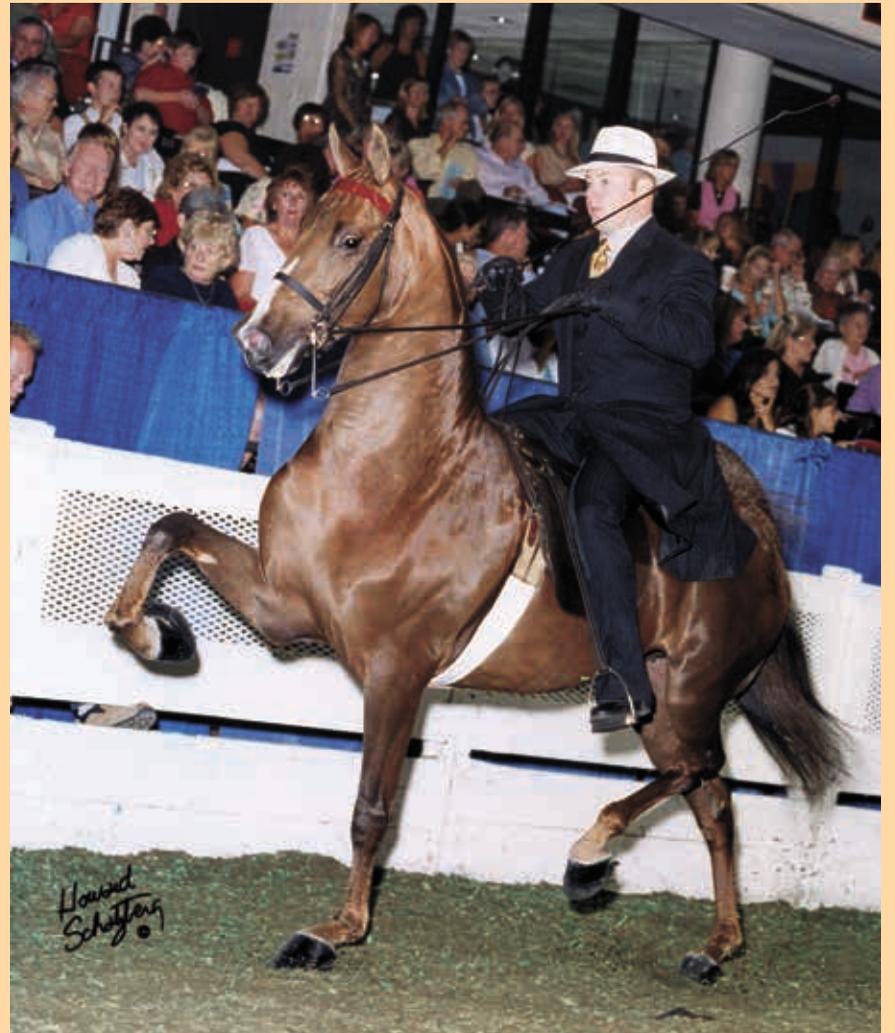


# MORE THAN JUST A STALLION SERVICE

# NORTHERN KISS FARM



*Burt won his first world's championship while working for Callaway Hills when he won the ASR National Futurity Three-Year-Old Five-Gaited aboard CH Callaway's Born For This.*



*Burt and CH Born With Style took home the reserve world's champion honors from the Three-Year-Old Three-Gaited Section A class in 2006.*

By Erica Faulkner

Nestled in the hills of Wytheville, Virginia, lies Northern Kiss Farm. Located an easy drive of just one mile off of I-81 and only a couple of exits from I-77, it is home to one of the industry's top sires, Callaway's Northern Kiss. The spacious 60-stall training and breeding farm is comprised of quality young stock, stallions, more than 80 broodmares, a group of outstanding amateur horses and riders, a dedicated team of employees, 10 dogs, a couple cats, some ponies and two adorable kids. Oh, and let's not forget the world champion trainers, Burt Honaker and Miriam Hirshon. Working together like a well-oiled machine, Burt and Miriam have been putting their heart and soul into the industry they love so much. They work hard to ensure that anyone and everyone have the same opportunity to own a quality show horse. If you have four thousand dollars, or four hundred thousand dollars, Burt and Miriam are almost guaranteed to have something to fit your needs.

