

# Gesek Family



**INSTANT CONNECTION:** Barbara and Bill Gesek, an MS survivor, met pacing colt Mr Bill G for the first time at the Ben Stafford Stable in Felton, Del., this past February, with Jody Stafford (background) looking on.

In October 2015, Jeff Gesek was perusing the Standardbred Horse Sale Company's "Black Book," a listing of about 1,000 horses for the annual yearling sale in Harrisburg, Pa.

One name stood out: Mr Bill G.

"I wasn't intending on buying this time around; I was just curious to see if I had recognized any mares that had yearlings in the sale," said Gesek, who has purchased several Standardbreds over the past 25 years.

There was already an important Bill G. in Jeff's life—his father, Bill Gesek, who has battled multiple sclerosis (MS) with courage and dignity for more than 30 years.

The connection on the page made an immediate impact. Jeff raced upstairs to the den at their home in Burlington, N.J., and told his wife, Janine, that this was more than a coincidence.

"I said, 'Let's put a bid on this horse,'" Jeff told his wife.

## Have Cause, Will Travel

Racing family inspires industry to fight a debilitating disease

by Marvin Pave

# VICTORY HILL FARM

## 2016 Hoosier Classic Select Yearling Sale Yearlings selling Oct. 28 & 29

FEATURING YEARLINGS FROM INDIANA'S TOP SIRE

**\*\*\*From Indiana's leading sire**  
**ROCKIN IMAGE**, sire of Breeders Crown winner Freaky Feet Pete p,4,1:47.1f (\$1,477,281), Indiana Sire Stakes winners Matrix Of Luck, p,3,1:50.3s (\$347,975), Rock The Look p,4,1:50.3f (\$295,700) and Rockin Good p,3,1:48 (\$283,564).

**103—COSMIC POWER**  
*Rockin Image - Cosmic Grace*  
Half-brother to Uncmprimising Z Tam p,3,1:52.1s (\$127,538). Race-timed in 1:52.4 at 2 and will be a top contender in the 3YO Super Final.

**205—ROCKIN INTHE HILLS**  
*Rockin Image - Lake Hills Melody*  
A half-brother to five \$100,000 winners from a mare that is a 100 percent producer.

**262—ROCKIN THE BEACH\***  
*Rockin Image - Nina Coleada*  
First foal from a mare that made \$163,784 and took a mark of 1:50.3 at 3.

**\*\*\*From millionaire sire**  
**SWAN FOR ALL**  
**208—DANCING DEVIL\***  
*Swan For All - Lasting Beauty*  
A full-brother to Swan Leader 3,1:56.2s, 4,1:54s (\$89,160) and a half-brother to Fearless Man 4,1:52.1f (\$457,444).

**243—DUE PROCESS\***  
*Swan For All - Miss Imperial*  
A half-brother to Imperial Count 4,1:53.2f (\$671,093).

**290—SWAN'S SHOWPIECE**  
*Swan For All - Showpiece*  
First Swan For All from a Yankee Glide mare that has already produced Detroit Rapper 4,1:52.4 (\$193,993).

**\*\*\*From super-sire ALWAYS A VIRGIN**, sire of Breeders Crown winners Always B Miki and Color's A Virgin. His yearlings last year brought more than three times his stud fee at the Indiana Classic Sale.

**314—ALWAYSINTHFASTLANE**  
*Always A Virgin - Sweet Electric*  
A half-sister to five \$100,000 winners including A Sweet Ride p,4,1:49.4f (\$440,452).

**364—ROUSEY\***  
*Always A Virgin - Silveresque*  
Second foal from SILVERESQUE p,4,1:53.3f (\$223,444). Her first foal was a winner at 2, timed in 1:55.1s.

