

# Horsing around

## Open hunt shows: classy

THE FIRST and last time I ever was on any representative of the horse family came a few years after the end of World War

This short-lived experience in the saddle was occasioned by an itinerant photographer when he led a black and white Shetland pony through our small town neighborhood, seeking gullible mothers who would pay for such a picture of their little monsters.

How much he collected from my own mother, I know not. As album pictures go, I much prefer one taken about 40 years later in which I am seen talking nose to nose with the great Citation over a fence at Columbian Farm.

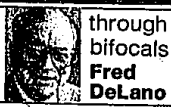
In sharp contrast to an equestrian career that ended with the click of a camera, the parental decision in Carla Potters' case was to plunk down for the whole horse, not just a snapshot.

Seven years ago, at the age of 8, Carla learned to ride at a summer farm school. In many ways, she typifies hundreds and hundreds of youngsters in southeastern Michigan.

Carla this week completed her sophomore year in high school and an immediate vacation highlight awaits her when she goes with her folks to the Motor City and Detroit Horse shows at the Bloomfield Open Hunt Club, even though it will be as a spectator and not as a contestant.

SHE HAS thrilled to the Olympic-level jumpers and nationally ranked hunters several times previously at the hunt club, declaring, "That's where I'd eventually like to compete. I've dreamed many times of being on the United States Equestrian Team, but that involves getting the right horse, too."

It's a dream no doubt shared by all the youngsters who care for their mounts at the dozens of riding academies and board



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farms in the area. For one brief period each June these kids and their elders get to see the best of horses and riders at the Bloomfield Hills events, evidence that for some, dreams do come true.

The current Potter steed, My Buddy, is a 17-year-old dappled bay gelding, standing a fraction over 16 hands. Carla is being trained in dressage, cross country and show jumping, riding an average of five days a week in a schedule crowded with numerous other interests as befits a teenager. For that purpose, My Buddy is adequate. For high grade competition, no.

Good horses aren't cheap. In fact, Harry Niederlander, honorary chairman of the Bloomfield Open Hunt Club shows, was quoted three years ago as saying, "People are paying \$600,000 and \$700,000 for a good Grand Prix horse. It wasn't very long ago that if you paid \$50,000, everyone across the country knew about it."

But sometimes, somehow they do come along and the crop of brilliant saddlesmiths developed in Michigan has matched the horseflesh. A few who come quickly to mind, spawned in large part at the Bloomfield Open Hunt, include Katie Monahan, Scott Niederlander, Cindy Carlson, Paula Imman, Polly Howard, Darcy Shelley, Julie Bacon and the Cross pair, Amy and Andrew, just in recent years.

ACTION AT the hunt club in the numerous classifications is almost continuous in three rings each day from early morning

until late afternoon. On Friday and Saturday nights this week and next, the open jumpers become the stars. Therein lies the major box office appeal.

The headliner this Saturday will be the \$20,000 Chrysler Motor City Grand Prix and on Saturday, June 21, it will be the \$35,000 Mercedes North American Grand Prix.

As one who has become a real fan of these daring but highly skilled riders in the last dozen years, let me tell you a tale which demonstrates what quality you will be seeing if you get to the Bloomfield Open Hunt.

By the way, it's at East Long Lake and Kensington Road.

It was the night of the 1983 renewal of the North American, which that year carried a purse of \$25,000. Thirty-six of the best jumpers on this continent were entered. Only six completed the testing course without a fault, thus qualifying for a jump off against the clock.

IAN MILLAR of the Canadian Olympic team, aboard Foresight, negotiated the tightened series of fences in 47.606 seconds to take the victory from Joe Fargis who hails from Petersburg, Va., and who was in the saddle on Touch of Class, the only mare in the field. The Fargis/Touch of Class duo were clocked in 47.835 seconds.

Now switch to the Olympic Games of 1984 at Los Angeles. Spearheading an American equestrian team which made its most successful showing ever was this same Joe Fargis and the same mare, Touch of Class. Taking the gold medal in show jumping, Fargis cleared 90 of 91 fences perfectly in both the individual and team jumping competitions. Millar? Yes, he was there, too, and placed 14th.

