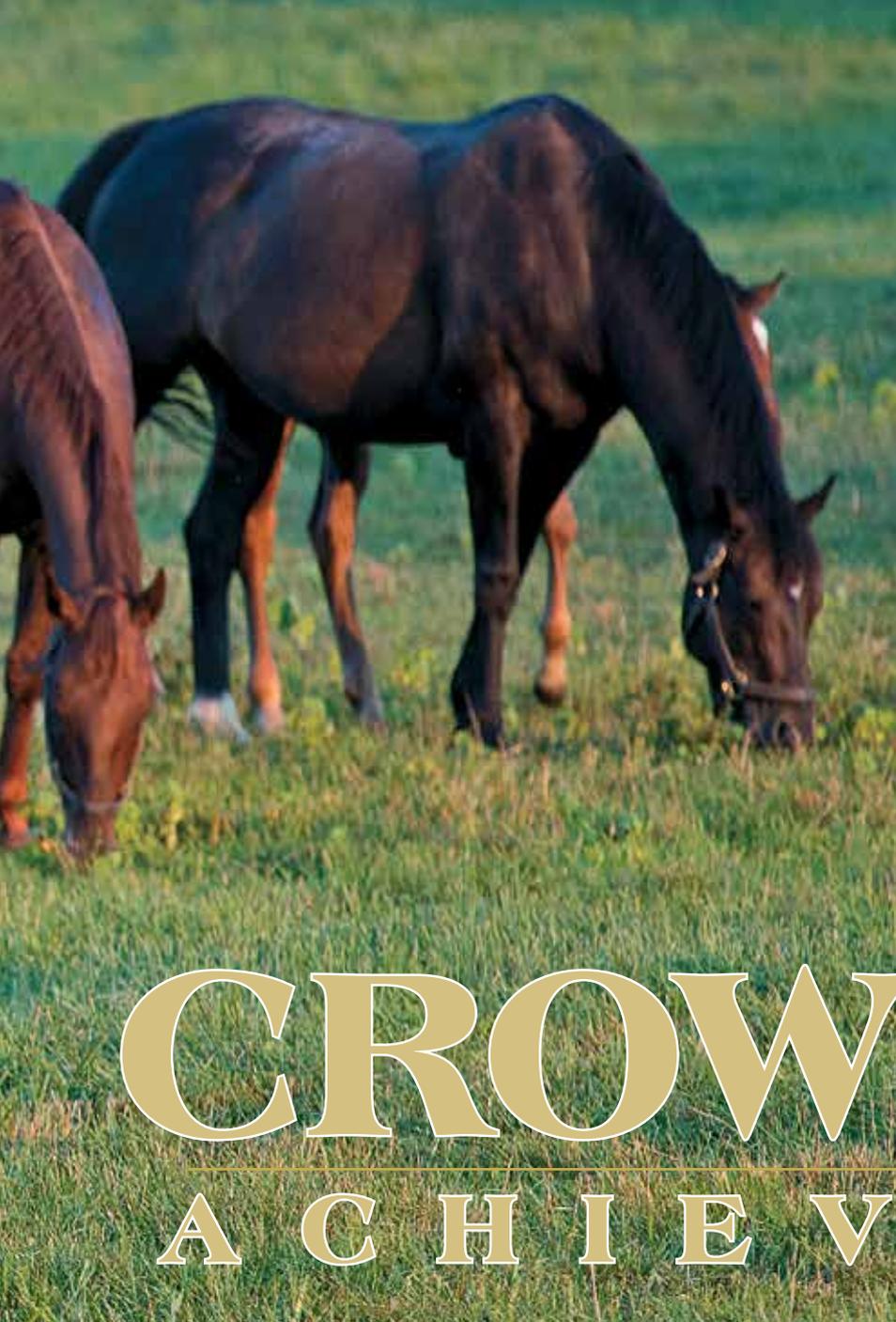




**Foreground,
Stage Magic,
the dam of
Justify, has
pride of place
at Glennwood
Farm.**



CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT

With Justify, Glennwood Farm fulfills every breeder's dreams

By Maryjean Wall | Photos by Anne M. Eberhardt

An undulating swath of Woodford County and Glens Creek inspired the naming of Glennwood Farm. The creek meanders on its timeless course close by the farm, flowing across the fabled limestone rock that gave rise to Kentucky's horse and bourbon industries. Green and tranquil, Glennwood Farm struck Canada's John D. Gunther as the perfect place to try to raise the right kind of horse.

CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT



Justify became the 13th Triple Crown winner with his June 9 victory in the Belmont Stakes.

