

# The People's Choice

## Callaway's Aperitif, Regal's Special Effort LF, Conventry's Too Fast Too Furious

By Jackie Hale



*Melissa Moore gave Sherry Frankel a hug back at the Sunrise Stables tack room after Frankel and Regal's Special Effort LF were crowned the Amateur Road Pony Reserve National Champions.*

A native Houstonian, Sherry Frankel first sat on a pony at three years old and that was all it took to get her hooked on horses. Through some of her mother's friends, Sherry ended up taking saddle seat riding lessons at the Phillips School of Riding (Gwen Phillips Nix). When Sherry was 12 years old, she moved on to Dale Milligan Stables, where her parents bought her the RWC Three Gaited Under 15.2 mare, RWC Melinda Stonewall. Although she was a great mare with Dale, she definitely knew the difference when Sherry stepped into the irons. At 15, Dale had Sherry's parents buy her a three-year-old five-gaited mare who they named Saucy Mam'selle. She and Sherry went on to be the Junior Exhibitor Five-Gaited Mare World Champions and Saucy was only four years old.

Fast forward twenty years and Sherry is raising her two girls, Lauren and Lindsey Greenwald, who one day told their Mom that they "wanted to ride horses." Sherry responded, "if they were going to ride horses it would be the American Saddlebred and saddle seat, because if they could learn to ride a Saddlebred they could ride any style or breed of horse." Her daughters proved to love riding as much as Sherry had, and because there were few Saddlebred stables in the Houston area, Sherry decided that it would be her passion and dream to start a full training facility. One was found in Tomball, Texas, about 28 miles northwest of downtown Houston, and in 2000 Sherry set about converting the 21 acre property that had been a former quarter horse betting race track into SGF Winning Ways Farm, Ltd. The stable and the Saddlebreds became a family activity that Sherry and the girls could all do together. "Horses raise great children," says Sherry. "I always knew where my daughters were and enjoyed seeing their confidence and skills grow."

Daughter Lauren chose to pursue a career in the Saddlebred industry and attended William Woods University. She spent two summers interning with Melissa Moore and Sherry moved several of her best horses to Melissa during that time. "Sherry sent me Regal's Special Effort to train in 2012," remembers Melissa. "We had discussed this great pony that she had with another trainer, that everyone else was showing and I didn't understand why Sherry wasn't enjoying her." The first season, Lauren showed her while Sherry learned to drive her, but in 2013 Sherry took the reins and has never looked backed. "Sake is a very special pony," said Melissa. "She is so nice to work and extremely game. She is one of those special ponies that you never really have to practice once you learn to drive her. You just get in and head to the show ring and have the best time." Sherry adds, "I had never driven a roadster pony so I was hesitant, but I put my confidence into Melissa and Lauren to teach me. Sake is so much fun -- she can definitely turn it on and is one of the few road ponies I have seen that does exhibit three distinct speeds, has incredible action, and ALWAYS shows happy with her ears up!"

During this same time that Lauren was working at Sunrise Stables, she and Melissa found a horse they knew was just right. Melissa went to look at prospects at Ricky Cook's. Melissa remembers, "They brought out this beautiful immature, fractious, hotter-than-a-smoking-pistol mare. Callaway's Aperitif, aka, 'Martini', certainly was bred to be great, but as I watched them try and put her through her gaits I knew she was a work in progress. They were trying to rack her and I could tell she hated it. God gave her so much natural talent, so much hock, that she had a hard time racking." Melissa personally bought her and brought her home and started just doing three gaits. "She was so talented and so hot, I knew that if she ended up not making a show horse she would be a very special broodmare. I thought that she would be a perfect match to It's Double O'Deuce," said Melissa, "so I decided to show her to Sherry."

"I was planning to visit Lauren and the road pony when Lauren told me 'make sure you bring a check or two when you come,'" Sherry laughs. "Callaway's Apperitif was definitely gifted and beautiful and super well bred, but she also needed a lot of work. This would not be a horse for me to ride for awhile. She needed the right training, not to be rushed or pressured, and I know that Melissa knew that I would be the one owner that was willing to wait for the mare to be developed at her rate."

Sherry was aware that the mare may never make it to the show ring, "but she trusted me and I purchased her," remembers Melissa. "We immediately bred her to Deuce and continued to work her. She had a beautiful foal by Deuce, but she HATED being a mom." Melissa bottle fed the colt around the clock until a nurse mare could be found, then sadly six weeks later he broke his leg playing in the field and had to be euthanized. In 2014, they bred her back to Deuce with the hopes she would be a better mom the second time around. "We put her back to work and Michael Buchanan was my assistant at the time. Michael did a great job getting her ready for the show ring and premiered her at Asheville Lions Club, where she hit the ring on fire and only stayed on her feet about half the class," recalls Melissa. But the more he showed

her, the better she got, coming into her own at Lexington Junior League where she won the Park Grand Championship. Melissa thought they were set up to win the Mare Park class at Louisville, but a health issue kept her from competing.

Melissa put her back to work in 2015 and finally got to show her personally at Shelbyville. "What an amazing ride I had winning the Open Park Championship. I was so excited about Louisville and determined to win the Park Mare class," she said.