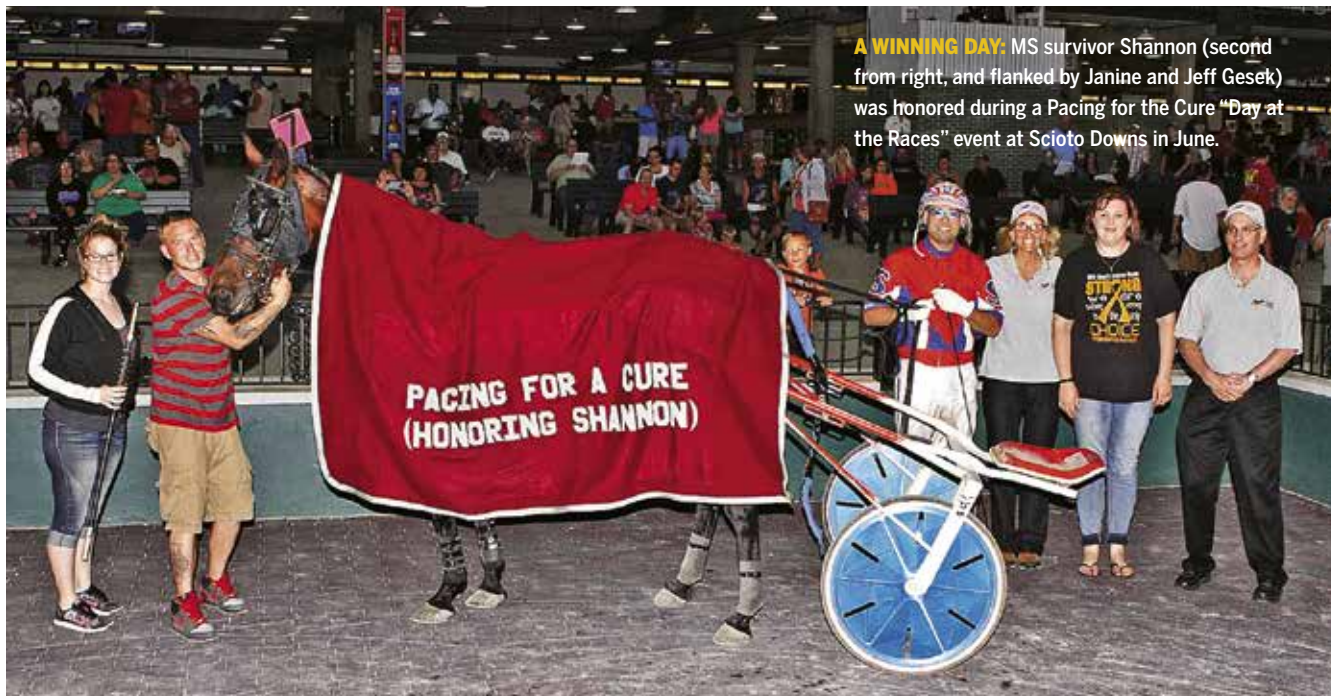
**\*\*\*From two-time Breeders Crown winner and world champion REAL DESIRE**

**164—TRUTH ABOVE ALL**  
*Real Desire - Have No Secrets*  
A full-sister to TELL ALL p,3,1:48.3 (\$1,509,227), an O'Brien Award Horse of the Year and Dan Patch Award Pacer of the Year.

*\*selling as agent*

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**A WINNING DAY:** MS survivor Shannon (second from right, and flanked by Janine and Jeff Gesek) was honored during a Pacing for the Cure “Day at the Races” event at Scioto Downs in June.

“Janine told me, ‘I’ll make a deal with you. If we win the bid, he paces for a cure for MS.’”

It was a moment that changed their lives, one that soon led to Jeff and Janine founding “Pacing for the Cure” and establishing a website ([www.pacingfortheure.com](http://www.pacingfortheure.com)). They chose maroon and gray as their branding colors—the school colors

at St. Joseph’s University in Philadelphia, from which Bill and Jeff graduated.

The organization, which raises awareness and money for MS research, also supports families and individuals in the harness racing community affected by the disease in need of special equipment or just somebody to talk to about caregiving.

**According to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society,** MS is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body.

“To inspire others, to follow our journey with Mr Bill G, to create hope in finding a cure and to believe that he was born

## FULL CALENDAR

Pacing for the Cure has grown significantly since its founding with the purchase of the equine Mr Bill G at the 2015 Standardbred Horse Sale. The following is a history of the organization. For more information about these and upcoming events, visit [www.pacingfortheure.org](http://www.pacingfortheure.org).

### NOVEMBER 2015

Ben Stafford Jr. purchases Mr Bill G at Standardbred Horse Sale in Harrisburg, Pa., for \$15,000. Janine and Jeff Gesek create the Pacing for the Cure charity to raise money for multiple sclerosis awareness and research.



Janine and Jeff Gesek

### APRIL 23, 2016

Pacing for the Cure “Day at the Races” event at Meadowlands Racetrack. Jeff appears as a guest on “In the Sully” on Meadowlands simulcast feed.

Bill Gesek, Jeff’s father and an MS survivor, Barbara Gesek, Bill’s wife and caregiver, and Deborah Lipartito, Jeff’s sister and an MS survivor, attend their first event.



### JANUARY 2016

Geseks hire Accularis Marketing Solutions for website development of [pacingfortheure.org](http://pacingfortheure.org).

to pace for a cure” is the central theme of the mission of Pacing for the Cure.

Bill Gesek requires a wheelchair, other medical devices and a specialty vehicle for transportation. He has been faithfully and lovingly cared for 24/7 by Barbara, his wife of 56 years, and his family.

The couple met at a polka dance in Bayonne, N.J., nearly 60 years ago.

