

Eames family building olympic-sized dressage arena

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Staff Writer

An Olympic-sized indoor dressage arena, complete with a viewing area and a stable, is being built on the Ninth Line, north of St. John's Sideroad.

The 50 acres of land were purchased by the Eames family. Tony Eames is the president of Coca-Cola, Canada.

"It's for our daughter," said Robin Eames. "We were looking for land and this land was very, very beautiful."

The Eames are building the arena for their daughter Belinda, to assist her in her dream of becoming one of the best dressage riders in the world.

"I'm trying out for the Canadian Equestrian Team," said Belinda, who's been riding for more than 15 years.

Belinda is on the short list for the Canadian team — the trials are in the spring.

"It's classical riding," said Belinda. "Horses do tricks, they walk sideways. Back in history, everyone does a pass and you're judged on your pass."

Last year Belinda was ranked ninth in North America by the North American Riders Association.

"I ride almost every day, pretty much six days a

week," said Belinda. "That's why we decided to build the barn. Now I'll have the barn and (I can) teach and ride."

As with many things, the earlier one starts riding the better.

"The younger you are the easier it is to get going," explained Belinda. "Right now that's what I really want to do, I want to teach young riders about dressage and riding."

Belinda will have lots of room to do just that — on the 50-acre site there will be two arenas, one indoors the other outdoors.

Both are the Olympic standard of 20 metres by 60 metres. The barn will house 12 horses in the stalls.

"We do one or two of these every year," said Gary

Von Bolderen, of Dutch Masters Construction, the company which designed and is building the arena. The Eames also own about 50 acres of additional land to the south of the property, on which they may build another house for themselves.

Stouffville's sandy base soil is perfect for horses — after a rain the soil doesn't clump together as it does in clay-based areas, according to Bolderen.

"I've done quite a bit of work in the area, the people are always good to work with," said Bolderen.

He supervises the whole construction project, from hiring excavator Doug Greenwood — who worked on Magna International president Frank Stronach's riding stable in Aurora — to making sure all the necessary building permits have been purchased.

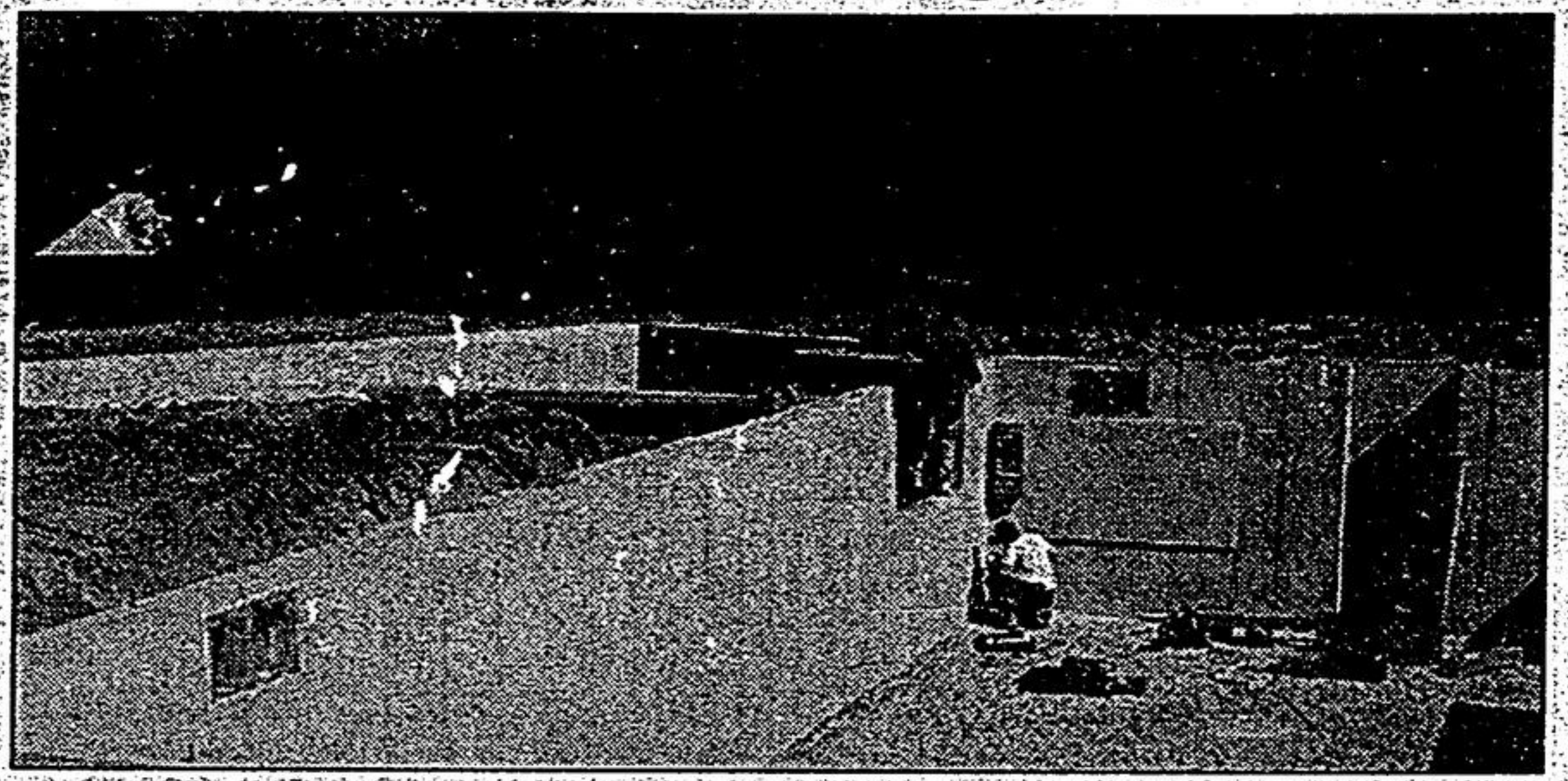
"We went around to all the neighbors and informed them about what we are doing," said Bolderen.

