

ALABAMA FLORIDA GEORGIA MISSISSIPPI
NORTH CAROLINA SOUTH CAROLINA TENNESSEE

Taking a Chance

Shooting Star Thoroughbreds'
Mary Lightner

Shooting Star Thoroughbreds starts quickly with Chance It

BY CHARLIE McCARTHY | PHOTOS BY JOE DiORIO

MARY LIGHTNER WAS LOOKING FOR A CHANGE. The daughter of a trainer, Lightner had been training racehorses herself for five years but sought a way to remain in the business with fewer hours required at the track and more time spent with family.

A discussion during a sale at Keeneland last year prompted her to investigate starting a racing syndicate. Her due diligence led to the creation of Shooting Star Thoroughbreds, which this year began with a three-horse syndicate and a pinhook syndicate.

The result? In 12 combined starts with three 2-year-olds, Shooting Star's Thoroughbreds posted five first-place finishes, four seconds, and two thirds. That's an in-the-money rate of 92%.

Leading the way was Chance It, a son of Currency Swap who captured two legs of the Florida Sire Stakes. He is out of a mare who was adopted for \$250.

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

Bridlewood	55	Ocala Stud	57
www.bridlewoodfarm.com		www.ocalastud.com	

2019 LEADING SIRE IN FLORIDA


 For daily updated sire lists
 visit BloodHorse.com

Rank	Station (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2020 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2019 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	ADIOS CHARLIE (08, Indian Charlie), Ocala Stud	\$4,000	106/64	3/6	0/3	(Jean Elizabeth, \$204,128)	\$3,598,725	205	7	1.52	1.23
2	FIRST DUDE (07, Stephen Got Even), Double Diamond Farm	\$7,500	133/70	3/3	2/3	(Ready to Runaway, \$180,030)	\$3,310,432	357	12	1.19	1.22
3	BRETHREN (08, Distorted Humor), Arindel Farm	\$7,500	97/46	2/2	0/2	(Scraps, \$157,625)	\$2,495,989	141	4	1.36	1.60
4	WILDCAT HEIR (00, Forest Wildcat)	Died, 2015	116/64	2/2	1/2	(Royal Squeeze, \$221,655)	\$2,425,826	*687	34	1.32	1.30
5	TREASURE BEACH (GB) (08, Galileo), Pleasant Acres Stallions	\$7,500	119/49	1/1	0/1	(Saratoga Treasure, \$196,808)	\$2,044,340	*379	2	1.12	1.42
6	OVERDRIVEN (09, Tale of the Cat)	Pnsd	72/42	2/2	2/2	(Extraordinary Jerry, \$210,611)	\$1,903,460	159	3	0.93	1.15
7	BIG DRAMA (06, Montbrook)	N/A	101/57	0/0	0/0	(Spring Drama, \$83,440)	\$1,777,521	240	4	0.86	1.26
8	PROSPECTIVE (09, Malibu Moon), Ocala Stud	\$3,000	65/43	1/2	1/1	(Ceci Valentina, \$266,555)	\$1,701,952	112	4	1.11	1.13
9	SONGANDAPRAYER (98, Unbridled's Song)	Pnsd	113/59	2/2	2/2	(Sarah's Passion, \$76,000)	\$1,622,708	*1033	37	1.08	1.38
10	FIELD COMMISSION (05, Service Stripe), Solera Farm	\$2,500	66/32	2/3	0/2	(Drafted, \$445,000)	\$1,549,261	146	2	0.82	0.95
11	GONE ASTRAY (06, Dixie Union), Northwest Stud	\$4,500	103/41	0/0	0/0	(Shifty She, \$83,200)	\$1,460,929	*251	8	0.94	1.09
12	HIGH COTTON (03, Dixie Union)	Pnsd	78/40	0/0	0/0	(Storming My Way, \$91,990)	\$1,205,056	*402	11	0.95	1.21
