

## “And down the stretch they come!”

An exclamation that has echoed in my mind for years during the running of the Kentucky Derby from the especially noteworthy track announcer. ... No matter where my three girls and I were I would hustle us home the first Saturday in May in order to view this momentous occasion being broadcast on television. Little did I know that I would someday be immersed in this pageantry and the culmination of its victories.

Following is an email accounting from me, Carolyn Moss, to my family and friends after American Pharoah won the Belmont Stakes and with it the Triple Crown of Thoroughbred horse racing. My son-in-law Bob Baffert, after three previous misses, had just won the most prestigious prize in American horse racing.

Subject: Triple Crown Winner American Pharoah: Beautiful, Sweet, Gentle, Thank you all so, so much for the congrats!  
Date: June 8, 2015

Got home late yesterday evening from New York, very tired, tried to rest I even missed the *Today* show's live segment with Bob this morning—though I finally found it online!

This is all still surreal—for me and for the Bafferts. I keep seeing segments on all the sports networks, etc. Yes, I got elbowed in the mouth, lost my pearl bracelet, Savannah (Bob's older daughter) got hit in the eye—caught on camera—went viral on Facebook...Relief shoes (baller-type slippers) were lost...Ginger (my youngest daughter) lost her sunglasses...there was pandemonium and we were caught up in the crush of jubilant fans—never got to see AP in the circle with his blanket of carnations. On the way down from the box to the winner's circle (OMG, how long did that take?), people were trying to touch Bob, high-five him, chanting his name; he did turn back to shake Penny Chenevix's hand and kiss her cheek (she is the owner of the late Secretariat), but could not get through the throng to reach President Clinton who was a few aisles over with his arm outstretched.

The folks in our boxes got separated as Bob was pulled aside by NBC's Kenny Rice for an on-air interview. Brian Buttery (my son-in-law) was dragging me along by my arm raised in the air (I'm vertically challenged) and my shoes flapping on my feet from having my heels tread on by so many insurgents...Ginger was to the right with her hand glued to my ribs in a rolling tide of people. The police wouldn't let any more people on the presentation stage, fearing it might collapse—there was a world of unrelated and unknown people who were already positioned in the winner's circle—who could blame them. Bob was desperately yelling for them to let that man (Brian) through and whoever he had attached to him—though I'm the only one who eventually got there! Later, Jill did ask the photographer to take an inclusive family picture where we should all appear. (You have to realize that this was live television and another race to be run within the hour after this celebration and preparations had to be made by the track staff.)

The roar was tremendous...I don't know what the other stable horses thought was happening around them, for one article said the noise could be heard for many, many, many blocks away. The NBC connections agreed that they had never heard such a sound at any covered sporting events—some admitted to crying tears of joy. Nobody was rushing around trying to cash in their winning tickets or evacuate for a long time. All was celebration. At 10:00 PM, thousands of people, us amongst them, were still leaving Belmont Park. The next day one report was that the Triple Crown win was the No. 1 Tweet in the world!

We progressed over to the barn where Jimmy Barnes (Bob's assistant manager) allowed some favored reporters and us “connected” people in to visit AP and get pictured with him as we held the 3-cornered trophy (Jill, Bode, and Bob were in transit over from yet another news conference)! AP was so sweet and casual, munching his hay ball and posing—the pained some as he was expecting more carrots which had run out earlier. Then when the trio arrived the cameras started clicking again, AP actually at one time rested his head on Bob's shoulder.

Needless to say, we were starving...went to restaurant where reservations had been made for Baffert's party of almost 50 family members! Bob's three sisters and two of his brothers

in raising her son Bode and relies on her fortitude in rising to the challenges of being a horse trainer's wife with all its ups and downs.

After graduating from Hickman County High School and then Middle Tennessee State University with a degree in broadcast journalism, Jill accepted a TV job in Hopkinsville, Ky., where she did it all—writing, reporting, anchoring and producing. She advanced to the CBS-WLKY affiliate in Louisville where she won a regional Emmy for her segment on predators of children. Along the way she was made a Kentucky Colonel by Governor Breton Jones. Prior to leaving Centerville, Jill waitressed at local Breece's Café from the age of fourteen until her college career ended. She met so many warm and interesting people, and, too, learned Lucille's kitchen secrets which, along with her mother's tutelage, she applies to the techniques of her own cooking today.

