

CAROLYN BAY

How Far Do You Want Me To Go?

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Carolyn Bay and Tony

She was raised on the 4000 acre Cornwell Ranch, which is just west of the Gladwin County line. How big is that – well, staying with traditional (non-metric) math, it's 6.25 square miles! So if you remember the old TV show Bonanza, she lived on the Ponderosa of mid-Michigan.

Now she lives with her husband Walter Bay on a "tiny" spread (50 acres) called T-Bill Stables (named after their first racehorse) located in the middle of the big ranch. The north branch of the Tobacco River runs right past their home so they have their own personal "A River Runs Through It" movie setting.

It would be easy to think Carolyn Bay was born with a silver spoon in her mouth. You would be wrong. She considers herself blessed.

Her grandfather was in the meatpacking business starting with Swift & Company in Chicago. After moving to Saginaw he purchased the land that would become Cornwell Ranch. It also became an excellent stopover

for the horse-drawn meat wagons heading north as well as a good spot to raise product, i.e. cattle.

Her father was a credit short of becoming a doctor but wanted to learn the ranching business. Carolyn admits her mother was a confirmed tomboy and she also admits the acorn didn't fall far from the tree. They both graduated from Michigan State University, the only women in their class studying Animal Husbandry.

She continued blazing a pioneer trail by becoming the first woman in Michigan to be a 4-H Extension Agent for an entire County and then went on to get a Masters degree in Guidance and Counseling.

Her final stop, in a long distinguished Extension Service career was Gladwin County where she served as Director. Along the way she has served as President of the Gladwin Rotary Club, a Trustee for Mid-Michigan Community College, a Director on the MMCC Foundation and somehow managed to become an expert on cattle and virtually every breed of horse imaginable.

Although she claims to be retired, Carolyn serves on countless committees across the country, follows her performance and racing horses, operates an extensive equine breeding operation and assists her two brothers in the management of Cornwell Ranch. And lest I forget, she is a devoted wife of 47 years and she relishes performing her most important task, which is spending quality time serving as Grandma.

ROR: You've had a long-standing relationship with horses but tell me about your first horse.

Carolyn: We've got a picture of me at my Grandmother's garden party sitting on Clinker, a palomino paint but my first horse really was called Billy Horse, a paint horse that came from Texas. We've got a picture of me rounding up cattle on him at age five. Of course Billy dumped me quite a few times but I learned a valuable life lesson at a young age: you really should get right back up in the saddle.

ROR: Why do humans seem to get along with horses so well, especially females?

Carolyn: I actually studied that connection and I'm a strong advocate of developing that connection. Horses share with humans many similar personality traits. They return affection; if you treat them right they will

respond and they have a child-like sense of honesty. As far as kids are concerned, it's a good way to tire them out in a positive way.

ROR: I understand there's been a foxhunt spotted on occasion at Cornwell Ranch. A rather unusual sight for mid-Michigan, don't you think?

Carolyn: It's a great event. We've hosted the Metamora Hunt Club for several years. They have the Huntsman, the red coats, a huge pack of dogs; they are so well trained. I'm the guide on a quarter horse riding with a western saddle in the back (laughing). Then we have the bagpipes and a big breakfast. It's really a lot of fun and yes, quite a sight for this area.

ROR: What was it like being the Extension Director in Gladwin County?

Carolyn: Of course I've been involved in 4-H since I was a kid with cattle and horses but I started as the 4-H agent in Midland County and was there for 13 years. I served in various capacities for most of the surrounding counties and when I came to Gladwin it was a very rewarding experience. Gladwin County is a sleeping giant – the people are gentle but powerful. They're innovative and not afraid to try new things, working as a team. Again, I felt blessed to get that assignment.

ROR: You are a Trustee of Mid-Michigan Community College and a Director of their foundation. In your opinion what are the priority issues facing MMCC?

Carolyn: We're in the process of getting a new President, which is always challenging. Another big challenge is working to get an equal share of state funding. For some reason there's an inequity. We have to start thinking of more creative ways of funding the school. Mid has been fortunate to experience increased enrollments, which as resulted in increased tuition receipts. Determining the appropriate rate of tuition is always difficult, particularly because of the uncertainty of State appropriations. This area is so lucky because MMCC is meeting many of the needs around here but most especially in nursing and in the health area.

ROR: What was one of the highlights serving as Gladwin Rotary Club President?

Carolyn: I was fortunate to serve during Rotary's centennial year. Boy, what a hectic year that was. A highlight was attending the national meetings in Chicago and I put Gladwin's letter into the time capsule they created. Rotary is such a great organization and our club is such a hard working team. But I am glad I can enjoy someone else being President now (laughing).

ROR: What's the latest passion that motivates you?

Carolyn: My grandkids...I want them to understand the traditions and history of their family background so they can pass it on to their children. We always share stories at family gatherings. For example, one of the stories I told them was about Henry Ford, who was a friend of my grandfather's. While visiting Cornwell Ranch, Ford went to shake hands with one of the farm managers. The manager hesitated because his hands were dirty. I'm not old enough to have witnessed this, mind you (laughing). But Mr. Ford supposedly said, "I'm proud to shake the hand of a man who got his hands dirty working." Our grandkids work the cattle roundups just like their parents and my brothers and I did.

ROR: What don't people know about Carolyn Bay?

Carolyn: That's the problem – I'd be a very poor poker player – you can read me like an open book. What you see is what you get. I'm a positive – move forward person. My mother left me two valuable lessons. One was to always look to the future with a positive attitude. The other was after she lost her leg below the knee at around age 90. After she got a prosthesis for her leg, the doctor asked her if she wanted to stand to see

how it fit. She didn't just stand, she said, "how far do you want me to go?" My life has been blessed and influenced by many people but those are attitudes I've tried to live by.

ROR: The title to Carolyn Bay's story. Thanks Carolyn.



Carolyn With Traditional Dancer