13	AWESOME OF COURSE (00, Awesome Again), Ocala Stud	\$4,000	68/27	2/2	0/2	(Band of Angels, \$99,747)	\$1,168,945	*255	12	1.31	1.30
14	¶ KHOZAN (12, Distorted Humor), Journeyman Stallions	\$8,500	38/15	2/2	2/2	(Liam's Lucky Charm, \$233,800)	\$1,129,530	*69	2	1.45	1.44
15	J P'S GUSTO (08, Successful Appeal)	N/A	40/24	1/1	0/1	(Max K. O., \$102,460)	\$1,078,439	89	2	1.02	1.06
16	DRILL (09, Lawyer Ron), Get Away Farm	\$4,500	56/31	1/1	1/1	(Drillit, \$92,610)	\$1,058,968	76	1	0.87	1.07
17	HANDSOME MIKE (09, Scat Daddy), Pleasant Acres Stallions	\$4,000	60/27	0/0	0/0	(Here Comes Jackie, \$114,060)	\$1,029,315	92	0	0.70	0.80
18	GREATNESS (99, Mr. Prospector)	N/A	25/16	1/2	0/1	(Lady's Island, \$230,550)	\$788,697	*261	8	1.30	1.00
19	RATTLESNAKE BRIDGE (08, Tapit)	N/A	61/27	0/0	0/0	(Showit, \$51,092)	\$723,047	115	0	0.48	1.02
20	¶ THE BIG BEAST (11, Yes It's True), Ocala Stud	\$6,000	30/15	0/0	0/0	(Inspiressa, \$96,600)	\$634,561	56	0	0.89	1.37
21	WINSLOW HOMER (07, Unbridled's Song)	N/A	34/18	0/0	0/0	(Boogie With Me, \$63,013)	\$539,787	60	0	0.76	1.05
22	WROTE (IRE) (09, High Chaparral)	N/A	34/14	0/0	0/0	(Vincero, \$131,245)	\$520,157	*63	0	0.56	0.84
23	FLASHSTORM (04, Storm Cat)	N/A	36/17	0/0	0/0	(Bella Tormenta, \$91,480)	\$489,790	114	3	0.89	0.93
24	IN SUMMATION (03, Put It Back), Ocala Stud	\$2,500	35/14	0/0	0/0	(Tearless, \$70,733)	\$436,836	*226	5	0.90	1.30
25	IQBAAL (06, Medaglia d'Oro), Ward Ranch	Private	16/12	0/0	0/0	(Riv, \$87,630)	\$377,504	29	0	0.98	1.11
26	BACKTALK (07, Smarty Jones), Goldmark Farm	\$2,250	25/14	0/0	0/0	(Masterofthehouse, \$43,400)	\$357,509	59	2	0.95	0.76
27	CAJUN BREEZE (08, Congrats), Stonehedge Farm South	Private	12/6	1/1	0/1	(Cajun Casanova, \$99,105)	\$343,474	21	2	1.63	1.36
28	TELLING (04, A.P. Indy)	N/A	27/12	0/0	0/0	(Arcelor, \$46,235)	\$339,000	50	0	0.64	1.29
29	¶ FURY KAPCORI (10, Tiznow), Journeyman Stallions	\$2,500	20/6	1/2	0/1	(High On Gin, \$110,244)	\$267,702	37	1	0.54	1.53
30	¶ BAHAMIAN SQUALL (09, Gone West), Double Diamond Farm	\$3,000	10/7	0/0	0/0	(Bahamian Girl, \$102,350)	\$264,454	29	0	1.02	0.83
31	COUNCIL MEMBER (02, Seattle Slew)	N/A	18/9	0/0	0/0	(Council Rules, \$78,285)	\$262,445	104	0	0.56	0.83
32	GARY D (07, Successful Appeal)	N/A	7/6	1/1	1/1	(Captain D, \$102,235)	\$251,781	12	1	1.09	1.11
33	HEAR NO EVIL (00, Carson City)	N/A	25/7	0/0	0/0	(Joyful Noise, \$32,250)	\$221,033	131	8	1.38	1.41
34	THOREAU (08, Gone West), Ocala Jockey Club	\$1,500	8/4	0/0	0/0	(Music Babe, \$116,760)	\$220,059	23	0	0.57	1.18
35	HELLO BROADWAY (06, Broken Vow), Ups and Downs Farm	\$3,000	9/7	0/0	0/0	(Harryhee, \$83,655)	\$218,627	32	1	1.05	0.80

As a new year approaches, it's an understatement to say Shooting Star Thoroughbreds has been successful. Its journey has included an impressive mix of hard work, bloodstock/training expertise, loyal friends, and fate.

