

Breeder By Chance, Owner By Choice

Mary Clark's farm may be named Highland Thoroughbred Farm but it's Standardbreds she's concentrating on primarily these days, and with some success. By Heather MacKay Roberts

A dozen years ago Mary Clark was happily married and living in downtown Toronto. Circumstances intervened and today she finds herself a widow, living in a glorious country setting surrounded by the animals she loves and managing a thriving horse operation.

Horses bred by her operation, which has been operation for less than a decade, include this year's Niatross and Bluegrass winner Mybrothergeorge, the \$1.2 million winner Giddy Up Lucky and Icy Breeze and Highland Strikes, both winners of more than \$150,000.

Unlike the vast majority of those who breed horses for a living, Mary doesn't have a background in either Thoroughbreds or Standardbreds. Rather it was the decision to move to the country, precipitated by her husband's diagnosis with Parkinson's disease in 2000 that began the journey.

"We were living on Balmoral Avenue in Toronto in a tall, narrow house that had lots of stairs," Mary recalled recently. "When Jack was diagnosed with Parkinson's we decided that house wouldn't be a good place for him and made the decision to move to the country. We thought that environment would be less stressful as well."

They moved north to a lovely property located close to the picturesque hamlet of Inglewood, Ontario, best known in the Standardbred world as the long time address of Armstrong Brothers Farm.

By that point in time the couple had been retired for several years. Jack, whose given name was actually John but was always called Jack, had graduated from the University of Toronto

with a Mining Engineering degree in 1950. He founded the company Jarvis Clark Inc. with his partner Lyle Jarvis in North Bay. Lyle was a decorated World War two pilot and Jack had also served in the war.

"Jack always joked that his one contribution to the war was a single parachute jump while in Canada and then the war was over," noted Mary.

"The company manufactured low profile mining equipment that operated underground," explained Mary who met Jack when she visited a friend in North Bay. She was a head nurse at North York General Hospital at the time.

They married in 1983 in Denver, Colorado. By that point Jack and Lyle had sold their company, as Lyle wanted to retire. Jack wasn't ready for that step yet and founded John Clark Inc., a mining equipment manufacturer similar to Jarvis Clark.

"We spent about 11 years in Denver," Mary recalled. "Jack was a real sportsman and we did everything while we were there. We skied all over the place, did a lot of white water rafting and hiking. I've had lots of injuries trying to keep up with him on the ski hills."

The couple remained in Denver until Jack's retirement at which time they moved to Toronto where they stayed until his diagnosis with Parkinson's.

"When we moved to the farm Jack was still very mobile and was dealing with Parkinson's very well," Mary related. "He became quite involved in Parkinson's research and established the Jack Clark Chair in Parkinson's disease research at the University of Toronto."



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"After we'd been here for awhile Jack thought we should be doing something with all of the property we had (136 acres). He initially thought of putting in crops but then a friend suggested we try pin hooking horses. Neither one of us had any idea what that was."

To that end the couple bought two young Thoroughbred horses with the intent of selling them the following year hopefully for a profit.

"We fell in love with them and they never left," Mary laughed. "They both raced, but we certainly didn't know what we were doing at that point. I still have one of those horses and gave the other to a vet tech I knew would give her a good life."

"Not long after that it was suggested that we try Standardbreds, the plan being to establish a band of about 10 broodmares and sell their offspring. Christina Anderson, our first farm manager, was responsible for purchasing our initial broodmares."

Christina was tragically killed in an air crash in 2006.

The new enterprise did well from the start. "We were fortunate at that time

There are three houses on the Highland Thoroughbred Farm's property. The main house, shown above, has panoramic views of the neighbouring countryside. The barns and paddocks for the horses are to the left of the house.

that the US dollar was so high and that helped considerably when selling yearlings in the states. That has changed now obviously."

As Jack's disease progressed it was decided that the mares be moved to nearby Village Acres, the farm established by Charlie Armstrong and operated by his daughters and farm manager John Henderson.

