

Go To Guys

Whether we live in the city or country we've all got our stable of go-to guys. I'm talking about competent, reliable trades people you trust. There's the plumbing guy, the heating guy, the painting guy.....you get the idea. Assembling that squad of pros is not unlike choosing a football team.

When you first move in to a new area, usually you have to say "goodbye" to your old team and begin recruiting a new one. This I call training camp. If I hire a drywall guy to box in some ductwork and he makes a smartass comment like, "who did your electrical?" he becomes the first guy cut from the team. To me, that's like the kicker telling the quarterback how to throw the ball. Shut up and box in the damn duct, ok Mr. Know-it-all! And don't let the poorly hung door hit ya on the way out.

It's not enough to simply pick your starting line-up either. You've gotta have some guys ridin' the pine in case one of your stars goes down. Let's face it, almost all of your premier guys came off the bench to shine at one time or another, so you may be grooming a future hall-of-famer and not even know it.

The only difference between the city and country are the number of specialists involved. And in most cases the country teams are more well rounded or... expensive. Beyond the mainstays you've got the pond guy, the septic guy, the fuel guy, the well guy, the gravel guy, the garbage guy, the mail guy, the backhoe guy, the tractor guy. That's a lot of butt cleavage. By the way, it's never a good sign if you have to call the well guy and septic guy on the same day.

The well guy I found to be quite chatty for some reason. Maybe 'informative' is the word I should use.

I called him because, of course, I had no water coming out of my pipes. My wife's been saying that for years. The bad news was that I had a 200-foot well. The good news was that, after I explained the situation, he thought I should be calling the pump guy. See the difference between the well guy and pump guy was... oh... I don't know... \$10,000.00. Much to my delight it was about the pump guy, so after he drained my pressure tank and re-pressurized it I had water and a bill of just over \$100.00. This was one instance where referred knowledge from one trades person to another actually worked. But watch it.

See, you're not the only one who knows that you need a finely tuned squad of contractors. They know it too.

If your roofer is up there scattering 30 year old shingles all over your property and pipes up, "You know, these gutters are toast eh! I know this guy..." RED FLAG, RED FLAG!!!! You have just run head long into, what I call, The Backscratch Theory. Of course he "knows a guy"! It's the same guy who got him his last roofing job while replacing a downspout two weeks earlier. I may be paraphrasing, but I'm sure that conversation went a little like this: "You know, you're roof's toast eh! I know this guy..." The Backscratch Theory can take you to the poorhouse in a matter of weeks. Cause the gutter guy knows a framer guy; the framer guy knows a door and window guy and god forbid that the door and window guy knows a foundation guy. There's probably some numbered bank account in the Grand Cayman

