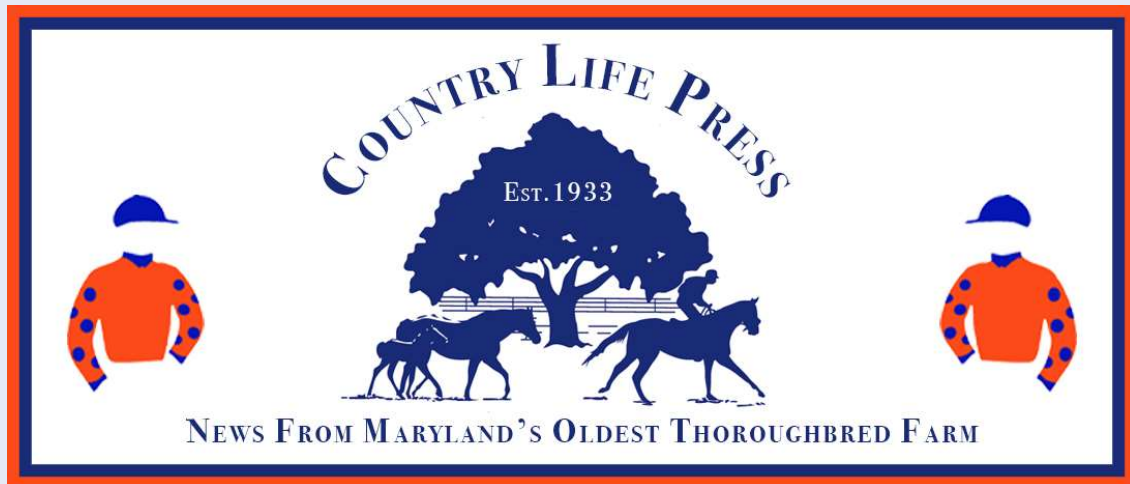




November 2025



"LETTERS FROM COUNTRY LIFE"

Named WINNER of

DR. TONY RYAN BOOK AWARD



Flanked by Castleton Lyons Office Manager Kerrie Cahill and General Manager Pat Hayes, Josh Pons poses with crystal award

BLOODHORSE PRESS RELEASE

November 6, 2025 (excerpt):

Noted racing journalist and horseman Josh Pons has been named the 19th recipient of the Dr. Tony Ryan Book Award, presented by the Ryan family's Castleton Lyons, for excellence in Thoroughbred racing literature published in 2024.

Pons won for *Letters from Country Life: Adolphe Pons, Man o' War, and the Founding of Maryland's Oldest Thoroughbred Farm*, a retrospective of the Golden Age of racing as viewed through a remarkable trove of correspondence to his grandfather, Adolphe Pons.

Early in the 20th-century, the senior Pons had served as private secretary to Hall-of-Fame breeder August Belmont II, a role in which he played an integral part in the breeding and eventual sale of Man o' War.

During the Great Depression, Pons boldly struck out on his own, moving from New York to Maryland, where he acquired the 100 acres that would become Country Life Farm. It is today owned and run by his grandsons, Josh and Mike.

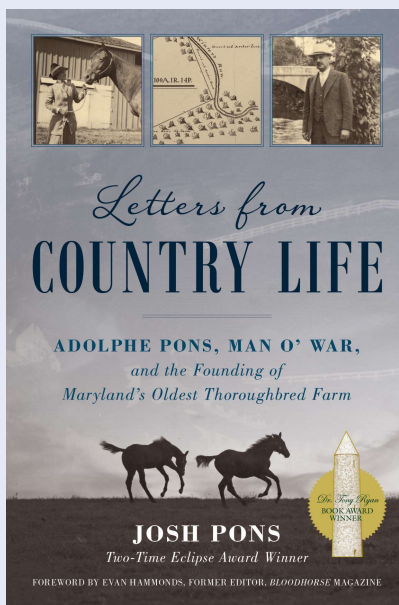
A decade ago, in the basement of the century-old farmhouse, Josh came across a large stash of letters to his grandfather, many penned by titans of the Turf. In curating and expanding upon what he learned from this extraordinary correspondence, Josh brought the Thoroughbred world---past to present---to brilliant life.

Lead judge Kay Coyte noted that "Josh Pons already had established his writing talent, but *Letters from Country Life* is another level of literary achievement. In it, you discover historic gems just as Josh does and worry along with him about the future of Maryland racing and his beloved farm."

Judge Caton Bredar described Pons "as much a poet as he is a horseman, who is able to make the past come to life vividly and lyrically with his very personal retelling of his family's history."

Two other finalists were honored at the Castleton Lyons ceremony, Arthur B. Hancock III for his autobiography, *Dark Horses: A Memoir of Redemption*, and John Perrotta, for his international mystery thriller, *A Beggar's Ride*.

