

Introducing ... Jada Neubauer

It was a lucky day for us in December, 2000. Three G Farms Equine Center, just northeast of Ames, had been open six months, and it was clear we needed additional help. I contacted Judy Miller, then the director of the Equine Science program at Ellsworth Community College in Iowa Falls. I described our ideal employee: a student who had completed the Ellsworth program who was now living in Ames, probably attending Iowa State University. Judy said that she could not think of anyone who matched that profile.

At that time, two of our yearling Trottingbred ponies were at Ellsworth for the fall, being put through their paces by students enrolled in the Young Horse Training course. When we picked up the ponies in December, a young blonde woman took one of our ponies over a blue tarp and over a bridge under saddle, and around the arena in harness pulling a tire. As she unharnessed the pony, I said to Judy, almost as an afterthought, "So you can't think of anybody we could hire who lives in the Ames area?"

And the blonde woman said, "Judy, I live in Ames." "Oh, right," Judy said, "I always think of you as living in Garden City..."

And that's how we first met Jada Neubauer.

She began working part time helping with horse chores in January, 2001. She is now our only fulltime employee, carrying the majority of the responsibility for training horses and ponies to drive. And she is now representing Three G Farms gloriously as a tough competitor in pleasure driving shows and Combined Driving Events (CDEs).

Jada started working with horses as soon as she was old enough to have a driver's license. She chose horses because, in her 15-year-old mind, she thought, "Pigs stink and cows are too stupid."

Her first experience was in a breeding barn near Jewell, where she did morning and afternoon horse chores;

next she worked in eastern Iowa at a reining and cutting facility. After graduating from South Hamilton High School, she enrolled in the equine program at Ellsworth.

When she began working for us, her experience with driving horses was very limited. She thought that driving was primarily for old people... it could not possibly be as exciting as riding! Although she had not driven horses, however, she was a skilled horse handler, able to "read" a horse's mood accurately. And she has incredibly sensitive hands, an attribute more even important for drivers than for riders, because the driver does not have the aids of weight and leg pressure for communication that the rider does.

As the demand for training horses to drive increased, it was clear that she needed to be involved in that part of the operation. So she scheduled driving lessons with Earl, beginning with the basics of harness fitting, and gradually moving to training



by Mary Winter & Earl Morris

Kimberly and Roger Yum drive AJ after their June wedding.

driving horses. The rapid growth of interest in driving in Iowa and around the nation, and the corresponding increase in the demand for safe, solid driving horses coincided with the completion of her B. S. Degree in Animal Science at ISU. We were delighted to offer her a fulltime job, beginning in May, 2006.

Jada's watchword in horse training, the watchword of all of us at Three G Farms, is "patience," using slow, careful work. We begin with basic ground manners, and then proceed through lungeing, ground driving, and long reining. The rule is that we want each horse or pony to trust us and be totally relaxed, even bored out of its mind, before moving on to the next step. Although patience is important when training a pony to ride, it assumes greater importance for a driving pony. If a rider falls off, the pony usually does one of two things: start eating grass, or head for home, stirrups flapping along its sides. If a driving horse loses its driver, the horse may be ruined for driving forever, because, as it gallops away, it is now being "chased" by something very scary: the carriage.

When we are ready to introduce the carriage, we start with PVC pipes through the tug loops along the horse's side. The next step is a drag, a set of shafts held together with a 2x4. The pony stays in the drag until it is old stuff. Weather permitting, Jada spends a lot of time outdoors with the pony in the drag, exposing it to lots of different sights and sounds. When we put on the carriage for the first time, we like it to be a nonevent, just another baby step in training. And it usually is.

Although we trained many horses in 2007, two 3-year-olds stand out, AJ and Native Victory. Leonard Larson from Cambridge, Iowa, came to the farm one February morning. His daughter, Kimberly, was being married the first weekend in June, and she wanted to drive her dad's 4-wheeled carriage, her new groom by her side, between the ceremony and the reception. The horse he had in mind was AJ, a palomino Quarterhorse with good ground manners who had not been ridden or driven. We gasped... you want us to do this in March-April-May... a little more than three months??? We made no guarantees, but, if we were to do it, we needed to begin that day. And on Saturday, June 2, 2007, thanks to Jada, Kimberly and Roger Yum drove AJ at their wedding.

Anne Leck, Maple Plain, Minnesota, delivered Native Victory, a Hackney Horse colt to Three G Farms April 1. His owner said, "I want him to have a relaxed, flat-footed walk, no matter how long it takes." Jada and I said, simultaneously, "Two years." Fortunately Anne, an experienced carriage driver, had a good idea what was going to

"Jada;" Continued on page 78

“Jada;” *(Continued from page 24)*

be involved in training a young Hackney fueled by testosterone! Basic ground manners took a month. It was another month before the side poles were introduced. (Owners can follow the progress of their pony in training on the daily logs on our website, www.threegfarms.com.) He was just barely driving comfortably in our large Meadowbrook at the end of July, a full four months from when he arrived. About then, he was sold to become a member of the carriage horse string on Mackinac Island.

In addition to her credentials as a horse trainer, Jada is gaining an excellent reputation as a competitor. She has competed at the Harvest Moon Carriage Classic at Living History Farms in Urbandale for several years, winning the Novice Driver Championship in 2004 with Baykill Regent, owned by Anita Schlosser and Three G Farms, the 2006 Novice Horse or Pony Reserve Championship with Hylee's Howaboutthat, owned by the Iowa State University



Jada and Matt Neubauer with GS Thunderboy Henry.
Oklahoma Cowboy Country CDE 2007. Photo by Digital Express.

College of Veterinary Medicine, and the 2007 Novice Horse or Pony Championship with Toby, owned by Jo Schumacher of Boone.

She began competing in Combined Driving Events (CDEs) with GS Thunderboy Henry (Hank to his friends) at the 2006 Longview Lake CDE, winning the Prelim Single Pony class at that event. She and Hank have continued their partnership in 2007, winning Best Preliminary Marathon and the Overall Preliminary Championship at both the Longview Lake CDE and the Cowboy Country CDE. They are becoming unbeatable in the marathon hazards. One of the observers at Hazard 4 in Cowboy Country called the office on the two-way radio after she completed the hazard, saying, "When you get the score sheet for competitor number 66, it is not an error." Jada and Hank, with her husband, Matt, navigating, did it in 27 seconds; everybody else took more than a minute. She is smart, young and fearless, is driving a very fast pony, and has perfected the art of smooth turns, the key to a fast hazards

The partnership between Jada Neubauer and Three G Farms has been a successful one, one that we plan to continue in the years to come! She and her husband, along with their two children, Xavier, 4, and Molly, 2, have recently purchased the house immediately south of the farm, so now she walks to work.