



## CLIPPITY CLIPS

# Mohawk's profits benefit all

BY KAREN DALLIMORE

Mohawk Raceway had a tough start 40 years ago. Raceway manager, Ed Bradley, will never forget opening night, April 26, 1963. It was cold. It was snowing. There were no doors on the grandstand, and the snow was blowing in the north entrance. Everybody was already working with gloves on, and then the boiler broke down. "That kind of stuff went on for a week before we got it all sorted out," recalls Mr. Bradley. At that time, Campbellville seemed like a strange place to want to put a racetrack.

Wolf von Richthofen, a director of the Jockey Club, lived on the Guelph Line. He convinced Jockey Club Chairman of the Board, E.P. Taylor, that the 400 acres of rocks and trees just north of Highway 401

would be an ideal place to build one of three tracks that would provide, along with Greenwood and Garden City, a circuit for standardbred racing in Ontario.

Elgin Armstrong of Armbr Construction had the contract to excavate the site. According to Ed Bradley, taming the rocky site cost Mr. Armstrong twice as much in broken machinery as his company earned from the contract.

There wasn't even an on-ramp to access the 401 westbound at the time: You had to turn around on a side road if you wanted to go to London.

The racetrack has proven to be a winner despite the odds. Even in the early days, Mohawk was able to attract top talent. In 1967, the Can-Am Pacing Series was touted as the richest harness race in Ontario's history, offering a record purse of \$27,800. Horses like McByrd, Levin Hanover and Meadow Paige; and drivers like George Sholty, Billy Haughton and Ken Galbraith were lured to Mohawk to compete in the travelling road show. The team of leading driver Stanley Dancer and three-year-old colt Nevele Dancer was one of the

favourites, having posted a mile of 1:57 3/5 at Vernon Downs earlier that year. Purses have continued to increase, and race records continue to be shattered. Last year Mohawk hosted its first million-dollar race, the Canadian Trotting Classic. Last September, three-year-old colt pacer Red River Hanover set an amazing track record of 1:49.3 for the driver John Campbell and trainer William Robinson.

In 1998, the Ontario Harness Racing Industry Association successfully lobbied the government to reduce the tax take on pari-mutuels from 5 per cent to .5 per cent in order to provide additional capital for renovations to the track and buildings. In August 1999, the Woodbine Entertainment Group became the landlord for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation, placing 750 slot machines at its Mohawk facility, one of fifteen racetrack slots locations in the province.

The successful marriage of the two different forms of gaming, one

of chance and one of handicapping, has helped to revitalize the standardbred industry.

Milton receives five percent of gross revenues from the first 450 slot machines, and two percent of gross revenues from the additional machines. This added up to over \$2.6 million for the Town in the first six months of operation. Ten per cent of the gross slots revenue goes to the track, and another ten per cent is used to increase purses.

For Halton, Mohawk has provided a great boost to local agriculture and tourism, and the trickle-down effect on the local economy is huge. Tourists are coming in from all over the world to watch standard bred racing at one of the top tracks in North America. Horsemen are buying trucks and trailers, hay and grain, farms, food and fuel, and they are investing in breeding stock. Training centres, like fitness clubs, are popping up all around the countryside, where equine athletes are treated like Olympians with access to swimming pools, training

tracks and mechanical exercise machines.

"We hope to continue to build on the momentum," says Bruce Murray, Manager of Media and Community Relations for the Woodbine Entertainment Group. The future looks bright for this 40-year-old, world-class facility.

## Organics

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thinning is all done by hand, not by using hormone-based sprays. His regular customers don't seem to mind paying a premium. "We are what we eat. That old saying has been around for years, and it's starting to sink in," says Paul.

Two-thirds of the 33 vendors at the Milton Farmers' Market have been there for over 20 years. "We try not to be a re-sellers market," says Sandy Martin, Executive Director of the Milton Chamber of Commerce. Local vendors offer a full range of fruits and vegetables, honey, jam, maple syrup, bedding plants, baked goods, meat, cheese, and a few crafts to round out the offering.

With Milton growing at a rate of 12 per cent a year, it is the fastest growing municipality in Ontario. "There's always a fear that we'll lose our identity as a rural community," says Ms. Martin. "The market is what keeps us grounded in our agricultural past, present and future."

