

Million dollar dreams:

On a wing and a prayer, a 3-year-old colt named Pegasus beats the odds at Orangeville

"I have a funny feeling he's going to be a good racehorse."
—Kevin Mitchell

Horse racing is a risky business at the best of times, but when you've invested in the sport because you love horses and are looking for fun, the rewards are not measured solely with dollar signs.

That might sum up how three partners feel about their pacer, Pegasus, a three-year-old brown colt who reached a milestone recently.

Pegasus won his first race July 24 at Orangeville Raceway, netting his owners \$900. After spending nearly \$12,000 in purchasing, training and board costs, the partners couldn't very well rejoice about a return on their investment.

But Pegasus proved he could beat the odds by forging a victory after only being on the racing circuit from May 1983.

For owners Andy Szigeti of Toronto, Bill McKeown and Kevin Mitchell of Georgetown, the joys of owning their own pacer have been well worth their fears, hard work and anxiety.

Pegasus may be ready in September for the 'A' circuit tracks such as Mohawk Raceway after his training experience at the B circuit level in places like Orangeville, Barrie, Hanover and Elmira.

"We all have million dollar dreams," the partners agree. However, the trio have beaten the odds by just getting their colt to the track.

One of the highlights for the owners happened back on May 29 when Pegasus qualified for a race by clocking a 2:12 time for the standard mile long track. Pegasus won his first race with a time of 2:07.5.

The strategy expressed by the trio is not to rush their horse along because Pegasus can race until he is 14 years old. There's no use in pushing him into a stressful situation before the horse is ready, they say.

BEAT THE ODDS
On the 'B' track the horse is able to learn faster without having his spirit broken. Pegasus has a winner's drive, as most good racehorses do. One race he was flicked with a whip and this caused him to lose a race. Pegasus was furious and disappointed, Mr. Mitchell said.

The percentages of getting your horse to the field are not good, the owners say. Disease, injury and a horse's training aptitude and temperament are all considered as possible liabilities.

The owners had the opportunity to buy the colt from a local horse breeder for \$4,000. Kevin Mitchell took the initiative by becoming the 'active' partner, raising Pegasus in his first year so that he

could eventually feel comfortable on the race track.

Mr. Mitchell, who lived on a farm north of Acton during his childhood years, had been active around the race track at London, Ont. when he was at university there. While working for a bank in Windsor, he was able to purchase a low cost horse and train the colt in his spare time.

EARLY TRAINING
The proud owners made their purchase Oct. 1, 1981. Mr. Mitchell started the colt's training during the first week by getting him used to the bit. The second week Pegasus became used to the harness as Mr. Mitchell walked him around a track.

Gradually Pegasus was eased into a training harness called a "jogger" which is heavier than the racing harness. Distance was built up gradually as the colt began training at one-quarter of a mile, eventually reaching five miles. Now Pegasus has some 400-500 jog miles behind him.

Although Pegasus was trotting bred, (a natural gait where the left front and back right legs move together) the owners decided that the colt's reluctance to trot might be solved if they changed him into a pacer.

Pegasus spent 1 1/2 years training as a trotter but then he was eventually switched to a pacing gait (the left front leg and the left

rear leg move together). Horses who pace can beat trotters, but trotters earn more money, because there are less trotters on the circuit than pacers. It's harder



KEVIN MITCHELL
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to get a young horse to trot, Mr. Mitchell says.

KNEE PROBLEMS
The training for Pegasus was going fine until February of 1982 when his knees were x-rayed. Because the knees are the last part of the colt's body to develop, the procedure is important to a young horse in training.

The results indicated that Pegasus should be rested for two months. The training was

continued in August and the rest proved fruitful.

"The horse liked it (the time off). He had more time to think about what he had been taught," Mr. Mitchell said.

