

Vet gains fame with Pleasant Colony

Continued from Page 1D

"Jan never liked playing with dolls," her father said. "Her best friend was a colt."

By age 15, Runkle had a job cleaning stalls at West Bloomfield's Haverhill Riding Stable. After

her sophomore year at MSU, Runkle entered the vet program two years early with a 3.8 grade point average.

But it hasn't been all honor rolls and trophies for Runkle.

"UNTIL RECENTLY, there had never been a woman vet around racehorses. My first months of work were a little rough," recalled Runkle, whose New Year's resolution is to work no more than 75 hours a week.

"Since I'm short, people looked at me thinking I was a child. But after I was established in my office on the grounds and had a few good clients, I began to make a name for myself."

"You attract a lot of positive and negative attention because (as a woman veterinarian) you're a novelty," she said. "Dr. Alan Hartman, the traditional practitioner at the Derby, wouldn't even come by Campo's barn. He was offended by my presence."

"In some ways, Runkle's femininity and physical size are assets."

"I have no desire to take on any height," she said. "Horses react favorably to small people because

it's a non-threatening situation. I know John Campbell, among a lot of other people, thinks women are good working with horses."

"Horses are the same as dogs — a dog would never attack a child, but might just tear a man apart."

WHAT'S IN THE cards for Runkle?

"I like to come home doing what I'm doing," she said. "I may not make a lot of money as an M.D., but we don't have to worry as much about malpractice. We're not stuck indoors, our jobs have more variety, and we've got a better lifestyle."

"I hope to keep working with Pleasant Colony.

"He's at his peak and in perfect physical condition.

"I expect him to win the Travers at Saratoga (N.Y., on Aug. 18). I see no reason to compromise."

Pleasant Colony has a terrific future."

Runkle's future doesn't sound too bad, either.

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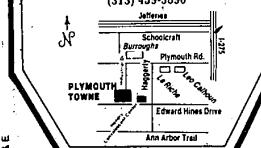
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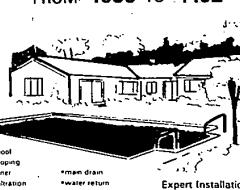
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