Then two weeks before Louisville she developed colic. Melissa had attended a chiropractic course the year before and learned about an acupuncture point that helped with colic. "I immediately applied what I learned at the clinic along with the usual colic treatment and loaded her into the truck and took her to the Rood & Riddle vet clinic. As I held her while they did her exam, I prayed and told them that they could not do surgery on her because she was going to win the Park Mare class in two weeks and we had to get her through it. It didn't look good, but they said they would do all they could without surgery. I'm not sure I have ever prayed as much as I did that night. I called everyone I know that would make a prayer chain for her. The next morning the vet called me and said he didn't know what happened, but she was doing great and she could come home. I spent the next two weeks personally watching her 24 hours a day. I kept a trailer hooked up and took her on trailer rides if she acted the least bit weird. She was working great and healthy and she was going to get her chance to win the Park Mare class. I will never forget the feeling I had when we lined up, I just broke into tears....I realized it didn't matter if she won or not, because she just gave me her perfect all and we made it to the Park Mare class and she was healthy and wonderful. When they called her out for first, it was one of those moments you will never forget. No one knew what we went through to get there, how many years, but Martini never gave up nor did her owner, Sherry Frankel, who always trusted me. It was one of those moments that will always be life changing."

Following her apprenticeship at Sunrise Stables and graduation from William Woods, Lauren accepted a position as Assistant Trainer at Taylor Creek Stables with Wes and Sena Bowling in Michigan. Coventry's Too Fast Too Furious came to Taylor Creek Stables in December of 2012 from Memory Lane Farm. He was a Christmas present for Jocelyn Hagerman's daughter, Taylor, as her 10 and under mount. At most shows, the trainers felt it benefited the pair for "Connor" to show with Lauren before Taylor was to show him as a way to school him in the ring and prepare him for his young rider. This recipe not only led to Taylor's success, but it also gained Connor many admirer's in the barn. Though we didn't know at the time, Sherry's wheels were already turning about the possibility of one day owning him.

By the next Spring, they shifted the flashy gelding into the Country Pleasure division with catch rider Gianna DeSimone. At this time, Connor was being marketed for sale as Taylor had taken on other passions, so Gianna expertly guided him to several victories in his new division. As one of his long time fans, when word got out the talented horse was for sale, Sherry jumped at the opportunity to buy him. At that moment Wes, Sena and Lauren all told her, "It may be now, or it may be in three years, but this horse has the potential to be a Country Pleasure World Champion."

That fall, the new team of Sherry and Connor showed successfully in Country Pleasure, winning both classes at ASHAM Fall Charity Horse Show, as well as strong finishes in Indianapolis. At this point Connor was already qualified for the 2015 World Championship Horse Show in Country Pleasure, so it was decided that when the 2015 show season began he would return to showing in Park Pleasure to further tune his skills and prepare him for Sherry to show again later in the year. He made electrifying victory passes at River Ridge and Syracuse International that year with Lauren in the irons. As the show was wrapping up and Louisville entries were looming, the decision was made to enter him in Country Pleasure. Sherry chose Gianna to take over once more in the Junior Exhibitor ranks. Gianna was surprised with this news two weeks before the show and was given only one practice ride. Wes, Sena, and Lauren had a feeling it would be all she would need.



*Lauren Greenwald and Sena Bowling celebrated with Gianna Desimone and Coventry's Too Fast Too Furious in Freedom Hall after they were announced as the Division 1 World's Champions Junior Exhibitor Country Pleasure.*

Like out of a story book the pair put on a perfect show and trotted down Freedom Hall's victory lane adorned in streaming blue ribbons. He would forevermore be known as WC Coventry's Too Fast Too Furious. The promise made a year ago when Sherry purchased the horse was fulfilled as he made his mark at our breeds largest and most prestigious show.

"We are so proud of his accomplishment at Louisville," said Lauren. "The Taylor Creek group had said time and time again that he would have been a contender had there been a Park Pleasure division at Louisville. It was wonderful to see him exemplify his versatility and earn a blue ribbon with Gianna in Country Pleasure. He proved to the rest of the world he was as special as all of us knew he was." Sena added, "Connor is everything you would expect from a talented and competitive individual. He is extremely intelligent, has opinions all his own, and loves himself as much as all of us do." She recalls, "As they put the blue ribbons on him in Freedom Hall the gelding raised his head up to look into the stands and nickered loudly as if to say 'look what I did!' He is one of those special individuals that come along once in a great while, and like most of the great ones, he won't let you forget it either."

With this accomplishment under his belt, Sherry decided that the horse Lauren had loved the most for so long and had given all of them so much should be able to finish the year the way he started it, with his old partner back in the saddle to take on the Park Pleasure ranks. He finished with two victory passes at the ASHAM Fall Charity and then made two strong showings at the American Royal, gaining top prizes and the support of many of the crowd.

With the 2016 season ahead, Connor and Sherry are preparing to compete in the Adult Country Pleasure ranks, adding another division to the geldings extremely versatile and successful resume. Being honored as People's Choice Reserve Champion for Open Park Pleasure is icing on the cake for this horse's star studded year.

Reflecting on Louisville 2015, Sherry concludes, "Martini and Connor showed in the same morning session only a few classes apart. It was a thrill to be able to watch both of my horses do so well and win their classes!" But those victories are second to the happiness and pride she felt for her daughter, Lauren, and trainers Melissa, Sena, and Wes. "All of their devotion, hard work, planning, thought patterns, and training produced the best results we could have dreamed possible."