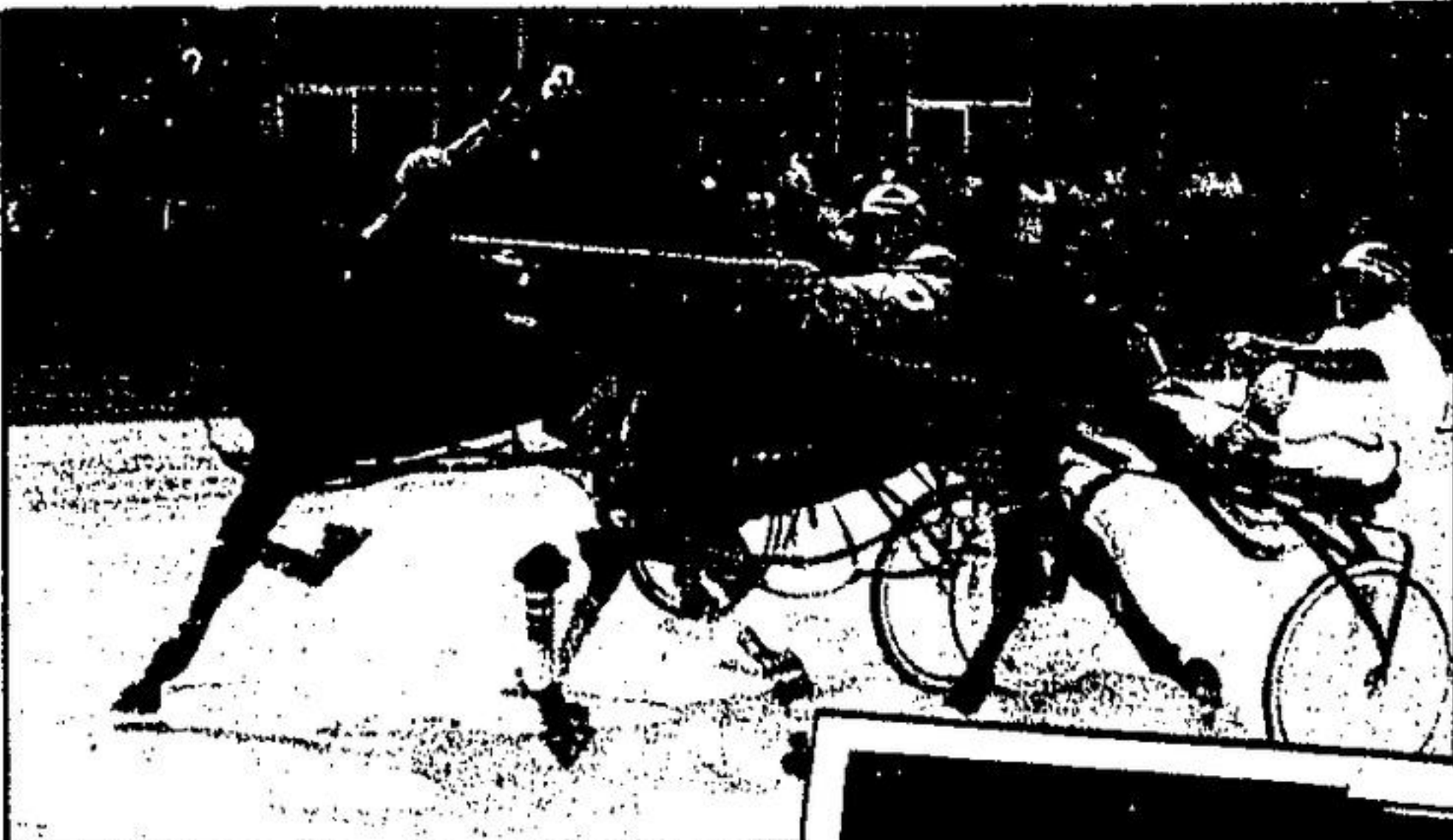
It wasn't until January of 1983 that the owners decided to use hobbles to teach Pegasus how to pace properly.

The perils of a trainer are well-known to Mr. Mitchell who broke his foot on New Year's Day after Pegasus became startled by a rabbit, landing on his foot, breaking it in three places.

