



Utopia Percherons

By Stacie Lynch



UTOPIA PERCHERONS Goshen, CT.

The Utopia six horse hitch, taken at Pinnacle Farm, in Cornwall, Connecticut. Photo by Betty Cooper.

It is an honor to be asked to provide our story with Percheron horses for the Percheron News. Draft horses have been a life long passion for Brian and me. It is a family hobby for us that introduced us to countless wonderful people across the USA, Canada and even France. Collectively, Brian and I have 55 years of experience with draft horses of all breeds. The Percheron is the breed that we admire most.

Brian has been a self-employed farrier for 9 years and enjoys studying Percheron pedigrees on-line in his spare time. He has also been called on to judge draft horse shows throughout the northeast. After working 10 years in the financial software industry, I have recently started an equine photography business, Stacie C. Lynch Photography (www.stacielynch.com).

In 2000, Brian and I bought land in Goshen, CT, and built our home here in 2002. We currently have 18 Percheron horses, 2 miniature horses and a cross-bred filly on our farm.

Brian and I began our relationship with draft horses through a friendship with the Kriz family of Bethany, CT. This eventually led to our relationship with one another. The Krizs are a family of nine generations of farriers that are most famous for shoeing the Budweiser Clydesdales. My father had lived near the Kriz

family as a young boy and always remained friends with them.

When my parents, Frank and Karen Castella, life members of the PHAOA, bought property in Pleasant Valley, NY, in 1973 they borrowed a Belgian named Tony from Johnny and Joe Kriz to use to clear the land where they were going to build our family farm.

In 1976, my parents had gone to the Danbury Fair in Danbury, CT, to assist the Kriz family by driving a hitch in one of the parades. It was there that my mother fell in love with a Percheron filly foal that the Kriz family had at the fair on display. The filly, Castle's Felina 253353 was bred on the Kriz farm. She was sired by Daleview William 251748 and out of Hot Rod's Donna 249748.

An article about Felina was published in the Spring 1993 Percheron News and can also be seen on our web site: <http://www.utopiapercherons.com/tribute/felina/Felina.htm>. Johnny put the weanling in a horse trailer and told my parents to take her home despite them not having the money to pay for her at the time.

My father, a printer by trade, rebuilt a printing press and sold it in order to come up with the money to pay Johnny for Felina. From

that day forward my family was in the Percheron business.

We raised a few foals out of Felina, one of which was Castle's Diesel 255765. Diesel was foaled in 1981 and is still alive today, making him 28 years old. A photo of Diesel and Felina being driven as a pair was published in the 1987 Percheron Calendar for the month of



Stacie at three years old with Castle's Felina 253353, as a yearling.



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Brian with the Kriz's shoeing crew.

November. Diesel is on the cover of the Fall 2007 Percheron News, as well as the Spring 2002 issue in the lead of the hitch. He was used for many years as a hitch horse and wedding carriage horse.

Brian was the Kriz's newspaper boy when he was 12 years old and eventually became their chore boy. This led to him later becoming their assistant farrier and all-around farm hand. Brian lived less than a mile from the Kriz farm and spent a lot of time with Johnny, Timmy, Glenn, Joe Sr. (aka UJ), and Joe Jr. Kriz. He apprenticed as a farrier with each one of them over the next 14 years and in 2000 he began his own farrier business.

While shoeing with the Kriz Family, Brian was also introduced to driving, haying, snowplowing and showing. The first pair he ever drove was a pair of mules, used on the farm to skid logs. He showed Clydesdales and Belgians with Glenn and Percherons with Timmy. Johnny also taught Brian to yolk and drive a pair of oxen.

Johnny was like a father to Brian. When Johnny passed away in 1996, Brian and I each drove a pair of horses in his unforgettable funeral procession. It was very hard for us to drive that last ride for one of the best farriers and horseman in the country. See http://www.utopiapercherons.com/tribute/johnny/Johnny_Kriz.htm.

Brian and I met for the first time at my family's hitch wagon christening party in 1987. My father spent several years building our hitch wagon in our garage and figured it was a good excuse to get all of our horse friends together for its unveiling. Brian came to the party with the Kriz family and this was the first time that we met at the age of 13.

Johnny Kriz saw Brian's enthusiastic interest in horses and on his sixteenth birthday in 1990, decided to give him his first horse to get him started. It was a weanling light horse colt. Unfortunately the colt died of colic a short time after Brian got him. Johnny then attended the Topeka Draft Horse Sale, where he bought Brian a coming two-year old grade Percheron gelding named Ace to replace the lost colt. Brian began driving and showing Ace in halter and cart classes.