Justify's story began here, on these 350 acres that occupy a moderate-sized niche on the physical scale of horse farms. Gunther and his daughter, Tanya Gunther, did not specifically aim for a Triple Crown winner when Gunther bought out former partners in the early 1990s. With only 12 winners of racing's rarest jewel appearing prior to Justify, the Triple Crown has always represented a nearly impossible dream for any breeder, almost too big to think about. More reasonably, the Gunthers focused their goals on breeding stakes winners and champions.

Justify brought all those impossible dreams down to earth from the stratosphere upon sweeping through the Kentucky Derby, Preakness, and Belmont Stakes this spring. The son of Scat Daddy, racing for multiple ownership interests led by WinStar Farm and also including China Horse Club, Head of Plains Partners, and Starlight Racing, gave the Gunthers worldwide recognition as his breeders. "He grew up in this field,"



RICK SAMUELS

COURTESY OF TANYA GUNTHER

The future champion stood out as special from his earliest days. He sold for \$500,000 at the 2016 Keeneland September yearling sale.



Quality over quantity ensures individualized care for Glennwood's horses.

CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT



Tanya Gunther, who advocated the mating that produced Justify, visits Stage Magic and her Pioneer of the Nile colt.

Tanya said, as she pointed to a rolling, tree-lined pasture adjacent to the foaling barn. “That’s his mother [Stage Magic] with her Pioneer of the Nile colt.”

This year’s Wood Memorial Stakes winner, Vino Rosso, likewise spent his early months in this pasture alongside his dam, Mythical Bride. In addition to Justify and Vino Rosso, who are this year’s best-known American graded stakes winners produced at Glennwood, the farm has raised, bred, or co-bred numerous other household names in the sport: champion Stevie Wonderboy (2005 Breeders’ Cup Juvenile winner), Stay Thirsty (grade I winner of nearly \$2 million), Tamarkuz (2016 Breeders’ Cup Dirt Mile winner), First Samurai (grade I winner of nearly \$1 million), Mo Town (grade I winner), My Miss Sophia (second in the 2014 Kentucky Oaks), Eye of the Tiger, Last Gunfighter, Tiger Moth, The Lieutenant, Bending Strings, Moviesta, and Materiality.

Glennwood sold all but homebreds Eye of the Tiger, Last Gunfighter, Tiger Moth, and Bending Strings at Keeneland’s September yearling sale.

The cycle of life moves along as on any other horse farm with new foals in the pastures and hopes for more success. Still, it would be hard to duplicate the season the Gunthers have had. And the first half of the year did not end with the Belmont Stakes.

Ten days later John and Tanya were at Royal Ascot, winning the St. James’s Palace Stakes June 19 before an audience that included Queen Elizabeth II. This time John Gunther owned the winning horse, Without Parole. He was also breeder of this 3-year-old son of Frankel, with the colt foaled and raised in England while Justify was growing up in Kentucky. Trophy presenters were the world’s most recognizable newlyweds, Prince Harry and the former Meghan Markle, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. Yes, the Duchess made small talk with the Gunthers. And,

yes, in keeping with Royal Ascot custom, Tanya wore a fashionable black dress and stylish fascinator.

Hands-on in the electronic age

Only days earlier Tanya wore skinny jeans, a sleeveless shirt, and a baseball cap when turning out yearlings for the evening at Glennwood. She was nearing the end of her post-Belmont Stakes visit to the farm. Though she lives in Monaco and travels frequently throughout Europe checking on her father’s horses boarded at various farms in England and France, the Kentucky farm is where her heart lies. She lived at Glennwood for seven years until 2014, managing the farm and building a team. “I miss the farm,” she said wistfully.

Tanya is hands-on with horses and likes to get to know each horse. “I feel like I’m my best person when I’m with them,” said this one-time investment banker who formerly lived and worked in London. Now that she’s left that milieu, she definitely prefers wearing jeans to a business suit. She does not try to hide how she feels about horses. “My favorite thing is to get to know their personalities and understand what they’re like,” she said. “I think about the horses all the time.”



Top, Tanya and John Gunther celebrate Without Parole’s victory in Royal Ascot’s St. James’s Palace Stakes. Above, John receives the trophy from the Duke and Duchess of Sussex.



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This hardly explains her management style. The way she runs Glennwood for her father seems paradoxical to her fondness for being close to their horses. Tanya is the queen of modern technology, micromanaging Glennwood in absentia from Europe. She communicates with the farm electronically and relies heavily on spreadsheets that show “everything from what they’re eating to where they’re located.” She returns to the farm multiple times a year.