"You don't start up a chainsaw in the country without someone else knowing."

Originally born in Australia, Belinda also lived in nine other countries, including Singapore, Hong Kong, Germany and the U.S.

Belinda said she's glad the family settled in Canada and she's proud she became a Canadian.

"I love Canada, I just love it up here," she said.



MAJOR PROJECT: Workers finish the basement of Belinda Eames' new home on Ninth Line north of Stouffville. In the background, trees hide most of what will be a large horse barn and arena.

Photo by SJOERD WITTEVEEN

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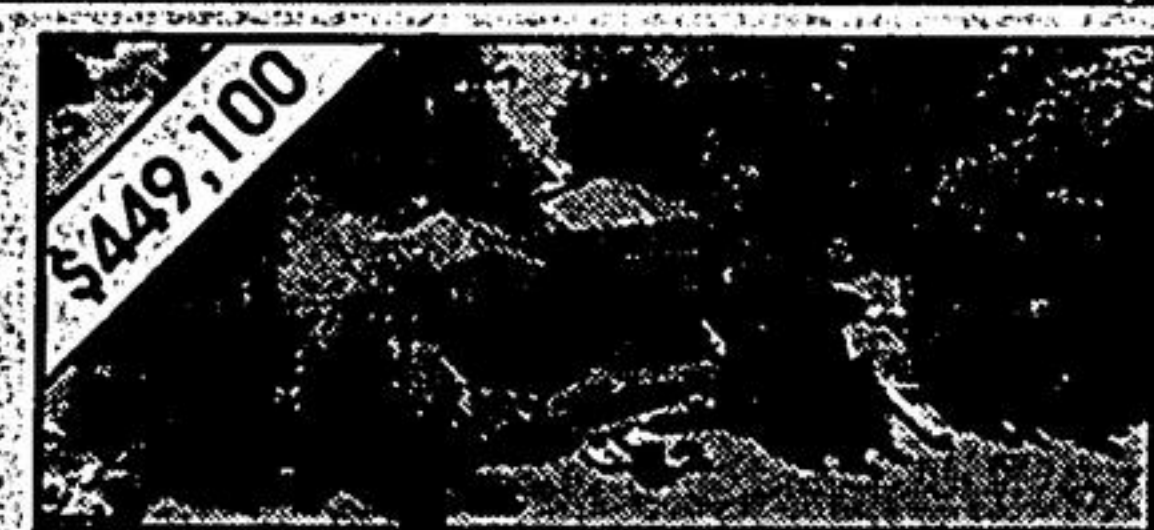
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