Brian eventually sold Ace and took the profits with him to Centre Hall, PA where Rip Swan was operating Sires International. Ripley offered to take Brian on a tour of several local breeders, one of which was Pennwoods Percherons, where they knew they were sure to find some of the best Percherons in the country.

While at Pennwoods, Brian bought Pennwoods Derrick 274011, sired by South Valley Did-It 251418, out of Valley View Joleen 258299. Brian raised, trained and showed Derrick, and eventually sold him as a hitch gelding. It was Johnny's generosity that began Brian's successful career with Percheron horses.

Brian was fortunate enough to not only be able to work with the Budweiser Clydesdales, but also the Country Reminisce Hitch every 5-6 weeks as they traveled 3,800 miles across the country in 1993.

Brian broke his foot in 1996 and was laid up and not able to shoe horses for some time. Johnny quickly put Brian to work delivering two pair of oxen to Warner Brother Pictures in Florida to be used in the production of the movie, *Rosewood*. *Rosewood* is a dramatization of a 1923 horrific racist lynch mob attack on an African American community in Florida. Once Brian arrived on set with the oxen, he was asked to stay to teach the actors how to drive them. It was then that the wranglers realized that Brian also knew how to drive horses. A few days before filming production was to start they changed livestock coordinators and asked Brian to stay and help with both the oxen and wagon driving.

About a month into production they were in need of a driver for a scene that involved a pair of horses running wide open after a train in a shoot-out scene. This was considered a stunt scene, therefore requiring a Screen Actor's Guild card, which are normally very hard to come by. Being at the right place at the right time, Brian became a union man! Thus a quick trip to Florida became a four-month adventure. Mind you, Brian did all this on crutches with a broken foot. During the filming, Brian had the opportunity to work with actors Jon Voight



Stacie Lynch with Castle's Felina at the 1986 New York State Fair.

and Ving Rhames. Not a bad opportunity and outcome for someone laid up with a broken foot.

I began showing with my family in 1980 at our first horse show, the Delaware County Fair in Walton, NY. My most memorable moment showing as a youth was winning the 14 and under Youth Showmanship class at the 1986 New York State Fair. I also won the Percheron Association's award for best Percheron Youth Showman.

I competed for many years in the Hunter/Jumper arena aboard my Anglo-Trakehner mare, Dou Lucy. I continued to compete wherever I could, whenever I could, with whoever would allow me to show their draft horses, no matter what the breed.

In 1994, my father called me from the Eastern States Sale and asked if I wanted to go into a partnership with him on a gelding. He brought home one of the top-selling geldings, a six year old from John Dryer named Prince. He was the first Percheron I actually had ownership of.

Throughout high school and until I left for college, I worked as a wrangler, with Belgians, for Steve Turk and the Rocking Horse Ranch in Highland, New York. I helped Steve as he began showing his horses at some of the horse shows in New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts.

In 1993, Brian and I were both endorsed by Johnny Kriz to attend the first Percheron Youth Hostel Clinic held at Cathy Zahm's in Huntington, IN. This was a very rewarding experience for both Brian and me. We met many other draft horse enthusiasts and learned a tremendous amount at that clinic. We found the instructors Cathy Zahm, Dr. Neuman, Phil Ferrell and Will Lent were more than willing to share their knowledge and experience. Several of our classmates are still friends of ours today.

It wasn't until 1997 that Brian and I became a regular couple. On Christmas Day 1998 Brian proposed marriage and needless to say I accepted.

We soon started buying and showing our own horses. As we sat in the stands at the 1999 National Western Stock Show in Denver we gave our Percheron business the name Utopia Percherons. (www.utopiapercherons.com).



Brian's first blue ribbon



Utopia Percherons



Brian's 16th birthday present from Johnny.

Our first Percheron purchased together as a couple was MCK's Royal Chief 278529, a three year old sired by Boggs Creek Royal 271929, out of Westridge Gracie 271373. We bought Gracie from Jim and Pat McKiernan of Richmond, MI at the 1999 Eastern States Draft Horse Sale in Columbus, Ohio.

We brought Chief home, broke him and prepared him for the upcoming show season. Chief showed a lot of promise as a hitch horse and was sold that same year to Hocking Valley Farm, Charles Bolton, Logan, Ohio to be used in the lead of their hitch. He remained in Hocking Valley's hitch until the hitch was dispersed in 2005.

