

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE: LOIS MCDERMAND



It gives me great pleasure to announce that Lois McDermand is the 2008 inductee into the Mississippi Valley Morgan Horse Club Hall of Fame. I have worked with Lois for the past four years on the board of the Brunk Morgan Horse Museum and have developed a great respect for her leadership abilities, problem solving skills, work ethic, commitment to the Morgan Horse, and especially, her warm and caring heart. Lois was born on May 1, 1942 in the Cotton Hill farm, lime stone and brick house which was built around 1828 by George Brunk for his family and, later inhabited by son, J. C. Brunk, and grandson, Roy Brunk, and their families. As a young girl growing up on Cotton Hill farm, Lois's hero was her grandpa, Roy. She literally followed her grandpa around the farm beginning between 4:30 and 5 in the morning going to the barn to feed the horses. She attended her first National Morgan Horse Show with her grandpa, who was a Director of the Morgan Horse Club, in White Rover, Vermont in 1948, at age six. She sat on the ground by the rail watching the people she had read about in the Morgan Horse Magazine and the most beautiful horses in the world. At the Director's meeting she sat in a corner, on

the floor listening to the business meeting. Thereafter she accompanied her grandpa each year to the National Morgan Horse Show. Lois' first horse ride was a disaster. She borrowed her friend, Pat Down's gelding, Rusty, to ride to Helen and Loy Greenwald's farm. Rusty had only two speeds, eating grass and running, and so the two of them took off at a dead run for the Greenwalds where Rusty ran under a clothes line and Lois was dehorned. Fortunately, no one was home and being a true horsewoman, Lois got back on and rode home, telling no one. Lois also drove. In the early 1950s she would drive grandpa Roy's team to the field and then walk home. Around noon she would walk back to the field and drive the team home. After dinner she would drive the team back to the field and again walk home. That evening she would walk back to the field and drive the team home for a total of approximately four walked miles. After having mastered riding and driving she was promoted to cowgirl. The cattle had gotten out and grandpa gave Lois Black Dee, an old mare who was a little "hot," to go and find the cows. Lois was instructed upon finding the cows to walk Black Dee to the far side of the cows and let Black Dee do the rest. Lois and Black Dee got the cows home in a matter of two hours. Lois's introduction to the show ring occurred in 1951 when her Aunt Helen Greenwald asked Lois to ride Flyhawk in a children's western pleasure class at a show in Monee, IL. Lois had so much fun that it, to quote Lois, "ruined my life as I decided that I wanted to show Morgan Horses." Lois's father's military career brought an end to the Cotton Hill life for four years; Lois and her family moved to Germany. Upon returning to the States they lived in six different states but Lois always managed to come home to Cotton Hill for the summers. Lois graduated from high school in 1960 and entered nursing school in Springfield. But like many a horsey girl her heart could not be given to any pursuit but horses. She dropped out of school and opened a horse training operation on the fairgrounds making about \$600 a month, not bad for 1960. However, training other people's horses, though more satisfying than nursing school, was not the answer either. Lois wanted to train her own horses. And so she closed her training barn, fall of 1960. That fall grandpa came to the rescue by giving Lois her first registered Morgan, Aldebaron. Aldebaron was a breeding stallion siring some 60 foals, show horse, the trail horse of Bob, Lois's husband, and lesson horse for Lois's kids. In 1961 grandpa Roy gave Lois a registered mare, Faberge. Unfortunately, adulthood finally caught up to Lois and she got a real job, went back to school to become a registered nurse, married her best friend, Bob McDermand, and had two kids, Betsy and John. While she kept her day job she continued her involvement with Morgan horses. Betsy told me that when she was only six months old Lois took her on the Mississippi Valley Morgan Horse Club trail ride in an improvised front pack. While working horses Lois would put Betsy in the manger of the stall of a two year old stud colt. (Fortunately, the statute of limitations has run out and DCSF can no longer take Betsy away.) At present, Lois has four Morgans: Merriehill Illusion (Lucy), 32, Betsy's retired show horse, Notahoby Ms. Tibbs (Missy), 22, a brood mare and trail horse, Notahoby Impromptu (Ethel), hunt and lead line show horse and trail horse, and CHF Spirit of Excellence (Louie), harness and English Pleasure show horse and the 2008 Illinois State Fair Stallions and Geldings in hand champion. Lois, you have contributed much to the Morgan Horse community through your breeding program, continuing the excellent Brunk blood lines; your involvement in the Brunk Morgan Horse Museum, and your contributions to the Mississippi Valley Morgan Horse Club serving as president in 1972. Beyond the Morgan horse community you have enriched the lives of all you have touched with your optimism, joy in living, warmth, and kindness. I can think of no one who more deserves being a member of the Mississippi Valley Morgan Horse Club Hall of Fame.