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The Percheron Congress

by Nancy McCormick

On the morning of October 25 of this year, my family and I were eager and ready to venture onto the interstate which would take us all the way from Southeastern Ohio to Des Moines, Iowa. There were five of us who took this trip: my husband Mike and I, our oldest daughter



Photo courtesy of Mary Dunaway.

Jennifer and her husband Brad, our granddaughter Tallia along with Mike's four month old pup, May. We were on our way to the 2010 World Percheron Congress which is held every three years, each time in a different location.

Our travel entailed a long ride in the radiant sunshine of autumn, viewing lovely fall colored trees which smiled at us all along the way. Fields of freshly harvested corn and soy beans are ready for the cold of the winter months to cover them with blankets of snow. I sat in silence for most of the 14 hours as we drove across the harvested fields of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Iowa. I was

sick with a cold or allergies; I'm not sure which. But even though I did not feel well, I knew we were headed for a glorious celebration and I was content within my spirit. The warmth within the pickup truck was wonderful compared to the blustery blast of the cold outside.

The World Percheron Congress is a draft horse event that encourages Percheron draft horse owners and teamsters to come together to compete. The Iowa State Fairgrounds was our destination this year. My husband, Mike and I have Percheron farm draft horses and Mike loves to compete in plowing competitions. This event mostly entertains the fancy harness and hitch horses, but there is always a sizable contingency of the work horses and teamsters ready and willing to show folks how it was done before the tractor came into being. We took a team of black Percherons, Leon and Erma, full brother and sister, raised and trained on our farm. We left New Vienna, Ohio, at 5:30 a.m. on Monday morning and arrived at the State Fair grounds around 7:30 p.m. I can honestly say we were all glad when our feet hit the pavement of the beautifully groomed fair grounds of Des Moines, and we thanked God for safe travel.



Photo courtesy of Jennifer McCormick.

Mike loves to compete with his horses because he enjoys the willingness these animals display when they work together as a team. He loves to feel the energy that comes through them as they toil together to complete the task set before them. He states, "When horses work together it is pure joy." It reminds him of his childhood farming community, a group of people who shared in the daily responsibilities of planting and reaping a harvest. They not only joined together in the difficult tasks of farm life, they realized they needed the friendly fellowship and joy that goes along in building community. That early upbringing re-

mains in Mike as a way to share in the responsibilities and joys of working together as community. What he learned and observed as a child was invaluable and plays a big part in how he views his role as a pastor. The summer and spring brought hard work on the farm, but along with it came the county fair, ice cream socials, swimming and fishing. The fall and winter months were spent harvesting, canning, maintaining machinery and tending to livestock. But along with those tasks came football, soup suppers, neighborhood card parties and church socials. It was a time of people building relationships while they worked and played and this built community.

At the Percheron Congress, we were back home where my husband's roots began. There were 30 family members and old friends who came to visit us while we celebrated with our farming draft animals. Later, as pictures of the event were shared over the internet, one of our friends noted that Mike had a radiant glow about him. I believe she was correct. When we are doing things we love most, we truly are connected to the Divine Spark of God within us. This can be with our hobbies, volunteering, or on our jobs in the work place. When we are connected in our own unique way and we are using our special gifts, WE SHINE. My husband is an example of Pure Glory when he works with his horses, and people love to be around him just to be able to share in the wonder. This event was a reminder to me that the Sacred is all around us. It was a reminder that community becomes a way to encourage one another as we discover and enjoy one another's gifts – it truly was communion – a little bit of heaven on earth. For this we are grateful.



Mike McCormick and daughter Jennifer along with Leon and Erma. Photo courtesy of Mary Dunaway.



Nancy McCormick lives in Southeastern Ohio on a draft horse farm with her husband Mike. It is their desire that this farm bring Hope, Peace and Love to all who enter. Nancy is a Quaker Pastor who is released to do ministry as a GOOD NEWS Associate. Nancy loves to minister to the elderly through prayer, presence and song; she listens to their life stories and sings to them and with them. Nancy is the author of *God is All Around*, a collection of stories and songs from her ministry.

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