FORMING THE SYNDICATE

Lightner, her brother Raymie, and their father, Mike, attended the 2018 Keeneland September yearling sale to buy horses for David Wilson, a client in California. While enjoying lunch with friends at the Thor-

oughbred Club, Mike's high school classmate Billy Ballard became inquisitive.

"What about these syndicates? What do you know?" Ballard asked. "It seems like they're becoming pretty popular."

The facial expressions at the table suggested not much was known about such ventures. Upon leaving Keeneland, Mary went to work researching syndicates. It wasn't long before the Lightners, with Mary leading the charge, decided to bet on syndication.

"We huddled and said, 'That's what we do; pick out weanlings and yearlings. Why don't we just try it?'" Mary said.

Mary and friend/managing partner Lisa Goodin operate the business. Raymie lends his bloodstock expertise, and Mike helps train on the farm near Williston, Fla. (Mary's sister, Molly, is employed by breeder Becky Thomas' Sequel New York and does not work for Shooting Star.)

"My goal is to bring people into racing," said Mary, 46. "There are so many people who are really interested and want to get involved, but they have no idea how to do it. They wouldn't know how to select a horse,



Lightner at Oak Ridge Training near Ocala

B·A·O·M·A

BIG TIMMERS



Chitu

Henny Hughes—Sea Gift, by A.P. Indy
2020 Fee: \$4,500 | S & N

**Winner of \$800,000
Sunland Derby**

**2 Y.O.s sold for \$200,000
and \$150,000 at 2019 OBS April**



Standing at Bridlewood Farm

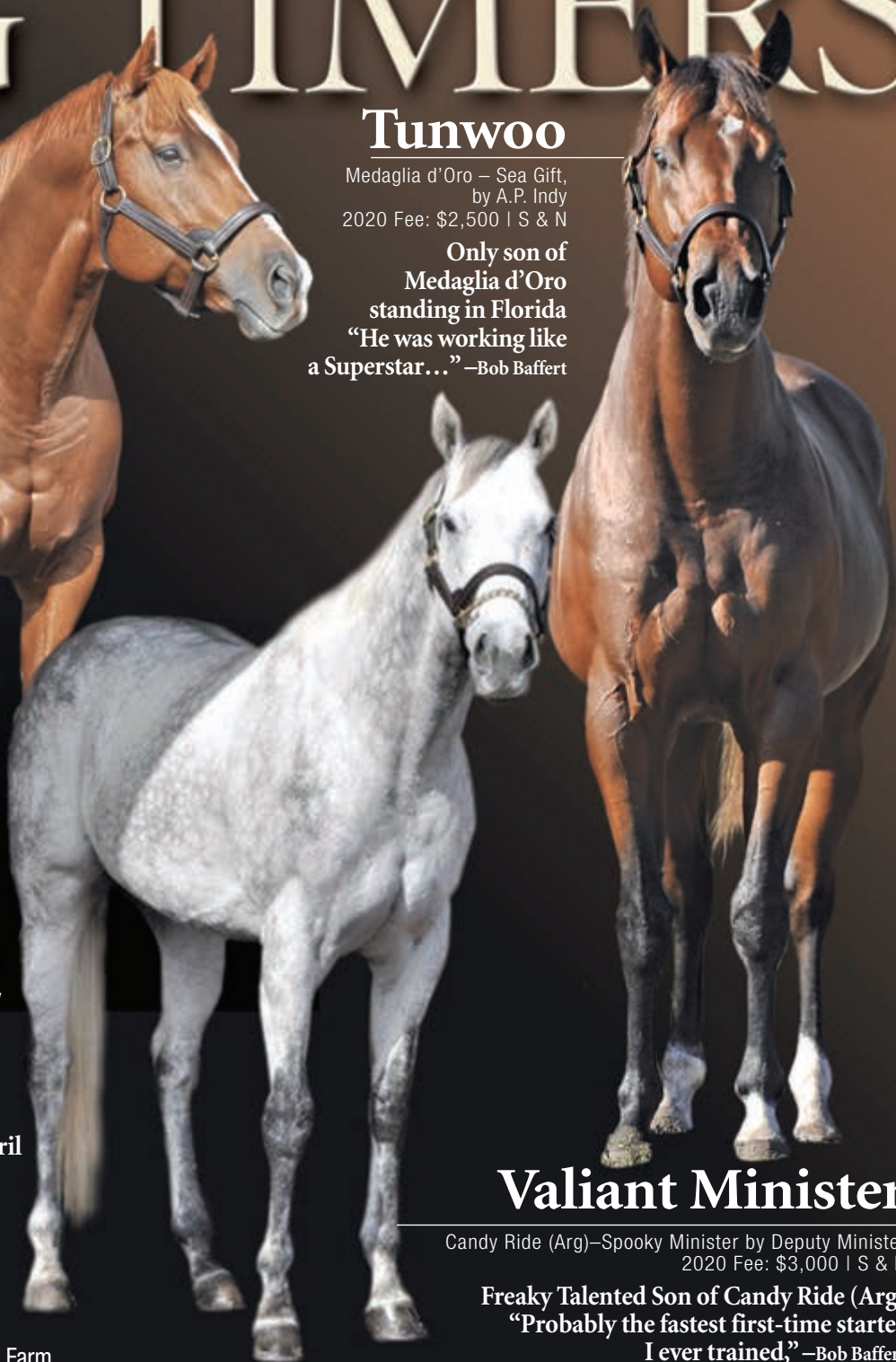
8318 NW 90th Terrace, Ocala, Fla. 34482 | George Isaacs, General Manager

