THE SHOCKING PLIGHT
OF THE
TENNESSEE WALKING HORSE

BY WENDELL RAWLS, JR.
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Horsemen Told Revise Industry Or It Will Die

By WENDELL RAWLS JR.
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The president of the Walking Horse Trailers Association has called on its members to clean up the industry or watch it die.

In a July 31 letter, Vic Thompson of Shelbyville wrote association members:

"I'M BEGGING YOU... think about this or we'll all be out of business... The general public is fed up with all the inspections, changing rules, sore horses and generally the conduct of walking horse people."

Thompson was expressing concern about a great industry, centered in Tennessee, that glitters on the surface but which is being dulled from within by rumor, suspicion and internal conflict.

First of a Series.

In the last two months, THE NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN has taken a close look at the walking horse industry. This scrutiny disclosed:

- Numerous instances of fraudulent registration of horses.
- Lack of control of artificial insemination which has raised grave questions about the purity of the breed.
- That siring of show horses is a common practice among owners and trainers.
- Charges of irregular judging practices which have prompted some trainers and owners not to compete in Tennessee shows.
- Charges that control of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association is maintained by a small group for their own personal gain.

Thompson, considered one of the top trainers in the business, is now training and showing 40 horses, and is one of the few men willing to speak openly and candidly about the industry which provides his livelihood.

But Thompson's concern about the present status of the business and its future is shared by many.

JAMES BLACKWELL, executive secretary of the American Horse Show Association, says flatly that Tennessee's walking horse people "are doing very well in destroying the walking horse industry."

A Pennsylvanian owner-trainer, Charles Mullins, said in a recent letter to Thompson that "dishonesty in the walking horse industry will always prevent it from being "a clean sport for the owner and good profession for the trainer."

California trainer Bud Franklin has such disdain for the way the business is run in Tennessee he refuses to compete in the state.

THOSE MEN HAVE just cause for concern. In the last decade the industry has been beset with problems and internal strife, most of which was invited.

In 1936, a California horse breeder won a lawsuit he had filed against the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association of America, an organization that serves as the heart of the industry.

In ruling in the case, Judge Jesse W. Curtis of the Central California District Court made some startling disclosures:

The breeders association, he said, is guilty of "restriction of trade and acts of monopolization, violations of the Sherman Antitrust Act... boycott... and illegal activity practiced by the selfish personal interest of certain officers and directors."

IN THE MIDST of that lawsuit, prominent Nashville Atty. Clarence Evans resigned as lawyer for the breeders association.

Says Evans of that action: "I was put in the position of having to defend something that should not and could not be defended."

The breeder who filed the lawsuit, R. Mitchell McClure, a California Chevrolet dealer, was awarded $13,000 in damages because according to the final ruling of the breeders association it had suspended him wrongfully and damaged his business.

The association had suspended McClure because he failed to show up at a special meeting called at his request to discuss the attitude of Tom Fulton, then executive secretary of the breeders association, California horse owners.

McCLURE, NOT satisfied with the verdict, has filed a similar suit against S. W. Beech, Jr., a Belfast, Tenn., breeder who was then president of the breeders association and is presently a powerful member of its board of directors. Attorneys for McClure are now in Tennessee taking depositions in regard to that case.

Fulton, of Chap Hill, was a principal witness in the first lawsuit. Shortly after the trial he was fined, though he had eight years remaining on a written employment contract.

In recent months, a Collierville, Tenn., owner and a breeder, George Lenox, has been rocking the industry with written and verbal attacks on current industry practices.

MOSTLY HE complains about what he calls "fraudulent registrations."

"I resent it when a man buys a mare from me and puts a picked-up colt with her... and says the colt is by my stall," he said. "Especially when I know the mare was at my farm trying to be bred when the man contends the colt was foaled."

"I resent it when a man tells me he has a mare which carries papers that I learned later were acquired when the mare was 15 years old."

Disturbed by such registration practices Lenox, short, dapper and shrewd, directly most of his anger at the breeders association.

"I resent it when the personnel at the association offices makes it so difficult to get records that a court action is required. I resent it when we vote on the judges for the futurity and learn after the votes are counted that 30 of the ballots were cast in the same handwriting."

LENOX CLAIMS to have spent $10,000 trying to gain support for a move to reform the industry and throw out the directors whom he claims use their position for their own good without regard for the whole industry.

The problem, he says, is that horse people go for the short range security of having the current "establishment" deliver a promise rather than the long-range goal of not needing it to deliver on promises.