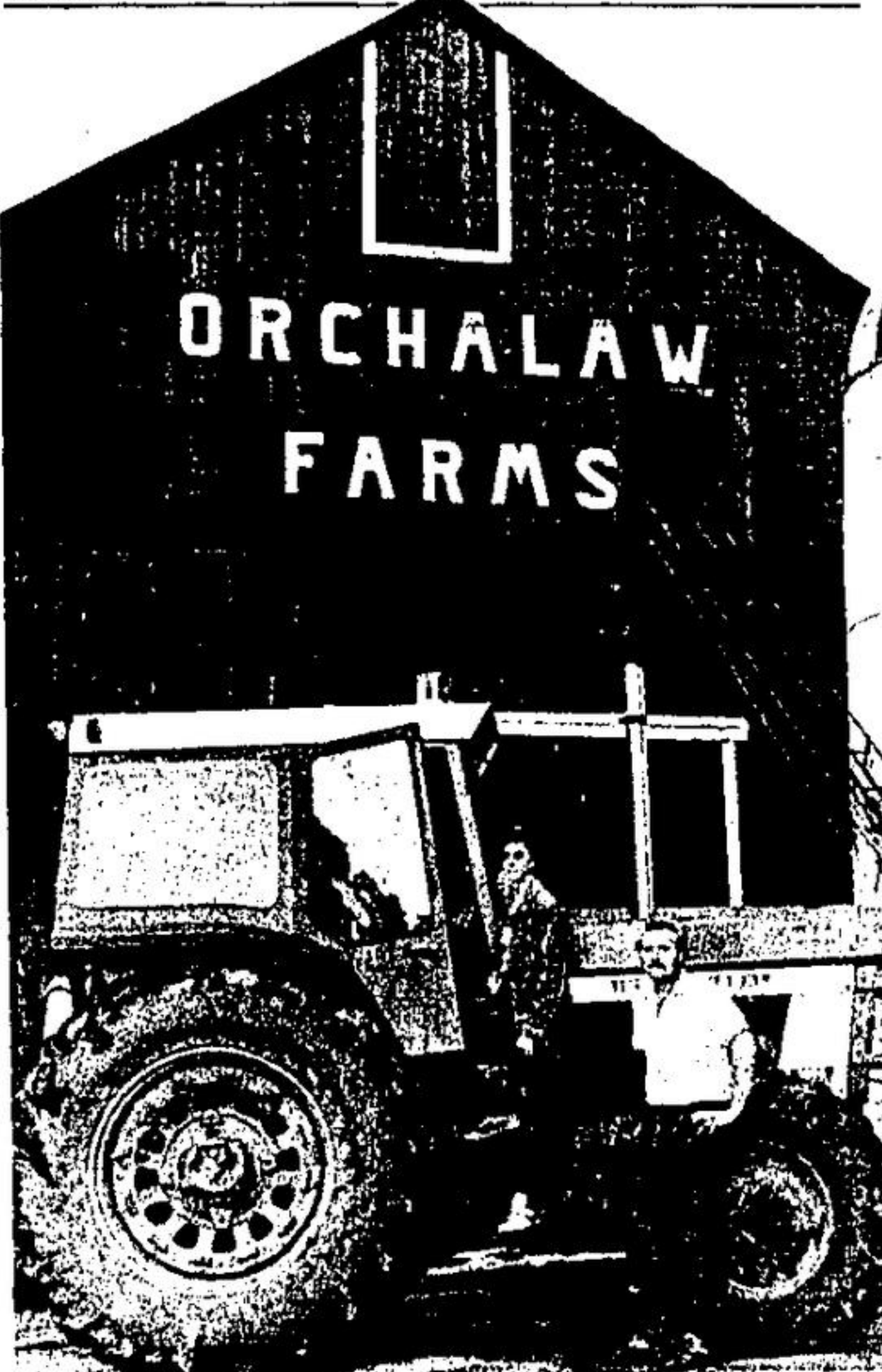
Around a farm track Pegasus was clocked at 2:18 for the mile, but he eventually qualified at 2:12 in Orangeville May 29. A very fast pace for a top horse is 1:49, Mr. Mitchell says.

The current target for the owners is to train Pegasus to pass other horses in the heat of the race, something an experienced horse does with ease.

SETBACKS
Often there are setbacks in training, though. Pegasus was set to qualify in March but he hit a soft spot on the



Pegasus records his first victory July 24, 1983: "you get so excited when your horse is racing that you feel like running along side of him."



Richard Schacht learns a different way of life working for Larry Laidlaw of RR2 Norval. (Herald photo)

Norval farmer trains 'big city' student

When Larry Laidlaw of RR2 Norval first set eyes on Oakville native Richard Schacht, 17, he wasn't sure how the lean city boy would handle nine weeks of farm work.

But from his first day, Richard proved to his employer that he wouldn't be a soft touch, even when it meant lifting hay bales all day.

Richard slept soundly that night and his point was made. "Richard's a nice boy. It's gratifying to teach someone who wants to learn," says Larry Laidlaw.

Mr. Laidlaw is in charge of the dairy operation on his Orchardlaw Farm located on the Fifth Line. His father looks after their huge apple crop as part of the entire 750 acre operation.

Mr. Laidlaw heard about the Summer Experience program for

students, sponsored by the ministry of agriculture and food, through a friend. He realized that more could be accomplished if he had some help for some of the smaller jobs around the farm.

Before Richard joined Orchardlaw Farm he had to take a safety course which taught him to be wary of such things as tractors, cattle and silo gas.

The grade eleven student has been putting on weight (pure muscle) from his first week and learning a variety of new tasks.

He starts his day at 5:30 a.m. working on different chores such as feeding cattle, filling silos, fence work and driving the tractor.

"The program takes a load off you. If someone's willing to learn, I'm willing to teach," Mr. Laidlaw says.

Someone from the city who works on the farm benefits from the experience by learning about farm life, Mr. Laidlaw says.

Richard is aware now that the myth about the lazy father is not true. Only the strong survive—the ones with a strong business sense, Mr. Laidlaw says.

The young helper has been exposed to other facets of life on the farm. He recently went to a twilight meeting where cows were being judged at the Jim King's farm nearby.

Richard in his two remaining weeks might have a hand at the early apples before he leaves, but more of the variety Orchardlaw sells won't be ready for harvesting for some time.

Mr. Laidlaw says his grain crop is down from four truckloads to 1 1/2 truckloads

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