

Cosequin presents OTTB Showcase: A Priceless Bond

by [Jen Roytz](#)

PaulickReport.com



OTTB Portia and Cassidy

Priceless Mischief was loaded with potential. She broke her maiden in her second start by a monumental 17-1/4 lengths, but that brilliance turned out to be a flash in the pan, and the lightly-raced filly only found the winner's circle once more toward the end of her career, that time in a hard-fought battle to the wire, winning by a head for a \$5,000 claiming tag.

Her owner and trainer for those last few starts, Darlene Reese, wanted the best for the sweet, hard-trying filly, and put her up for adoption through the Pennsylvania Thoroughbred Horseman's Association's Turning For Home racehorse retirement program. That's where Jan Hart found her and helped her on the way to a happy and productive off-track career as a show horse.

"I brought her to the farm I boarded at five days after I lost my big horse to colic," said Jan. "After six months, the then-barn manager, Stephanie, fell in love with her and it seemed like the right thing to do, so I sold her to her for one dollar, which she paid me in four quarters."

After just six months, though, debts and obligations forced Stephanie to make the decision that the horse would be best suited with someone who could give her more time and attention.

At the same time, the Himmelberger family was looking for a new horse.

"My daughter, Cassidy, was riding her Appendix Quarter Horse, but was beginning to outgrow her," said Veronica Himmelberger. "I had a horse when I was first married, but had to sell him due to financial reasons and not having the time for him with three small children. I was considering a more seasoned horse for myself to get back into riding and learn with, and it was suggested to me that I take Cassidy's horse, Easter, and that we find Cassidy something larger with more potential."

So, the family was on the hunt and came across a young Thoroughbred mare at a lesson barn that was up for sale.

“They were occasionally using her as a lesson horse, but she didn’t seem to enjoy that career and, since she was too fast and green for beginners, they wanted to place her elsewhere,” said Veronica.

While Portia, as she’s known now, has turned into the perfect horse for Cassidy, she wasn’t exactly “show ready” when they first got her.

“We were a little nervous after seeing her careening around jump courses at a local show, but with a lot of work and an amazing trainer, she became a gem in only a few months,” said Veronica. “By the next show season, they were winning nearly every class!”



Smiling for the camera – Portia and Cassidy

It’s that eagerness to please that made Portia a favorite in every barn she’s been in, and many of her previous connections, including Jan Hart, the team from Turning For Home, and Darlene Reese, have kept up with her and are thrilled to watch the transformation she’s undergone with Cassidy.

The foundation of that transformation began with dressage. Veronica explained that for the first few months of their relationship together, Cassidy and Portia focused on balance and connection, and the result was a horse and rider team that carried themselves in harmony with athleticism and grace.

“One of the things that had the biggest impact with Portia was her bit,” explained Veronica. “She did not like a snaffle, she liked a French link a little better but became an entirely different horse in a Myler bit.”

She explained that Portia was significantly more relaxed in the lighter bit, and that often Cassidy will ride her in simply a halter and lead rope and Portia would move much more effortlessly.

“Some people immediately jump to a harsher bit when a horse seems to be misbehaving when, most often than not, a milder bit would help tremendously,” said Veronica.

The same kindness, softness and patience the Himmelberg's show Portia has been reciprocated often. She and Cassidy have developed a strong bond with one another, and take care of each other in many ways.

“One of my favorite moments was at a local schooling hinter show – it was one of their first together,” said Veronica. “They were doing a two foot course and I was video recording it. Cassidy had leaned slightly going over one of the first fences. She lost her balance and began to slip off the side. I thought she was falling off for sure, but when they were just about to land, Portia swooped sideways and came back underneath her.”

“That’s when I knew what a truly special mare she is. She takes care of Cassie and I’m so grateful for that.”

THE DEETS:

Name: Priceless Mischief (a.k.a. “Portia”)

Born: April 9, 2005

Color: Bay

Sire: Outflanker

Dam: Mischief Seeker

Sale History: None

Race Record: 10-2-1-0

Race Earnings: \$21,770

If you have or know of a retired Thoroughbred with an interesting story to tell, we’d love to hear about it! Just email Jen Roytz (Jenlroytz@gmail.com) with the horse’s Jockey Club name, background story, and a few photos.

Jen Roytz was the marketing and communications director at Three Chimneys Farm in Midway, Kentucky. She is a freelance writer and marketing and public relations consultant for various Thoroughbred, sport horse, and non-equine entities. She can also still be found on the back of an OTTB most days.

*Contact Jen on **Facebook** and **Twitter**.*