

# Riding Over Forty

By GREG GILBERT, GOLDEN WOODS RIDING SCHOOL LTD.  
SPECIAL TO THE COMPASS

Life doesn't end at 40 - why should riding?

Riding for the over 40 crowd is quickly becoming one of Ontario's fastest growing sports. The need to escape the "rat race" looms larger as the pace of our everyday world quickens.

Just the trip alone to a quiet country setting away from the hustle and bustle has a therapeutic value all its own. The quiet is almost deafening with only the soft tones of birds' songs, insects chirping, and don't forget horses calling. The smells of everything but car exhaust hits your nose and tingles your senses.

Just being around horses drops the blood pressure and allows you to get your mind off things for a while as does being in the presence of other people doing exactly the same thing - enjoying the love of riding and being around horses.

Riding provides exercise, comoradory and a general feeling of well being. Also, riding can be modified to suit almost any age of rider and allows one to ride almost indefinitely.

The types of riding available are almost endless - English, Western, Carriage Driving, Trail Riding, etc.

The most important element when beginning to ride, is the selection of a riding establishment that

offers a safe environment with qualified instructors. Each place is a little different in how they operate, but there are a few key elements to look for.

You should be shown how to move around and groom your horse. Grooming for some, is the best part of the whole experience. Taking pride in the way your animal looks and the thanks in return for a good brushing with nudges, soft looks and the unspoken feeling of bond between you and your horse. I know it is that way for me - I rarely ride but I constantly groom.

You should be taught the rules of the ring or the trail, such as the maximum number of riders and horses allowed out in the ring or on the trail at one time in the presence of a qualified instructor. These are set up for the enjoyment of all. There are a number of recognized bodies who certify instructors - The Canadian Equestrian Association, The British Horse Society, and the Ontario Equestrian Society to name a few.

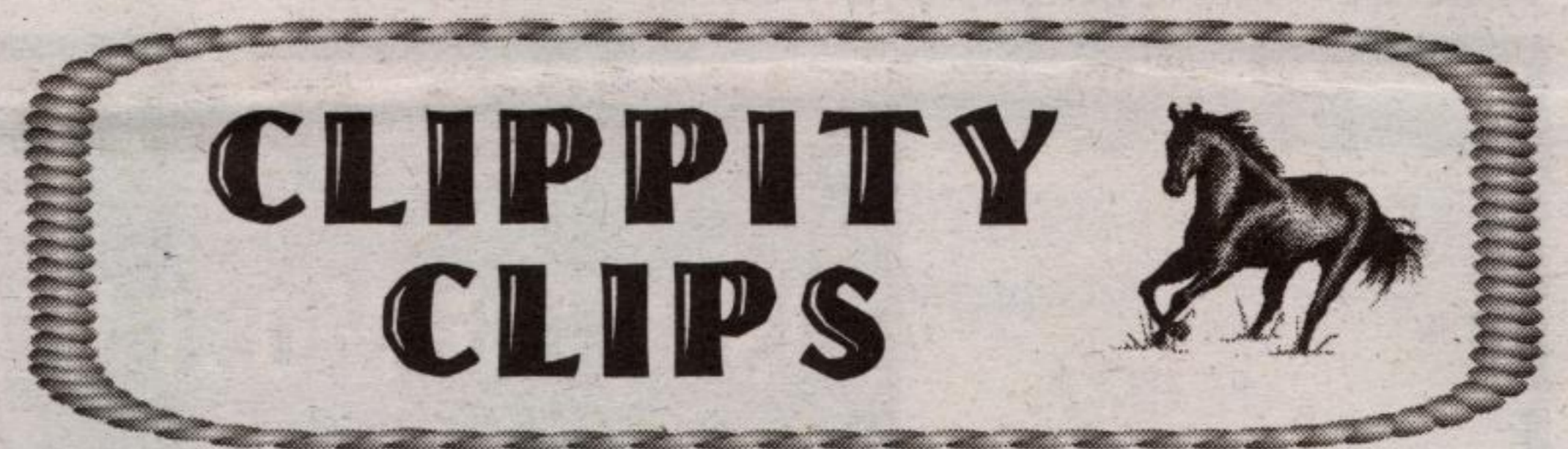
Everyone must have access to and wear ASTM/SEI approved helmets and wear boots with a heel of no less than 1.5 centimeters in length. This is law under Bill 12 - Act to increase the safety of equestrian riders.

The Association of Riding Establishments of Ontario, who is

partnered with The Ontario Equestrian Federation, has listings of English, Western, Carriage and Trail riding sites that must meet standards for the safety and professionalism in the horse industry. Their toll free number is 1-877-441-7112 and the website is [www.horse.on.ca](http://www.horse.on.ca).

It can be as relaxing or as challenging as you like with recreational riding and lessons, to competitions that you can enter at any level. I know it has affected me enough personally to leave a career in the city, to be with horses full time as my career.

There's nothing like horseback riding and the ability to share that experience with others. The people who are out riding are there because they enjoy it and want to be there. It only adds to the fun. I am over 40 and I love it.