That's the Bloomfield Open Hunt quality. If you find something better, buy it.

## Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. None can be returned. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. Letters should be limited to 300 words in most cases. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

## Thanks much for coverage

To the editor:

Thanks to Loraine McClish, my job as the chairman of publicity was a success, you made me look good. The coverage was so well done; excitingly presented and abundant. The club was very happy and pleased. You really got across all the ideas I had, but you certainly embellished them with your writing. I especially enjoyed how you combined several thoughts into a single story.

Our president, Gwen Tomkow, was pleased with the story surrounding her. She certainly was one happy person.

The photographer, Rick Smith, did a great job and certainly made all the artists feel special.

Your support in promoting our club certainly helped to make it a very successful show. It is very gratifying to be part of the Farmington Artists Club, and especially because of the support and cooperation we receive from the Farmington community. We certainly hope our efforts opens the possibilities for us to become part of a Cultural Center in Farmington.

Again, many thanks to both you and Rick Smith for an excellent job. It was certainly a pleasure meeting and working with you.

Joan Gregory  
Farmington Artist Club

## There is no fast solution

To the editor:

Lawyer-bashing is in vogue in the pages of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and elsewhere these days.

The insurance industry and its allies, including your Tim Richard, find attorneys to be the con-

venient culprits of "the liability crisis."

The latest in a long list of columns critical of plaintiffs' personal injury attorneys is Richard's "Lawyers cash in on roads" (April 24).

He observes: "... the next time we damage a car wheel on an unrepaired pothole, maybe we ought to sue the lawyers."

His example reflects too narrow a view of the problem, and totally ignores the victims of defective roadways who are concerned not with damaged "wheels," but with permanent disability and suffering sustained in accidents.

ARGUMENT BY example should include one from my law practice!

In 1982, a beautiful 21-year-old co-ed at a small Michigan college was a passenger in a car being driven on a rural roadway. It was a dark night, there were no streetlights, no speed or warning signs along the road, and no barrier at a point where the road abruptly ended.

The car was not being driven fast, but the driver was unable to stop when the road ended without warning. The car struck a tree and my client hit the windshield with her head.

She fought back from her injuries, but she was left with permanent facial paralysis, double vision and the loss of half her hearing, not to mention the pain and emotional loss associated with such disabling injuries.

The accident could have been prevented. The county road commission knew about the danger on this road; there had been previous accidents at the same site. But warning signs and other safety measures were not added until after this girl was hurt.

SUCH NEGLIGENCE resulted in a sizeable settlement against the road commission.

Who among us would take this money in exchange for the personal loss this girl has sustained?

What motivation would the road commission have had to make this particular road safer and prevent future accidents had they not been sued?

This example is not unique. Each year in the United States, 3.5 million people are injured in traffic accidents, causing some 50,000 deaths and twice that number of permanent cripples.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation in a 1967 report, defects in the design and maintenance of the road system was the largest single contributing cause of this highway slaughter.

Attorneys representing injured persons fight for improved safety on the highways. As a group they don't deserve to be singled out for blame because they make a living at the same time.

MY FRIENDS in the liability insurance business who complain about increasing premiums for their clients because of the "liability crisis," at the same time quietly acknowledge that they've never made so much money themselves.

When is the last time anyone heard of an insurance company voluntarily opening up its financial records to disclose the true losses or profits that they're making during this "crisis"?

As with most complex social problems, simple solutions can be elusive. Across-the-board blame heaped on attorneys and the simplistic answers offered by the insurance industry and their apologists serve no useful purpose.

Reasonable and fair reforms in the tort liability system can be accomplished when all relevant facts are known, if the discussion and debate remains free of counter-productive prejudice and rhetoric.

Alan C. Helmkamp,  
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Alan Helmkamp is an attorney with offices in Livonia.  
— Editor

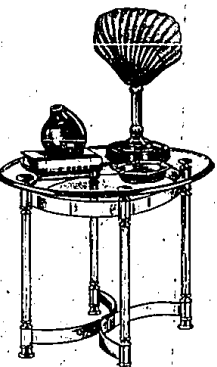
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