"Glen Smith, who is married to Caroline Armstrong, recommended we move the mares to Village Acres and it's worked out very well. The staff there are wonderful and take such good care of our horses," praised Mary. "Their office manager Lorraine has also been very helpful to me."

"During that period my time was dedicated to looking after my husband so it was a relief knowing the horses were somewhere they were receiving the best of care."

After Jack's death in 2008 Mary has kept her horses with Village Acres. Her own farm houses her retired broodmares and a couple of rescued horses as well as any of her racehorses that require rest before returning to their trainers.

Mary has kept a few of her foals to race in order to promote her mares' careers and if they are fillies, to retain the gene pool with long term plans to replace their mothers in her broodmare band.

One of those is the now four-year-old mare Rockn Highland, a daughter of Rocknroll Hanover from the Cam Fella mare Armbro Ophelia who earned over \$107,000 while racing under trainer Murray Brethour's management.

Last year Mary sold a full brother to Rockn Highland at the Harrisburg Sale for \$110,000. He was purchased by Frank Bellino of New York, who is best known as the owner of the \$2.7 million winner Rock



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- 30 MAGIC ROSE, bc Miss Madisyn Rose-Mr Lavec
- *491 LADYFINGER, bf Cream Pie-Malabar Man
- *69 RONAN, brc Roisin-Donerail

By ANGUS HALL

- *591 ANTZINTHEPANTZ, bc Lookin At You Babe-Malabar Man
- *1129 KEYSTONE CASSIDY, bf Keystone Chickadee-Sierra Kosmos

By BADLANDS HANOVER

- *853 KEYSTONE REAL DEAL, bc Keystone Romona-Shady Character
- *830 KEYSTONE CAMARO, bc Keystone Caitlyn-Shady Character

By BETTOR'S DELIGHT

- 668 DELIGHTED, bc Odds On Affair-Artsplace
- *1015 KEYSTONE CALVIN, bc Croquette Hanover-No Nukes

By BROADWAY HALL

- *1087 ARCHERTOWN RD, brc Hawaiian Delight-Muscles Yankee

By CAMLUCK

- 992 CATCH THE LUCK, bc Catch An Angel-Western Ideal
- *1130 KEYSTONE RHYME, bf Keystone Romance-Keystone Ore

By CAM'S CARD SHARK

- 459 LIARS POKER, bc Camus-Artsplace

By CANTAB HALL

- *269 HIGH BRIDGE, bc Madame Volo-Yankee Glide
- *551 KEYSTONE BOLT, bc Keystone Brittany-Lindy Lane

By CHOCOLATIER

- 1045 DAGGET, bc Elena Victory-Valley Victory

By CHRISTIAN CULLEN

- *889 WESTERN CULLEN, bf Witchy Western-Western Hanover

By CLASSIC PHOTO

- 1125 ACADIAN QUEEN, bf Kendra Hall-Garland Lobell
- *768 FLASH CRASH, bc So Help Me-Super Bowl

By CRAZED

- 619 CRAZY OVER YOU, bf Meadowbranch Queen-Malabar Man

By CREDIT WINNER

- *933 ALIEN HUNTER, bc Armbro Norway-Speedy Crown

By DEWEYCHEATUMNHOWE

- 419 DOUBLE DIP, bf Armbro Dipper-Speedy Crown

By DONATO HANOVER

- 282 VC ECLIPSE, brc Missy Lavec-Mr Lavec
- *558 GILDED AGE, bc Kosmo Girl-Sierra Kosmos
- *82 ARCTIC TALE, bc Southwind Wake-Muscles Yankee

By DRAGON AGAIN

- 94 SUNSHINE PATRIOT, brf Sunone-Western Hanover
- 560 KUKALAKA, bc Kuklapanandollie-Artsplace
- 832 DRAGON BABE, brf Total Babe-Western Hanover
- *876 REDHOOK BAY, bf West Indies-Western Hanover
- *1094 KEYSTONE KANE, brc Heavenly Killean-Astreaos
- *1133 KEYSTONE NOTORIOUS, bc Nevertheless-Grinfromteartear
- *359 KEYSTONE SHAYE, brf Style-Rustler Hanover