352-622-5319 Office | **352-804-5568** Cell | A BAOMA Corp. Stallion | www.baomacorp.com

Tunwoo

Medaglia d'Oro — Sea Gift,
by A.P. Indy
2020 Fee: \$2,500 | S & N

**Only son of
Medaglia d'Oro
standing in Florida**
“He was working like
a Superstar...” —Bob Baffert



Valiant Minister

Candy Ride (Arg)—Spooky Minister by Deputy Minister
2020 Fee: \$3,000 | S & N

Freaky Talented Son of Candy Ride (Arg)
“Probably the fastest first-time starter
I ever trained,” —Bob Baffert

or how to select a trainer. Financially, it's a lot of money. I kind of make a price point for these people where they can get in and enjoy the fun."

Raymie Lightner, whose résumé includes helping Rockingham Ranch buy champion sprinter Roy H, agreed with his sister.

"I thought it was a great idea," he said. "I think the future of the industry is syndications."

As word spread among the Lightners' friends, many were eager to take part.

"If this is something Mary really wants to do, we love Mary and we want to support her. Really, that's all we were thinking," said Cathy Roberts, whose husband, Bob, was a fraternity brother of Mike Lightner's at Eastern Kentucky University.

"I never thought that there might be a chance that we'd win a race or win money."

Although many of the syndicate members have enjoyed previous experience in breeding and/or racing, Mike Lightner likes to remind people of something he was told years ago.

"When people get in the horse business, you need to tell them it's going to be like going to Vegas," Mike said. "We're gonna guarantee you're going to have fun; you may make some money, and you're gonna have a nice time."



Horses in the round pen at Oak Ridge Training

A DREAM SEASON

The initial racing syndicate offering resulted in 100 shares among 20 members at \$2,500 per share.

The horses were

- Chance It, a bay out of the Pleasantly Perfect mare Vagabon Diva;
- Island Commish, a dark bay son of Commissioner out of Bide a Wee Island;
- Most Sandisfactory, a bay gelding sired by The Factor and out of Pearl In The Sand.

The plan was to race, and at year's end sell the horses. Most Sandisfactory, trained by Peter Miller, had three maiden special weight starts—a second and third at Ellis Park, and a second by a half-length at Kentucky Downs. Shooting Star recently sold the colt to Miller. Island Commish went 2-0-1 in four starts in South Florida for trainer Saffie Joseph Jr. Irish Commish broke his maiden first time out in a maiden claiming race at Gulfstream Park Aug. 3. After finishing third in the Proud Man Stakes and fifth in an allowance optional claiming race, the colt won a starter optional claiming race at Gulfstream Park West. Sold to Matthew Schera, Island Commish won his first start for the new owner Nov. 20 at Gulfstream Park West.

