

# Equestrian costs inflating, riders still enjoy their sport

by Jennifer Barr

Equestrian sports have been big business in the Acton area for the past 10 years or more. How has inflation affected this recreational activity? Are people having too much trouble feeding themselves to bother feeding a horse? Has the cost of horses climbed with all other costs?

Several area equestrians and affiliated businesses were contacted and reports are conflicting. There's no doubt that costs are up—horses cost more, so does their feed, equipment, and transportation.

However, only a few say high costs are affecting business or their enjoyment of the sport.

According to Steve and Ron Lister of Mountainview Farms, proprietors of a large equestrian establishment south of Acton dealing in a variety of riding activities, business is still very good and people are willing to spend more and more on recreation and the horse habit.

Even though trailer costs are up 15 per cent every year, Ron Lister says people are still willing to buy them.

The cost of a general purpose family horse has increased over the past three years from \$400 to at least \$800 and closer to \$1,000 or \$2,000, Lister explains.

Meat prices have always affected the horse market and these have risen from around 25 cents a pound a few years ago to a record of 79 cents a pound last year. When thousand pound horses fetch nearly \$800 for dogmeat the price of a pleasure beast is bound to be affected.

However, the public is still buying horses, say the Listers. In fact competition is keener than ever because there are less horses on the market.

One person who doesn't agree is Quarterhorse breeder and horse dealer, Roy Inson of R.R. 3, Acton. He feels the horse business had definitely been hurt by inflation and the amount of people getting started in the sport is drastically reduced. For this reason, he's cut down his horse activities. He is breeding rabbits.

The horse show business seems to be booming although small show organizers report entries are down. Instead of suffering from inflation, though, it seems the amount of horse shows being run has increased dramatically thus thinning out entries in smaller shows. Steve Lister feels there are more people than ever attending more shows but entries are reduced because of competition.

Roy and Joan Inson, a recognized judging team, are busier than ever, judging several shows every weekend of the season.

Don Lawrence of BoDee Tack Shop in Rockwood says more people have bought saddles in the past year than every before. He says he doesn't see much change in the horse business—he's a horse owner, himself. Although costs are higher, he feels enthusiasts are willing to pay more for any recreation.

A record sixteen million pairs of western boots have been sold in the United States in the past eight months, according to Lawrence, despite the highest prices ever. Boots selling for \$45 three years ago are now \$105 and up.

Feed costs have risen say most horse feeders, however basic costs have stayed fairly stable for the past two or three years. A good crop year has kept the price of hay at a dollar to \$1.50 a bale whereas 1973 to '77 prices ranged up to \$2.50 a bale.

Concentrates have doubled their price in five years the increase being considerably slower in recent years.

Higher feed costs are reflected in board costs. For those boarding their horses the costs are up to \$200 a month. Mountainview Farms charge \$175 a month for basic board and use of all facilities including indoor arena, boarding a Thoroughbred race horse at the track can run as high as \$35 a day!

Four B Hunter Training Centre run by Evelyn and Lynda Buchanan near Rockwood have managed to keep costs down to \$70 a month for board by lowering the overhead of their family business. They have 10 horses of their own and 10 boarders. Mrs. Buchanan says they try to spread the cost of care and subsidize it even though their feed costs have increased considerably. They still manage to keep the resale price of a pleasure horse to approximately \$600. Mrs. Buchanan says she feels it's important horses are still kept available for the pleasure of everyone who wishes to partake of the sport.

Paul Thompson, of Acton, a two-horse owner who has cared for his horses on 10 acres for a decade, says it's cheaper to keep his own horses now that board fees have increased.

