

Driving and riding horses was in Mary Ver Meer Borg's blood long before she owned a horse.

The 1st Ver Meer family in the U.S. immigrated from Holland in 1857. From the East coast, they took the train to Iowa City. There they bought two wagons, harness, a pair of oxen and team of horses and headed southeast to Pella, ready to start farming the land that has been handed down and enjoyed for 7 generations.

Her mother's brothers bought, trained and sold horses that were brought into town by rail from out West. The best prospects were saved for Jennie to help her retain the title of riding the fastest horse in the neighborhood.

Mary grew up showing Holstein and Angus cattle. Her dad was a cattleman and pleas for a horse of her own went unheeded. She did the next best thing, she settled for riding the lead cow home from the timber at milking time and making a harness for a pet bull calf and hitched it to her Radio Flyer wagon. The driving project was forbidden after they ran through mother's flower garden and crushed the garden fence.

After Lyle and Mary's first 10 years of marriage they moved to the family farm. The first purchase was an Appaloosa cutting horse to help with their small herd of Simmental cows. There's a lot of difference between Bovine and Equine and education began in a flurry. Marcia Pothoven gave Mary her first formal riding lessons.

When their oldest son joined 4-H, they began raising and showing POA's. The family competed in Lead-line, Halter, Western, English and Pleasure Driving, at county, state and regional competitions. As the boys grew, they needed bigger horses. Jon and Lyle concentrated on raising and trail riding Quarter Horses. Joe and Mary preferred the Morgan breed.

In 1983, they purchased their first Morgan. Sucha's Honey Bee was a part of the family for 27 years. She was their first "society show horse", but was just as comfortable giving lessons, being the example horse for driving clinics and farrier demonstrations.

Morgans are a good breed for Americana classes. With help from Pella craftsmen, a small, to scale, Dutch milk cart was made into a full size vehicle driven by Mary and her sister Andrea in their authentic Markin costumes. This cart is now a permanent part of the Tulip Time parade. They were also instrumental in securing horse drawn carriages from Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, which are now being used in the Tulip Festival parade by the Tulip Queen and her Royal Court. The Borgs purchased an American Saddlebred to pull that first Queen's Carriage.

During the 4-H years of their three sons, Mary served as county horse project leader and superintendent. Winter months involved equine ed. meetings and spring and summer large group clinics were held every week at the fair grounds. Many boys and girls also came to the farm for individual lessons. During those years, classes were added for English riding, In-hand and Driving.

A middle school teacher, her class room is always a place for the horse owners to go to when they need to share their joys, sorrows and frustrations. Over the years lots of tack and riding gear have been brought in so students would have visual aids to impress upon them the importance of the horse in American history. Special needs children love to come to the farm to groom the Pinto pony "Bobbi Sue", purchased from the Kinsingers after a SIERA field trip to their farm.

She and her family have enjoyed promoting the history of the Morgan horse at the Iowa Horse Fair. Caduceus Fiero, the black gelding from Dr. Lowell Hughes' Flyhawk bloodline, was a perfect mount for Civil War officer, General Phillip Sheridan, AKA Lyle. Honey Bee proudly carried Joe, from the 1st Maine Calvary unit. Now Borg grandsons use the horses to portray George Custer and Ben Franklin for school projects.

Mary is a member of the IHSA and has served on its board and as its president. She is the current president of the SIERA club, has chaired their show and loves planning outings for the group. For 16 years she and Fay Coulthard have edited the Iowa Show Horse News.

Monty Wallen introduced the Borgs to the Medomak bloodline, bred by Muriel Burnheimer of Waldoboro, Maine. Medomak Hi Priority was purchased in 1993. From then until now they have been showing Medomak Master Copy, Medomak Cobra Command and Medomak Hi Profile. These horses have enjoyed many a victory pass in English, Western, Driving and In-hand. Kids, grandkids, nieces and niece's kids have been introduced to the show ring, riding Morgans in Leadline classes.

Many people have helped make her part of horse industry in Iowa so exciting. She wants to thank her husband, Lyle, and sons, Brad, Jon and Joe. Trainers, Milt Gauger, Rob Kritzler for their winning drives and rides with HTC Fine N Fancy and Ryan Sims for his performances on Medomak Hi Profile; farrier Denny Beyer, Dr. Tim Yoder, IHSA and SIERA friends. It's been a team effort.