

Brief answers
to short questions

Sheila's Shorts

By Sheila Miller



In Touch With NFU

Getting the agricultural message across to our urban neighbors is a far-reaching goal for farmers, and one of the toughest chores ahead.

Having the ideas heard above the roar of consumer groups' blasts against modern agriculture sometimes makes farm groups feel like their training mules — it takes a 2 x 4 to get any attention.

On the other hand, urban dwellers seem to eat up the rhetoric spat out by consumer groups on how farmers are destroying nature's delicate balance with pesticides and herbicides, chemical fertilizer, and on and on.

With well-planned and organized propaganda, consumers lead the way in preaching how modern agronomic practices are poisoning people and the meat is somehow desecrated with chemical additives and preservatives.

So, how do you reach the millions of city-dwellers to set the record straight?

That question has been the stumbling block of numerous farm organizations, from conservation districts to unions. Through media campaigns and speaking engagements, the communications gap has attempted to be spanned.

But, how do you get people who've never seen a cow or a field of corn first hand to understand farming — or sympathize with the plight of the 'armc'?

Sometimes, the city-dweller seeks out information on farming — a rarity, of course, but an encouraging fact.

Just last week, I recieved a post card from Ralph S. Rinker, 415 East 52nd Street (A-4E), New York, New York 10022 who actually subscribes to our farm publication and likes what he reads.

Mr. Rinker's request was for the address of the National Farmers' Union "I like their views on ag," he said.

To keep our urban neighbors happy and informed, here's the address of not only the national organization, but the Pennsylvania Farmers' union address too.

National Farmers' Union
12025 East 45th Avenue
Denver, CO 80252

Pennsylvania Farmers' Union
Suite 608, Locust Court
212 Locust Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Man O Who?

Horses — most young children, especially of the female gender, love those four-legged creatures.

And, I was no exception.

When I was growing up on my parents' farm in Hershey, I used to dream of someday having a horse of my own — even a pony would do.

I devoured anything written on horses during my trips to the library, and every television series or movie on the elegant equines was on my list of must-see's.

I was fortunate enough to have a neighbor, who also happened to be my best friend, who had a pony of her very own. The brown and white and black Shetland's name was Serina.

On those days when I was allowed to go to stay overnight at Julie's, I'd almost die with anticipation until she'd bring out the pony and we'd set to work brushing and brushing the defenseless thing. Finally, after our elbows and arms

ached and the pony was suffering from 'brush burns', we'd give her back to the pasture where she'd immediately roll in the mud.

When it came time for bed, I'd brush my teeth and sprinkle water on my face — but I wouldn't wash my hands (I hope the dust didn't come off on the sheets now that I think back). I'd finally drift off into dreams of horses and ponies with Serina's sweet scent still lingering on my fingers.

Other lessons on the equine world came from a burro and pony owned by an uncle in Lebanon

County. Sunday trips 'down-home' were worth all the long gab sessions of the adults when Mom and Dad would stop in at Uncle Herman's and he'd saddle or hitch his four-legged fun.

Finally, when I turned eleven-years-old, all my annual Christmas requests and birthday wishes came true. My parents surprised my sister and me with a beautiful horse — his coat was chestnut red, his face was graced with a white race, star, and nip, and he had one white stocking. My mother picked the name Charlie Horse for him — I secretly preferred 'Lucky Star' but you know whose name stuck.

Charlie and I grew up together. He put up with a kid who made him swim in puddles and jump over barrels. He patiently stood while I practiced gymnastics and stunts I'd seen at the State Police Rodeo — most times falling flat on my face.

Charlie is now a quarter century old (about 125 human years) and has traveled and moved with me since my graduation from college to live in Berks County and Wayne County. Now, until our farm's barn is readied, Charlie is back home again in Hershey — and he's still

as frisky and full-of-heart as he was the first day I set eyes on him. Even though he's a Quarter Horse, he's all thoroughbred.

Speaking of Thoroughbreds, Jenny Cave of Dexter, New York has written to me for information on the greatest race horse that ever lived (and he was the same color as Charlie, with almost identical markings) — Man O' War.

She writes: "I'm in a program at my school called Learning Lab II and I'm going to write a book about Man O' War, the race horse."

I don't have enough information about him and I was wondering if you would help me get it. I'm waiting for a letter from the Jockey Club in New York City. And I'm going to write to Faraway Farm in Kentucky where Man O' War was retired.

Anything about horses will be greatly appreciated.

Jenny, I salute your ambition. Writing a book about the greatest race horse in history is no small task. But, I caution you to be careful your book is your book and not someone else's ideas.

To help you with reference

material, I suggest you get in touch with your local and state libraries. There, you might sign out periodicals of the times when Man O' War was racing and standing at stud — thousands of magazine stories have been published on the famous red runner.

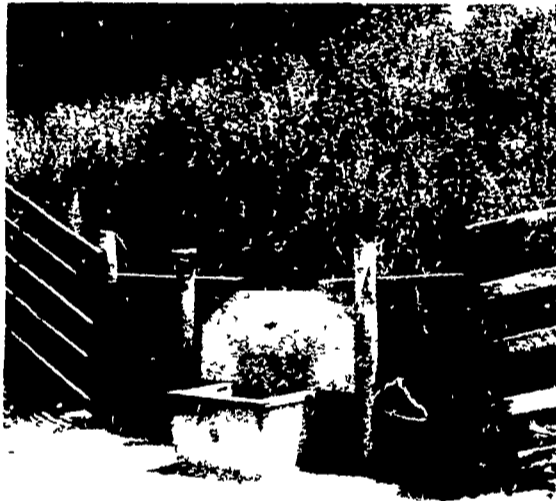
Our Lancaster Public Library's reference librarian Bob Graham cited several books containing facts on the great race horse. As a matter of fact, one book is strictly on Man O' War — that's the title of a book written by Walter Farley, published by Random House, copyrighted in 1962.

Several others include David Alexander's book, A Sound of Horses: The World of Racing from Eclipse to Kelso, published by Bobbs-Merrill, copyright 1966; Dick Francis' Sport of Queens, published by Harper, copyright 1969; Who's Who in Thoroughbred Racing by Ned Welch, printed by Northland Press, 1965, and David Woods' Fireside Book of Horse Racing, published by Simon and Schuster, 1963.

That's a start. Good luck — here's hoping you cross the finish line in record time.

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