Both have a deep history in the horse industry. His parents, Rae Lee Mills Davis and Terry Honaker, owned and operated Timberline Stables in Bluefield, West Virginia. Burt spent his childhood in the barn and when he was old enough, he started working for his parent's full time. As he got older he explored other avenues of work and in 1997 enlisted in the Air Force. He worked as a crew chief on cargo planes while in the service, but



*Burt Honaker and Miriam Hirshon, owners of Northern Kiss Farm.*

it was not long before he realized just how much he missed the horses. In January of 2001, he returned to what he loved and knew and accepted a job at the prestigious breeding farm Callaway Hills. Burt put in seven years of hard work at the farm, learning all he could about the breeding business and working young horses. Bob Brison was the head trainer of Callaway Hills at the time, and Burt speaks fondly of his talents.

"He is one of the best at racking a young horse," Burt said. "I had the privilege of learning from both Bob and Virgil Helm, two of the industry's best."

The list of horses that passed through Burt's hands while at Callaway Hills is full of champions. CH Callaway's Born With Style, CH Callaway's Born For This, Callaway's Bluesman, Callaway's Clemency, Callaway's Pretty In Pink, CH Callaway's Cumulus, CH Callaway's Carnival In Rio, Callaway's Mystical Moment, and Callaway's Think Again, are just a few of them.

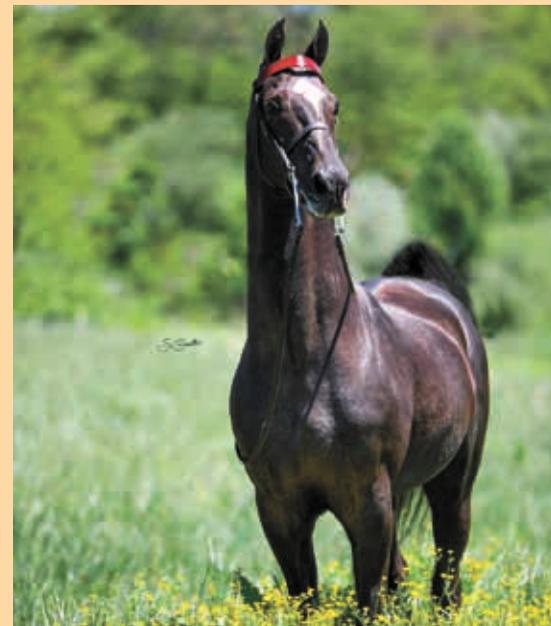
Burt won his first world's champion title during his years at Callaway Hills. In 2006, he showed CH Callaway's Born For This, the well-known gray mare sired by CH Callaway's Born To Win and out of Beckon The Day, to the ASR National Futurity Three-Year-Old Five-Gaited win at Louisville. This grand show star spent the next 10 years winning blue ribbons for all that owned her. It was also in 2006 that he showed CH Callaway's Born With Style



Miriam and CH Attaché's Spirit Commander topped their lengthy list of career wins when they were named the world's champions in the Junior Exhibitor Three-Gaited 14 to 17 class at Louisville in 1997.



Seaforth's Billion Heir is one of the stallions that has helped put Northern Kiss Farm on the map.



Callaway's Northern Kiss, one of the industry's leading sires and the backbone of the breeding program at Northern Kiss Farm.

to the reserve world's champion title in section one of the Three-Year-Old Three-Gaited class. Both horses are just a small part of Burt's long history of success.

Miriam began riding horses at the young age of six at Walnut Hill Stables in Cape Elizabeth, Maine. A talented rider right from the start, she continued to improve her skills when she moved to L.M. Turner Stables with trainer Rob Turner. It was during her time there that she fine-tuned her riding ability and won her first world's champion title aboard CH Attaché's Spirit Commander.

CH Attaché's Spirit Commander, a game gelding who got his start with Rob Turner as a young horse, was selected as Miriam's mount in 1995. Their first year together they took seven victory passes in the junior exhibitor three-gaited 14 and under division. In 1996, they moved into the older age group and came away with double wins at Roanoke Valley Horse Show. It was just a year later when Miriam and her flashy gelding would earn the world's champion honors from the Junior Exhibitor Three-Gaited 14 and 15-Year-Old class.