One outspoken advocate of change in the structure and hierarchy of the breeders association is Joe Urquhart of Columbia.

One of the first out-of-state breeders to move his operation to Tennessee and one of the first to challenge variance rules and the stretching of ethics, Urquhart says simply:

"THE SAD TRUTH of the matter is there are a lot of common s.o.s. in this business... I'm too old to play tight physical battles... I did when judges refused to tie (place) my horses when I first came here. They do not want anyone but Middle Tennessee folks to succeed in this business, but they'll take money from anyone anywhere."

The organization catching most of the criticism, the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association of America, was charted 34 years ago with headquarters in Lewistown, "to collect, record and preserve the pedigrees of the strain of horses known as the Tennessee Walking Horse."

The breeders association lists more than 3,000 members and registers more than 5,000 horses each year.

THE CRITICS are taking their case to the American Horse Show Association, which will meet in Chicago next week.

Blackwell, the American Horse Show Association official, is another who claims that the walking horse industry is a hard deal with.

"Those folks look you right in the eye and tell you they will do one thing, then turn right around and do something different."

HIS EFFORTS, he says, to place the walking horse classes in more sanctioned A.B.A. shows is falling. One problem, he says, is the breeders' insistence in using a 2-inch boot, the protective covering around the front ankles, while the A.B.A. requires a 1-inch boot. Another, he says, is the breeders' desire to inspect horses.
Walking Horse Trainer Vic Thompson of Shelbyville

"If we don't clean up the industry... someone else will!"

"WE ARE GOING to have to do something about our bridle, judging and several other things... we are bringing this all (public criticism) on ourselves."

A response to Thompson's letter from Hicks, the Virginia owner, pointed up one of the most frequent complaints — partiality on the part of judges toward certain segments of the industry.

"The walking horse image is that the judge in the ring often ignores the performance of the horse and ties according to who owns the animal or who is training or riding the horse," said Hicks. "One only has to mingle among the crowd a few hours before the show starts to determine who is going to win with what horse."

HICKS BELIEVES these alleged practices have created a backlash of disappointment and a reluctance on the part of prospective buyers to pay the price of a Tennessee walker.

in a letter June 35, 1983, Thompson wrote another plea for help, this one aimed primarily at stopping the sorry of horses, a practice which shortens considerably the training period for a walking horse and produces an exaggerated step, or "lick," that is beautiful to watch but unnatural to the walking horse. "Each of us must put forth greater efforts toward doing away with horse soring. If we are judging a show, we must assume the responsibility for excusing horses which are not in proper condition. If we do not clean up our own industry, we can only look forward to having humane societies do it for us."

FRANKLIN, the California trainer, says flatly he will never bring a horse to Tennessee because he does not sord horses and could not compete. "It is not worth the expense to take horses there when those people do not abide by the same rules we live with," he said.

Franklin, who trains for McClure, the Waring California breeder, says McClure would not allow a horse to be sored. A check of every horse in the McClure stable found only one horse with even as much ear tissue from a sore. That was an 18-year-old stallion McClure purchased in Tennessee.

Many other trainers take the same position.

"UNTIL SOMETHING is done about the dishonesty we will never have a clean sport for the owner and a good profession for the trainer who knows how to train a horse and not just pout a bottle to it," says Mullins, the Pennsylvania horseman. "A judge has the right to let a supposedly well-known trainer stay in a class and win on a horse that is sore. He doesn't want to move and then kick out a lesser-known trainer for the same reason."

THOMPSON SAYS: "He's exactly right."

Thompson, who could be risking his future success in the business, by complaining, has letters from humane society officials lauding the efforts by trainers and the progress in cleaning up. But, he points out, the cleanup will never come until every segment of the industry agrees or is forced to. The focus of any public pressure on the walking horse industry is squarely on soring, and with the introduction of a bill in the U.S. Senate, has reached the point of governmental concern and intervention, as Thompson anticipated.

SEN. JOSEPH D. Tydings, D-Md., has introduced a bill designed to eliminate the sor ing of horses by prohibiting the interstate shipment of sored horses as well as their exhibition for show purposes. Hearings on the bill have been scheduled next month.

Similar legislation has been introduced into the House of Representatives by Rep. William Whitehurst, R-Va.

New legislation to control the walking horse industry might prove effective, at least concerning the soring of horses.

Tennessee laws on the same thing have not been.