By FOUR STARZZZ SHARK

- 754 RIO TINTO, bc She's The One-Matt's Scooter

By GLIDEMASTER

- *272 ADAPTATION, bc Malabar Memories-Malabar Man
- *656 MERIN AYR, brf New Day-Conway Hall
- *851 AIR WOLF, bc Usmenie-Uno Atout

By LIS MARA

- *604 KEYSTONE MADDIE, bf Mai Katie-Shady Character

By MAJESTIC SON

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By MUSCLE MASS

- *1121 ANGELINA J, bf Justice Done-Donerail

By REAL ARTIST

- 864 REAL SECRET, blkf Village Secret-The Panderosa

By REAL DESIRE

- 1088 NITTANY NATION, bc Hawaiian Pamper-The Panderosa

By ROCKNROLL HANOVER

- 154 ROSE RUTHLESS, bf Babe Ruthless-Walton Hanover
- 306 MOSH PIT, bc Panevolence-Artsplace

By SOMEBEACHSOMEWHERE

- 118 BIKINI BEACH, bf Western Spring-Western Hanover
- 512 SUNSHINE BEACH, bc Light Up-Artsplace
- *243 KEYSTONE WANDA, bf I Will-Western Hanover
- *552 KEYSTONE TITUS, bc Keystone Trinidad-Albatross

By VILLAGE JOLT

- 991 JET JOLT, bc Catch A Break-Real Artist
- 1100 TERRIBLE TYRANT, brc Imattculate-Matt's Scooter
- *1110 JOLTING JEN, bf Jate Mate-Jate Lobell

By WESTERN IDEAL

- *429 ONE STOP DEAL, bc Artstopper-Artsplace
- *965 FOOL BEWITCH U, bf Bewitch-Artsplace

By YANKEE CRUISER

- 871 SOILED DOVE, bf Western Dove-Western Hanover
- *635 MODERN CRUISER, bc Modern Medicine-Jenna's Beach Boy

By YANKEE GLIDE

- *392 KEYSTONE WALLACE, bc Willa Hanover-Lindy Lane
- *436 KEYSTONE ACE, bc Balanced Action-Balanced Image
- *543 KEYSTONE FIGHTER, bc Its Just A Fling-Balanced Image
- *655 KEYSTONE SADIE, bf Keystone Sirena-Malabar Man



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N Roll Heaven last year's Horse of the Year in the US.

It wasn't surprising that Bellino was interested in the colt as his dam, Armbro Ophelia had also produced the Artsplace daughter Artistic Vision, who is the dam of Rock N Roll Heaven and both are sired by Rocknroll Hanover.

Bellino renamed the colt Mybrother-george in honour of his brother who had

passed away unexpectedly at the age of 49 last December.

At this point in his young career the colt has standings of 5-1-2 in 10 starts for \$146,000. His most significant wins so far have been his 1:51.1 effort in a division of the Niatross Stake at the Meadowlands in early August and his recent Bluegrass victory at The Red Mile in 1:52.2.

Another horse Mary has been watch-

ing closely this summer is her Conway Hall three-year-old named Highland Thunder.

"He is from a mare I lost when he was born, SJs Image (a Balanced Image half-sister to \$1.3 million winner SJs Photo)," Mary noted. "I want to credit John Carry of T.C. Westmeath Stud Farm in Shelbourne for saving Thunder by finding him a replacement mother, a very patient Clydesdale mare, and socializing him with other horses as he grew.

"That's one thing about the horse business, I found the majority of people are very caring, especially if you need help."

Susie Kerwood handles the training of Highland Thunder who has earned \$45,000 so far this year. His first win this year may be viewed by [clicking here](#).

"He tries really hard. As a two-year-old he had a difficult year, he had to be operated on and lost about two feet of bowel and was gelded."

