

# Bird and June Are Easy To Spot Pulling an Island Carriage

Suddenly, Memorial Day weekend seems like a lifetime ago, especially when living in the midst of July on Mackinac Island. Back in May, one of the things that caught my eye was a new hourly team in service downtown. It's nice to know that the same pair of horses and driver are busy these days as well. While the horses may have been somewhat unfamiliar with their handler, he, however, is quite a seasoned horseman, who comes from a line of Islanders who grew up with the trade.

Rob Mclean holds the reins of Bird and June, two distinctive black and white horses that pull an hourly rental carriage. The team is owned by Dale Gough and they're registered Spotted Draft horses. The two are coming on 6 and 7 years of age. They were introduced on the taxi line in late summer of 2004. For years, Rob drove a pair of grays that he liked very much, but he readily became attached to this pair. When I saw Rob in May, he was enthusiastic and proud of them. He still seems that way three months later.

Rob has grown up on Mackinac. Once upon a time, I was his substitute teacher. His family, the Mcleans and Browns (brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, and uncles), have all had a heritage with horses here. All of them know a lot about these animals and this Island. Members of his family have worked for the stables, had horses of their own, and have been good riders. Rob also happens to be more than capable of taking care of a loose shoe or a broken harness.

Actually, Bird and June look like many of the sturdy all-purpose spotted horses I've seen in Ireland, pulling a traveler's cart, under saddle for trekking, or pulling a wagon of dried turf from the fields. His two horses are powerful but not huge, in comparison to the Belgians or Percherons seen under harness on the Island. This pair stands a little more than 15 hands high. Both of them have a distinctive white blaze running down their black faces and ears. Their legs are white, and black predominates over their shoulders and rumps. They make a nice presentation and are certainly easy to spot in town or in the line (Doud's Corner and Marquette Park) each morning.

Rob seems to really enjoy these two. He proudly handed me several photographs the other day, showing what Bird and June enjoy doing after they're done showing people around all day. The two love to clown around and roll. Even out of harness, they seem to move together as a team. When the two horses are worked into a trot, it's unique to see the union of their colors side by side. They make a nice addition to the Island, and they're the only pinto team regularly working here these days.

I hope that many visitors and regular readers of the *Town Crier* have seen the



**Bird and June stand about 15 hands high and have a distinctive white blaze running down their black faces and ears.**

signs around town for the Mackinac Island Horsemen's Association Tack Sale. This will be Saturday, July 23, at Chamber's Corner. Saddles, bridles, halters, you name it; if it's horse related, it could be there. All proceeds go to support the summer riding programs on Mackinac.

Monday, July 25, at 6:30 p.m., there will be a free lecture by Carol Ley, who is a certified Centered Riding Instructor. She was here last year and gave an interesting program. Her talk will be hosted by Anne Levy, on the East Bluff at Craig Mawr Cottage. Ms. Ley will follow Tuesday, July 26, with a series of

instruction for riders at Turtle Park. There is no charge for participants, but sign-up is mandatory. Call 847-3835 for more details.

And lastly this week, hats off to the barn crews and the drivers at Mackinac Island Carriage Tours, Arrowhead Livery, and all of those at Gough's, who have taken extra effort and time for their horses in this long stretch of extreme heat we've been experiencing on Mackinac. Some have been at work around the clock. Few people realize the number of dedicated people who have been working extra hard in the background for the show of



**Bird and June enjoy their relaxation time after showing people around the Island all day.**

horses you see daily. Candice Dunnigan is an active member of the American Equestrian Association, the Waterloo Hunt, and the Mackinac Island Horsemen's Association. Seasonally she resides at Donnybrook and Easterly Cottage.



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