When Timmy Kriz stopped showing his Percherons in 1999, Brian and I both assisted Richard and Gail Dolan of Maple Hill Farm, West Cornwall, CT, showing their Belgian hitch. At that time, we owned only a few halter and cart horses. We are now lucky enough to live only 15 minutes away from the Dolan family, which enables us to help each other whenever necessary. The Dolan's are a second family to us, despite their preference for the Belgian breed.

We were married in May of 2000. The horses played a large part in our Percheron theme wedding. Eight Percherons participated. We had a six horse hitch, which consisted of a combination of geldings owned by Timmy Kriz and my parents along with my horse Prince, a Vis-à-Vis and a traditional black Victorian Coach, which my father had restored that was once owned by the Franklin Roosevelt Family Estate. It was always a childhood dream of mine to have Diesel bring me to the church in the Victorian Coach, when I was to be married. My dream was fulfilled that day and after our



Brian's first Percheron, Ace.

wedding Diesel was retired. He lives out his days on my parents' farm.

After selling Chief in 2000, we decided we would purchase Chief's full sister, MCK'S Royal Princess Jeanine 283307 (aka PJ) in hopes of eventually breeding some hitch horses. After losing both PJ and her maiden foal in 2003 during foaling, we began to look for a new broodmare. Our new venture of a breeding program was not off to a good start.

In 2004, not long after losing PJ, it came to our attention that the mare Petals Surprise 269962, sired by M.G.'S Black Diamond 262536 and bred by the Robinson's, was looking for a new home. We jumped at the opportunity to own her. Surprise's most notable daughter is Pennwoods Mag-Nitude 286095. Surprise has had two fillies for us. In 2004, we tried to breed her to L.D. Prince Foley 281989 but she missed and remained open for that year. In 2005 we bred her again to L.D. Prince Foley and had our first filly out of Surprise, Utopia's Miss Independence 300246, (AKA Missy). Unfortunately we lost Missy to very quick and severe colic in the spring of 2008 as a two year old. Surprise's 2008 All-American Nominee, filly, Utopia's Cracker Jack Surprise 304361, by Lola's Cracker Jack 288641 has shown well for us this year as a Jr. Filly Foal. She was 1st at Addison County Fair, 1st at NYS Fair and 1st at Keystone.

In 2005, we had the opportunity to purchase Chief and PJ's dam, Westridge Gracie 271373 from Jim McKiernan. We bought her in foal to Boggs Creek Royal 271929 and after two unsuccessful years we finally had a stud colt, Utopia's Royal Victory 297571. It was truly a victory for us to have our first foal on the ground after so much misfortune. A photo of Gracie and Victory was published in the 2006 Percheron Calendar. Gracie has since had two more foals for us, Utopia's Texas Tornado 300247, by Mini Acres Rocky 294856, a son of Pleasant View King 275262 and Utopia's Anstett 304362, by F.C. Foster 298100. Gracie, now retired at age 18, has had 14 foals and we have owned 7 of them.

We purchased Solid Rock Bill 298200 privately from Gary W. Miller, Hartley, DE, in 2004. We showed Bill to Grand Champion Gelding at Keystone in 2005. He finished 6th in the 2005 All-American contest and was sold to Brygale Farms in 2006 to be used in the wheel of their hitch.

In early 2007, we had the opportunity to purchase F.C. Foster 298100, again from Gary W. Miller. We showed him as a two year-old Stallion in 2007 to 1st, Jr. & Gr. Ch. at Addison County Fair; 1st Res. Jr. & Res. Gr. Ch. at NY State Fair. He finished Reserve All-American two-year-old stallion for 2007. His original breeder Lloyd Farnham of Plainfield, VT, lost Foster's sire, Pennwoods Cabernet 288510 and decided to repurchase Foster. Foster is now co-owned by Lloyd Farnham and Pennwoods Percherons.

After several years of hitching, primarily carts and pairs, with our own horses, while hitching up to a four with my parents, we



Stacie driving for Ralph Wetherell winning the 1992 Ladies Cart at Topsfield Fair, Topsfield, Massachusetts.

decided to start showing our own six horse hitch. With the help of family and the good fortune of using my father's wagon and a few of his horses this venture was soon underway. It was the purchase of a lead horse, Lucasia Henry 292283, (aka Hank), from Leroy and Merlin Keim, Wilmot, Ohio, that put us on the right track to hitching a six horse hitch in 2005. Between Brian and me and my parents, we have purchased a total of 5 Percherons from the Keim brothers.

This past summer, we completed restoration of our own hitch wagon, which sits on a Studebaker gear that my father had purchased from Johnny Kriz many years ago. This makes it a special wagon to us with its own bit of history.

