

A poignant win for Monba and the Headleys

by John P. Sparkman

When Keeneland co-founder Hal Price Headley died suddenly in the place he loved most in 1962, his daughter Alice was there working his Keeneland Race Course shedrow with him. Hal Price Headley had given each of his children four mares about a year before he died, and one of those gift mares, Attica, by Mr. Trouble, produced European champion Sir Ivor a few years later. Thus, Alice's Mill Ridge Farm, established on land inherited from her father, was on its way to international prominence.



Photo by Z/Keeneland

MONBA

Barely a week after the now 82-year-old Alice Headley Chandler announced the transfer of daily management of Mill Ridge to her son Headley Bell, the 2008 edition of Keeneland's greatest race, the Toyota Blue Grass Stakes (G1), could hardly have produced a more fitting or poignant result. The winner, Monba, was bred by Mill Ridge in partnership with Jamm Ltd., from a tail-female descendant of another mare Chandler received from her father.

"He gave me Hipparete [Monba's fifth dam] when she was a yearling, and Louie Beard bet me \$10 she'd never race because she was so crooked," Chandler remembered. "She won four races, and I collected my \$10 with a big smile on my face."

Like Attica, Monba descends from Hal Price Headley's great foundation mare Alcibiades. Monba's fourth dam, Pillow Talk, by Mr. Trouble, was bred on a very similar pattern, since her dam, Hipparete, is a half sister to Attica's second dam, Salamina.

Pillow Talk is one of three stakes winners produced by Hipparete, a full sister to Hal Price Headley's 1937 champion two-year-old colt, Menow. Pillow Talk's daughter Ave Valeque, by Bold Ruler, narrowly missed stakes brackets, running a close second in the 1967 Arlington-Washington Lassie Stakes.

Ave Valeque's daughter Ciao, by Silent Screen, won a stakes race and was a remarkably productive broodmare. She produced Grade 1

Monba, gr. or ro. c., 2005				
Maria's Mon 93 687 fls, 36 SWs SI 1.95 DI=2.33	Wavering Monarch 79 6 wins, \$466,773, SW 670 fls, 41 SWs SI 1.19 DI=1.95	Majestic Light 73 854 fls, 72 SWs SI 2.22 DI=2.20	Majestic Prince 66	Raise a Native 61 Gay Hostess 57 *Ribot 52 High Voltage 52
		Uncommitted 74 10 fls, 2 SWs DI=1.59	Irradiate 66	Buckpasser 63 Tom Fool 49 Busanda 47
	Carlotta Maria 84 Placed, \$9,680 11 fls, 1 SW DI=2.50	Caro (Ire) 67 599 fls, 78 SWs SI 3.70 DI=1.26	=Fortino II (Fr) 59	Better Self 45 Past Eight 45
		Water Malone 74 5 fls, 0 SWs DI=3.80	=Chambord (GB) 55	=Grey Sovereign (GB) 48 =Ranavalo III (Fr) 54 =Chamossaire (GB) 42 =Life Hill (GB) 40
Hamba 92 7 fls, 1 SW DI=2.20	Easy Goer 86 14 wins, \$4,873,770 Champion 133 fls, 9 SWs SI 3.25 DI=2.07	Alydar 75 689 fls, 77 SWs SI 5.54 DI=3.94	Raise a Native 61 Native Dancer 50 Raise You 46	
		Relaxing 76 12 fls, 3 SWs DI=1.38	Sweet Tooth 65	On-and-On 56 Plum Cake 58
	Ciao 74 5 wins, \$44,636, SW 12 fls, 4 SWs DI=2.27	Silent Screen 67 686 fls, 45 SWs SI 1.80 DI=1.32	Prince John 53	Buckpasser 63 Tom Fool 49 Busanda 47
		Ave Valeque 65 6 fls, 1 SW DI=3.80	Prayer Bell 54	To Market 48 Allemande 55
		Bold Ruler 54	*Princequillo 40 Not Afraid 48	
		Pillow Talk 54	Better Self 45 Sunday Evening 47	
			*Nasrullah 40 Miss Disco 44	
			Mr. Trouble 47 Hipparete 44	

winner Secret Hello, by Private Account, and his full sister, Grade 2 winner Silent Account, was the dam of stakes winner Gold Case, by Forty Niner. In addition, Ciao produced two other stakes winners and the dam of Monba, Hamba.

By Easy Goer, Hamba won twice from five starts, earning \$47,500, and her fourth foal, Gijima, by Red Ransom, placed in a stakes. Monba is her sixth foal. Hamba has an unraced two-year-old colt by Aldebaran named Pious David and a 2008 colt by Harlan's Holiday. Agent Barry Berkelhammer purchased Monba for \$200,000 on behalf of Starlight Stable, Donald Lucarelli, and Paul Saylor at the 2006 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga sale of selected yearlings.

Monba's sire, Maria's Mon, was well established as a high-class stallion at the time of his death in 2007, but he had overcome several obstacles to achieve that stature. By the good but unfashionable sire Wavering Monarch out of Carlotta Maria, by Caro (Ire), Maria's Mon earned the 1995 two-year-old male championship by defeating Unbridled's Song (fourth) and Hennessy (sixth) in the Moet Champagne Stakes (G1). Maria's Mon broke down while training for the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1), in which Unbridled's Song narrowly defeated Hennessy, and he could not regain his juvenile sparkle in two starts at three.

The first crop of Maria's Mon included 2001 Kentucky Derby (G1) winner Monarchos, Grade 3 winners Wander Mom and Silver Tornado, and seven other stakes winners. The harsh realities of the modern stallion market, however, mean that horses with unfashionable pedigrees and soundness deficiencies like Maria's Mon often receive little patronage in their third and fourth crops. Therefore, it was not until Maria's Mon's sixth crop—conceived after his first-crop success—that his first champion, 2006 champion three-year-old filly Wait a While, emerged.

Monba is Maria's Mon's 36th stakes winner from 628 foals age three and over. That 5.7% strike rate is mitigated somewhat by the difficulties he faced before he made his quality obvious. The average number of career starts of his offspring, 11.4, is all too close to the current average for the breed.

Monba is inbred 4x4 to that great sire of fillies, Buckpasser, through two daughters, Uncommitted and Relaxing, producing an inbreeding coefficient of 1.72% in a pedigree free of Northern Dancer.

Whatever he accomplishes on the Triple Crown trail or at stud, though, Monba's Blue Grass win serves as a fitting coda to the remarkable career of Alice Headley Chandler as she approaches retirement.

John P. Sparkman is bloodstock editor of THOROUGHBRED TIMES. His e-mail address is ormonde1@gmail.com.

The NEWEST STAKES WINNER for
BELONG TO ME
is Group 2 Winner ALL SILENT,
3 WINS in 5 STARTS



2008 Stud Fee: \$12,500 Live Foal

LANE'S END

Box 626, Versailles, KY 40383 • (859) 873-7300 • FAX: (859) 873-3746
E-MAIL: lanesend@ix.netcom.com • WEB SITE: lanesend.com • Photo: Martin King