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which ran the length of the stable, could hold a total of 5,000 bales of hay. Catwalks above the aisle on both ends allowed stable workers to access the hay, which they flaked off and dropped into the hay racks of each stall.

By the time the grooms finished up their morning duties, Art would be back and ready to train.

"Every groom had six horses on his string," said Usnick. "A lot of times you'd clean their stalls out in the morning, and get one or two worked before lunch. Then you'd work the other four that afternoon. And those six horses were your responsibility as far as their care."

It was the grooms' job to keep the horses coming for the trainers, who worked them outside on the sawdust and cinder tracks.

"Most of the time, except for a harness horse, Art would ride one day, and jog them the next. A harness horse got jogged every day. Every day they got worked, and they got exercised every day."

Perhaps Usnick, now a locomotive engineer for the Kansas City Southern, earned his precision railroad timing during these early years.

"A lot of times when they were out jogging a horse or riding a horse, then you'd come in and strip your next horse. You'd tie them up and take the tail set off, and start brushing them up; then you'd kind of peek out for Art or Jimmy to come back in, then go down and take their horse. If it needed walked, you'd walk it, and got your next horse ready to go. Yeah, it was a great time."

Tom is still amazed at the caliber of horses that came through this stable. Pointing out different stalls, he said, "Tashi Ling was in the third stall. She was a world champion in fine harness. Courageous Connie was a five-gaited champion. She was a real light chestnut mare with a flax painted tail, and a great head set. She was in the first stall. Colonel Boyle was down at the other end of the barn. He was six-time world champion.

"Oh my gosh, there's been so many ... Sea Beauty, she stood right along in here." Recalling the night she won at Madison Square Garden, he added, "She could trot this high. As a matter of fact, an auctioneer once said she could trot higher than a woodpecker's hole. A lot of motion, that trot."

These finely-bred horses were in their element, showing at gaited events that became a spectacle of horsemanship, from the music and lights of the arena, to the exhilaration of the audience, to the high-stepping vigor of the animals, right down to showmanship of the trainer.

The horses were shown in both riding and fine-harness classes. Art had been known to take as many as 16 horses to a single event, where he, or Jim, or the horses' owners showed them. There were three-gaited events – familiar to all horsemen as the walk, trot, and canter – and the five gaited events peculiar to the Saddlebred, which adds the slow gait and rack to the repertoire.

"A rack is a four-beat, man-made gait, and this is the only breed of horse that can do it," said

Usnick. "A rack is real smooth. Only one foot's on the ground at a time. It's real fast, and it's really cool."

He said the Saddle Horse build makes this breed perfect for showing.

"They're fine through the barrel, and they've got nice long necks that come right up out of their withers. And when they set their head, they look like a swan. Of course, that tail's up over their back, and they have a big eye and animated way of going. They just don't look like any other horse."

Jim Simmons describes his father as a near "workaholic," and his sister Jane recalls their dad was often on the show circuit for weeks at a time. But Art knew a winning outcome could build status for the horses, and prestige for the stable.

Usnick went along to some of these events as a groom. What was it like?

"Hard work. No showers. You slept in a stall. We had canvass we'd put around a stall, and call it tack rooms or show rooms. We had cots, and you just slept in there. And we had to haul everything. Everything you needed for every horse, you had to take with you. It was just like taking the whole barn."

But the work paid off with ribbons and trophies, and they came

pouring in for Art, who was a real showman in the ring. He was particularly colorful at the harness class, especially when it came time for the judge to turn the trainers loose by announcing, "Show your horse!"

"That's when those guys whistle 'em up, right? And Art, he would drive that thing," grins Usnick. "He'd have his foot up there in that high harness buggy, hanging out the side (of the cart). I don't know whether he was showing that horse, or the horse was showing him."

Usnick said a champion horse could be as big of a showboat in the arena as the trainer.

"You can just listen for that applause to follow that horse around the ring, and those horses get bigger, and bigger, and bigger," he said, puffing out his chest. "There was a fine harness horse called the Lemon Drop Kid, and the more those people clapped, the bigger he got. He'd just look up in the crowd as he trotted by ...and you couldn't turn that horse's head straight if you'd had a come-along."

With the experience he gained at Art's stable, Usnick went on to train and show his own Saddlebred and society horses, and personally owns a 17-year-old Saddlebred named Catch Me Sir, a mare he got from Jim

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\$800,000 in donations and grants have made it possible to complete half the building's stabilization and restoration, although workers had to literally slice the structure in two.

"I think most people never, ever thought it could look like this again," said Littrell, noting that Five Oaks Associates, of Centralia, was able to reuse the original vertical sideboards of the barn in the outer restoration. Now painted, these boards make the stable look virtually brand new.

"It's really exciting to see at least half the stable restored," she added. "It makes it all worthwhile."

Although a lagging economy makes fundraising harder for the remainder of the project, the committee remains undaunted. Just walking through these stable doors still fires Bobette's imagination.