For nearly four years during her early middle school years Jill suffered with osteochondritis (L-egg-Calve-Perthes disease) which affected the ball-and-socket joint in her left hip. While awaiting the hopeful return of the blood supply to the ball's top, Jill was prescribed to walk on crutches for those years and to immediately go into traction at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital during each summer break. While seemingly normal for so many years, the aftermath of the condition caught up with her. After the Belmont win, Jill underwent hip replacement surgery earlier this month. Today, her pain is diminishing and she has been given approval to do short-term driving, then take therapy when all swelling is gone around the joint.

She credits her hard work in the restaurant and her Christian faith as foundations in life. She applied her grace and poise, winning the Miss Hickman County pageant in 1989 and landing good jobs. But, she's been cautioned, “Don't get above your faisin'!” She says: “I very much appreciate my Southern roots. I'm proud of my hometown.” Jill does have occasion to return to Louisville and to Hickman County as their schedules and Bode's schooling permits.

“The only way you can know/Is give it all you have... Hope when the moment comes you say I, I did it all...”

Ryan Tedder wrote the lyrics to the currently popular song “I Lived” citing the universal theme that, despite difficulties or trials that you face, for all the time you have on this earth that you can do nothing less than what you feel you're supposed to do (Wikipedia). This seems fitting to the destinies that Jill and Bob reached Louisville...where my daughter's journey with the charismatic Bob Baffert began.

The two met in 1998 during her morning show broadcast from Churchill Downs. That week he won his second Kentucky Derby with a horse named Real Quiet who also won that year's Preakness but lost the Triple Crown with the smallest margin of defeat ever at only four inches by Victory Gallop. Baffert's other Derby wins were with Silver Charm (1997), War Emblem (2002), and now American Pharoah (2015). A dry spell hit at this venue, with, out of twelve other entries, mere second-place finishes with Pioneer of the Nile (sire of American Pharoah) in 2009 and Bodemeister (his son's namesake) in 2012. (Both of these horses were also owned by Zayat Stables.)

Graduation for Bob was at University of Arizona with a B.S. in their Race Track Industry Program after having worked cattle and chickens on his father's ranch in Nogales, AZ. He once said, “Jill's got nothin' on me. I walked barefoot on many dusty roads, selling eggs!” His father had a hunch and purchased a few quarter horses which led to Bob becoming a successful trainer, though he moved to Thoroughbreds in the early 1990s. One of the most respected and most recognizable trainers in the horse business, Bob was inducted into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame in New York in 2009. In all he has won 14 major Grade I stakes races including the four Derbys, six Preakness Stakes, two Belmont Stakes, and two Kentucky Oaks (for fillies).

Jill and Bob were married in 2002. Their only child Bode was born in 2004, melding into the family of four older siblings. Bob says his job is “24/7 and being at the barn daily is a requirement that takes in all 24 hours of the day.”

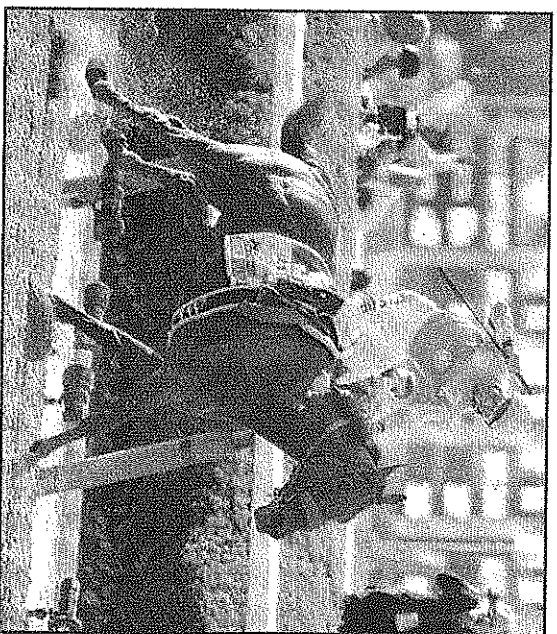


photo from morristechnology.com

done. That's what he did. He just brought it at every track,” Baffert said. “I went back and looked at all the videos of Seattle Slew, Secretariat and Affirmed and... they all have in common — that there was never an excuse. They just took the ball and ran with it. When they're special like that, you keep them healthy, keep them happy, stay out of their way and don't overthink it.”