His horses are part of the family, he says, so (Continued on Page 2)



The stirrup cup, traditional toast to a successful hunt, is broached at the annual fox hunt of the Eglinton and Caledon Hunt Club at Docking Farms, Eighth Line. Photo Courtesy THE GEORGETOWN INDEPENDENT

# The Acton Free Press

An Inland Community Newspaper

One Hundred and Sixth Year-No. 14

ACTON, ONTARIO, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1980

Eighteen Pages, Twenty-Five Cents

## Stephenson makes

# No commitment for new Catholic school



Happiness is a horse—or so Sharla and Melony Wood think. These two young daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Doug Wood of R.R. 2, Acton enjoy their ponies Joeli and Mitch every chance they get. They were competing at a recent Rockwood Trail Riders show when this picture was taken—and winning lots of ribbons. Photo by JENNIFER BARR

Delegates who pleaded to Ontario Education Minister Bette Stephenson the case for a new separate school in town came away with one word on their lips: positive.

No words of commitment, however, passed through the minister's lips.

"She was very supportive, very positive," Acton Parents Association President Vince Whelan said Friday. Acton-Georgetown Separate School Board Trustee Hartley Sherk echoed Whelan's observation of the Thursday afternoon Queen's Park audience.

"We all thought of it as a very positive meeting," said Whelan. Halton Separate School Board Chairman Robert O'Brien and Education Director Cliff Byrnes also attended the meeting which had the ear of the minister for about an hour.

There was no commitment from the minister concerning funding for the school building or the school's \$75,000 Mill St. W. site.

The minister's office issued no statement after the meeting.

In about a month the Halton Separate School Board expects to hear from the education ministry concerning the amount of money left over from other boards, which was allocated this year, but which has not been spent.

That notification may translate into some dollars for the school site.

"There was no promise that any will come to us," said Sherk. "She (Stephenson) said we are on the

short list."

If some funds come to Halton from the ministry's review this month, and that money goes for the school site, Sherk said he would interpret that as a commitment by the ministry towards a new St. Joseph's School.

So far the ministry has not approved the purchase of the Mill St. property for the school.

Delegates, in return, learned from the minister the "very severe restraints", as Whelan described it, which government operates.

Sherk and Whelan pointed out that the minister was made aware that next year there will be only one priority from the Halton Separate School Board for provincial funding—Acton.

Town parents of children attending St. Joseph's School were disillusioned and angered when they learned last summer that the board presented the province with two number one priorities: their's and Oakville.

Oakville received the money while the board put a \$5,000 down payment on the Nellis farm for a new Acton school.

Queen's Park, Whelan said, expects to make final decisions concerning allocations of money in January or February. This year the allocations came in the spring.

The school board received a separation this summer from Halton's Land Division Committee off the Nellis property.

The minister told delegates they might have to set their sights lower concerning the type of building for an Acton school, said Whelan.

No longer is the ministry building super structures because so many of them in Toronto and around the province are empty.

Modular construction is the new way, states Sherk. Modular schools have a permanent core surrounded by classrooms.

The core contains rooms for offices, gym, library, washrooms. The advantage, according to ministry public relations spokesman John Gillies is that "with fluctuating enrollment they can add or subtract classrooms."

Examples of modular schools exist in Erin, one of the early types, and at Penetanguishene where the new French school is underway. Modular schools are "somewhat cheaper" than regular buildings, however, their main advantage is that classrooms can be changed, said Gillies.

Sherk indicated the idea of modular schools is not new to him and that he is pleased the ministry is pushing boards towards this type of construction.

Delegates also invited the Provincial minister to tour St. Joseph's School, the 19th century, stone structure. The reply seems to be that she may if her schedule permits.

Halton Liberal MPP Julian Reed, whom parents have used to pressure the Conservative government minister, was, he said, not invited to the meeting.

## North's musical festival getting one last chance

Full Support may come to the North Halton Music Festival when representatives from 12 elementary schools meet next week to determine its future.

The dozen schools indicated they were in favor of the 51-year-old festival when they answered a recent survey by festival organizer Doug Magwood.

"Is your school definitely interested in participating in a revised North Halton Music Festival in 1981?" The dozen schools replied they were; 16 schools said they were not.

