

EARLY MORNING FOG hung over the berry patch at Brobar Farms as Mrs. Waltraut Morton of Guelph was out to try her luck at strawberry picking. Mrs. Morton is just one of the hundreds who turn out on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at the fields on Highway 26 near Spaykida to pick their own strawberries.—(Staff Photo)

In the berry patch

Strawberry lovers

It was a foggy, cold and damp Friday morning but hundreds of ardent strawberry lovers were on hand at 6 a.m. at Brobar Farms on Highway 25 to descend on the patch of ripe berries waiting to be picked.

The farm, run by John and Ed Brown and V. T. Barber, has been declaring open season on its berry patches around this time of year for the past six years. Berry enthusiasts pay 30 cents per quart basket for the delicacy and can pick as many quarts as they can carry.

Fifteen acres are open to pickers and daily crowds average between 300 and 600. Almost seven acres of an adjoining field have been used to park cars and it is usually full by 8 a.m.

All sorts of people can be found in the patch—from women in ever-present hair curlers to businessmen on holidays who have a craving for

fresh strawberries. Whole families come and every member of the clan is sent out to search under the plants for the red fruit.

Once they leave the patch, the strawberries find their way into pies, strawberry shortcakes with whipped cream or just plain with a little cream and sugar in desert bowls.



HARD AT WORK, Mrs. Waltraut Morton of Guelph picks her own strawberries at Brobar Farms where she has come for the morning to try her luck at picking the gourmet's delight. Mrs. Morton, like many others chooses early in the morning to come to Brobar on Highway 25, because by mid-morning most of the crop has already been picked.—(Staff Photo)

Success to smithy

Greg Rapson shoes and trains horses

By Wendy Thomson  
Come spring, most horses emerge from the barn looking like the country cousin to the city horse, with a shaggy body, fuzzy ears, woolly feet, and whiskers. Owners head for the stables armed with shedding blade, brush, comb, shears, and various other paraphernalia to begin a horse's ready to be taken out in public again.

It takes many sessions with a strong arm and brush before it is slick and gleaming in body; the shears make short work of the hairy fetlocks, but when the person doing the grooming gets down to the horse's feet, they almost always call in professional help.

While in bygone days people brought their horses in to the village smithy, set under the chestnut tree of song and story, today's men who tend to horses' feet, travel around the countryside in a half-ton truck with their shop contained in the back.

No matter whether they have a regular route or just go where their fancy takes them, they are welcomed wherever they are horses. While the smithing itself is a dying art, the farrier profession has taken a surge ahead as interest in the horse has grown.

One of the newest to join the few in the district is Greg Rapson of Milton who graduated from Oklahoma Farriers' College last year and is rapidly making a name for himself not only as a farrier, but as a trainer and showman as well.

When asked how he got into this line, Greg explained that it began with a diploma course in

Agriculture he was taking at Guelph. As his summer project, he planned to train a few horses. Because he liked the training, and because he was a little bored at Guelph, he left and began looking for other training prospects. He figured that by trimming and shoeing he not only would fill an existing gap at his father's farm, but would also get out to meet other horse owners to promote his abilities as a trainer.

After looking over several Farriers' Colleges, Greg settled on Oklahoma's since it offered roping and bulldogging, as well. Although the course was only two months long, he learned more than he figured possible.

"We had a good instructor," he said in the drawl he picked up. "He could put a point across so clearly and so well, that you couldn't help but learn."

Greg went on to tell of his shoeing experiences. "I nailed a shoe on a horse the first day I was there, and I had never hammered a nail before in my life, and Oh, man! Was I scared!"

All in all, he shod about 200 horses while there, and learned to run down ropes and tie calves in three or four seconds. As far as the last goes, "I'm a little out of practice now," he concluded.

Back home, using his father's Six R Farm as a "base camp," Greg found enough work in the district to keep him going steady. He starts his day with a drive to three or four different places to shoe horses, then on to another farm for exercising and training a couple, and shoeing a few. He continues with a riding lesson, going home to do his own chores, then riding a few



TOP PHOTO, Greg Rapson at work. BELOW, he talks over his unusual profession. BOTTOM: It's bad enough having people watch you work—now Velvet has a turn.—(Staff Photo)

more head after supper—sometimes till 10 p.m. or so. Most horses Greg has shod in one day is 17. He said he could do more if he had to, but then he'd be no good for anything the next day.

Greg's plans for the future are a little vague, as yet. "I'd like a big farm, with a big lake, to raise and train quarter horses." A course in Vet Technology might be in the offing, as well.

His one definite aim for this year is to win the title of "Top Western Riding Horse of the Nation" for Show Tip, owned by Paul Oswald. Although they won the "Top Western Riding Stallion" award for 1968, they missed out on the higher award by only half a point.

With this in mind, Greg has been taking off every weekend with Show Tip and a few other horses, to make the rounds of the various shows. They started by going to Columbus, Ohio.

The next weekend they went first to Downsville, N.Y., then on to South Park, Penn. the next day, where Show Tip placed first in Western Riding, third in Western Pleasure, third in Western Trail, third in English Pleasure, and third in Erining, and received a trophy cup and blanked as "Top Performance Horse of the Day". Greg also won the "Grand Champion Gelding" award, on Double-Mar.