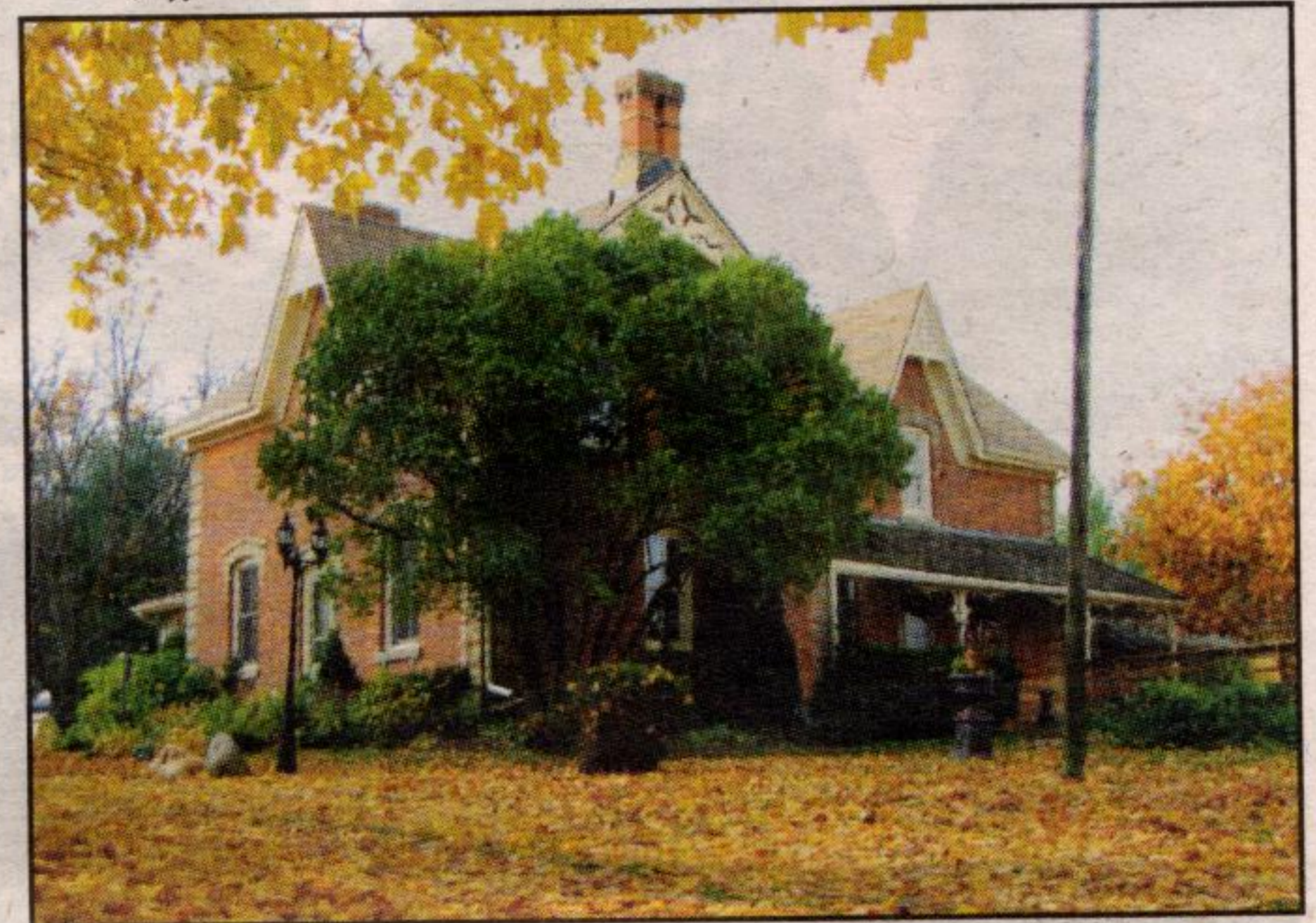
Jeff Lumby's view from the country

Islands where all "Backscratch" monies go. And the reason you can't get a hold of any of these guys one day in January is because they're all hammered in some conga line at Stake Bay on your dime. I don't have the historical data to back me up, but I believe the Backscratch Theory to be responsible for the fall of the Roman Empire.

Country rule number 16: You must cultivate a group of qualified, trustworthy trades people you can call on a moments notice.

Oh, and one more thing. It's not considered rude if you don't shake the Septic guy's hand, but it'll go a long way if you do.

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peepers. The noise in the spring was deafening. Over the years the noise has been diminishing to the point that the neighbourhood blue heron doesn't bother visiting for lunch any more. It's about time we become serious about air and water pollution and force legislators to act.

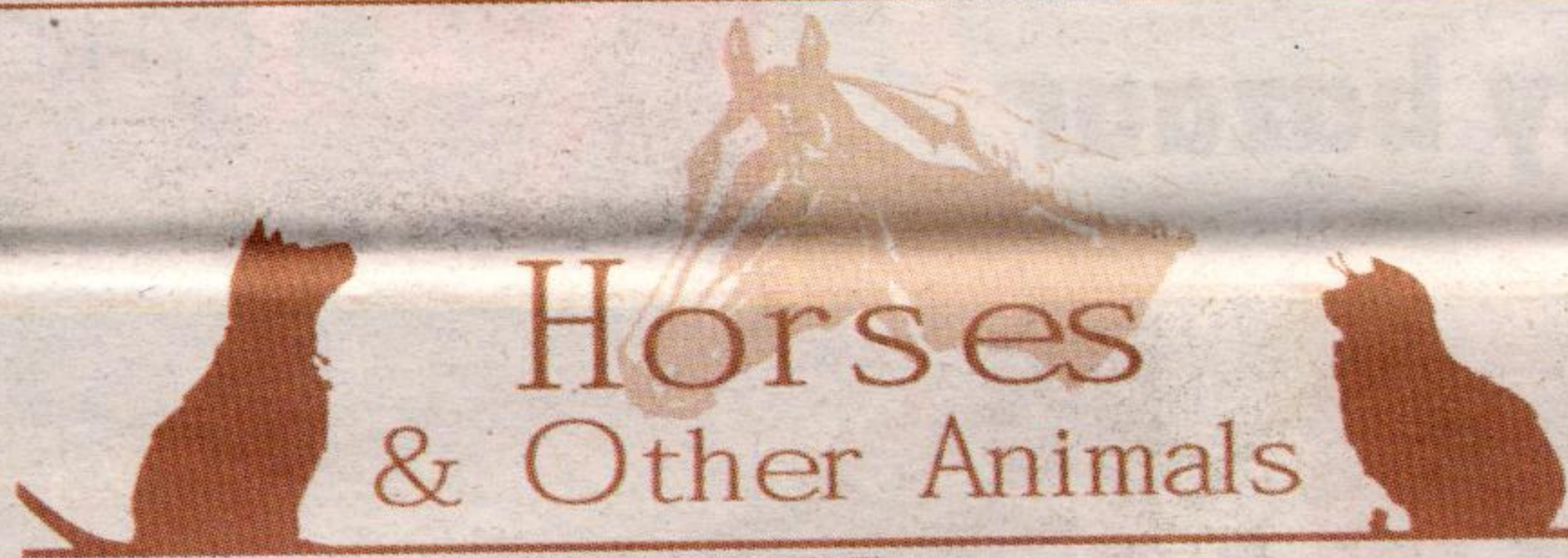
The lower than low are at it again. Animal abuse knows no bounds. The latest is the dumping of a pair of domesticated ferrets, one brown and the other white in a Toronto Park. Please don't abuse your animals when your fetish for ownership has been satisfied. Take them to the SPCA or a rescue organization. Better still, don't bother owning an animal in the first place. Usually animal abusers end up as people abusers.