Judges this year included Coyte, an Eclipse Award winner and former long-time editor at the *Washington Post*; Bredar, award-winning television broadcaster now reporting for FanDuel TV; and last year's Dr. Tony Ryan Book Award winner Kim Wickens, for her national bestseller, *Lexington*.



Click book to get your copy!

**BRED BY COUNTRY LIFE
AND THE MAKE AMENDS LLC,
MARYLAND-BRED *MODUS BESTIA*
SCORES ON BREEDERS' CUP UNDERCARD**



MODUS BESTIA
 B.c. 3; Maclean's Music - Make Amends November 1, 2025
 Owned by **CALVIN NGUYEN & JOEY C. TRAN**
 Trained by **RICHARD BALTAS**
 2nd COMEDY TOWN 3rd LAWLESS WORLD 6 FURLONGS IN 1:09.51 \$ 6.20 3.80 3.60
 Bred by COUNTRY LIFE FARM & MAKE AMENDS LLC (MD)
 © 2025 BENQIT PHOTO, COPYRIGHT

DEL MAR
 BING CROSBY SEASON
 Purse: \$175,000
 Ridden by **FLAVIEN PRAT**
 THE OCEAN VIEW

With the goal of the Grade 1, \$300,000 Malibu Stakes the day after Christmas, California trainer Richard Baltas sent out MODUS BESTIA in a \$179,000 allowance on November 1, as prelude to the full card of Breeders' Cup events to follow.

Coming off a brilliant maiden score at the Malibu distance of seven furlongs, Modus Bestia cut back to six furlongs and sprinted home as the 2-1 favorite.

Sired by Maclean's Music and sold by Country Life for \$140,000 as a weanling at the Fasig-Tipton Night of the Stars sale in 2023, MODUS BESTIA certainly was a beast on Breeders' Cup Day.

His dam, the Malibu Moon mare MAKE AMENDS, was acquired by Country Life and Partners in 2021 for \$82,000 at the Keeneland November sale, carrying MODUS BESTIA. She is in foal to the popular Gainesway Farm freshman MUTH for the 2026 foaling season. (MAKE AMENDS is also the dam of recent Country Life Racing Partnership yearling offering, a \$70,000 filly just officially named AMENDALOUN---after her dam and her sire, Kentucky Derby winner MANDALOUN.)

WELCOME TO THE COUNTRY LIFE / MERRYLAND TEAM: Hillary Fisher and Gunnar Shuler



Adolphe Pons started Country Life in 1933; Danny Shea bought Merryland in 1939. Come New Year's Day of 2026, that's 180 years of Maryland horse farming. We pause to consider all the fine horsepeople who have staffed these two farms over a combined 18 decades.

And with pleasure we welcome our latest skilled horse lovers: Hillary Fisher and Gunnar Shuler, who joined us this month.

With a degree in veterinary technology, office experience at the Maryland Horse Breeders Association and several years in the Thoroughbred industry managing broodmares, foals and sales prep horses, Hillary's talents are a welcome addition. She steps into her new role as Broodmare Manager, overseeing the well-being of all mares, foals, and young horses at both Country Life and Merryland.

Hillary's role will be a compliment to Country Life General Manager Christy Holden, whose job description in these transitional times seems limitless. (See below for Christy's report on The Jockey Club's recent "Regional Breeders Forum" in Louisville.)

As Merryland expands its population of horses-in-training, lay-ups, and

yearling breaking, Gunnar brings his strong work ethic and positive attitude to his new role as foreman of the Training Barn, assisting Merryland farm trainer Sonja Aleksic. His attention to detail and dedication to the horse are traits that we value, and will enhance Merryland's reputation for turning out professional racehorses.

We acknowledge with gratitude our Broodmare Manager for the past 10 years, Cheyenne Piccolo, as she pursues her dream of operating her own boarding and lesson farm. We wish her only the best in her new endeavor.

The Jockey Club Reaches Out to Regional Breeders

On November 12 in Louisville, Kentucky, The Jockey Club hosted a Breeder Organization Workshop at Churchill Downs. More than 60 horsepeople from 23 state breeder organizations attended.

Country Life and Merryland General Manager Christy Holden was among several representatives of the Maryland Horse Breeders Association. The goal was to identify strategies to reward regional breeders and attract new investment, in response to the foal crop decline heavily impacting regions outside of Kentucky.

Everett Dobson, the new chairman of The Jockey Club, emphasized collaboration. Panelists gave presentations on creative programs. The joint effort this past summer between Maryland and Virginia in blending their state-bred stakes programs was singled out as an example.

Also highlighted were the Maryland-bred Breeder, Owner, and Developer Bonuses, earned in races at Colonial Downs and Delaware Park over the two months that Maryland racing went dark. Another positive note was the 40% increase in Breeder Bonuses for *Maryland-sired* horses, effective with the Maryland-bred Foal Crop of 2023---an added stimulus to support Maryland stallions.

The Jockey Club intends to hold this workshop annually.

