

Canter Call

Family fun has become John and Cheryl's business



Monday and Mundy

Riding Instructor Don Betts looks on as George Mundy and Alredy Monday leap over a specially designed fence. Don, who has worked

with gold medal winning horses and been to the Olympics and the Pan-American games, started work as the riding instructor at Canter Call three

weeks ago.

Staff photo

by Terri Howell

In the Lackie household, horseback riding is a family affair.

Mother and father—John and Cheryl Lackie ride and their children Michele, David and Robert are rapidly learning how to control their little steeds.

In fact, riding has become so much a part of the family's day to day life that John and Cheryl have decided to turn it into a full time business.

Out on Tiny Concession 13, halfway between the beaches road and Wahnekewening Beach, 50 acres of land is quickly being transformed into an elaborate equestrian centre that could have jumped out of the English countryside.

Workmen are busily building an enormous arena and combination horse accommodation. Fences are being erected, hay is being cut, jumps are being constructed and tack is being cleaned. Everywhere you look people are busy working.

"My father didn't believe I was serious about horses," admits Cheryl as she tucks up one of her favourite horses and gets ready for daily lesson.

Her instructor Don Betts says, "Cheryl is a natural with horses. In fact she's good with any animal. They just love her."

Several years ago John and Cheryl Lackie's riding facilities consisted of a small paddock behind their Wahnekewening Beach house. When this became inadequate they built several large box stalls and a tack room at the back of a large garage on their 50-acre piece of land on the 13th concession.

"But we could only ride for six or seven months of the year. So we figured if we were going to build an arena we might as well make it pay for itself," says John Lackie with a laugh. And in the words of their recently hired riding instructor Don Betts, "it's going to be unique in this area."

The arena, which is nothing more than a skeleton shell right now, is going to be over size with an overhead heated lounge for people to watch the activity. Twenty-three box stalls and 14 standing stalls will be attached to the arena. This part of the construction is scheduled to be completed before the summer ends. If the response for riding lessons and boarding facilities is good, a second stage will be built adding 14 more box stalls and 11 more standing stalls.

Referring to a large blue print John Lackie explains that each person boarding a horse will have their own tack locker. A small retail store will sell everyday tack supplies for anyone in the area. There will also be a feed room and storage area attached to the arena.

As classy and elaborate as the center, called Canter Call sounds, the idea behind it is to let people have fun and enjoy their horses.

"It's going to be a fun place not just for shows but for people who enjoy riding," Don Betts commented. He explained that people will be able to board their horse and enjoy riding summer and winter. If they want some instruction he will be on hand to help them out.

As well as boarding horses, Canter Call will offer riding lessons to anyone. The Lackies have purchased a number of "school" horses for teaching lessons. At the moment all but a few of them are in another barn in quarantine. "just to make sure they are all good and healthy".

Cheryl and Don are extremely fussy about the care the horses get. They both believe that if a horse is treated well he will treat the rider well. They want the horses at Canter Call to get the best care available.

A nutrition expert has advised a good feed mix to serve the horses. He also gone over their hay fields pointing out the best. The stable will be fully licenced under the Riding Establishments Act and Don Betts will be on hand to advise on care and feeding.

"Three months ago I had doubts about the market," John Lackie says as he works on several make-shift stalls on the side of the garage. Five people have insisted on moving horses in already. "They don't want to wait until the work is finished."

Don Betts commented, "I think the stable will be full in no time." He says 60 people have already made inquiries about riding lessons which will begin next week.

If the results of a local horsheshow the Lackie's recently participated in are any indication, they are on the road to success.

Cheryl Lackie entered a turn-out class which was the first event she ever entered a horse in. She left the ring sporting a bright red first place ribbon.

The smile on her face and the little squeal of delight that followed, said it all.

Munich, Mexico City and Tiny Township

Horses and Don Betts go together

"Use your legs. Sit into him now.... Don't rush him. Don't rush him.... Just relax."

Instructor Don Betts guides two riders atop horses around the jumps and over them. His eyes are everywhere at once. He runs from jump to jump raising and lowering the bars depending on the horse that's going over.

"You can't rush a horse," he says explaining that horses have to be taught to jump just like their riders. He arranges a jump in a strong fashion so the horse must jump through two v-shaped logs propped up against jumping standards.

"It keeps the horse from moving from side to side as he jumps," Mr. Betts explains.

You don't have to spend much time in the ring with 26-year-old Don Betts and his riders to know that he knows what he's doing and his experience with horses and riders goes back a long way. Laughing he tells one rider his horse jumped the fence beautifully but he looked terrible. He warns the riders to watch their hands, sit up straight and above all relax.

"If you relax, the horse will relax," he says and sure enough when the rider lets loose the horse settles right down.

Don Betts started as the riding instructor at Canter Call on Tiny Concession 13 three weeks ago. He's as excited about the construction of Tiny Township's only equestrian centre as the owners John and Cheryl Lackie are.

"It's going to be just fantastic," he states with enthusiasm.

A Maritimer born and bred in small town New Brunswick, where he learned to ride, Don came to Ontario with the ambition to work and train with the best.

"I set my goals and went after them. I had to sell myself". And sell himself he did.

"I went to a blacksmith and said I wanted to work with horses. He mentioned it to Penny Lang and she mentioned it to Jim Elder," he said. "He thought I had a bit of talent in riding and gave me the chance to work for him."

Don started mucking out stalls on Elderberry Hill Farm in Aurora for Jim Elder, one of Canada's best equestrian riders. Before long he was riding and training the young upstart horses. Eventually he started riding Elder's best. During this time he helped train "The Immigrant", Canada's 1968 Olympic gold medal winning horse.

From Elderberry Farm, Don was off to the 1972 Olympics in Munich, Germany as the custodian and groom for the entire Canadian dressage team. In 1975 he took in the sights and sounds of Mexico City at the Pan-American Games as custodian of the show jumpers for the Canadian Equestrian Team. At both the Olympics and the Pan-Am Games Don helped with the intensive training period prior to the main events.

Don's experience with horses doesn't end here. With a chuckle he says he's been a stable manager, and farm manager for thoroughbred owner Warren Beasley. He's sold tack, taught

riding, worked for a farrier, coached junior riders and judged and announced at horse shows.

"I guess I've been in just about every aspect of riding," he says. Thinking for a moment he adds that he even worked with standardbreds for a short time.

As Don guides his riders around the ring and over the jump he is relaxed and easy with them. Although he takes the horses and riders very seriously he has the ability to laugh at their mistakes and make them laugh along with him. He's quick to praise and quick to point out mistakes.

He says he cares as much about the horse as he does about the rider.

"You have to treat them well," he says. They should be limbered up before going over jumps. "The horses here are going to have really good attention."

Don started giving regular riding lessons next week. Each one of his charges will get an individual lesson first so Don can assess the stage they are at. Then if they want group lessons, he can put people with the same ability into each group.

At the moment he is teaching John and Cheryl Lackie's three children. "I love it," he says with a smile.



Don Betts



Cheryl learns to jump

Everyone is a learner at Canter Call. Next week riding instructor Don Betts will start giving riding lessons to beginners, intermediates and ad-

vanced alike. On Wednesday he gave a demonstration lesson to Canter Call.

Staff photo



Heidi steps over jump

That's horse sense for you! Even though Rider Cheryl Lackie is prepared to jump, Heidi merely

stepped over the fence. No need to waste unnecessary energy.

Staff photo