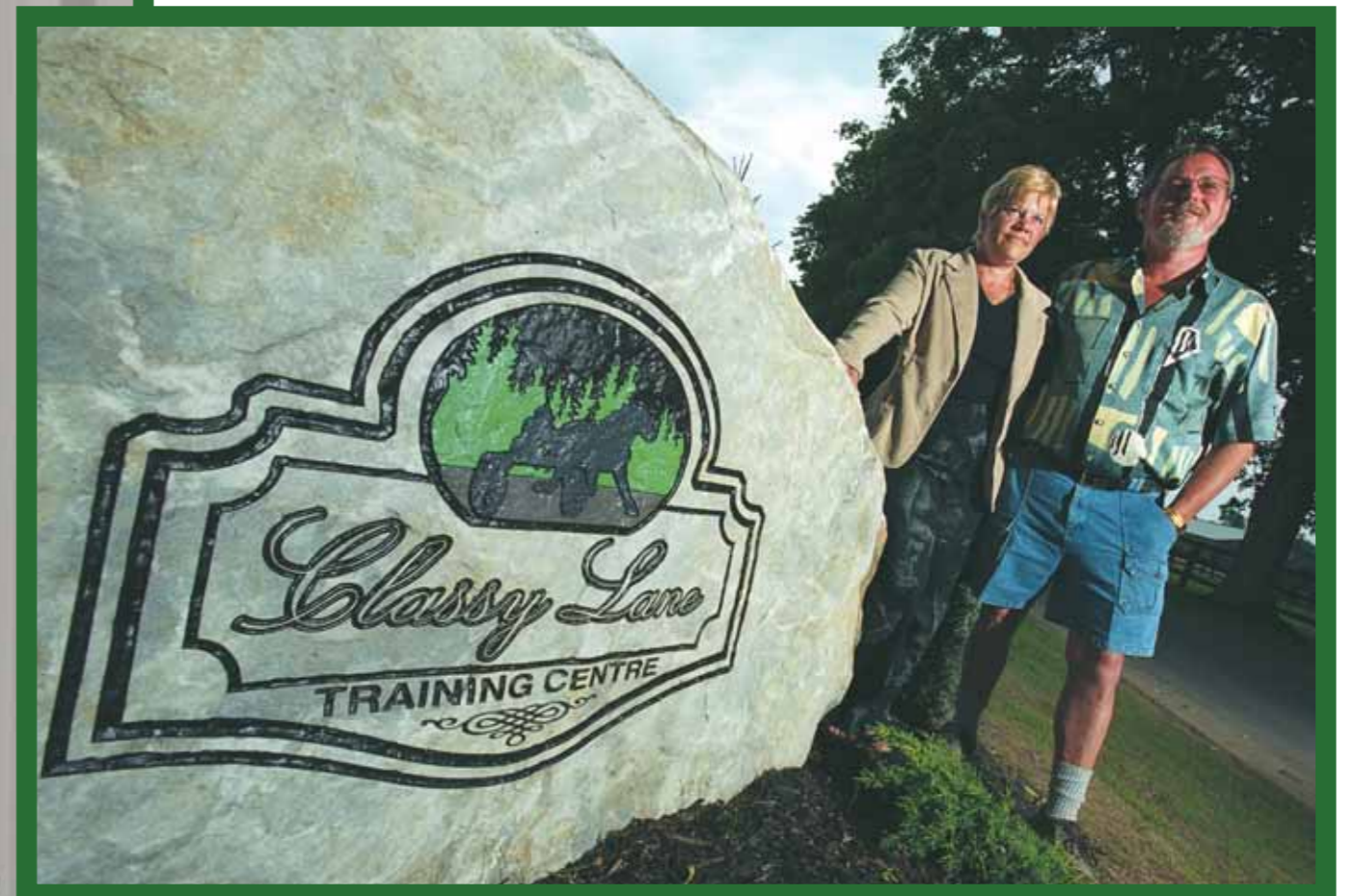
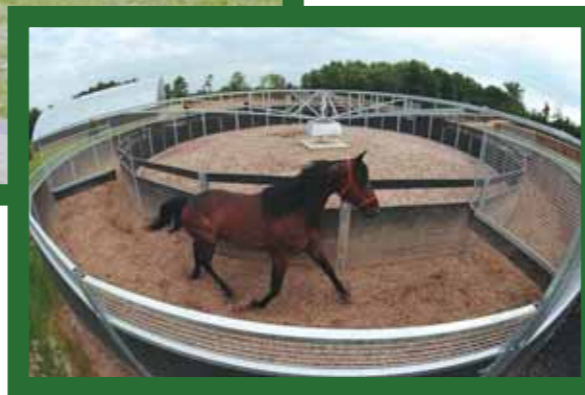