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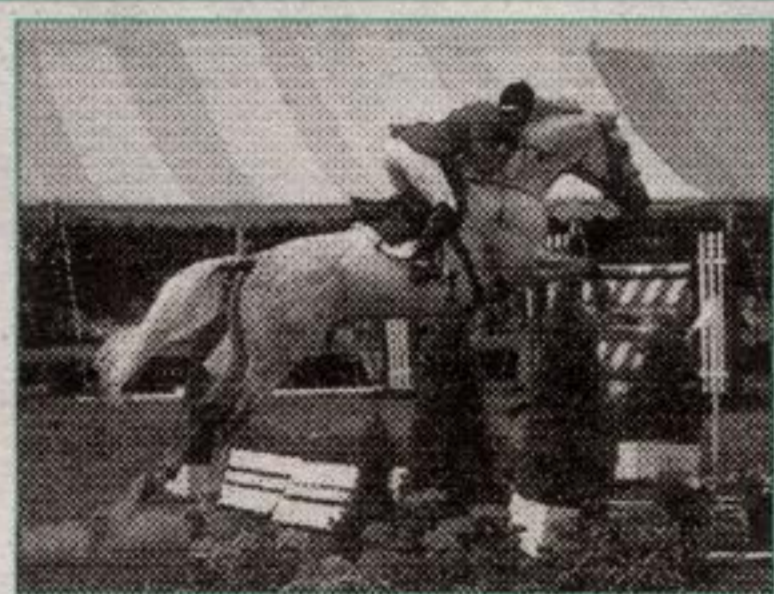
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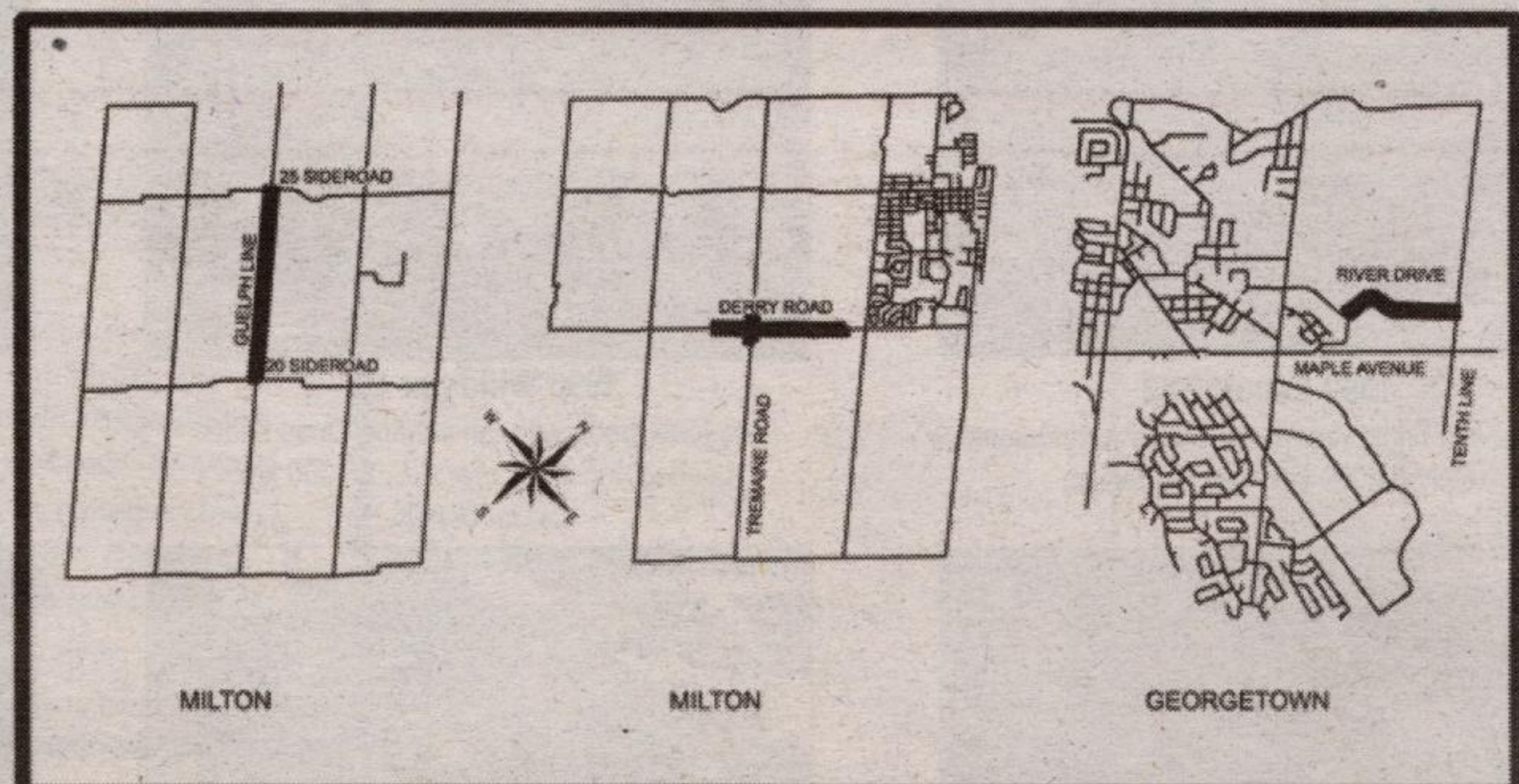
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