Then there's Chance It, who finished

second first time out before breaking his maiden in a June 29 maiden special weight at Gulfstream Park. Next was the six-furlong FTBOA Dr. Fager Stakes, first leg of the Florida Sire Stakes series Aug. 3. Chance It won by $3\frac{1}{4}$ lengths under Edgard Zayas and gave Shooting Star Thoroughbreds its second winner of the afternoon.

"We were in the winner's circle twice that day—it was like I was Bob Baffert," Cathy Roberts said. "It was just the most exciting thing in the world."

Chance It and Zayas finished second to Stonehedge's Liam's Lucky Charm in the seven-furlong FTBOA Affirmed Stakes Aug. 31 but then took the $1\frac{1}{16}$ -mile FTBOA In Reality Stakes by $7\frac{1}{4}$ lengths under Tyler Gaffalione Sept. 28. The winner's circle that day included many syndicate partners and their families.

"Most of those people flew in from Chicago, Lexington, and they're just having a ball for their \$2,500 investment," Mary Lightner said. "They want to do it again, and maybe they'll get comfortable where they'll want me to buy a horse for themselves."

Besides enjoying the frills, syndicate partners have more than doubled their money this year.

"Years ago I owned one share in a stallion syndicate," said Ballard, 72. "When those things fail and you're still getting bills, that's not fun."

It seems the only potential negative of a spectacular initial campaign is that partners might be spoiled going forward.

"That's been the running joke among the families—we might have just created a lot of bad owners," Raymie Lightner said with a laugh.

GOING FORWARD

This year's success not only proved financially beneficial but presented Mary with a predicament: Should Shooting Star sell or keep Chance It? Although the Breeders' Cup had been a possibility for the colt, Mary de-

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 2015 are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 8, 2019. 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. *Foil 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.

*if you want a runner,
look to **Ocala Stud***



Mark J. Barrett photo

Adios Charlie

Indian Charlie - Teak Totem, by Northern Afleet
\$4,000

Greenpointercruader

Bernardini - Ava Knowsthecode, by Cryptoclearance
\$5,000

Ami's Flatter

Flatter - Galloping Ami, by Victory Gallop
\$3,500

In Summation

Put It Back - Fiesta Baby, by Dayjur
\$2,500

Awesome of Course

Awesome Again - Mais Oui, by Lyphard
\$4,000

Jess's Dream

Curlin - Rachel Alexandra, by Medaglia d'Oro
\$5,000

Awesome Slew

Awesome Again - Slewfoundmoney, by Seeking the Gold
\$5,000

Noble Bird

Birdstone - Anyhow, by Tiznow
\$5,000

Fort Loudon

Awesome of Course - Lotts a Tale, by Talc
\$2,500

Rainbow Heir

Wildcat Heir - Rainbow Pride, by Prospectors Gamble
\$3,500

Girvin

Tale of Ekati - Catch the Moon, by Malibu Moon
\$7,500

The Big Beast

Yes It's True - V V S Flawless, by Deputy Minister
\$6,000

Inquiries to David O'Farrell
david@ocalastud.com
www.ocalastud.com



P.O. Box 818, Ocala, FL 34478
352/237-2171 • FAX 352/873-3223



cided shipping cross-country and the significant entry fee were not in the best interests of the owners or a colt that had run five times in four months. After getting several outside offers to buy Chance It, Mary Lightner decided Shooting Star would retain the colt heading into his 3-year-old year.

“I did not think (keeping a syndicate horse for another year) would come into play, but then you have a horse like Chance It that could be a once-in-a-lifetime kind of horse,” she said. “I kind of polled everybody and said, ‘What are your feelings; what do you want to do?’ And 98% of the people wanted to roll with it.”

People who owned shares in Chance It this year only needed to pay a nominal fee that went toward food and training. Members could sell shares at a higher rate for the Chance It syndicate.

Mary Lightner had targeted the Nov. 30 Kentucky Jockey Club Stakes (G2) for Chance It before the colt developed a temperature and cough. She then took aim at the Dec. 15 Remington Springboard Mile Stakes in Oklahoma, though a recent herpes case at the track might alter that plan. While high hopes surround many 3-year-olds, more than a few syndicate members know the deal.