DAUGHTER OF DIVINING ROD WINS \$100,000 GLASS SLIPPER AT CHURCHILL

NEXT GIRL, bred in Maryland by Country Life Farm and the Fleet and Fancy LLC, and sired by Country Life stallion Divining Rod, made national headlines winning the \$100,000 Claiming Crown Glass Slipper at Churchill Downs on November 15.

Trained by Maryland-based Robbie Bailes and owned by WWCD LLC, 4-year-old NEXT GIRL was purchased from Country Life as a weanling for \$20,000 at the 2021 Fasig-Tipton Midlantic December Mixed Sale. Her dam is a half-sister to Breeders Cup Juvenile Grade-1 winner Midshipman and to Grade-2 winner Fast Cookie (dam of successful sire Frosted).

NEXT GIRL earned her spot by winning a one-mile dirt race on Colonial Downs' Claiming Crown Showcase Day on August 21. She qualified by running for a \$12,500 claiming tag when she broke her maiden in January of 2024. The Churchill event was NEXT GIRL's first race outside of the mid-Atlantic. Her earnings now stand at \$255,330.



GIVING THANKS TO OUR EMPLOYEES



Teamwork makes the dream work. Our 2025 staff deserve a huge thank you for their dedication and round-the-clock efforts keeping two farms looking and running well all year.

Bottom row, left-to-right:

Rochelle Allgier (Accounting), Sonja Aleksic (Merryland Trainer), Milan Milosevic (Merryland rider), Luis Martinez-Barajas (Merryland rider), Brett Owings (Merryland rider), Greg Hare (Comptroller), Sallyellen Hurst (Office Manager). (Merryland rider Brett Parra-Zerpa missed photo-day.)

Top row:

Fabian Herrera-Cazares, Maurilio Gutierrez-Mendez, Jerry Zavala (Stallion Manager), Fabian Herrera Jr., Ignacio Zavala-Bautista, Bobby Flock (Maintenance), Armando Gutierrez-Mendez, Mike Pons, Jesus Gutierrez-Sepulveda, Sergio Gutierrez-Nunez, Rica Gutierrez-Sepulveda, Cheyenne Piccolo, Dr. Russ Jacobson DVM, Ellen Pons, Christy Holden (General Manager) and Josh Pons.

Country Life Bred or Sired Winners

DIVINING ROD

KITTEN'S PLOY: 10/18 at DEL, Maiden (breeder Bell Gable Stable LLC; owner Francisco Ramirez; trainer Jose Ramierez)

H TWO O: 10/19 at CAY, Allowance (breeder John Bashore & Albert Klerlein; owner Carlton St. John Watson; trainer Jason Dacosta)

STRAIGHT TO WATER: 10/31 at LRL, Starter (breeder George Doetsch, Jr; owner Linda Albert, et al; trainer Linda Albert)

MOSLER

SHARMIN: 10/11 at LRL, Starter Handicap (breeder South Branch Equine LLC; owner Larry Rabold; trainer Hugh McMahon)

WORTH A DIME: 10/11 at LRL, \$125,000 MD Million Ladies Stakes (breeder/owner Nancy Lee Farms; trainer Tim Keefe)

SAXTON: 10/26 at LRL, Allowance (breeder Lazy Lane Farms LLC; owner The Elkstone Group LLC; trainer Brittany Russell)

FRIESAN FIRE

WORLD ON FIRE: 10/19 at LRL, Maiden (breeder Daniel Eubanks & Annette Eubanks; owner Terry Overmier; trainer Roy Peacock, Jr)

RED SPITFIRE: 10/25 at LRL, Maiden (breeder Daniel Eubanks; owner Rising Sun Stables, Inc. & Annette Eubanks; trainer Annette Eubanks)

ANITA BEER: 10/25 at LRL, Claiming (breeder/owner Matt Spencer & Kelly Cox; trainer Kenneth Cox)

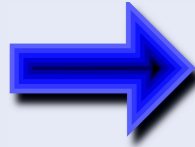
FREEZE THE FIRE: 10/31 at LRL, Starter (breeder Carl Lanier; owner Gracie Mae Stables; trainer John Salzman, Jr.)

OTHER COUNTRY LIFE/PARTNERSHIP-bred or OWNED winners or Stakes Results:

TOUISSET (Mosler - Gansett) - 3rd in \$125,000 MD Million Ladies Stakes at Laurel on 10/11. Bred by Country Life Farm, Paul Berube & Karen Linell; owned by Paul Berube, Karen Linell and Heather Hunter and trained by Edward Allard.

AMIE'S SYMPHONY (Mendelssohn - Amie's Legend) - 1st in Allowance at Laurel Park on 10/19. Bred by Two Legends Farm & Sycamore Hall Thoroughbreds LLC; owned by Country Life Farm and trained by Michael Trombetta. This was her 3rd straight win since switching to turf.

**Check out our farm
YouTube Channel for
stallion videos,
training videos and more!**



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Farm on
YouTube**



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