Mr Bill G, a colt by Delmarvalous – Rafanelli, was purchased by Jeff and Janine in Harrisburg for \$15,000 after the pacer was evaluated by Jody Stafford, Ben Stafford Sr. and the late Ben Stafford Jr. out of the Ben Stafford Stable in Felton, Del.

The week before the sale, the Staffords, who are like a second family to the Geseks, visited Mr Bill G at Winbak Farm in Chesapeake City, Md., where he was born March 24, 2014.

When he begins his racing career, probably by next spring, any earnings will support Pacing for the Cure.

“He was a big, good-looking horse and I said, ‘Wow, I think he may go for more than our limit,’” Jody Stafford said.

Ben Jr. made the successful bid in Harrisburg while Jeff Gesek watched the proceedings on video.

**Last February, on a crisp and sunny day,** Bill and Barbara Gesek, who reside in Mount Laurel, N.J., were driven to the

“I felt that Mr Bill G, who was amazingly calm and gentle, somehow sensed what this connection was all about.”

Janine Gesek

Ben Stafford Stable.

There, they met Mr Bill G, who was led out of his stall by Jody Stafford.

“It was one of those tug-at-your-heart moments,” said Janine, who grew up on a farm in western Pennsylvania where one of her passions was horses.

The Geseks work at Virtua Health System in Marlton, N.J.—Jeff as a treasury specialist and Janine as an assistant vice president for clinical transformation.

As they posed for a photo taken by Janine, Bill Gesek maneuvered his wheelchair next to his wife. Barbara placed her right hand on the horse and draped her left arm around her husband’s shoulder as Jody looked on.

“I felt that Mr Bill G, who was amazingly calm and gentle, somehow sensed what this connection was all about,” Janine said. “It really touched me. There was a certain energy passed from Mr Bill G across to Bill through Barbara, the caregiver.”

Jeff Gesek said his father—who sold his share of a computer consulting firm in

1994 because of his illness—felt that same sense of purpose and that Bill was pleased to see the Staffords, who have trained the Gesek family’s racehorses since 1990.

Jeff’s golfing connection with the late and former Philadelphia Flyers hockey star Rick Mac-

Leish, who owned and raced Standardbred horses, led to his introduction to the Staffords.

“It was quite a surprise,” Bill Gesek said about first learning of his son and daughter-in-law’s new horse. “I thought they had changed his name, but they told me they didn’t have to. It’s amazing they would think of such a thing. I hope, someday, he makes enough money on the track to help people like myself.”

He said his wife “suffers from MS, too, because she has to take care of me.”

Barbara said her husband is “full in on accepting his lot in life. I have the energy and stamina to care for him and he has the resolve to handle not being able to care for himself.”

**During this year’s Standardbred Horse Sale,** Jeff and Janine, whose sister, a primary care physician, is also battling MS, will host a Pacing for the Cure dinner Nov. 8 at the Best Western Hotel & Conference Center in Harrisburg. The Geseks will tell

#### JUNE 4, 2016

Pacing for the Cure “Day at the Races” event at Scioto Downs. The event honored Shannon, an MS survivor and racing fan who contacted the Geseks through their website.



#### SEPT. 17, 2016

Pacing for the Cure invited to attend the Open Space Pace at Freehold Raceway, a community event with thousands of local families attending to celebrate the horse, New Jersey’s official state animal, and to promote open space in New Jersey.

#### NOV. 8, 2016

Inaugural Pacing for the Cure Harrisburg Yearling Sale Dinner Event.

All harness racing owners, trainers, drivers, breeders, employees and the entire Harrisburg community are welcome.

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

#### MAY 14, 2016

Open house at Diamond Creek Farm in Pennsylvania. The farm invited the community to come meet the Geseks and support their cause.

#### AUG. 26-27, 2016

Inaugural Pacing for the Cure MS Walk at The Meadows honoring Polly, an MS survivor and starting gate driver. Pacing for the Cure “Day at the Races” event, also honoring Polly.

#### OCTOBER 1-2, 2016

Pacing for the Cure attends the Grand Circuit meet at Red Mile Racetrack and Lexington Selected Yearling Sale in Lexington, Ky., to promote their cause as well as invite fellow horsemen to their inaugural Pacing for the Cure Harrisburg Yearling Sale Dinner Event.



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## How to Get Involved

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a debilitating disease of the central nervous system and affects approximately 2.5 million individuals worldwide. As the disease progresses, the medical equipment and devices needs become more prominent for MS survivors to manage their daily living. The equipment is costly and is rarely covered by medical insurance.

Pacing for the Cure has joined forces with renowned MS researcher Dr. Jeffrey Greenstein, founder of the Multiple Sclerosis Research Institute in Philadelphia, Pa.

