

THE CARTING CORNER

PARADE CARTING

BY BRENT SPOELSTRA

Putting your Berner to work doesn't have to be all work and no play. I'm fairly new to the Berner world. Five years ago at a dog show at the Grand Rapids Deltaplex I saw the breed for the first time. After doing a bit of research on the Internet and locating a breeder, I found "Moby." He's such a great representative of the breed. I enjoy sharing him with the public who, without fail, will ooh and aah when they see him. Having him pull a cart in parades is a fun way for maximum exposure of the breed and its heritage as working dogs.

Since I don't enter Moby in drafting competitions, the restrictions on size and weight of the cart can be relaxed. I found a website showing a young milkmaid holding a dog hitched to a milk cart. I drew plans for a similar rig then built one in my shop. I can wheel the assembled cart into my mini-van, and there is room left for Moby!



Pulling the mobile water station at the Wag-n-Walkathon in Grand Rapids

When Moby was nearly 2 years old I introduced him to carting. The training rig was a piece of 2 x 6 lumber with lawnmower wheels and shafts of PVC conduit. He was a natural. While I worry he may someday be done in by his fearlessness of noisy distractions, this trait was an asset. The little training cart made a lot of noise, but he took it in stride, and it was an easy jump to the real thing. When harnessed, he shifts into working mode and acts more like an ox than a dog.

For three years we have been part of the HMBMDC entry in the Howell Festival of Lights parade. It's a one-mile Christmas parade held in the evening with the idea of lighting your dog or your float. Moby's lighted cart has provided a ride for an inflated "Frosty The Snowman," but Frosty had a hard time staying onboard in the wind. We gave up on that theme and now pull a load of presents.

In the last four years we've participated in the local Ada Christmas parade, an easy half-mile walk. Again Moby pulls a load of gifts. The past two years



The Big Rig

we've been placed between groups of candy-throwing Girl Scout Brownies. Moby doesn't try to pick up the pieces, but I'm not giving the kids high marks for their aim. By the way, we always try to stay ahead of the horses!

We've entered the Holland Tulip Time Parade for the past three years. It's a two and one-half mile walk. Entry into the parade is by invitation, and the entry must have a Dutch or tulip theme and costume. Twice Moby has pulled a cart full of tulips, but this past year I found a couple milk cans and stuck a pot of tulips in the top of each. It's a bit dicey to know if we'll be able to walk the parade, because it's held in May and the weather may be too warm. Twice it's been rainy and in the forties at staging time, but three hours later sunny and in the sixties or seventies. I don't consider entering the Memorial Day and Fourth of July parades because of the potential heat problems.

We enjoy meeting the crowd before the parade. Many times we've been asked to have his picture taken with a spectator. Then when Moby passes by during the parade, we often hear his name being called, people cheering for a dog having fun at work!



Milkmaids Tena and Janelle 2006