

# Letters to the Editor

## FOND MEMORIES

Dear Editor,

I found the article by D/Commr. W. H. Kelly (rtd.), "How the RCMP Came To Have Black Horses," most interesting. The well-written, comprehensive article brought back fond memories of my equitation training in Regina. Two of the horses pictured in the article I remember quite well.

The thoroughbred stallion "Faux Pas" was a magnificent animal, although somewhat high strung. It could only be groomed if it so desired. This was accomplished by having one recruit hanging onto a bucket of oats as a peace offering and the second recruit running in circles inside the box stall trying to brush him, much like a merry-go-round.

The second horse picture was "Knight," RCMP #214, which is of particular interest to me. By the way, the photo does absolutely nothing for him because he was much more statuesque than the picture indicates. I can attest to that as I have a photo of him and me taken after our riding pass out and my mount looks considerably better than I do.

With all due respect to past and present members of the Force, I'm sure they will agree that the names of the horses and riding instructors can be recalled more readily than the members of our own squads. "Ida," a gentle old mare, was assigned to me. Being a veteran, she always gave you that totally bored look and would constantly change her gait to let you know she

had been around. "Gypsy" was next, loveable but would trip on a straw and couldn't jump a log. "Imp" was next and quite aptly named. With one torturous bite to my off back side, she taught me not to go from her off side to her near side via the front of the stall in the crouched position. I can confess now, that I broke her habit of biting while being combed at the expense of her jaws and my elbows.

Finally, "Knight" my dream horse came along, a big gentle mount with a gait so smooth, you could cut a diamond whilst in the saddle doing a fast trot. Well, almost! The bond was set, no other horse for me. During the following months I became so attached and accustomed to him that as far as I was concerned there was no other horse in the stables. Then came the devastating news. I was asked to switch mounts a week before pass out. I was informed that "Knight" couldn't handle the truncheon drill as he would rear and attempt to bolt as soon as you swung the truncheon over his head. Understandably the instructor didn't want our ride disrupted.

Rather than accept a new mount, I requested and received approval from the crusty riding master to tutor "Knight" in the riding school after hours. This was unusual as normally a lowly recruit wouldn't be trusted with such an expensive, valued and irreplaceable animal.

In my own crude manner, I commenced ground training, which was a sensible approach as there always is a chance of becoming airborne. Training began by gently waving the truncheon back and forth letting the horse get a feel and at one point a taste of it. After a