There are several ways for those in the harness racing industry to get involved:

- Multiple Sclerosis survivors may visit [www.pacingforthecure.org](http://www.pacingforthecure.org) to “tell us their story” under the “Journey” tab and be eligible for a lucky horseshoe or be a special guest honoree at a Pacing for the Cure event in your area.
- To donate, go to the website and click on the “donate” button, which will take you directly to the Pacing for the Cure secure online donation portal. Donations can be made by check payable to Pacing for the Cure. They can be mailed to: **Pacing for the Cure, P.O. Box 1, Mount Laurel, NJ 08054.**
- Corporations considering an-

nual sponsorship packages or funding individual events in a local community can contact Jeff and Janine Gesek at this e-mail address: [sponsors@pacingforthecure.org](mailto:sponsors@pacingforthecure.org).

• There are two annual fundraising events: the **Harrisburg Yearling Sale Pacing for the Cure Dinner** on Nov. 8 and a **Pacing for the Cure Golf Tournament** next spring, date and location to be announced. The goal is to raise enough funds throughout the year to provide the necessary medical equipment and devices for MS survivors in need at one of these annual events.

• You can also visit the **Pacing for the Cure Facebook page** to comment, invite and share in upcoming events and help Jeff and Janine expand their support for MS survivors and their caregivers.

• Volunteers are needed at all levels of support, including at events in your area. If interested, e-mail them at [inquiry@pacingforthecure.org](mailto:inquiry@pacingforthecure.org).

“We are extremely grateful,” said Janine, “to all the wonderful people in the harness racing industry who have supported us as we’ve begun our journey to make a difference in the lives of MS survivors and caregivers.”

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their story while reaching out to the harness racing community for support.

It is the latest in a series of awareness events and fundraisers that have included a Day at the Races at the Meadowlands in April, attended by Jeff’s parents and sister; an open house at Diamond Creek Farm in Pennsylvania in May and another Day at the Races at Scioto Downs in Ohio where an information table was set up and an Ohio resident with MS, Shannon, was honored.

A Pacing for the Cure MS Walk and Day at the Races, a two-day event, was held at The Meadows honoring Polly, an MS survivor and starting gate driver, in August. Pacing for the Cure also made an appearance at the Open Space Pace at Freehold Raceway in New Jersey in September.

The money raised will be donated to two MS-related organizations: the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and the

Multiple Sclerosis Research Institute.

“Basically, the national group concentrates on finding a cure through genetics and the MSRI is looking at the cellular level,” said Jeff. “Eventually we would also like to help out people who can’t afford the equipment needed to deal with MS, like vans, wheelchairs and walkers.”

Jeff’s mother appreciates the work done by her son and daughter-in-law, both for her husband and for MS sufferers everywhere.

“Jeff and Janine have full-time jobs and Bill and I are kind of stunned at what they’ve done,” Barbara Gesek said. “We are touched and moved by them.”

Jody Stafford said he has one wish: “To see both Bill Gs together in the winner’s circle someday.”

**Marvin Pave** is a freelance writer living in Massachusetts. | To comment on this story, e-mail us at [readerforum@ustrotting.com](mailto:readerforum@ustrotting.com).



# Heartfelt Congratulations to the 2016 Ohio Sires Stakes Champions!



**LET'S GET STARTED~2-Year-Old Filly Trotting Champion**  
Richard & Joyce McClelland, owners/breeders  
Josh Sutton, driver Bobby Brower, trainer



**BERAZZLED~2-Year-Old Filly Pacing Champion**  
Marion Beachy, owner Lisa Ezzo, breeder  
Peter Wrenn, driver Danny Collins, trainer



**WHATABOY~3-Year-Old Colt Pacing Champion**  
Carl Howard, Gerrie Tucker & RBH Ventures, owners Dm Stables, breeder  
Ronnie Wrenn, Jr., driver Brian Brown, trainer



**WEGOFERDAPRIZE~3-Year-Old Colt Trotting Champion**  
Curran Racing LLC, owners Bill Troyer, breeder  
Chris Page, driver Jessica Millner, trainer



**MY TWEED HEART~3-Year-Old Filly Pacing Champion**  
Carl & Melanie Atley and Alan Keith, owners Stanley Swango, breeder  
Josh Sutton, driver Bill Dailey, trainer



**SCOTCH MCEWAN~2-Year-Old Colt Pacing Champion**  
Carl Atley, owners Rebecca Ewing, breeder  
Josh Sutton, driver Bill Dailey, trainer



**ROSE RUN SPANKY~2-Year-Old Colt Trotting Champion**  
Kim Dailey, Kevin Snyder & Shane Hines, owners Rose Run Farm, breeder  
Josh Sutton, driver Bill Dailey, trainer



**CONSOLIDATOR~3-Year-Old Filly Trotting Champion**  
Green Acquisition Corporation, owners Rose Run Farm, breeder  
Chris Page, driver Jim Arledge, Jr., trainer