



40th Anniversary Speakers Dressing for the Pleasure Show Mary Jo Stockman

Mary Jo began her driving career with the children of a family friend in a chariot down the main street of Goldfield, Iowa. She was 10, lived in the city, but never forgot the fun of that ride. The Minnesota State Fair Horse Show was an annual event for Mary and her mother where they both loved to watch the driving classes, ladies and gentlemen dressed for a turn in the park with spectacular horses and ponies.

When she graduated from law school she was taking riding lessons at a local barn that had a pony and cart. They had a small show where Mary showed the school pony to the cart. The cart had a flat tire but she won the class and has never looked back.

Mary learned Morgan pleasure driving from Ernie Wood, a well-known Minnesota breeder and trainer of Morgan Horses, working as a groom for the Woods to be able to show their driving horses. In 1986, the first organized carriage driving event in Minnesota, the Prairie Home Carriage Classic, was held at the Coplin Farm in Maple Plain, MN. It became clear immediately that Mary needed a horse and one of those beautiful carriages. The first horse was a Shire mare owned by Mary's friend Michael Ridge. She was driven to a wicker governess cart that was totally inappropriate, incredibly expensive and dangerous.

It was soon obvious that a different horse was needed for the show ring. Royal Heart, a 2 year old Morgan mare was acquired by Mary, husband John, and Michael Ridge in 1988. She had been trained to drive down the road, sort of, and had been showing since she was a foal at her mother's side. There were many tense moments when they began showing as the horse thought she knew more about it than Mary or Michael but once they conceded she was right, things went more smoothly. Mary and Heart have shown successfully in Carriage Pleasure Shows and Combined Driving Events all over the United States and Canada. They started with a red road cart, moved to a Meadowbrook, an antique Houghton Educator, Canadian Sleighs, a Concord Buggy, a dog cart phaeton, a ladies wicker phaeton, and a George IV phaeton. They started with an Amish made "going down the road" harness and have used everything from synthetic to spectacularly handmade formal harness. John has accommodated this evolution with everything from a half-ton pick-up truck to a horse box that accommodates 5 horses, living quarters, a driver's cabin, and a twenty-four foot tag along for the carriages and equipment.

In order to reduce the cost of going to the East Coast shows to buy hats, Mary and her business partner started Hat Trix where they create hand trimmed hats for carriage driving, weddings, the races, polo, tea parties and garden parties. It turns out that starting a company is not more cost effective than buying hats on the East Coast but that's water under the bridge and Mary and Paula take their hats to a few carriage pleasure shows each year where they help eager competitors who are trying to improve their winning turnouts.

Mary is currently serving her second term as the Vice President of *The American Driving Society, Inc.*