Justify was raised partly under this system and so were numbers of stakes winners the Gunther team of father and daughter have sent through the Keeneland sales. Neither Tanya nor her father is on-site daily, yet Tanya says she knows where every horse on the farm is at all times. She acknowledges what works for them might not work for others.

“Most people can’t get their heads around it,” Tanya said. “But the team is here. I spent years living here, working on the farm, so they know me. They know what’s expected.”

The team helped raise Justify. “Conrado Campos has been with us the longest” of nine grooms, Tanya said. Campos began working at Glennwood at least 17 years ago. No one at Glennwood has a title — Tanya doesn’t believe in titles because she has seen titles lead to larger egos and an unwillingness to do any job needed in any of the farm’s five barns. She relies on her team and has found having no titles works for her. Lindsay Wilson, eight years with Glennwood, primarily runs the farm office and also communicates electronically with Tanya daily to ensure everything is running according to the Gunthers’ style.

“One thing interesting about the farm,” John Gunther said, “for a small farm like Glennwood we’ve had seven

3-year-old colts off the farm make the starting gate for the Kentucky Derby. Five of them were homebreds. That statistic alone was really amazing.”

Also amazing are John’s statistics as a breeder: 29 stakes winners individually and nine in partnership since beginning with Thoroughbreds decades previously at Vancouver’s Exhibition Park, now Hastings Park. This accomplishment seems all the more remarkable as he usually keeps only 25-30 broodmares.

The accomplishment is really remarkable, considering John has never employed a bloodstock agent. He and Tanya earned their luck and took their lumps the hard way, by making their own decisions.

Individual teamwork

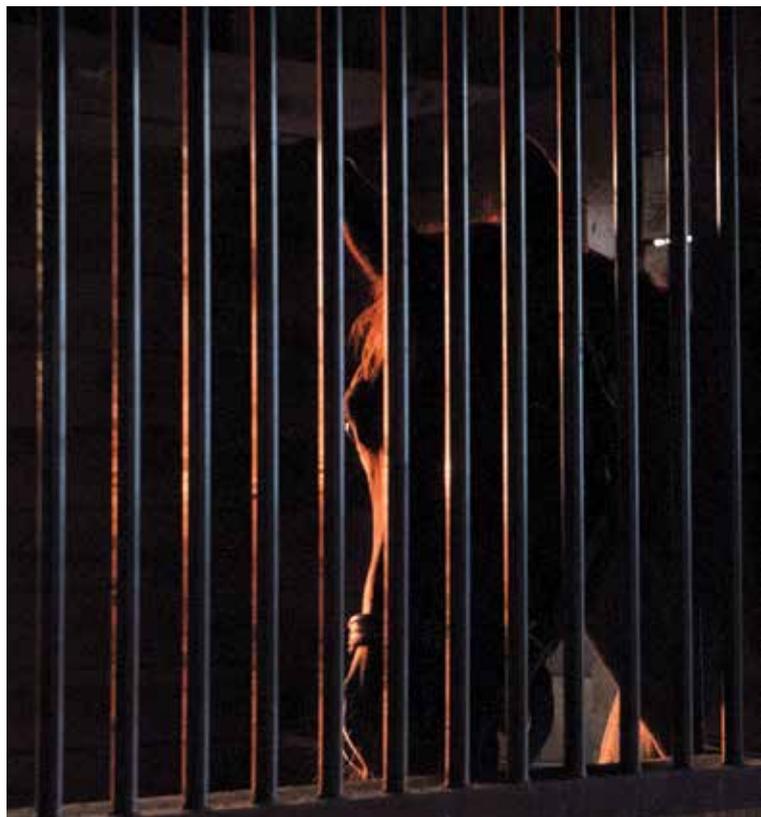
A lot more than fancy luck has led to their success. Both Tanya and her father have decades of involvement with horses behind them. Working together, each brings individual talents to the matter of picking out mares to buy or planning matings. Each relies on the other’s strengths.

John Gunther said he leans on his instincts when picking out a horse. He said Tanya is much more analytical. Combin-



From left, the Glennwood team includes Ricardo Lopez, Nery Hernandez, Lindsay Wilson, Martine Sandoval, and Conrado Campos.

CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT



The cycle of life moves on at Glennwood Farm, but it would be difficult to replicate the year the Gunthers have enjoyed in 2018.



Teamwork is essential at Glennwood, where no one has a title.

“

You can aspire to breed a Derby winner, but to have everything fall into place where the horse gets all three is phenomenal.”

—TANYA GUNTHER



ing these two qualities “has turned out very well,” he said. John’s word generally is final when the two disagree since it’s his pocketbook paying for the operation. But the two don’t disagree often.