Miriam showed many champions during her time at L.M. Turner Stables, including but not limited to Midnight Flames, Fortunately Mine, Worthy Of The Name, Platinum Asset, and Santana's Cheer Me On. In 2005, she graduated from Boston University with a psychology degree. Then it was off to Missouri where she attended William Woods University, graduating in 2007. She furthered her knowledge of training horses and running a business when she worked for Bob and Tonya Brison at their Fairview Farm, and then Callaway Hills Stable. It was during her time at Callaway Hills that she met Burt; little did they know that this would be the start of an incredible future together. The two married in 2010.

Northern Kiss Farm began with just a few young horses and has since progressed into a full-blown breeding and training barn. The majority of the success of their breeding operation came from their leading stud, Callaway's Northern Kiss. Bred by Callaway Hills Stables, he is by the famous world's champion Callaway's Blue Norther and out of the world's champion CH Caramac daughter, Callaway's Carmel Kiss.

Shown just two times as a two-year-old, he eventually found his place in the breeding shed. Burt had noticed the talented youngster when he was at Callaway Hills, but never thought that he would have the chance to own him.

"I helped get Kiss broke to lead and had the opportunity to work him a few times," Burt said. "My dad and grandfather and grandmother had come to see me in Missouri. My grandfather got one look at him and fell in love right then and there."

Burt figured that once the colt left Callaway Hills, he would be gelded and turned into a show horse, it seemed a more than logical path as he was showing signs of being a great performer. However, Burt and his grandfather agreed, that if they could get their hands on him and keep him a stud, then his impact on the horse industry would be greater than that of just blue ribbons in the show ring. The two of them just knew they had to have him, no matter what it took.

"I told Bob that I wanted him and I would do anything to have him. If that isn't a leap of faith and blind trust in an animal, I don't know what is," Burt said.

The stallion started his breeding career with Fred Sarver. Northern Kiss was bred for the first time to the mare Let'er Rip, a chestnut who was by Desert's Supreme Memories. This cross resulted in the birth of Jack And Coke, a gelding who quickly made a name for himself in the driving divisions. He is still going strong today and successfully showing under the ownership of Oak Hill Saddlebreds, LLC. The iconic breeding career of Callaway's Northern Kiss was just getting started.

"We were hungry right from the start," said Miriam, regarding her and Burt's desire to build an empire around Northern Kiss. "We were doing anything we could to ensure that people knew what this stallion could offer."

Burt and Miriam to this day, do everything they can to promote their stud, as well as give back to the community they so love by donating stallion services

to others within the industry. Fay Lowry knows firsthand, just how gracious and giving Burt and Miriam are, as they donated to her The Heart That Gives Foundation, which has been established by Lowry to help the hungry and the poor people of the Kwazulu Natal region of South Africa and orphan children and disabled people of Uganda.

Lowry started this foundation in 2017 after spending three weeks in a South African village. The poverty and despair she saw tugged at her heart and made her realize she needed to do something to help make life better for the people of Africa. In order to raise funds for the foundation, Lowry decided to have an online auction with paintings from an orphanage in Uganda. Miriam originally bought a beautiful giraffe painting. After the auction, Miriam had mentioned to Lowry that she and Burt would donate a breeding to a young stallion if she ever decided to hold another auction. Henceforward, THTGF held another on line auction and Miriam and Burt decided to donate a breeding to the world's champion sire Callaway's Northern Kiss.

Lowry said, "I am so grateful to Miriam and Burt. They have unselfishly opened their hearts to help people in need by donating a breeding fee to such a great stallion. They have also purchased the largest amount of paintings from the foundation. Burt and Miriam have many times expressed that they are passionate about helping the foundation and feel this is a way to give back those who are less fortunate. THTGF cannot thank them enough."

And what a gift that is, a breeding to Northern Kiss, as this stallion has sired champions such as CH Surprise Kiss, Fort Chiswell's Royal Kiss, Famous Kiss, CH Birthday Kiss, Kiss Goodnight, CH Heir To A Kiss, Watermark's A Kiss For Luck, Groundhog, CH HS First Day, Blackout, Northern Asset, Fort Chiswell's Wild Kiss, Enchanted Kiss, Native Kiss, Two Sweet To Kiss, Kiss My Cuervo, Here Comes The Boom, and A Kiss Goodbye. He has produced show horses in every division. From pleasure, to harness, to three-gaited and five-gaited, Northern Kiss has sired them all.

