

## GENTLE GIANTS

## A passion for Percherons



Tim Egan driving All-American Vic.



Jack Egan with Larissa and her filly

## In four hectic years, Ann & Tim Egan have built their Connecticut farm into a home for All American champions.

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*Mid-Atlantic Horse*

According to Ann Egan, "New England is the red-headed stepchild" of the national draft horse breed show community. And that's when there's not four feet of snow on the ground as there has been in much of the region for the past few months.

Which makes it all the more special to see a New England-based horse among the Percheron 2010 All American champions, an elite honors roll dominated by such well-known national breeders as Windermere and Pennwoods, both of Centre County, Pa., and other big names in the Midwest and Canada.

But in the current crop, the reigning All American yearling mare is Mill Creek Valley's Cameo, now resident at Ann and Tim Egan's North Point Farm, a small Percheron breeding farm perched atop Prospect Mountain in Litchfield, Conn.

Getting Cameo to North Point Farm was quite a challenge, not just in mileage but in the determined persistence of Tim Egan's negotiations with the breeders.

As Ann Egan described the process in a telephone interview last month, she and her husband were at a horse show in Ohio

in August last year when a Percheron filly caught Tim's eye.

"I like that horse, Jerry. Is she for sale?" Tim asked the breeder, Jerry Chandler of Mill Creek Valley Percherons in Fillmore, Ind.

"No!" The reply was decisive.

But Tim Egan kept at it when he went to a show in Indiana, Cameo's home state.

But Chandler's reply was the same: "No!" Again, at another Ohio show, Tim Egan made another pitch.

And once more it was, "No!"

"Tim came back from Ohio and said to me, 'I want to buy that mare,'" said Ann Egan.

Finally, in October last year after more pleading and persistence, Jerry Chandler, who co-owns Mill Creek Valley Percherons with his son, David, relented.

Cameo changed hands at a price that Tim Egan has yet to disclose to anyone, least of all to his wife who is responsible for keeping the books on the farm.

"Tim's got an eye for a horse," said Ann, and that has been a critical asset as they build their fledgling Percheron breeding farm.

Now the Egans have an All American mare in their North Point Farm stable that was founded only four years ago. They also have several other All American nominees and qualifiers, under the complicated system that The Draft Horse Journal devised for judging the much sought-after annual titles.

The Egans' passion for Percherons began in 2006 when they were at a show in West Springfield, Mass., the Eastern States Exposition, better known as the "Big E."

Although both Egans had grown up around horses - Tim was mostly a Bridgewater, Conn. cattleman, and Ann used to ride hunters and jumpers in Pennsylvania - at the time they were at the Big E, they had no horses and Ann Egan hadn't ridden for 20 years.

As they watched the draft horses perform they fell in love with the gentle giants, and a life-changing moment happened. Their choice of Percherons was based on the advice of a friend who, Ann Egan said, "warned" them against the showy Clydesdales that Budweiser made so famous. (The constant bantering that goes on between the partisans on each side of the breed divide is legendary. At a top draft horse show, this reporter once overheard a Percheron breeder mutter that only chickens have feathers - a reference to the Clydesdales' distinctive feathered fetlocks, and presumably to his opinion of their courage.)

The Egans' first purchases were made at a sale in Ohio, from which they came home with eight cows and two 6-year-old Percheron geldings.

"Those geldings taught us everything we know about draft horses. They were so patient with us," said Ann Egan about her first Percherons who tower above her 5-foot-6-inch height. The tallest was Jack who stood 18.2 at the withers. That's when he was not wearing shoes and pads which would lift him another inch or so.

The geldings have since moved on to new homes in Vermont and the Egans now only have breeding stock at North Point Farm - six broodmares, two 2-year-olds, one 3-year-old, a new foal and three more foals expected soon.

"We work hard," said Ann Egan. "Tim gets up early and does the stalls," the first of three muck-outs a day. In addition to looking after the horses, he also runs a building restoration business and a cattle farm. She keeps the books, handles the marketing end of the operation and drives the horses, among other things.

Their 9-year-old son Jack is not so sure he shares his parents love for Percherons. He teases them that he prefers Clydesdales, which is like waving a red flag at a Percheron breeder.

At the time of this interview last month, the weather was still frigid and the snow lay deep on the turnout fields at North Point Farm. The Egans' first foal was 10 days old and they were expecting two more in March and one in April. The hours are long and at this time of year they have to keep a 24-hour vigil on the mares and foals.

Once the foals are up and prancing around their paddocks and the snow begins to melt, the Egans have to start preparing for the spring show season - like cleaning off the mud from their show horses and summoning the blacksmith to put the pads and shoes back on at \$300 a horse.

Any regrets?

"Yes, every day," she said with a laugh, adding that just the day before, as she worked in the yard knee-deep in snow, her hands and feet frozen, she had asked her husband to remind her why she loved their way of life so much.

Ann Egan grew up in York, Pa. riding show hunters and jumpers and was at college with the Cazenovia, N.Y.-based Olympic show jumping star Beezie Madden.

"When I watch the horse shows on television and see Beezie winning another Rolex watch and a Mercedes" Ann Egan said, she sometimes wonders about the ways things turned out.

But when she's among her Percherons and driving them, she realizes how much "I love this life."

"I wouldn't trade it in for anything," she said.

Info: [www.northpointfarm.com](http://www.northpointfarm.com)



All American Cameo with Ann Egan.



Mill Creek Valley's Cameo at the Percheron World Congress show in October 2010.