Kerwood also trained the horse's Andover Hall sister, Highland Image, who won at Mohawk last year as a three-year-old in 1:54.1 in early July, making Mary

"I love both the Standardbreds and Thoroughbreds. They are equally exciting or heartbreaking. I've learned a lot over the past few years although my trainers might argue with that given some of the questions I ask them."



Photo by New Image Media

and Susie hopeful about her future, but fate intervened.

"She broke my heart, this mare had so much potential but tragedy struck," Mary said. "After that race her ankle was injected and she developed a huge infection and she became lame and could never race again. She's now in foal to Muscle Massive."

Another Highland horse in the Kerwood stable is Highland Bogart, a two-year-old Modern Art colt who in his most recent start at Mohawk was 10th for most of the race and paced a :26.2 last quarter to finish third, timed in 1:54.2. "I have high hopes for his three-year-old season," said Mary.

In addition to Brethour and Kerwood, Mary also horses with Garrett Whelan, Highland Candy Bar, a Mach Three filly and Ikey Breeze, a Western Terror homebred mare who has \$167,000 on her card lifetime.

"Glen Smith, who has been very helpful to me, introduced me to the trainers I use and they've all been great to work with," said Mary.

She also has a Thoroughbred in train-

Ikey Breeze, a homebred daughter of Western Terror, is shown taking her life mark of 1:52.2 at Mohawk earlier this year for trainer Garrett Whelan. That race may be watched by [clicking here](#).

ing with noted trainer Sid Attard. "I love both the Standardbreds and Thoroughbreds. They are equally exciting or heart-breaking. I've learned a lot over the past few years although my trainers might argue with that given some of the questions I ask them," she laughed.

"I enjoy the racing and the breeding but there can be some very tragic moments. There are so many things that can go wrong sometimes you have to remind yourself of the good and exciting times."

One thing that can't be denied is that Mary takes very good care of her horses. She's decided that she'll retire three of her broodmares, Armbr Ophelia, Ice Chaser and Falcons Secret after they foal next spring. They'll join the other mares she's already retired at her farm and their daughters will continue on in Mary's broodmare band.

This fall Mary is selling four yearlings, three at the Forest City Sale and one in Lexington.

The three at Forest City include Highland Gwyns Guy, a Ken Warkentin half-brother to \$818,000 winner Godiva Hall, Highland Baddie, a Badlands Hanover filly from a full sister to \$1.1 million winner Giddy Up Lucky and Highlandnightlight, a Ken Warkentin filly half-sister to Highland Strikes (\$157,745).

At Lexington she sells Highland Hottie, a Western Terror colt and first foal from HTF Cocoa. All of her yearlings sell in the Preferred Equine consignment.

"I've used Preferred Equine to sell all of my yearlings. It helps for a small breeder to be in a consignment likes theirs to get noticed.

"I have high hopes for all of the yearlings but you never know until the hammer falls what they will bring. The

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economy plays such a huge part in the success of yearling sales.

"The farm has to support itself and that's dependent on the yearling sales and how well the racehorses do. And with everything in this business luck plays such a significant role.

"When you're racing so much depends on the mind set of the horse, the post position, the driver, the trainer, the trip, no illnesses, accidents, and on and on. When you do have some success it makes it all the more worthwhile as you know the obstacles you've had to overcome."

When determining which sires to breed her mares Mary follows Norman Hall's theories after attending one of his workshops in PEI a couple of years ago. Hall's Pedigree Matching website may be viewed by [clicking here](#).

"There's a lot I don't know, but I learned quite a bit from that experience, I didn't realize how much until I got home and started to put it into practice. I try and follow his theories and sprinkle them with a bit of star power."

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At the home farm Mary has Linda Just help her five days a week caring for the various horses there and this summer had a student who also helped out.

Mary is adamant that her horses will always have a home with her. "If I can't find good homes for them, I'll keep them here. I definitely feel attached and responsible for them. I love them all," said Mary

who shares her home with three dogs and an assortment of cats who are all well loved.

"I was very fortunate to have a wonderful 25 year marriage, not many people get that anymore. When I lost Jack the horses provided a welcome distraction for me and an excuse to carry on like he would have liked." 🐾

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