"He passes along the will to work," Burt said. "To have a good show horse, they have to want to work."



Burt and A Kiss Goodbye were named the Junior Five-Gaited Mare World's Champions at Louisville in 2017. She is just one of the champions that Callaway's Northern Kiss has sired.

And that is one characteristic of a Northern Kiss baby, they want to work."

A great trait to pass on, because no matter what division his offspring show in, they always hit the ground with the will to give their all. They all have heart. However, it is not just the will to work that puts his offspring at the top of the most wanted list. It is also their quality. Their presence. Northern Kiss puts a beautiful hinged neck on his babies. "It's something of an iconic trait of his," Burt said.

Burt talks of what he thinks is the best lineage to breed to his stud.

"The golden cross with this horse, I would have to say would be anything with Mountain Highland Memories. If I could get more Mountain Highland Memories mares to breed to, I would."

Seaforth's Billionheir is another well respected breeding stallion that makes his home at Northern Kiss Farm. Burt and Miriam purchased him from Bill and Christine Field in 2012. He is by Supreme Heir and out of the incredible walk trot mare, CH Rejoice. He has produced horses such as, Sedgfield's Graceful Heir, Pretty Persuasion, On Higher Ground, and Heir Highness. At one time he stood to the public, but these days Burt and Miriam choose to breed him to a select group of their own mares.

Over the years Burt and Miriam have worked tirelessly at building their brand. Hard work made it happen. Nothing was handed to this young team. They have built everything from the ground up, and they are rightfully proud of it.

"It's a big deal to us, that we created this entire breeding program, in just about 10 years' time. It has evolved into so much, so fast," said Burt. It has become big enough that additional property is being purchased for the future of the farm.

"We are not completely sure of what is going to come of it," Burt said. "But we are working on adding more property and currently a barn for our broodmares is being built."

"We are very excited about the future of our farm, and what this new property holds for us," Miriam said.

Miriam points out that although they are known for their incredible stud and his champion offspring, there is much more to the farm than just that.

"People don't often realize just how many horses have passed through these walls, and not just because of the breeding program. We have developed a competitive group of show horses," Miriam said. The number of ribbon winners at this past world's championship horse show that came through Northern Kiss Farm at one time or another, amounts to more than 30 horses.

The list includes, but is not limited to; Ray Donovan, Surprised By A Kiss, A Kiss Goodbye, Bewitching Waze, Rockband, Infamous Kiss, The Embezzler, Washed By The Water, Native Kiss, Northern Assets, Curvy Hips And Red Lips, Sedgfield's Graceful Heir, The Blacklist, Blackout, My Chrome Princess, Foxgrape's Lover Boy, CH Royal Valentine, Fort Chiswells Hot Kiss, and Groundhog.



Burt and Miriam shared a moment with their daughter Mila and her pony at a local horse show.



CH Fort Chiswell's Prince Charming won his first world's championship with Burt aboard in 2011 when he was named the Three-Gaited Park Stallion/Gelding World's Champion.

Many know the name CH Fort Chiswell's Prince Charming. He has carried a few riders to many blue-ribbon victories, and he got his start with Burt and Miriam. By Dickey Davis's stud Attaché's Royal Assets, and out of Just Charming, this gelding earned his first world's champion title with Burt in the irons. In 2011, they beat a field the country's most competitive horses and left Freedom Hall with the Three-Gaited Park Open Stallion/Gelding win. This was the first blue ribbon from Louisville that would be hung on the walls at Northern Kiss Farm. It wouldn't take long for others to follow.

A Kiss Goodbye won her first world's champion honors with Burt in 2017 in the Junior Five-Gaited Mare class for previous owner Kim Goodrum. The mare was then sold to Deirdre and Ronald Oakley and went on to win her second world's championship title just this past year as trainer Maria Gilman piloted her to the win in the Ladies Five-Gaited Mares class. Although each of these accomplishments are something to be proud of, Miriam points out that it is more than just the show ring success that drives her and Burt. As much as they love coming home with tri-colors and blues to hang on their walls, it is just as important, if not more, to provide others with the opportunity to experience the same.

