



BRIAN BEAN DRAFT HORSE MAN

If you're a Fryeburg Fair draft horse fanatic, and who isn't, then you've heard of

the Bean family of western Maine. Brian Bean is the family patriarch and the voice emceeing the draft horse shows held Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday mornings starting at 8:30 a.m. at the Grandstand. There's nothing better than arriving early at the fairgrounds on a chilly fall morning, picking up some hot coffee and a breakfast sandwich and beholding the beauty of these draft horses and the mastery of their handlers. The Fair's draft horse shows include both horses and ponies. They are run through their paces in classes of two, four, four abreast, six and the spectacular eight-horse hitch, always the last show on Thursday. Additional classes include cart hitches - one horse/pony on a two-wheel cart; the North American Classic Cart Series - for both men and women who are vying for national points; and the unicorn hitch - two horses/ponies abreast with one in front.



Brian Bean, 75, of South Paris, Maine, the emcee of Fryeburg Fair's Draft Horse Shows

A lifelong horseman, Brian Bean, 75, has

been coming to Fryeburg Fair since 1956. "Back in my day, going to Fryeburg was a big deal in travel. It wasn't right around the corner like it is today!" Bean, 75, lives in West Paris, Maine with his second wife, Darlene. They live in the house Brian Bean grew up in, the eldest son of Robert and Pauline (Thurlow) Bean. Bean has one brother, Doug Bean, six years younger who lives next door. Doug owns horses and is known for his oxen and steers.

Bean first showed dairy cattle at Fryeburg Fair at the age of 8. He showed steers and oxen as did every



The Bean Family at their South Paris home - Doug and Brian with their parents, Pauline (Thurlow Bean) & Robert Bean - late 50's

member of his family starting in the 50's. As a young 4H member, Bean also entered prize vegetables and raised a foundation calf for a year before bringing it back the next year for auction. He participated in the Fair's competitive and fun opening Sunday Horse Show in the 60's. Bean is very proud to have been brought up in 4-H and the FFA (Future Farmers of America). He went on to become a 4H leader as a young adult. "I've lived my life by the merits and standards I learned in these clubs."

"On the other hand, I remember well going to Fryeburg and staying overnight. That was a big deal! There was a girls dorm back then but the boys slept in lofts in the cattle barns. If it was really cold, you jumped down and slept with the cattle! Yes I remember getting caught in places that I shouldn't have been. But boy those were great times."

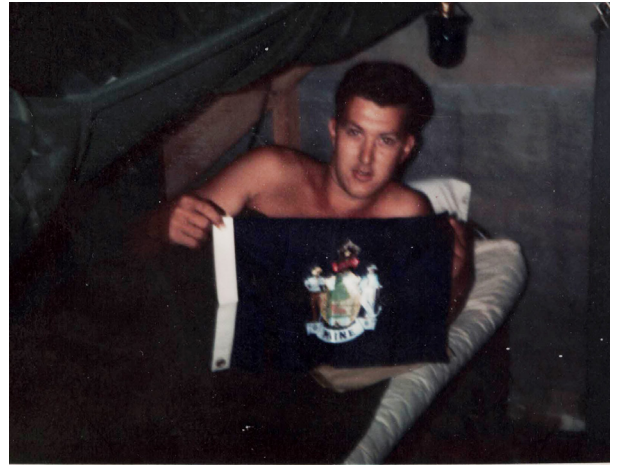
Bean's Grandfather Thurlow had a milking farm in S. Woodstock, and bought, raised, and sold calves all over Maine. Bean says, "He lost an eye after being kicked



Brian Bean - 1966 graduate from Oxford Hills High School

by a cow and was unable to drive. As soon as I got my license I drove him all over to haul cattle. This was a big learning experience for me. That's how I met so many farmers, old-timers back then, most have passed now. All great people. That's where I got my early education!"

Bean graduated from Oxford Hills High School in 1966 where he played baseball, "My other great love!" He went on to attend the University of Maine at Orono for two years majoring in, of course, agriculture. "I wanted to be a veterinarian. Cornell was the closest school for vet sciences. And then I got drafted." Bean went into the U.S. Army and shipped out to Vietnam in 1968. He served three years. Bean says, "I didn't want to go, but I had to. I was glad I went when I got home. I had some buddies that didn't make it home."



Brian Bean in Vietnam in 1969 showing off his Maine banner

When Bean returned from overseas, he settled in Fort Carson, Colorado. He married Bethany Andrews of Bethel, ME, and son, Lance, was born in 1971.



Brian & Darlene Bean at Fryeburg Fair

"I loved Colorado. I had joined a rodeo club and had a great job. But the call back to Maine was too great. Lance was 10 days old when we moved back."

Along with his regular farming, Bean would spend the next 24 years working in the retail parts businesses of John Deere dealerships, two car dealerships and two Bragg stores. "I like to go into businesses that were a mess and help straighten them out. Once that was done, I was on to the next challenge."

In 1995, Brian Bean found his true calling when a friend suggested he apply as a teacher at Oxford Hills Technical School. Teaching had always interested him and he had much experience with youth leadership. He knew the school community very well. He retired in 2018 after 23 years as a forestry teacher, baseball coach and high school game announcer for Oxford Hills. He continues to help out as a bus driver.

a class on the war, well each of his students had to interview someone who had served in Vietnam and he would tell them to go see Mr. Bean. It was helpful to them, and helpful to me. Over the years, I've had many former students go into the military. My wife and I drive to Bangor to meet them when they return home."