“With this horse, we owe it to the sport to continue properly, and as often as we possibly can,” (Owner) Zayat said. “This is a pledge to my family, the industry and racing, and we take it really seriously. When the horse is ready, we're not going to be scared about running him, to lose or not lose.”

“Start spreadin' the news...I'm leavin' today...”

A refrain from Sinatra's “New York, New York.” Bob

says he doesn't know why he can't get that song out of his head, except on my last day of care-giving with Jill, he substituted “she's leavin' today!”

For the time being, I've left behind that amazing horse with the misspelled name and chewed-off tail... the one who runs with plugs in his ears and a blue shadow roll above his nostrils. Bob is coming down from the clouds and gone back to work at the barn at Santa Anita. He says of Pharoah: “He's probably eaten 500 pounds of carrots since he won that race.” In three weeks the colt travels to California's Del Mar Track to get back to conditioning prior to racing again. Baffert said: “He was always on my schedule. Now we're on his schedule.”

Jill with Bode's help is recuperating at their home near Pasadena. I'm in Nunnally rubbing down the lingering goose bumps and waiting for the dog days of summer... I

Bob's shoulder. Needless to say, we were starving... went to restaurant where reservations had been made for Baffert's party of almost 50 family members! Bob's three sisters and two of his brothers and their immediate family members were there (Bill was in Italy). The waiters were lined up to usher Bob in to a standing ovation from the diners... several bottles of champagne were sent over... fans were queued and respectfully asking for autographs. We got back to the hotel in Manhattan at 1:30 AM in the two packed town cars, realizing that Savannah had been left behind (she rode back to the St. Regis Hotel with another relative!).

Exhaustion had set in, yet Bob jumped up again at 5:00 AM to be interviewed back at the barn on Long Island (Belmont—where Belmont Track is located). They just flew out of New York @ 11:00 today, Bob still giving a radio interview as they waited for take-off. My little boy (grandson Bode) had to get back and finish his last week at school. I cannot imagine what Victor Espinoza (jockey) and the Zayat's (owners) agendas have been. By the way, I picked out Bob's red tie the night before—I think this brought him the luck that he needed!

Hey, it was a great day...thanks again! Carolyn

\*\*\*

This leg of the three-year-old horse's odyssey began with his win over 17 other horses at the 2015 Kentucky Derby on May 4, before a record crowd of 170,513 people. He next proved victorious over 7 horses at the Preakness Stakes in Baltimore two weeks later in the slop after a relentless downpour with another record 131,680 fans in attendance. After three weeks, with a restricted attendance of 90,000 people, American Pharoah ran gate-to-wire past 7 horses again to earn the Belmont Stakes trophy in New York and therefore win the Thoroughbred horse racing most elusive prize—the Triple Crown. Only eleven horses had previously done so since 1919 with Affirmed last winning in 1978, and this was Baffert's fourth try. Penny Cheney laughed and told Baffert that Pharoah was now "a member of a very small and exclusive fraternity!"

Two days after American Pharoah broke the Triple Crown spell, NBC anchors and staff members admitted that of all the great sports moments they've seen in their careers, last weekend's Belmont is at the top of many of their lists. In the group that included analysts Bob Costas, Tom Hammond, Randy Moss, Jerry Bailey, Eddie Olszky, Bob Neumeier, producer Rob Hyland, NBC Sports horse racing director Drew Esocoff, and announcer Larry Collins, there are decades of experience covering sporting events worldwide. The team has witnessed Michael Phelps's swim to gold in Beijing, Usain Bolt's Olympic gold medal, the Miracle On Ice, multiple Super Bowls, the Stanley Cup; everyone agreed however, that the moment Pharoah crossed the wire is now at or near the top of their lists of greatest moments they've witnessed.