We try to attend 8 to 10 shows a year, most with the hitch and a few with just halter horses. This makes for busy summers, with Brian being a farrier, the customers' horses have to come first. It can make scheduling hectic at times, but always seems to have a way of working itself out.

It is important for us to share the knowledge we have gained over the years from many great horsemen in the industry, some of which are no longer with us. We were fortunate enough to have many teachers that shared their love of draft horses with us. Therefore, we feel that it is our duty to continue the promotion of draft horses no matter what the breed. This year we had four youth showmen who we took to the horse shows with us. We pride ourselves in



Pennwoods Derrick 274011, at the New York State Fair. Photo by Stan Phaneuf.



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The 1993 Percheron Education and Charitable Fund Youth Hostel, held at Cathy Zahm.

teaching the young because we know that they are the future of our industry and without them the draft horse industry cannot survive.

Brian and I have participated in teaching a few draft horse clinics. Ten years after we attended the Percheron Association's first Youth Hostel Clinic, we were flattered to be asked to be two of the instructors to teach at the 2003 PHAOA combined Adult and Youth Clinic held in Fredericktown, OH at the home of the PHAOA.

In the spring of 2008 we again taught a driving and showmanship clinic for the Percheron Horse Association of New York State. The clinics give us the chance to share our knowledge and we greatly enjoy meeting new people and helping them with a love we share with draft horses. We hope to do more clinics in the future.

Early in 2004, we had received an e-mail from Vladimir Grudzinski-Lowicz, a young man in Le Perche, France, whose family owns Percherons. His 18th birthday present from his parents was a plane ticket to come to America to see the "American Percheron". Vladimir stayed with us for a month during the summer. It was a terrific experience for him and for us as well. We took Vladimir to a few local horse shows and also took him to a show in Maine where Brian judged. He was able to compete in our hometown draft horse show in the youth cart class. We now have a standing invitation to visit him and his family in the

birthplace of the Percheron horse. We hope to be able to take Vladimir up on his offer some day in the future.

Our crew consists of mostly family, my father and my sister, Kim Castella, and many good friends. In 2008 we had what we called our "crew of kids", Sarah Palmer, Nyla Arsego, Cody Kriz, and Seth Davis. Sarah Palmer finished her youth career this season after showing with us for several years. Sarah made us very proud, completing this show season at the KILE by winning the Youth Showmanship 14-19, as well as, placing 2nd in both Youth Cart 14-19 and Youth Team 14-19. Nyla Arsego, our neighbor's 13-year-old daughter, we affectionately nicknamed "Barn Boss". Cody Kriz is Timmy Kriz's 16-year-old son. Seth Davis is another close friend's 16-year-old son. Seth won his first blue ribbon ever with us this season in the Youth Cart Class at Topsfield Fair in Topsfield, MA. Nyla, Sarah and Seth helped Brian all summer with working the horses and getting ready for horse shows. Without their help and dedication both in preparing for and attending the shows it would be impossible to do what we do.

To our delight, our two and a half year old daughter, Kaleigh, has already shown a great interest in the horses. She has her very own, 28 inch, black miniature horse, Carino. Carino has quickly become our new hitch mascot. Kaleigh enjoys riding and driving him. If you ask her which she prefers, riding or driving, she will almost always tell you she wants to drive. This past summer she was often found in the evenings riding with Brian on the work sled or practice wagon while he was exercising the horses. She has also been known to have her wheelbarrow and shovel handy to help clean the barn.

We have many people to thank for assisting us in getting to where we are today. Brian's mother, Dale, in particular, has been a large inspiration and support to us over the years. My father has also played a large part in our foundation and has always allowed us to use his prized possession, his hitch wagon, without ever thinking twice about it. My sister, Kim Castella, often times can be seen riding with Brian. To her dismay, many often confuse her

to be his wife. Kim is instrumental in keeping us on the road with the horses in the summer. We must also thank my mother, Karen, who more often than not stays home to take care of the chores while we are all out playing. Last but not least, our good friend, Bill Cario, is always there to lend us an extra hand, to trailer equipment or horses for us.

We often times ask ourselves what our lives would be without horses, and if the greatest ambassadors of the draft horse, the Kriz family, hadn't been part of our lives. So many friendships and opportunities have been created due to the common link we share with so many others. We all own horses, we all really enjoy them, and the camaraderie that comes along with them. We have owned about 50 Percherons in the last nine years and look forward to many more years of owning Percherons, and making many more friends.



Brian showing Timmy Kriz's geldings, Jake and Aaron at the 1995 Pennsylvania National Horse Show.