## OUR SIDE from page 4

in America and we are part of the greatest economic machine that the world has ever known. We hear so much about China? The American economy is 4 times that of China. America is not just a place. America is a way of living that unleashes the power of individuals, entrepreneurs and those dreamers who live to build into an economic model whose synergies multiplies exponentially the efforts of the few to the benefit of the many. Who are these individuals and entrepreneurs and dreamers that build? We have met them and they are us – that's right YOU and ME. The country as a whole and our industry itself has challenges but all can be surmounted. All progress will begin with individuals taking

tion.

She's reminded that at the end of her one and only harness ride, Art swung the jogging cart around the far end of the stable, where she slid out and strode through these very doors. Inside the cavernous edifice, Wilson was transfixed as she watched a groomsman lead a 1,200-pound Saddlebred down the sawdust aisle, and the power of its hooves striking the floor made her catch her breath.

"I think, if people could just feel the thunder of those hooves, they'd never let this stable go."

And for those fighting so hard to save Simmons Stables, that's the history. Yes, that's the vision.

**(EDITOR'S NOTE: For more information, or to make a donation, contact Simmons Stables Preservation Fund, Inc., at 573-581-8873.)**

action; individuals taking responsibility for ourselves, our government and our future. Our efforts here are not efforts in a wilderness. Although we can't always see it, our people are working right now. Our dreamers are dreaming and our builders are building. As for me this week, I think I'm gonna build that new stretch of fence I've put off for months. After that I'm gonna work on building four kids to grow up to be better than me. What about you? What are you going to work on this week, our government could use a little work.

That's all for this week – rose colored glasses in place and optimism tank full.

See you at the sale!



**THE SIMMONS TOUCH:** Jim Simmons continues the horse traditions of his father at his farm outside Mexico where he trains horses like Twilight, shown in the customary tail set harness of the Saddlebred. Jim remembers when the Audrain County Fair horse show was bigger than that of the Missouri State Fair, reflecting the status of the Saddle Horse industry in this area. "They used to say, if you can win at the Mexico fair, you can win about anywhere." (Advocate photo by Susan Denkler)

Simmons.

He and Jim are still close friends, sharing a special bond that just happens to connect to a big white barn, and a man born with a special talent for horses.

"Art had a gift," said Usnick. "I've had old trainers tell me that when you or I ride a horse, we're just riding a horse. But Art would help the horse ... with his hands, with his body, with his weight,

with his feet. While he was on that horse, he would actually help that horse go. And how he did it, no one knows."

**(EDITOR'S NOTE: Some background for this story was taken from the book, "Arthur Simmons: American Icon of the Horse World – A Daughter's Memories," by Jane E.B. Simmons.)**

## NAIS from page 1

values its position on international trade more than it values its mandate to protect animal and plant industries against foreign animal diseases. This is illustrated quite well by USDA's proposed plan to partition known foot and mouth virus-infected countries into specific regions. This partition plan will result in USDA clearing particular portions of a foot and mouth virus-infected country to imports of live animals and raw meat into the United States. When challenged on this potential epidemiological disaster, USDA said they are bound to allow such a ludicrous trade relationship with foot and mouth virus-infected countries because of the World Trade Organization treaties and because of USDA's acquiescence to the Office International des Epizooties in Paris, France. Just like the response from Under Secretary Bruce Knight, it now appears inevitable that USDA will allow potentially foot and mouth virus-infected animals and meat into the boundaries of our sovereign nation because the OIE tells USDA they have no choice in the matter. NAIS is really an international program designed by the OIE to facilitate trade with known disease-infected countries. Once NAIS is in place, our nation will not likely deny a foot and mouth virus-infected country access to our meat market simply because a country is infected with foot and mouth disease (FMD). Once a country has implemented a National Animal Identification System, the country theoretically can trace animals to their farm of origin, and potentially trace the movement of every animal within the boundaries of that country. Now, since the country can trace the movement of livestock, that country – in the eyes of the OIE –

should no longer deny trade with countries that have not expended the resources to eradicate an infectious disease like FMD.

I believe the proposed NAIS system is wishful thinking on the part of the OIE and USDA. During the outbreak of FMD in Great Britain, it was not animal identification that contained FMD. It was old-fashioned geographical isolation and feet-on-the-ground that stopped the spread of FMD. It will be impossible to trace every movement of every animal in the vast geography of the United States, no matter how burdensome and onerous the NAIS program. I do believe USDA intends to be in compliance with the OIE by 2010, regardless of the 90 plus percent of U.S. citizens that loudly proclaimed their opposition at the many USDA listening sessions conducted across the United States. The OIE will win this one, unless U.S. citizens take back their own USDA.

For those livestock producers who live in a country were taxpayer dollars and years of hard work have been expended to eradicate contagious animal diseases, the NAIS plan sounds like pure stupidity. How could a veterinarian educated and trained in animal disease epidemiology even consider such a thing? It is unexplainable. It is bowing down before the god of free trade. It is a willingness to offer on the altar of sacrifice to the god of free trade generations of hard work and tax expenditures to simply satisfy the demands of the World Trade Organization. USDA has lost its way. It is time it became again, the People's Department, and once again, a department of the United States of America.

NAIS will cost us our national sovereignty.