

At Greenwood

Persley Den horses are off and running

by Jennifer Barr
Thoroughbred racing starts this week at Greenwood and several local racing stables are geared up and ready to go.

Carl and Dagmar Schwabe, owners of Persley Den farms on the 25 Sideroad, have two horses at the track already and are preparing a third. With 22 horses, most of them broodmares and colts, 25 head of sheep, and eight foals expected in a month or two, Persley Den staff are girding their loins for a busy spring.

Carl Schwabe, an aristocratic gentleman who happens to be a lawyer in his spare time, keeps an educated eye on the proceedings making sure everything runs smoothly. Dagmar Schwabe, who comes from a background of four generations of horse breeders in Germany, is a gentle lady with profound ideas about the care of her animals. It was she who bought the first Persley Den horse, Neade, who became a record breaker and dam of some of the farms well-known mares. Neade is still on the farm.

"We're not business people, that's the trouble. They (the horses) stay till they die," says Mr. Schwabe.

Stakes winner
Other mares now serving their gestation time at Persley Den include Reasonable Wife (a good name) who was broodmare of the year in 1976; her daughter Wedded Wife, best race mare of 1977; Hildesheim, Canadian Stakes winner and winner of the Natalma Stakes.

"It's everybody's dream to get in the winner's circle and we made it twice with the first horse we bred. We were lucky to win," Mr. Schwabe explains.

However, all these successful mares don't seem to realize how important they are. They live happily in their spacious quarters running in alfalfa-rich pastures protected by sturdy board fences and careful attendants. They're not the usual spoiled brat type of racing Thoroughbred but friendly playful ladies anxious for a pat and interested in visitors. The relaxed atmosphere at Persley Den is a credit to the managers.

Full time staff
The man responsible for this management is John Kennedy, reputed to be one of the finest horsemen there is. He and his family live on the farm. Kennedy has the job of keeping the wheels oiled and making sure every horse has individual attention. This past winter that meant caring for 32 horses, not to mention the sheep and Dinky a 40 year old pony.

Ted Shields is currently the training jockey and rider, assisted by the Schwabe's youngest daughter, Yvonne, 17, who comes home from boarding school every weekend to jump on the horses and "leg them up". The Schwabe's older daughter, Petra, an economist, lives away from home.

Four fulltime staff man the farm assisted by several parttime employees.

Shields, described as "a nice guy—very experienced trainer" by his employer, breaks yearlings the 'slow way', taking his time to ensure maximum relaxation of every horse. Mr. Schwabe declares this past winter to have been one of the best, weatherwise, for training. The lack of ice has enabled the horses to be galloped outside most of the time. The footing has only become slippery recently and now the Schwabe horses are exercised in the covered arena.

Sheep are kept to 'clean up' the pastures after the horses. Sheep and horses are compatible grazers, being immune to each others' parasites.

The broodmares occupy a separate isolated barn and are fed first in line to minimize the risk of infection being carried from the other stables.

Foals are planned to arrive late in the season in April or May. The Schwabes don't like the common practice of foaling Thoroughbreds early in the year for extra growth and age. They feel a colt grows just as well and has a better start when it is born at a more natural time and can benefit from early grass.

Small breeders can't compete

Despite the impressive appearance of Persley Den farms, the Schwabes describe themselves as small breeders and declare they can't

compete with larger breeders and don't try. "We're the only ones (breeders) left who think of Thoroughbred racing as a sport. We do it for fun and just break even."

Carl Schwabe states the small breeder is suffering because of the lack of breeders' awards currently. Until two years ago, each breeder received a small percentage of every purse his colt won no matter who owned him. This money helped the small breeder realize more profit from the sale of a colt and helped finance his breeding operation—always an expensive proposition.

Now only large stake races offer breeder awards. Schwabe would like to see breeder awards back on allowance and claiming races adding this is an incentive for the small breeder. The present system only helps the larger breeder, Mr. Schwabe feels.

He also says the biggest disappointment for a breeder is to sell a colt and not have it handled to its best ability.

Mrs. Schwabe agrees that seeing a colt not realize its potential in someone else's hands can be heart-breaking. Long line of horsemen
Carl and Dagmar Schwabe came to Canada in 1962 and bought Persley Den in 1960. Until 1973 the farm was managed by the former owner, George Robertson, who also named the farm

after a Scotch valley. The Schwabes came to live on their 350-acre farm in 1973 providing a natural farm atmosphere surrounded by animals for their two daughters.

"Would you have children growing up without pets?" queries Mrs. Schwabe. The Schwabes still use the red and white racing colours of Mrs. Schwabe's mother. Coming from such a lengthy background in horses in the old country, Mrs. Schwabe is an extremely knowledgeable horsewoman.

"She's the horsewoman of the family", declares her husband.

Mrs. Schwabe remembers her favorite horse, an Anglo Arab who came to her family as a refugee from invasion during the war. The colt's dam was purchased by her mother from a herd of the finest Arabians in the country while they were being moved from the line of fire. The mare was bred to an excellent Thoroughbred and dropped a foal who was to become Germany's leading sire for producing small horses.

"Everyone's always looking forward to winning the Queen's Plate", says Carl Schwabe declaring he may never do it.

However, whether or not a Queen's Plate winner comes from Persley Den farms, Acton will still have the happiest Thoroughbreds gamboling through rich pastures on the 25 Sideroad.



FIELD FULL of fat mares at Persley Den Farms on the 25 sideroad means there'll be lots of foals this year at the Thoroughbred breeding establishment. Carl Schwabe leads Hildesheim, multiple stakes race winner, and Helgoland to the gate.



YVONNE SCHWABE bridles Halton County before training in the arena for the racing season starting this week at Greenwood. The five-year old mare broke her leg two years ago but patient care from her owners has made her fighting fit again.



THE MOST VALUABLE horse at Persley Den is Dinky, the 40-year-old pony who acts as wet-nurse to excitable race horses. Farm owner Carl Schwabe is very fond of Dinky who runs with the sheep when his services are not required

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Police to try new jackets

Halton Regional Police will try out a some new style jackets and make the traditional blue tunic more comfortable.

About 38 new style jackets will be worn by men in each district for about eight months in order to help the police commission decide which way to go in uniform styling next year. The decision came at last Thursday's commission meeting at Oakville.

Commissioners found they could not make a decision based on the brief time one constable wore the nylon patrol jacket. Constable Bill Gall said the new style jacket is a 100 per cent improvement over the present tunic. The new jacket is shorter than the tunic. Equipment can be carried on the pants' belt, without help from the traditional Sam Browne cross belt.

The commission also agreed to pay about \$4 per garment to have sidevents included in the tunics which most of the 252 man force wear.

Neither the commission or police chief Ken Skerrett were attracted to the Eisenhower Jacket they saw during a previous commission meeting. "I personally don't want any part of the 'Eisenhower jacket'," Skerrett said.

Normally the police patrol the harbor from May 24 to Labour Day. Police use their own boat. "However with the introduction of salmon to our waters, we have had to spend more time with the related problem", states Skerrett's report.

Skerrett estimated the cost of placing an officer on a different boat, after labor Day, would cost about \$3,000.

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