

Three G Farms Equine Center, Inc.

Instruction, Training, Clinics, & Events for Carriage Drivers / Earl W. Morris and Mary Winter, owners



Jada Neubauer and Droste in an arena class at the Villa Louis Carriage Classic. They won the Small Pony Open Cross Country at that event. Photo by Robert Mischka, used by permission.

Three G Farms Equine Center, Inc., was founded in 2000 with a vision of becoming the center of carriage driving activities in Iowa. Interest in carriage driving around the country was beginning to increase at that time, according to Earl, the demographer, because baby boom babies are now in their 50s. They are beginning to experience hip, back, and knee problems that make riding difficult, even painful. But they still want to be involved with horses, and driving is one way to do that. Three G Farms was to build on the growing interest in carriage driving by offering a place where people and horses could learn to drive and where driving events could be held. That vision still guides us!

"What do the three Gs stand for?" is usually a farm visitor's first question. Before we found carriage driving, we raised and raced Trottingbred ponies, a breed developed by crossing Standardbreds with Shetlands, Hackneys, and Welsh ponies. The only difference between Trottingbred races and Standardbred races is that the ponies race a half mile instead of a full mile. They wear the same equipment, race in scaled-down sulkies, and travel at either a pace or a trot. We got involved in this activity because Earl's dad, Walter Morris, who lived in southwestern Michigan, was racing the Michigan-Indiana Trottingbred circuit. One summer we took leaves of absence from our

jobs to travel with Earl's folks to the races. Earl's son, Brian, also living in Michigan at the time, purchased a young trotter, which he named "Three G Summer" in honor of the fact that three generations would be racing together that summer.

The pony is long gone, but the name lives on in our farm name. (Brian is *not* long gone, but is now living in Iowa and is one of the best drivers and trainers at Three G Farms.)

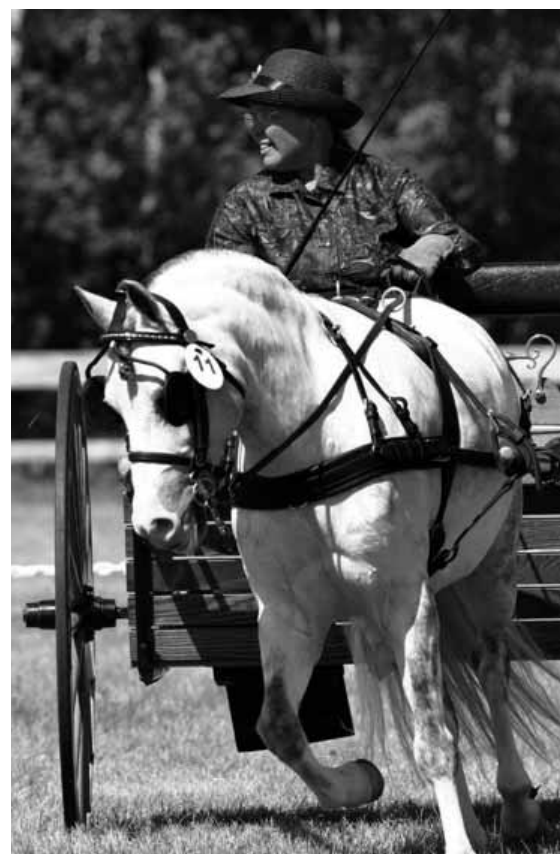
Both of us grew up with horses. Earl helped his dad run the Michigan farm with a team of horses named Dutch and Dan. Mary's first love was a spotted pony named Checkers. After *many* years away from horses, we got back into them more than 25 years ago with the racing ponies.

Fast forward 20 years. We are now old, too old to travel 30 miles an hour 2 inches away from other people traveling that fast with only a helmet and wheel disks for protection. We began looking for something else to do with our Trottingbreds, and found carriage driving. Two Trottingbreds still play a prominent part in our activities. Three G Frieda Pace, now 22, our fastest pacer in her younger days, competed successfully in carriage driving for a few years, and is now our lesson horse for very young riders. Arthritis in her right shoulder has led to her retirement as a driving lesson pony.

GS Thunderboy Henry, 10, raced as a trotter in 2- and 3-year-old stakes races. Hank is one of our competition ponies, driven by Brian or Jada, and can trot faster than most horses can canter.