Over the past few months, the group has also been to Centerville, Indiana; Newcastle, Ind.; Buffalo, N.Y.; Holland, N.Y.; Michigan and Richmond Hill, Ont.

Their lists of wins are so impressive that their arrival is met with mixed reactions, partly "Here come those Canadian horses—wish they'd stay home", and "Gee, I'm glad you're here—do you have your tools with you?"

Greg says he likes being able to lend a hand in an emergency, but this is one of his pet peeves—people who leave their shoeing till the very last minute when they've known for months that it had to be done.

His other peeves? "People who send their horses for retraining, who say they have only one small problem and you find they're FULL of problems."

The worst part is people looking over your shoulder while you're shoeing, and criticizing. Or people who object to your straightening the horse out when it starts acting up.

"As far as I'm concerned, there's no horse worth getting hurt over," he asserts.

Generally, Greg likes the people, and likes the travelling. Last year, he drove between 35,000 and 40,000 miles, and has already put about 10,000 miles on his truck so far this year.

"I like the work, and I like doing a good job. It's great to see other horses win, that I shod."

Now, that is taking pride in your work, Ma'am.



SAMPLING THE GOODS is Karen Barber of Brobar Farms, who was up bright and early to help send the amateur strawberry pickers out on their way. She did manage to take a short break and downed her breakfast in the form of fresh, ripe strawberries.—(Staff Photo)

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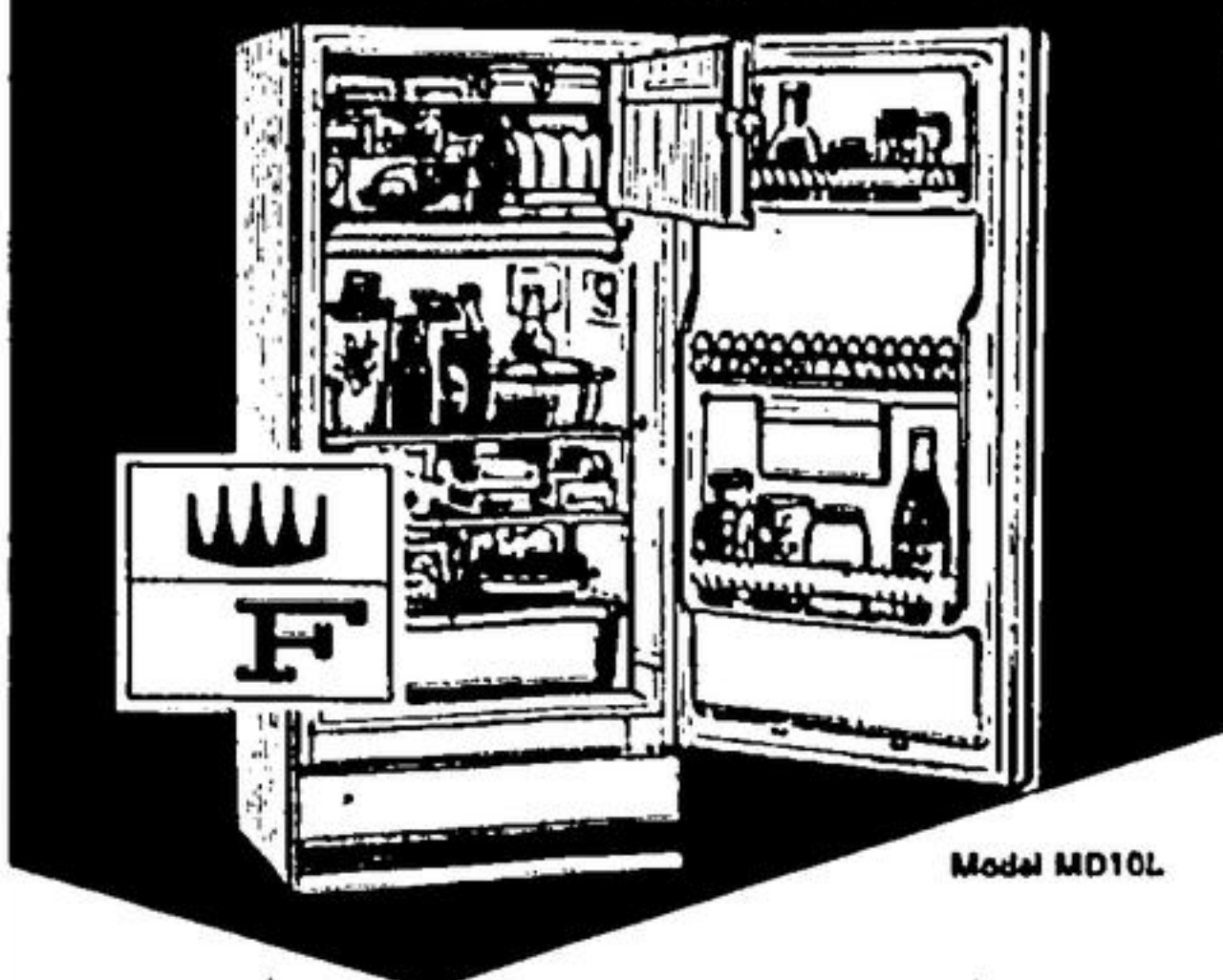
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