

[Page 11 - The Donald Rankin Family and Harness Racing](#)ISSUE : [Issue 45](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1987/6/1

just a form of support for them. (But pac? ing is bred in them.) That's bred in them. You'll see little colts out in the field, little tiny month-old colts. And they'll turn around to run, and they'll switch to the pace, and they'll pace away. (When a horse is born, do you very quickly know that you've got something there?) Oh, I suppose no more than.... No. Like some are really pretty, and some catch your eye, their personalities and that type of thing. But when it comes right down to racing, they have to get out on the track and prove themselves. (So you don't really know how successful your breeding program is.) Till years later. It's really a long- term thing. But the colts are interesting. It's sort of a new beginning. You never know exactly how good they will be, or if they will be any good. You know, after a horse is rac? ing, you know what he's like, and you know how fast he'll be. There's sort of an un? known quantity to colts, that you sort of can dream on them! But then, the colts are the hardest thing to do. They're sort of a nuisance. You have to teach them every? thing. They take them and they break them, and they teach them to go, and they teach them all the sort of the manners and--civ? ilize them. And it's a slow process to get them to the races. A colt takes pretty near a whole year. You break them in the fall, and you train them all winter, and then they'll be ready to go in the summer. It's a long drawn-out process. You have to be patient, because they're good one day and they're rotten the next. They're one of the harder things for the horse train? ers to handle. All the obstacles that can be in the way. We had this mare, one of our brood mares. And she was sent to New Brimswick and was bred, and came back in foal. Then last win? ter she had what would be a miscarriage. So here was this little (unborn) colt. And he was developed enough that he--didn't have hair, but he was perfectly developed with hoofs and everything, like a stud colt. It was really sad to see it, 'cause you've invested so much, even up to that point. Like you say, the obstacles all along, it's unbelievable. We had a colt that grew to be a yearling. And somebody went to take him out of the barn, and he reared up backwards and fell back and broke his neck. So that, even to get them there, your per? centage is not good--it's a difficult road. (And even finally getting it to the races-- no guarantees.) No guarantees. You still don't know how fast they're going to go or how good they're going to be. Some horses can be fast, but perhaps don't have a lot of determination. They call it heart. And some of them wouldn't have a lot of heart. If somebody goes by them, then they'll let them go by them. There's personality type things come in then, too. (What happens to a horse that fails? Doesn't get to the races?) Again, the econ? omics come into it. It costs so much to keep them. If it's a mare, somebody will take it, perhaps, and breed it, to get a colt. Or someone will take it for a saddle horse. Or sometimes you just shoot them for meat. (Tough business.) It is a tough business. You forget that they're living-- it doesn't help that the horses have per? sonalities too. You sort of get attached to a horse. But then if they're not going to race--if it comes down to the bottom line, that you can't really afford to keep them as pets. "' Sonny Rankin I'd get home from school about 20 after 3:00, and I wouldn't bother going to the house. I wouldn't get



to the house till 8 o'clock or 8:30. There was one mare, Cecilia Sharon, that you'd ride to school and let her go, and she'd go home herself. She would be jogged. They'd wait for her to come home, to put her in the barn. And then when I'd come home from school I'd jog the others. By the time you'd get through with all the chores it was 8:00 or 8:30. (Even then, did you have any kind of racing goals?) No, just interested in being around the horses. There were no goals. CONTINUED NEXT PAGE (11)