

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri., Feb. 2, 1962

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Dad Tells Story Of Joe O'Brien

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A CHAT I had with Harry O'Brien, Alberton a few weeks ago makes it much easier to understand the sensational triumphs of his son, Joe, who this week was proclaimed the top harness racing driver in the United States for 1961.

Joe was a wizard with horses from his youth, his dad told me proudly as I visited him with Frank Weeks, who has put me on the trail of so many good column items. It was just before Mr. O'Brien left for California to join his famous son for the winter months.

The son was 14 when his father bought for \$40, Ace Bailey, a colt his owner decided wasn't worth keeping, because of his gait. But the youngster soon proved the idea was wrong.

MR. O'BRIEN and his older sons, Claude and Lloyd, were down in Charlottetown with every available bit of usable racing equipment. But Joe patched up a sulky and set of harness, drove four miles to Elmsdale and took the first and third heats, after getting into a nasty spill in the second.

Two weeks later Joe won a race at Tignish with the same colt in 2.27 on a slow, sandy track.

I forget the details, but the youngster also beat his father and two brothers in a race at Myron MacArthur's track at Kensington, despite their combined efforts to contain him.

Joe always did have a way with horses, his dad recalled proudly.

I am writing only about Joe now but his brother Lloyd who was killed in a car accident several years ago, was an outstanding horseman and so is Claude who is well known in contemporary Maritime racing circles.

He Won Before In 1956

AS HIS father proudly reminded me, Joe was leading U.S. driver in 1956 when he finished far ahead of his nearest competitor.

He's recognized by top American horsemen as one of the best in the country, and a recognized authority like Del Miller has termed him the best driver of colts in the world.

Judging from my talk with Mr. O'Brien and what Frank told me about him, I think the son must have a lot of his dad's traits.

O'BRIEN SENIOR stole a horse from his father at 16, raced her at Elmsdale and won. "It's just as well I did, or I would have had to sleep that night in the stable," he told me as his eyes twinkled.

The veteran - he was 90 in December - has had an average of eight to ten different horses each year since.

He built the Northam track and “won with Mack Volo, the first heat ever raced under the lights in Canada.”

He built other tracks at Moncton and Saint John and at some other places he couldn't recall at the time of our chat.

Grading Certificates Important

THIS NOTE is only for hog producers, but it could be important. Producers must keep their grading certificates from each shipment, and make their own application for federal deficiency payments on forms that will be available from the department of agriculture here.

No deficiency payments will be made on 1961 shipments and there may be none on this year's hogs. But unless the grading certificates are kept from each shipment so the hog raiser can apply in the proper manner, they will not be in a position to collect the payments, should the commercial price drop low enough this year to warrant payments.

This is new this year, but that's the way it's to be done, I was told yesterday by Stewart Eagles, senior livestock fieldman, Canada department of agriculture.

Angus Cattle Breeders Increase

I WAS impressed last week by the tremendous percentage increase in the number of Aberdeen Angus cattle breeders in this province.

I don't know how many they may have altogether, but Leo McIsaac, president of the association, told me at their annual meeting that they have 42 members which is approximately seven times the six or seven members Arthur Roper told me they had a year ago.

Many of them are new breeders who got underway with stock purchased last year, and some of them only have a few cattle. But others have been established for some time, and have built up sizable herds.

My neighbour, Dr. J.P. Lantz, has a large herd on his “High Pastures Farm” with something like 65 head at the present time.

REDVERSE STEWART, Hampshire, is one who has been in the game a long time, I believe, and has had some outstanding success in the show ring.

Mr. Stewart had the grand champion steer at the Easter Beef Show and Sale several years ago. I've been wondering why more of the Angus cattle do not top the Easter show here, because they dominate carcass competitions at some of our biggest shows.

L.W. Roper said last week that the Angus cattle swept all of the prizes at Chicago last year and they took pretty nearly all of the prizes at the Royal Winter Fair, he added.

Beef cattle quality has improved rapidly in Canada during the last 10 years, with 35 percent grading Choice or Red brand last year. This compares with only 6 percent 10 years ago.

Eagle Is Flat River Visitor

A LONE eagle has been visiting Flat River regularly now for something like 20 years, I learned this week from Stewart Ross, MLA.

It's the same bird alright, he assured me, because he lights each year on the same branch of the same tree.

When he came first there was some fear of the big bird, who stands perhaps three and one-half feet in height, and has a tremendous wing spread.

There was some concern, for example, about the safety of a little neighbour girl who lived nearby, as she wended her way to school each morning and back home in the evening. But the little girl has since grown up and become a nurse, and the eagle still comes without, apparently, causing harm to anyone.