

V5-18

Lightning Results In Loss Of Barn, 14 Horses Near Town

1982

The thunderstorm which hit this area last Thursday evening resulted in the loss of a barn and fourteen standardbred racing horses, at the farm of William and Ethel Fritz, located on the South Line Road, two miles east of Walkerton. The Fritz house and garage were not damaged.

Their daughter, Margie, first noticed smoke at 9:30 p.m. and alerted the rest of the family, who were home. Mrs. Fritz could see flames through the cracks between the barn boards. Her daughter Sheryl called the Fire Departments.

Their daughter Susie and sons Randy, Dale and Brad helped save 12 of the 28 race horses housed in the barn.

Fire losses also included 40 sets of harnesses, horse blankets, harness bags, 8,000 bales of hay, \$2,500 worth of straw and a bin of grain and oats. Most of the horses were owned by Eugene Forbes of R.R. 4, Walkerton, for whom William "Bud" Fritz works as a trainer and driver.

The Hanover Fire Department arrived first, but left after the Walkerton Fire Department came. Walkerton's firemen were delayed due to the road closing at the South Line bridge, which is being reconstructed. Water was available from the pool on the Mike Von Hatten farm immediately to the west. The barn however was a total loss. The structure and its contents were covered by insurance.

Some of the better horses were saved, the first being Carol's Omaha, a good two-year-old pacing filly which won two of four divisions of a \$92,688 Ontario Sires Stake at Orangeville Raceway. Trudy Omaha, with which Bud Fritz has also won a Sires Stake, was another horse saved. Some of

the others escaping the fire were Pie N The Sky, an invitation class pacer at the B tracks, Armbro Actress, a three-year-old pacing filly that performs in Sires Stakes, and Speedy Bug, a trotting colt which earlier this year won a Sires Stake.

Lost in the fire were Music Beau, a good Sires Stake pacer several years ago, and Armbro Burns, a two-year-old pacer that is a full brother to Armbro Arctic, winner of the Summer-time Series at Greenwood Raceway. Most of the other horses lost in the fire were unraced 2-year-olds and some colts from Western Canada. Some of the surviving horses are being housed at the Larry Yuke farm nearby and some at the Forbes farm just west of Walkerton.

If bad luck runs in threes, then this should be the last for Bud Fritz. Last April he underwent several operations after a horse kicked him in the abdomen, injuring a bowel and causing a blood clot. Just after recovering from that, his good colt, Daylon Thunder, died while in surgery to remove a nerve in a front leg. Ethel Fritz says they plan to rebuild a smaller barn with thirty box stalls this fall. Plans for a pond at the front of the property will now be postponed. They have the support of their nine children, three of whom are married, while the other six are still at home. Bud was racing again at Hanover, Saturday night.

The large barn, which measured 70x70 feet, was located on what for many years was known as the Charlie Tanner property.

Subsequent owners were Mr. Tanner's son, Clarence, followed by the late Wilfred Weber, father of Eldon Weber of Weber's Electric, Walkerton.

Mr. Fritz purchased the farm 21 years ago.