PUTTIN' ON THE RITZ

By Harold Howe

THE FINEST TRAINING ESTABLISHMENT IN ALL OF CANADA IF NOT NORTH AMERICA IS NOW IN OPERATION AT CLASSY LANE STABLES IN ONTARIO. THE OPULENT CENTRE WAS UNVEILED IN MID-JUNE WITH AN INDUSTRY OPEN HOUSE THAT PROVIDED NOTHING BUT RAVE REVIEWS.





Harness racing in Canada reached a new highwater mark in mid-June with the official opening of Classy Lane Stables.

Jamie Millier, a 48-year-old Dorchester, Ontario, landscape excavator and his two partners have created what has become the most talked about facility in not just Canada but the United States as well.

Located near Cambridge, Ontario, just 15 minutes driving time west of Mohawk Racetrack, multi million \$ operation lacks for nothing as those who attended the open house discovered.

Last August, Millier and his two partners bought the 135 acre beef farm and on September 9 the earth moving equipment rolled in.

"We worked seven days a week through early June to get things finished," admitted Millier who operates Classic Excavating, a 50-employee company that builds sewers, water mains, etc. largely in the London/Kitchener-Waterloo corridor.

"Approximately 9,000 truckloads of dirt were moved and I'd be lying if I said it has not gone over budget. But after hearing the response from the horsemen I feel a lot more relaxed about the project."

A racing enthusiast for a number of years, Millier owns part of 10 horses with trainers John Pentland and Leon Mansfield. His success in horse ownership has been limited although he did have an Ontario Sires Stakes Gold division winner last year in Catch This Bunny.

"I had the chance to see all of the better places where people trained and saw that there was a real need for a top place. Most were just farm tracks that had been converted into training centres but nothing built from the ground up like what I thought was needed."

Originally, Millier focused his attention on finding a property closer to London but was convinced by Pentland and friend Tony Aarts (co-owner of Camotion) to base closer to Mohawk

Racetrack. Six months later he found the property he wanted.

The key to any training establishment is the quality of the track and Millier spared no expense. Dan Coon, the best builder of racing surfaces in North America, was called in and completed the project before the arrival of frost last fall.

"I wanted to have it settle over the winter and we learned a lot about it through the spring. It needed a bit of grading changed on one turn this spring but there were no bad soft spots. Horses started training April 1 and I'm very encouraged with it now," says Millier.

Accommodation for horses totals only 178 which makes it almost intimate rather than like coming into a box store parking lot. However, the clientele includes some of the game's leading horsemen like Ben Wallace, Mark Harder, Brett Pelling, Noel Daley, Duane Marfisi, Kevin O'Rielly, Whitesand Valley Farm and the operation of the late Brian Pinsky now trained by Scott Forbes.

The facility has room for an additional barn but Millier has no plans for expansion for at least another year. Stall rent is approximately \$400 per month.

The centre also has a sand jogging track, a one-half mile path through a wooded area, a swimming pool, 21 paddocks for turnouts, two equicizers, a blacksmith shop and resident veterinarian.

When The Meadowlands came into being in the mid-1970s the construction of Showplace Farms, Gaitway Farms and other training establishments followed. That never took place in Ontario but with the bonanza of purse money in recent years that has all changed.

Classy Lane Stables may prove to be just the first of several new centres in coming years to dot the province. 🐾