“We come at it from different perspectives,” Tanya said, “and, hopefully, that makes us a good team. We knock heads sometimes, of course. He’s more of a risk-taker, a big-picture person. I’m more analytic [spreadsheets, remember] and into details all the time.”

They did butt heads, somewhat, over the mating that produced Justify. John was not keen on sending Stage Magic to Scat Daddy, a stallion whose loss to the Thoroughbred world with his untimely death at age 11 in 2015 is impossible to calculate. Tanya recalled she spent a year trying to persuade her father to breed to the young stallion.

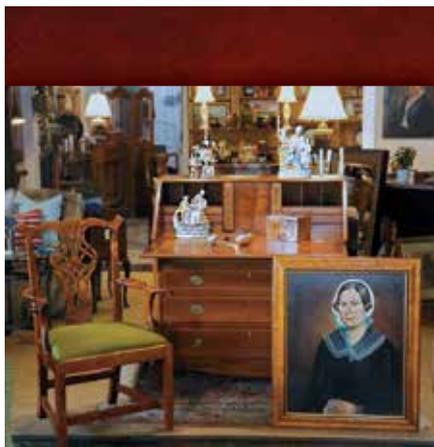
“I said if you don’t want to do it this year, I think his runners will start coming even more next year from a commercial perspective,” she said. “So, if you don’t do it this year just promise you’ll do it next year, which was the year we bred Stage Magic to him.” She became enamored of Scat Daddy based on analysis. “I looked at all the stallions and thought he was up and coming,” Tanya recalled. “I’m actually not sure how I managed to convince him now, but I really believed in the mating. I liked where Scat Daddy was going, and

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I wanted to produce a good horse at the end of the day. Not just a sales horse. You've got to produce a good racehorse or the whole family gets ruined. First and foremost, it's the racehorse."

The baby — eventually named Justify after he went through the 2016 Keeneland September sale for \$500,000 — grew up in a field of 10 or 11 other foals and mares. When Justify and Vino Rosso (who sold at the 2016 September sale for \$410,000) grew a bit older, they moved with their comrades to an "older colt barn" and then to a still "older colt barn," both on the other side of the farm. Fast forwarding three years to see both colts in the Kentucky Derby and Belmont Stakes was a feeling of great satisfaction to Tanya. She had temporarily returned to Glennwood to participate in their yearling sales prep two years earlier and knew the colts well.

When she saw them going postward for the Belmont Stakes, she recalled, "I felt like, those are my two little boys out there. They've been adopted by other owners, but they're our boys."

The top-level horses the Gunthers have bred, raised, and sold or raced have established the father-and-daughter team at Thoroughbred racing's top level. Still, their success has had nothing to do with serendipitous luck. John has spent some 40 years studying pedigrees. He began in the business after frequenting Exhibition Park during his free time from unloading ships as a longshoreman working the Vancouver docks. His entrée to the sport was as a gambler. Later, as a successful stockbroker, he was able to acquire the horses that could stair-step him to increasingly higher levels of ownership.

For her part, Tanya has been studying pedigrees since she was younger than 10 years old. She can recall the family spending its weekends at the racetrack in Vancouver. She, too, was steeped in horses long before her father joined into a partnership that owned the Glennwood property. She spent her youth competing on hunter-jumpers and in equitation.



Tanya Gunther avows that success consists of producing a good racehorse — not just a high-priced sales horse.

"Great setting"

John has added to the acreage since becoming sole owner. He built a house and three additional barns, bringing the total barns to five.

"I love the rolling hills, and it's fairly well-treed as well," John said of the property. "And it's [elevated] sort of high so you get a really nice setting. From the top part of the farm you can see everywhere. It's a great setting, for sure. The creek is how we named it. It was Woodford County and Glens Creek. That's where we got the name, Glennwood."

Beautiful though the farm is, no one foresaw a Triple Crown winner on the horizon. "My goal when I came here, was to help my dad at the farm, was to help him breed a champion one day," Tanya said. "Did I think we would [breed a Triple Crown winner]? No. You always hope. But you almost don't dream that because it's too big. You can aspire to breed a Derby winner, but to have everything fall into place where the horse gets all three is phenomenal."

And then there they were, John and Tanya, watching Justify win the Belmont Stakes and soon after that, making small talk with Prince Harry and his new wife, the duchess, upon Without Parole's win at Royal Ascot. Years of study, years of hard work, and setbacks common to every breeder converged to give Glennwood Farm a rare distinction in the Thoroughbred world. **KM**