unbelievable performance for a breeder, to have both your mares produce stakes winners. I was really happy for Connie because she’s worked so hard. She works the sales for me so we can keep costs down. She’s a hard-working person and a great joy to be around, and we’ve had a fun time doing this.”

Added Susan van Dyke of the Washington Thoroughbred Breeders and Owners Association, “Connie’s love and dedication to her horses is always evident. Each year her yearlings are among the best-fitted and -behaved at the summer sale, and her caring bond with her animals is genuine.”

Although Money Inthe Starrs was the favorite when she won her stakes, her modest sale price points out a problem for local breeders. Abraaj stands at Blue Ribbon, and even though Belshay said Money inthe Starrs was a stunning individual, the lack of sire power depressed her yearling price.

Because Great Mom is a nervous mare



Great Mom has produced two stakes winners, including 2018 star This Great Nation

that doesn’t ship well, Belshay has chosen to breed her locally while sending Our Monstarr to California to be bred. So Great Mom has a newly turned yearling filly by Blue Ribbon stallion Atta Boy Roy while Our Monstarr has a yearling colt by Grazen (a son of Benchmark standing at Tommy Town Thoroughbreds).

“I’m going to ship her back somewhere to be bred this year,” said Belshay of Our Monstarr. “I have to try and keep solvent,

and with the one mare going to a local stallion, I have to ship the other one out. I don’t aim to get rich at this, but I do want to stay afloat.

“Our Monstarr (who has also produced stakes-placed San Juan Star, a \$5,700 yearling filly by Atta Boy Roy) is getting up there (18) in age, so I’m starting to look at adding another mare, but with five acres it’s hard to carry much more than a couple. But I’m open to another one.”

The numbers tell the story of the tough environment in the state today. The 2016 Washington foal crop was just 246, according to The Jockey Club statistics. That’s compared to 1,226 in 1996 and 708 in 2006.

“It’s a scary industry to be in right now,” allowed Belshay. “A lot of people go to Kentucky and pick up horses there. They don’t shop at home as much. We’re trying. We have a Washington Cup day every year, but there just aren’t enough horses or buyers/owners. We’re not going to come back to the days when Longacres was thriving.”

Nevertheless, Belshay would, in the not-too-distant future, like to join the ranks of racehorse owners. Having worked as a groom and assistant at the racetrack in her youth, she would like to own and train one herself.

“I have a filly out of Great Mom now (the Atta Boy Roy yearling) who has had some growing pains. She might not be ready for the sale, so if she doesn’t develop to my satisfaction, I might try to run her myself. We’re small enough where you can do that, and I have the passion to try. I’m hoping to retire in a few years and devote more of my time to the horses.”

The Connie Belshays of the world are the backbone of the horse industry, certainly away from the major breeding centers. Their passion should serve as inspiration to anyone who has the inclination to carve out a place for themselves, doing what they love and being around horses.

“Watching one you bred come down the stretch to win makes it all worthwhile,” said Belshay. “The 2 a.m. feedings wearing a head lamp—I gripe about it just like everybody else—but you forget about all that stuff when you see one of yours win a race, whether it’s a \$2,500 claimer or a stakes race. It’s amazing.” **BH**



COADY PHOTOGRAPHY

Squeeze Me, out of Great Mom, winning the Turf Paradise Open Spring Futurity