The Milton Farmers' Market, located on Main Street between Martin and James, opens on May 24 for its 31st year and continues every Saturday morning, rain or shine, until the end of October.

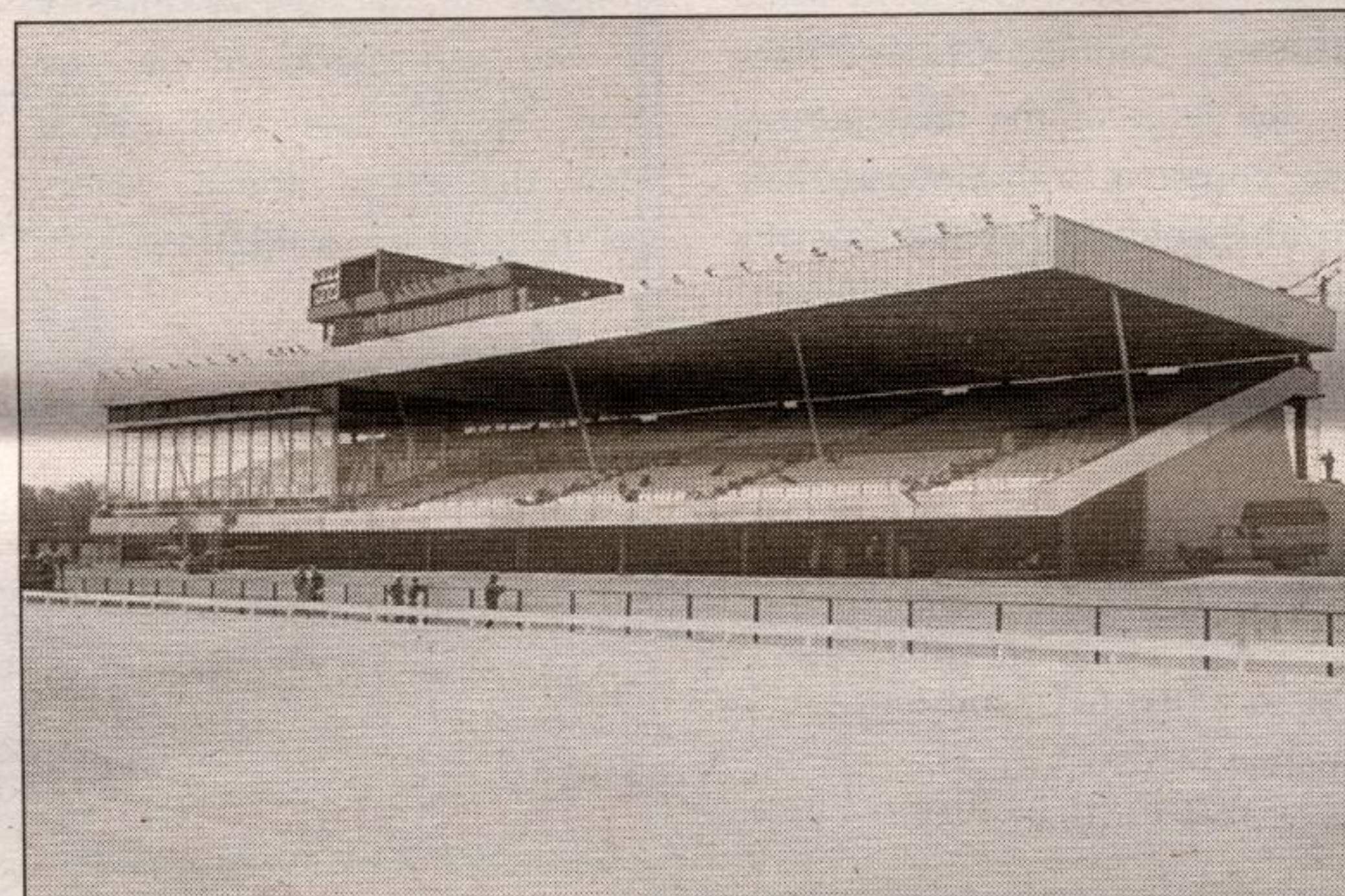
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The newly completed Mohawk Raceway, April 1963

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