“This will be a difficult year because there are a lot of good horses out there,” said syndicate member Ed Maggard, 74. “But Chance It hasn’t really been hooked.”

Besides the Chance It group, Shooting Star Thoroughbreds offers two racing syndicates for 2020, as well as another pinhook syndicate. No surprise, most of the current partners have re-upped. For the pinhook syndicate, up to a handful of short yearlings will be selected with plans of selling them in the yearling sales in summer/fall. A \$2,500 investment purchases 1% fractional interest. Last year’s pinhook syndicate returned 40% profit on the investment.

The first racing group will be similar to 2019’s—three 2-year-olds, with 100 shares at \$2,500 per share. There’s a Brethren colt out of Run the World, a First Dude colt out of Tiz Alta, and a Constitution filly out of Real Strike.

“I like the Brethren; he’s a good sire,” Mary Lightner said. “I was looking at a lot of Khozans but I couldn’t get one. With Liam’s Lucky Charm and Smash Factor (stakes



RYAN THOMPSON/COGLIANESE PHOTOS

Chance It winning the FTBOA In Reality Stakes at Gulfstream

horses from the first crop of Khozan), I need to get a Khozan. I haven’t gotten my Khozan yet. But Brethren is a good Florida sire, and I want something to run in the Florida Sire Stakes. I want to win the Florida Sire series every year.”

The second racing syndicate includes two 2-year-olds. There are 40 shares at \$9,000 per with a 2.5% fractional interest. There’s a Prospective colt out of Vagabon Diva (Chance It’s half brother) and an Uncaptured filly out of Striking T.

“I didn’t want to have to run against (the Prospective colt) if somebody else got him, so I wanted him,” Mary Lightner said. “The Uncaptured, she’s absolutely drop-dead gorgeous. She looks like an athlete. Her mother’s a producer of a graded stakes-placed stakes winner.”

Optimism surrounding the Prospective colt derives from Vagabon Diva, who was adopted from a retirement home for \$250 by Fred Pace, a 68-year-old Winchester, Ky., funeral home owner and a longtime friend of Mike Lightner’s.

“I saw she was out of a Storm Cat mare and by Pleasantly Perfect. I figured there’s got to be a hole in her,” said Pace, who has been in the game with broodmares and racing for more than 40 years. “So I went to look at her and she was a good-looking mare. I just had to get my vet to write a statement about my farm and how we took care of our horses, and I adopted her.”

Pace and co-owner Dutch Ishmael raced Vagabon Diva’s first foal, Trenton Traveler, with Mary Lightner training. Trenton Traveler won his first two races. Pace then told Mike Lightner to give the mare to someone

who would take care of her. That led to Mary Lightner meeting breeder Bett Usher at a restaurant.

“I never go in this restaurant, and this one day I go there and there were only two people in the place—me and Mary,” said Usher, who received Vagabon Diva in August 2015. “We were talking and she said she was Mike Lightner’s daughter. I said, ‘I know Mike!’ This was just meant to be.”

After visiting Currency Swap and viewing his races on video, Usher decided he was a perfect match for the mare. The High Cotton bay had gone 4-2-1 in 10 starts and won the Three Chimneys Hopeful Stakes (G1) and Amsterdam Stakes (G2) at Saratoga.

“We made a decision to breed the mare to him,” Usher said. “We weren’t ready for marketability; we wanted to mate the mare to produce a racehorse.”

Usher and the Lightners had lost touch for a while, but after Trenton Traveler ran well, Mary Lightner told her father and brother they needed to find Usher to see if she still had Vagabon Diva. They reconnected to discover she did indeed, and they quickly purchased her son.

Whether it’s Shooting Star Thoroughbreds’ first year in business, or Chance It’s campaign, the story is remarkable.

“We’re blessed, that’s all I can say about it,” Mary Lightner said. “I was hoping that out of the three horses we could have one win at the special weight level, and the others win claiming races. When you’ve been in it, you know how hard it is to win races.” **BH**

Charlie McCarthy is the South Florida correspondent for BloodHorse.