"We are just as excited, if not more, when someone who purchased a horse from us, wins a class. We do what we do for others, more than for ourselves," Miriam said.

Miriam stresses the fact that she and Burt try their best to breed quality stock and offer options for everyone in the industry to own a nice horse. Nikki Johnson, who purchased a young prospect named My Sweet Sunrise, a couple years ago, speaks highly of her experience with Burt and Miriam.

"Purchasing a horse from Burt and Miriam is one of the most enjoyable horse shopping experiences. They take the time to make sure you are getting a horse that is perfect for you. Their knowledge about the industry and breeding is exceptional," Johnson said. "They provide a quality product and relationship with their clients that will keep me as a customer for life."

Johnson continues to speak praise about Miriam's ability to almost foresee upcoming breeding trends.



Sallie Mason Wheeler and CH Royal Valentine were the Junior Exhibitor Three-Gaited Show Pleasure 13 and Under Div. 1 World's Champions and the Junior Exhibitor Three-Gaited Show Pleasure 13 and Under World's Champion of Champions, in 2016, for Northern Kiss Farm and owner Roberta Hirshon.



Roberta Hirshon showed CH Unpretentious to many blue-ribbon victories under the direction of Burt and Miriam.

"One of the things that impresses me the most about Miriam is that she can see the characteristics in the horses that are successful in the show ring, and identify the breeding trend before it happens. She understands what people want and where the future is headed for breed."

Customer Kim Goodrum also spoke highly of her trainers and what they have accomplished for her.

"There are a lot of clichés that people use, but many ring true when it comes to Burt and Miriam, such as 'talent plus timing equals success.'"

Goodrum had been contemplating getting back into the show scene, when some good friends recommended she check out Northern Kiss Farm.

"We took the plunge and bought a horse from them," she said. "And with Burt's talent and patience our new mare, A Kiss Goodbye, won her first world's championship title in 2017."

"Two heads are better than one" describes the team that Burt and Miriam are when dealing with horses. Their teamwork made for a successful time both then, and with our new horse now," Goodrum said.

Suzanne Wright, who has found success in the show ring with Northern Kiss Farm, also expressed her joy for all Burt and Miriam have done for her.

"I love being a part of Northern Kiss Farm. Burt and Miriam were so welcoming and kind to me when I joined their barn," she said. "They have taught me so much and helped me gain more confidence."

The story wouldn't be complete without mentioning two show horses that have carried the Northern Kiss name to the winner's circle time and time again. Miriam's mother, Roberta Hirshon, has honed her riding skills over the years at her daughter's farm, and time and time again has graced the winners circle with champions such as the late CH Undulata's Snowflake, CH Royal Valentine, and CH Unpretentious, just to name a few. This year Roberta looks to excite the crowds as she teams with her new horse, Expensively Designed.

Miriam is quick to compliment her staff on their hard work, pointing out that without them, none of this success would be possible. The Northern Kiss Farm team is comprised of Elias Malaga, Adrian

Santana, Carlos Sanchez, Alicia Lawson, Katie Heckler, Summer Warden, and Luther Akers. Terry Honaker is also a valued member of the farm, as he has perfected the collecting and shipping aspect of the breeding program. Whether at the farm or at home, family comes first in the Honaker/Hirshon family. Burt and Miriam have two beautiful children, Mila and Gavin, who not only accompany their parents to the horse shows, but who also ride themselves.

Callaway's Northern Kiss has helped to build a legacy for Burt and Miriam, and if history repeats itself, the future is looking good as a new up and coming stallion at the farm is starting to follow in the footsteps of his father. Époque Kiss NKF, by Callaway's Northern Kiss and out of VHF Belle Époque, is a sight to behold, and although he is not standing to the public at the moment, he will be one to watch for in future. He just may be the one to carry on the Northern Kiss name.



Miriam Hirshon aboard the incredible stallion Fort Chiswell's Royal Kiss at the Roanoke Valley Horse Show in 2010. This grand stallion is a prime example of the quality offspring that Callaway's Northern Kiss produces.



Gavin, Burt and Miriam's son, smiles big while riding his pony at home at Northern Kiss Farm.



Burt works Lilac Time in the spacious indoor arena at Northern Kiss Farm.



Miriam aboard The Blacklist, a talented walk trot gelding they sold in 2018.