Helsinki Zoos' Leif Blomqvist attempted his own version of animal abuse, with his plan to cull fourteen baboons from this Finland zoo. The country rose up in an uproar after the media publicized the planned execution. A stay has been enacted while they find alternate locations for the apes.

A female Moose on the loose in a North Bay, Ontario, neighbourhood was tranquilized and moved back to her own environment, unlike the Black Bear that wandered into the Hamilton area and was shot to death. Next time take a lesson and tranquilize, then move the animal back to its own environment.

Bears attacked five elderly people in three different regions of Japan. Experts put the incidents down to an acorn shortage. The so called experts did not think that if they gathered acorns from other areas and left them under the trees for the bears to eat, the attacks would not occur. The bears are more than aware that the acorns are available for a very short time and after satisfying their feeding needs will move on.

A.W. FINN IS THE PUBLISHER OF THE RIDER, ONTARIO'S ALL BREED HORSE PUBLICATION



By A.W. Finn

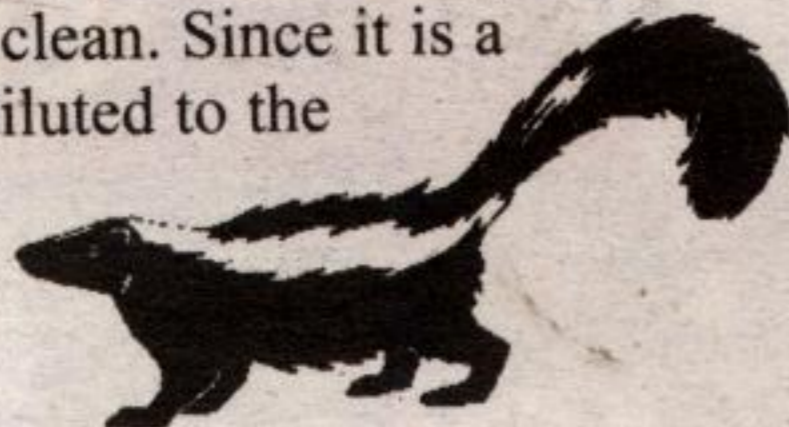
There are more than 150 different breeds and types of horses in the world. The development of each of them has been influenced by man. Domestication resulted in selective breeding and, in many instances, more nutritious feeding, both of which led to an increase in the size or the quality of the horse. In future columns I will explain each breed and their purpose.

The town council of Grimsby, Ontario has decided not to live-trap coyotes and relocate them. Their decision to force humans to co-exist with this marvellous and cunning critter is worthy and noble, but be wary that these critters don't end up in Grimsby neighbourhoods attacking dogs and cats. It is about time that humans realize the continued encroachment of subdivisions into their domain is causing the problem. Any horse owner feeling that coyotes will harm their horses, get a donkey. They have a superb instinct for warding off these type of predators.

The Boston Globe reports that a study revealed what we have known for years, that frogs, toads and other amphibians are in serious danger of extinction. I have a pond and it has always been over populated with frogs, especially spring

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