During Bean's teaching days, he ended up talked extensively with students about his Vietnam days. "Thanks to a fellow teacher who started



Brian Bean at Fryeburg Fair with his grandchildren Brayden & Anna - circa 2002

Bean is excessively proud of his family. Brian and Darlene Bean have five children, **Lance Bean**, 52, (wife, Jen, two children-Brayden Bean, 24 with one child, Beckett, 2; & Jaylee Bean, 21), **Lori Bean**, 49 (five children Anna Winslow Belval, 27, husband, Cody, with three children-twins Collins & Emree Belval, 7, and Keegan Belval 4; Tasker Winslow, 22, with one child Everton Winslow, 2; Tanner Bickford, 18, Haley Ross, 28 and Connor Bickford, 24), **Shane Cote** (dec.), **Shannon Avery**, 49 (husband, Scott, two children-Tyler Avery, 25 & Payson Avery, 22) and **Kacie Hussey**, 43 (one child Finn Maldovan, 12).



Brian Bean with his son Lance on the reins, Fryeburg Fair 2006

the top champion six-horse drivers & hitches in the U.S. Bean says, "They take the top six teams nationwide and we all go to Springfield (Big E, Massachusetts) for three days. Last year we took 3rd in the top six."

The draft horse shows at Fryeburg began in the 70's. So what is the point of the draft horse show? Bean says, "Well it's to show off your horses of course! It's really something from a bygone era. All our wagons are replicas of delivery wagons. Just like the Budweiser Clydesdales, they are delivery horses. And you want to go in a hurry, that was a business, wanted them up on the bit and wanted them to move along. That's what we're showing. The judge is looking for uniformity. They want to see the bigger horses on the wheels as they start, stop and turn the wagon. They want to see the swing team in the middle. They are a little bigger than leaders but a little smaller than wheelers because they've got to stay ahead of them. They help. The leaders are usually the smallest, most fearless, most athletic. They can't be scared. They've got to want to be out there and be in the front. The positions the horses are in is because they've been trained but it's what they have in their heart and head. You can't make a leader if he doesn't want to stay out there. It's like trying to make a kid a hunter, but he really doesn't like hunting, he just likes being in the woods. He's not going to

The family business owned by Bean, son-Lance, daughter-Lori and granddaughter-Anna is called Bean Family Drafts.

"Lance, third generation Bean horseman, is really the boss," Bean says. "He is a very accomplished and superior driver. He started riding when he was two years old on a little black pony. He goes to fairs and expositions all over the country now driving other teams. Lori is a great driver as is her daughter Anna who is exceptionally skilled. Both Lori and Anna are in demand to drive for other teams. Anna and Cody and all three of their kids show, pull, train and sell horses. Lori hasn't shown as much lately due to knee surgeries. Lori's boyfriend, Billy Powell, owns four pair of pulling steers so he is involved too. He may be an ox man now but we're turning him into a horse man! He is a great help. Kacie is really good with design and technology. She has done our logos, signs and t-shirts. Shannon does great photography and along with her mother, videotapes lots of our competitions so we can watch later and see how we did. We all help each other and I'm fortunate to say that each generation has supported the next."

The Beans have boxes of ribbons, prizes and trophies from winning and placing in shows all over New England. Most recently Lance won big at Windsor Fair with his four and six-horse hitch and in several other categories. Jaylee took the trophy for Grand Champion Gelding with Bean's horse, Tom, and won 2nd in the ladies cart.

The Bean's biggest title is being selected by the Halflinger and Hitch Pony Championship Series (www.hhpcs.com) as one of



Lance Bean & his father Brian, Fryeburg Fair 2015

be a great one cause it's not in his heart. Each horse has a position they're qualified for. You can swap some around and you do it by working them at home. You can make a leader and that's a lot of work but he has to have the drive within him to stay out there."

As a past judge at the draft horse shows, Bean says, "When you look at a six-hitch sideways you want to see three horses and when you look right down the middle you want to see two sets of ears. The #1 critical thing during all these shows is safety. As the emcee I have to see



Brian & Darlene Bean on the 25th anniversary 2023

everyone does their best and gives it everything they've got. And we love this with all our hearts."

Brian Bean will be in the ring all three days of the draft horse shows. He welcomes people to come up and ask questions. "The first thing I do in the morning is walk the ring. First I want to check the ring and also say hello to everyone on the side. The same people have been there since I can remember. One couple comes from China. They love the Clydesdale ponies and they camp at the fair for a few days."

When asked what his favorite class is, Bean says, "I like the six and of course the eight horse hitch. They're big and you can't see this class everywhere. We've got some great hitches. These folks compete with guys out west and when it happens at Fryeburg, we've got the greatest show on earth!"

Written by Rachel Andrews Damon



Brayden Bean & his grandfather Brian Bean, Fryeburg Fair 2016

everything, the animals, the drivers, the crew, the traffic, the audience, to make sure everyone is safe. When the animals are stopped I can talk. From the time the teams hit the gate, they're listening for direction."

"My son and I have showed against each other, both cattle and horses. We always say it's fun if one of us wins! We're actually happy for anybody who wins. Lance is always the first one to congratulate others, and I'm the second. In these competitions, it's the judge's opinion. Ev-



*Brian Bean with his three-year old draft horse, Tom
Photo by Rachel Andrews Damon*