We are located three miles northeast of Ames on the hills above the Skunk River. We have a regulation 40 x 80 meter driven dressage arena (located in the middle of a quarter-mile race track, a holdover from our previous lives!) Our indoor arena, 80 x 120 feet, is easily large enough to drive carriages comfortably. The arena is attached to a building containing a dozen 12 x 12 stalls, a carriage storage area, wash stall, bathroom, tack stalls, and an office. We own 27 acres and rent the 40 acres next to our property, where we have more than 4 miles of driving trails, and where we have built a number of obstacles (called hazards) that we use for Combined Driving Event competitions. We have one fulltime employee, Jada Neubauer, a 2006 graduate of Iowa State University's Animal Science program. Jada worked

Below: Mary Winter and Kevyn, Thane of White Sage, in their championship dressage test at the Birds Hill International Combined Driving Event. Photo by Candice Daum, used by permission.



parttime for us while finishing her B.S. degree; we were pleased that she wanted to stay on as our riding instructor and horse trainer for both riding and driving.

In addition to driving lessons given by our staff, we sponsor driving clinics with Robin Groves, Brownsville, Vermont, four times each year, in March, June, August, and November. Robin is not only a prominent carriage driver, competing at the advanced level in Combined Driving Events, she is a marvelous teacher for novices and veteran drivers alike. Camie Stockhausen, known to eventers and fox hunters throughout the Midwest, offers weekly driving lessons at Three G Farms. Dressage is dressage, whether ridden or driven.

Every April we offer a Combined Driving Event (CDE) camp for drivers and their horses. This year the camp is April 20-22, and, like last year, the clinician is Kathy Palmer from Plattsmouth, Nebraska. Camp participants have a private dressage lesson with Kathy on Friday, work on cones and hazard in groups of three or four on Saturday, and participate in a shortened version of a Driving Trial (DT) on Sunday. Participants have a chance to experience a Driving Trial in a relaxed atmosphere prior to entering an ADS-sanctioned event.

We also offer competitive events for drivers. The Second Annual Snowdrift Arena Driving Trial, scheduled for the last weekend of January, was cancelled because of bitterly cold temperatures. The BITS Distance Driving Clinic and Novice Drive will take place the weekend of May 19-20, and the Fifth Annual Skunk River Driving Trial will take place June 23-24. The Skunk River event is an American Driving Society-sanctioned event, that drew 32 competitors from eight states last year. The Best of Iowa in Traces Society (BITS) organizes both the Distance Driving event and the Horse Driving Trial. Other events planned so far at Three G Farms this year are a schooling show and clinic August 25-26, and The ABCs of CDEs on August 18, a day-long introduction to carriage driving.

Although we love competing (and did very well in 2006!), it is just as much fun to watch others, like Christie Loiacono, Anita Schlosser, Jada Neubauer, and Eleanor Eagly, realize their driving goals at competitive events in the Midwest.

Each year our dream of a state full of carriage drivers comes closer to reality, as more people turn to driving. For more information on our staff, facilities, or upcoming events, consult our website, www.threegfarms.com, or e-mail us at mwinter@iastate.edu (Mary's email) or vienaabbe@aol.com (Earl's e-mail). (Viena Abbe was one of Mary's driving horses. She is now a hunter/jumper lesson horse in eastern Iowa, but her name lives on in Earl's email address!)



Jada Neubauer, with husband Matt navigating, driving GS Thunderboy Henry on the marathon course at the Longview Lake Combined Driving Event. Photo by Randall Farwell, used by permission.

UPCOMING DRIVING EVENTS:

(Contact information for all events is: Mary Winter, mwinter@iastate.edu, or 515-450-1041, unless otherwise indicated.)

March 22-25

Robin Groves Driving and Riding Clinic, Three G Farms

April 20-22

Kathy Palmer CDE Camp, Three G Farms

May 19-20

BITS Distance Driving Clinic and Novice Drive, Three G Farms
Steve Stillions, sstilli279@aol.com; 319-247-1734

June 7-8

Robin Groves Driving and Riding Clinic, Three G Farms

June 23-24

Skunk River Horse Driving Trial

August 9-12

Robin Groves Driving and Riding Clinic, Three G Farms

August 18

The ABC's of CDEs, Three G Farms
Mary Winter, or Kris Brimm, kbrimm@cfu.net; 319-277-4624

August 25-26

Dog Days Schooling Show & Clinic

November 1-4

Robin Groves Driving and Riding Clinic, Three G Farms
Mary Winter, mwinter@iastate.edu, 515-450-1041