Adam Kloc showing Petals Surprise 269962. Photo by Stacie C. Lynch.



Brian showing Timmy Kriz's horse Jake to one of Jake's many wins in the Men's Cart at the 1993 Topsfield Fair, Topsfield, Massachusetts.



Brian and Stacie showing for Timmy Kriz 1997 Sussex County Horse Show. Photo by Reflections Photography.



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Stacie riding a gelding, Art.



F.C. FOSTER 298100, 2007 reserve All-American 2 yr. old stallion. Photo by Stacie C. Lynch.



Stacie showing Prince in Sussex, New Jersey. Photo by Reflections Photography.



UTOPIA'S CRACKER JACK SURPRISE 304361. Photo by Stacie C. Lynch.



SOLID ROCK BILL 298200, photo by Stacie C. Lynch.



Brian winning the Men's Cart at the 1999 Sussex County Horse Show with MCK's Royal Chief 278529. Photo by Reflections Photography.



The wedding of Brian and Stacie on May 6, 2000.



Brian showing for Timmy Kriz 1998 Sussex County Horse Show. Photo by Reflections Photography.



2008 Dutchess County Fair, Rhinebeck, New York. Photo by Stacie C. Lynch.

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Brian on the set of the movie *Rosewood* with one of the yoke of oxen.



Utopia Percherons four horse hitch at 2008 KILE, Brian accompanied by Kim Castella. Photo by Stacie C. Lynch.



From left to right, Frank Castella, Kim Castella, Cody Kriz, Hank, Brian Lynch, Stacie Lynch, Nyla Arsego, Preston, Sarah Palmer, Seth Davis and Stephen Rosko.



Brian Lynch with Vladimir Grudzinski-Lowicz.

Spring, 2009



Sarah Palmer driving Sonny and Stonehaven's Justin 292502 in Youth Pair accompanied by Kim Castella at the 2008 Big E. Photo by Bob Branam.



Seth Davis accompanied by Stacie Lynch driving Sunset Acres Thunderbolt 294080 in the Youth Cart at the 2008 Big E. Photo by Bob Branam.



Brian driving lead horse Preston in the Men's Cart at the 2006 Big E. Photo by Bob Branam.



Our new hitch wagons debut at the 2008 Addison County Fair, Addison, Vermont. Photo by Stacie C. Lynch.



The 2003 PHA Education and Charitable Fund combined Adult and Youth Clinic, held at Fredericktown, Ohio.



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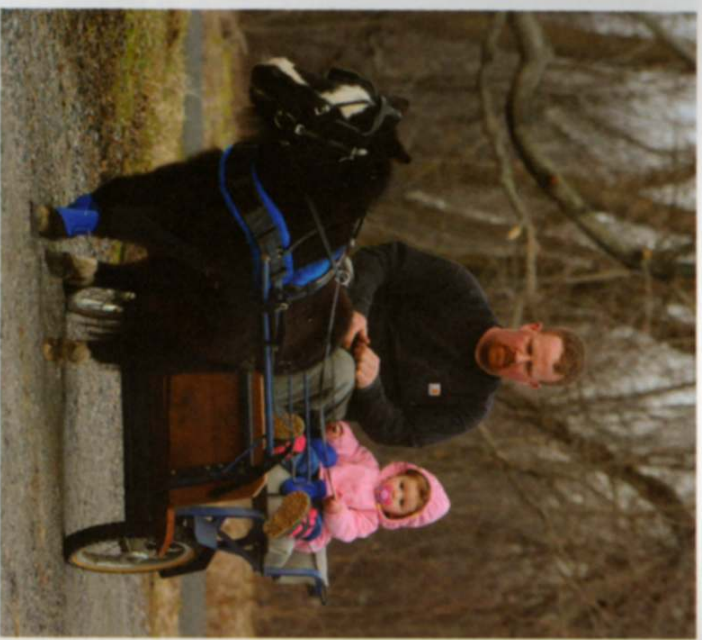
Cody Kriz accompanied by Stacie Lynch driving Smokey in the Youth Cart at the 2005 Big E. Photo by Bob Bramam.



Kim Castella winning the 2005 Big E Ladies Cart Championship with Smokey. Photo by Bob Bramam.



Nyla Arsego with one of our wheel horses Windmere's Conan 289333 winning the Youth Showmanship at Addison County Fair & Field Days. Photo by Stacie Lynch.



20-month-old Kaleigh taking Dad for a ride with her mini, Carino. Photo by Stacie C. Lynch.

AMERICAN HORSE SHOWS
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