



# A Country Girl At Heart

Lynn Baker seems to have it all, a dream farm, a small but commercial group of broodmares and ownership in one of Canada's best older trotting horses. What more could you want?

By Harold Howe

"Let me tell you this, Lynn Baker may not be all that well known but she does a hell of a job growing a horse."

There is probably no greater compliment that can be paid to a Standardbred breeder. And while she is a customer of his, Lexington Selected Yearling Sale manager Randy Manges is not one known for tossing out such kudos without merit.

Obviously he is not alone. The buying public spoke with its pocketbook in October at that auction for two of her three yearlings. The more notable pair brought \$100,000 and \$97,000 respectively, which is not too shabby for a breeder with just four mares.

So who is Lynn Baker?

She is from Shreve, Ohio (between Cleveland and Columbus) who despite having no family background in Standardbreds has become a successful commercial breeder. It all began in 1995 thanks to an Amish friend.

Sixteen years ago one of the more intriguing stories in the racing game was that of trotter B Cor Pete, a son of Balanced Image who had made the transition from buggy horse to open class performer at the Meadowlands.

The horse had made one start as a two-year-old and then bowed two tendons so he was sold for a Mennonite horse. However, half-way through his four-year-old year he



## A COUNTRY GIRL AT HEART



Photo by New Image Media

returned to the track where he quickly showed he was something special.

He graduated to the top of his class and for several years competed with many of the sports top trotters. He retired at nine with earnings just shy of \$900,000.

Owner Levi Hershberger just happened to be a neighbour of Lynn's and she was captivated by horse's rags-to-riches story.

"It was such an amazing development. We starting following everything

**Lynn's patience with Tall Cotton, who broke his neck when he was a baby, paid off when he won over \$117,000 this year for she and partner June Durand whose husband Tom trains.**

Pete did and then through Levi I learned that the mother was for sale. Her name was B Cor Tamara."

B Cor Tamara was a daughter of Dream Of Glory who was a superb Ontario Sires Stakes performer in the

mid-1980s. Her breeder Bill Core of Dresden, Ontario, won \$186,000 with her before retiring her to the breeding shed.

She had eight foals for Core, including Pete, her fourth, and the eighth was a son of A Go Go Lauxmont named B Cor

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Timingo who earned \$666,000 during his career.

Lynn's knowledge of bloodlines was limited to say the least at that point in time. But she knew the mare was B Cor Pete's momma. Then 14 years old she was in foal to Super Pleasure. The price was \$10,000.

"There was no great plan. Bill Core contacted us and never once tried to push her on us. We just decided to take her and he even delivered her to our farm. How nice is that?" she asks.

Lynn admits to feeling a kinship with rural Ontario people. She draws comparisons to her Ohio brethren, which may be due to her farming background.

"We raised beef cattle from just 136 acres and my father also worked in a factory. I always rode and after school went to work in the dairy department at Ohio State University. I'm very much a country girl who felt most comfortable on the farm," she explains.

It wasn't until 1990 that Lynn and her then husband Marty were able to fulfill her dream of having a farm. It was just 80 acres but it was hers and located just a step from her parents.

The property was dubbed Windswept Farms in recognition of a devastating wind that tore through the valley creating havoc along the way.

"I always liked horses but it was B Cor Pete that gave us the bug to get into the racing game. We started getting various trade magazines and got drawn to the Ontario program largely because of Balanced Image.

"We liked what he was doing as a sire in addition to B Cor

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Pete which led us to (farm manager) Doug Nash at Glengate Farm where Balanced Image stood. He was such a help to us and that's how this all came about," notes Lynn.

B Cor Tamara would prove to be the foundation mare for the farm producing 11 foals for Baker before her passing well into her twenties. Today, Baker still has three daughters in B Cor Peatra (which she bought in 2004), the \$330,000 winning Clarice Marie and Melba Jean. She owns just one other broodmare who is not related to this family.

"I'm retired now and this is a hobby for me. I know everything about my horses. They run loose in the yard around the house and I love them dearly. It is hard for me to sell yearlings. I really had to give myself a talking to in order to come to Lexington for the sale."

And then there are her racehorses.

"I've raced a few but they were all second hand. For some reason they could not be sold so we trained them ourselves."

Enter June and Tom Durand of Ontario.

Back in 1998 the couple bought the King Conch colt Conch Deville from Baker. He would go on to win \$200,000 before being exported to Australia for stud duty.

"I really liked what they did with their horses. In 2001, the year of the terrorist attacks in the United States, I offered Clarice Marie, a full sister to B Cor Pete. But I bought her back for \$30,000 that fall and after talking with June and Tom I sent her there to race."

She would go on to bank over \$300,000 and was the ultimate

# SEASON'S GREETINGS



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*The 2011 racing season was another great one for the Burke Stable. Across the board our team was there. We'd like to thank all of the supporters of the stable, our staff and of course the horses. We would particularly like to single out Buck I St Pat – old girl, thanks for the memories.*

*Best wishes to everyone for a happy holiday season.*

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winner of the 2002 \$300,000 OSS Super Final after the disqualification of Wescott.

"I became great friends with the Durands and come up once a year to visit," says Lynn.

And there is also the tale of Tall Cotton, a son of Revenue from B Cor Peatra, who in 2011 became one of the better open class trotters on the WEG circuit. He won \$117,000 this season before heading to Florida to the Durands' win-

Lynn's first horse was the former Ontario Sires Stakes champion B Cor Tamara. The Dream Of Glory mare is responsible for Baker's involvement in the sport thanks to her son B Cor Pete and would go on to produce 14 foals for her.

ter base and served notice that he may be even better next year. It's another fairy tale story.

"We went to visit Lynn in 2006 and this poor little foal was alone in a stall.

He was wearing a cage on his neck because he'd done a summersault one day and broke three vertebrae.

"By the time Lynn got him to the vet clinic she said it had swollen to a terrible

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Many thanks to the owners and trainers for their support in 2011. Good luck to one and all for 2012.

**DOUG MCNAIR**



**CANNES FELLOW**  
Photo by New Image Media

# *Season's Greetings*

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size and looked like he was a goner," explains Tom Durand.

"But she would not give in and he was placed on stall rest for weeks. It was sad to see the little fella but then a year later she called and said he seemed to have no ill effects of the acci-

**A neighbour of Lynn's owned the remarkable trotter B Cor Pete who went from a buggy horse to become a top free for all trotter.**

*Best of the Season*

*Happy holidays to one and all!*

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dent but would not put him in a sale. She was unsure what to do.

"I told her to get her Amish friends to break him in and if he handled himself all right to send the horse to me. All he's done is get better and better."

The horse did race at two but it has been a slow and steady progression with no stake victories in his \$245,000 in earnings. In late October he won the WEG Preferred class in 1:53.2 and served notice he is a player.

"He continues to surprise me with his improvement. I have come to think that he is going to be one that still has more left to show. We've always wanted to race in the Elitlopp. Maybe he'll be the one to get us there," speculates Durand.

That could pose a problem with Lynn who is never away from her herd more than a few days at most.

"Tall Cotton has been a lot of fun. Our mailman sells hay to us and I was telling him back in September that we were racing against the great San Pail for the first time. I said we could never beat him but just being in the same race was so exciting," offers Lynn.

"Anyway, he found a way to watch the race where Tall Cotton finished a very respectable third and now has become a big follower. That is what makes it all so much fun."

Lynn Baker might be categorized as old-fashioned. If so she takes it as a compliment.

"I have my dream farm and this is a hobby that I love. I hate seeing the old horse farms here in Ohio going by the way-side. I guess I'm just a country girl at heart." 🐾

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