The closeness of the replies was not strong enough, in Magwood's mind, to call an end to the festival. A meeting with representatives of the 12 schools is scheduled for M.Z. Bennett School next Wednesday.

A motion to disband the festival will be introduced and debated, said Magwood, principal of M.Z. Bennett School.

"A simple majority vote will end it," he said. The annual festival was suspended for this year in order to give organizers an opportunity to measure the support for it. The last time the festival was held, eight of a possible 25 schools competed.

Negative replies to the recent survey came from Acton, Milton, Georgetown and Esquesing, said Magwood. He declined to identify the schools. "The support just does not seem to be there," said the festival's chairman.

A decision has to be made in the fall in order that preparations can be made for the May festival. Chorus from a number of North Halton elementary schools often competed for prizes.

The Georgetown Kiwanis Club has been helping festival organizers since last year's festival was suspended.

Financially the yearly musical event is in the black. The snag appears to be the competitive nature of the festival.

Competition, especially in the arts, is not popular. Another difficulty is the traditional May dates for the festival. Many school trips take place in that month. Also some schools are committed to other forms of musical presentation—non-competitive—such as operettas.

Halton Board of Education supports the festival so far as to provide bussing to the host school. The board, however, does not go as far as urging teachers to support it.

Not far away, in Elmira, the annual music festival is thriving, according to Magwood. They are so busy, they are searching for an additional secretary to run it.

## Kids too noisy—residents

Residents on Division Street with property adjoining Bovis Park are complaining about the newly-erected play structure, despite the 30 or 40 neighborhood children who are using the equipment steadily since it was erected.

The structure was installed by the parks department last Tuesday.

It is a specially designed framework with logs, a tire and a rope for swinging and a slide.

Tom Shepard, director of parks and recreation said the playground was promised to the subdivision when it was built.

Councillors Ross Knetchel and Terry Grubbe asked residents what they would like to see in the park before the structure was bought and Joy Gwilliam, Acton co-ordinator for the Parks and Rec Department displayed a sketch of the equipment on the Community Bulletin Board outside the town office on Main Street.

But once the thing was put up, some of the mothers started to complain. A few called the councillors and the Acton Free Press anonymously.

They called it, among other things, "ugly", "hideous", and "dangerous", saying the 12-foot height was too high for younger children.

They also threatened the town with a lawsuit if a child fell off.

Residents complained of the noise and that it attracted older children and teenagers after nightfall.

Shepard said none of the complaints reached the

parks department, but residents were taking a "selfish attitude".

He said those who were complaining were the immediate neighbours of the park who disliked hav-



ing the open space behind their property put to use.

He added the structure, which is only part of an overall plan for the park (including a footbridge and bicycle path), has the best safety record. It is a structure designed for three to four year olds and older, he said.

The equipment is surrounded by six-by-six foot planks of wood and filled with six inches of sand for extra safety.

"I think kids know their limits better than the parents," said Shepard. "And you will find there are a lot of kids playing on it."

He added, "I guess we'd get a lawsuit if a kid fell out of a tree too."

Several parents in the area support the equipment. John Dunn, who helped install the structure says he is pleased with what has gone up.

"I have no fears of my girls playing on it," he said. "I have four girls, between eight and 14 and they're always climbing and falling off trees."

"Any mother with smaller children should accompany them to the park," he added.

Other parents voiced similar opinions, pointing out less children will be playing there once the novelty has worn off.

Seven-year-old Kim Scott, one of the 30 children playing in the park Thursday, said she really likes the structure.

She said someone swinging on the tire might knock down another child standing in the way, but on the whole it was fun.

And she added, she'd be coming back to play "a lot".

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Peggy Balkind is the subject of Jennifer Barr's Profile this week. Turn to page 2.

Bert Hinton withdraws from election for school board trustee. Details on page 3.

In Eramosa Betty Jones has chosen to run for the position of school trustee. See story page 8.

Halton Board of Education recently changed the way it applies its school bus policy. Turn to page B3.