Above from: 'Tears Of Joy'. NBC Team Reflects On First Triple Crown In 37 Years 06.08.2015)  
"When you wish upon a star, makes no difference who you are..."

It's fitting that Jimmy Crickel's lyrics are favorites of Jill's. She feels that she has a "wonderful life" and takes great delight



Amid the chaos in New York, Bode exclaimed: "Daddy, I'm so proud of you!"

Carolyn Moss and Bode Baffert Dine at the Kentucky Derby.

Brian and Ginger Buttrely dine at the Belmont.

Jill and Bob were married in 2002. Their only child Bode was born in 2004, melding into the family of four older siblings. Bob says his job is "24/7 and being at the barn daily is a requirement that takes its toll." He suffered a heart attack while in Dubai, UAE, requiring surgery for stent placements. Bob and the doctor applauded Jill with her early intervention in obtaining help in that foreign country. Slowing down, the trainer has reduced the number of changes in his barn to around 100. "I've realized that I'm not invincible and am learning to appreciate what I have," he sagely says. "I'm more humble." Yet, one owner gladly speaks out for Bob. "It takes a special trainer. It takes a special team," Zayat said. "And I want to salute him and thank him. I'm grateful to Bob for giving us this proud moment for my family and everybody."

Son Bode is one of his father's biggest fans. As a participant in his Boy Scout Troop's Soap Box Derby in March, Bode bested his competition with his car. He excitedly challenged Bob: "I won the first Derby this year. Now, it's your turn!" While he is not interested in the horse business at this time, Bode is enthused by weather and especially destructive storms. Upon his return home from the Belmont festivities, he was invited by Sam Champion of The Weather Channel who had recently learned of his interest to do a broadcast together. So Monday morning before school, a live feed was set up in the Baffert kitchen where Bode gave the day's forecast for the Los Angeles area. In a response to Champion, the 10-year-old apologized to the citizens of Oklahoma: "I don't think they'll be very happy with me because of my fascination with tornados; I'm sorry."

Bob and Jill Baffert were feeling especially charitable after making history with a Triple Crown. Shortly after the Belmont Stakes, the couple announced they will donate \$50,000 to the Permanently Disabled Jockeys Fund, in memory of Bobby Adair. Adair, an American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame jockey, died in May at the age of 71. The Bafferts also donated \$50,000 to the California Retirement Management Account (CARMA), a non-profit charity created to raise money for retired California racehorses. Another \$50,000 will go to Old Friends Farm, where Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes winner Silver Charm and Game on Dude (winner of 14 graded stakes races) recently retired.

It was here at the Thoroughbred retirement facility in Georgetown, Ky., where Baffert tearfully saw Silver Charm for the first time in more than a decade before this year's Derby. Native Hickman Countan Jill continues to make contributions to her hometown church, community center and various charitable benefits.

"The sun'll come out tomorrow, tomorrow..." These lyrics are from the Broadway hit Annie which Jill sang as she performed in a middle school talent contest. The proverbial tomorrow awaits many decisions. While Bob reigns supreme in the horse's health and training, Mr. Zayat has the final say in Pharoah's retirement which could come at the end of 2015. A reported \$20-plus million has been paid to Zayat Stables for the breeding rights. It is yet to be determined when the horse's next race will be run as he is now in R&R mode. "He loves to be around people, people petting him and loving on him," Baffert said. "I want to share him with everybody and show everybody how kind and sweet he is..." "No matter if it's raining, sloppy, heavy track, you get it

New Pharoah back to Pasadena. I'm in Nunneley California on June 18th. I was on hand when he was trucked in with four of his stable mates from the airport in a custom painted transport van to his permanent residence at Santa Anita Park. The yellow and aqua colored trailer was escorted by a good ride!"

## This ad paid for by Carolyn Moss.



Jockey Victor Espinoza, owner Joann Zayat, trainer Bob Baffert, Bode Baffert, and Jill Moss Baffert with the Triple Crown Trophy. Owner Ahmed Zayat is in sunglasses directly behind Baffert



Above: Brian, Maya, Halle and Ginger Buttrely Below: Bella Wilson, Jake Brendel, Zan Wilson, Owen Pullen and Lori Wilson