ALREADY ON state law books are statutes that provide one to three years prison terms and a $1,000 fine for the fraudulent registration of walking horses; a law making the soring of horses a misdemeanor, and punishable by fine and imprisonment; a law making it a misdemeanor for show officials not reporting exhibitors who show sored horses; a fourth law making it a misdemeanor for horse owners or exhibitors, ringmasters and show management not to disqualify and report persons who violate the other three statutes.

The list of Tennessee laws sounds strangely similar to the list of complaints about the Tennessee's walking horse industry.
Merry Minnie Wouldn’t Stay ‘Dead’

By WENDELL RAWLS JR.

Merry Minnie was a highly unpredictable walking horse.

In January, 1957, her Texas owner, Robert Berry, had her tested by a doctor to determine if she was in foal. The results—negative, not in foal.

But S. W. Beech Jr., a recognized expert judge of herself from Belfast, Tenn., saw her, concluded she was indeed in foal, and bought her from Berry for $200.

SEVEN MONTHS later, true to Beech’s judgment, Merry Minnie foaled twins, much to the dismay of former owner Berry and the doctor, Lloyd Smith of Vidor, Texas, owner of the stallion to which Merry Minnie had been bred.

Naturally, the misjudgment of Berry and Smith subjected them to the jokes of the walking horse set.

and the transaction became a standing joke.

The joke did not end with that sale.

Berry later testified in a federal court lawsuit that he and Smith took their misfortune lightly and arranged with Beech to buy back the mare and the twins.

BUT, BERRY told the court, when he arrived at Beech’s farm at Belfast to pick the colts and mare, Beech told him Merry Minnie had died—dropped dead for no apparent reason. An autopsy was performed on Merry Minnie, Berry said, which showed there was nothing congenital in her death that might affect the colts.

Seven years later, after Berry had moved from Texas to Franklin, Tenn., he was reading the program for the 1964 National Futurity, a prelude to the Walking Horse National Celebration.

There on page 21 of the program, listed in a class showing mare and foal, was one of all horses—“Merry Minnie, number 66-688, owned by S. W. Beech Jr., Lewisburg, Tenn.”

Berry, recognizing the registration number on Merry Minnie as the same number on the Merry Minnie he once owned, said he checked with the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association at Lewisburg which verified that the entry.

WHEN HE returned later to the association offices in the company of two others, Berry testified, he was told that the papers had been mishandled and could not be found.

Merry Minnie and her colt were not shown at the futurity. They were scratched.

Beech, president of the breeders association, testified during the lawsuit hearing in 1966 that Merry Minnie had not died in 1957 as Berry alleged. Instead, he said, she died two or three years before the trial.

Beech said he did not remember if Merry Minnie had been entered in the 1964 futurity, or if even if he had a mare named Merry Minnie in his barn in 1964.

ASKED ABOUT the incident last week, Beech said he did not remember Merry Minnie and that she had not died after the twins were foaled but three or four years later. He denied that an autopsy had been performed on Merry Minnie.

The reason Merry Minnie was not there when Berry came to buy the colts, Beech said, was because “she was out in the field somewhere.” He denied telling Berry the mare had died.

The strange case of Merry Minnie first came to light during a federal court hearing of a suit brought by a California owner against the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association.

It is one of several cited by members of the walking horse industry who complain that registration papers on a Tennessee Walking Horse may not mean he’s a purebred.

Midnight Lena, a registered Tennessee walking horse, is owned by Jack Short of Shelbyville, who says he bought the animal in 1968.

Baker of Centerville.

Baker said that in 1929 fire swept through his horse barn, killing Midnight Lena.

Joe Urquhart, a Columbia trainer, remembers working as an appraiser for the insurance adjuster who investigated the fire at Baker’s.

“Every horse in the barn except a quarter horse and a mare who belonged to B. C. Urquhart. He said he definitely appraised the loss of Midnight Lena.”

A RECENT check by Urquhart confirms the loss of Merry Minnie.

Another is the case of Midnight Lena, a registered mare who belonged to B. C. Urquhart. He said he definitely appraised the loss of Midnight Lena.”

A RECENT check by Urquhart confirmed the loss of Merry Minnie.
Pulaski trainer, tells a bizarre story that lends considerable weight to Short's statement.

Magnuson, who operates a horse auction, says one Tennessee trader, Charles Payne, ran a 'draft horse' through his auction in October 1965.

**Let Us Hear**

This is the second in a series of reports based on a two-month investigation of the walking horse industry by THE NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN. Anyone having information about irregular industry practices should contact TENNESSEAN sports-writer Wendell Rawls Jr. at the newspaper or at the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration at Shelbyville.

S. W. Beuch Jr.

Good judge of horses

"Did you know Midnight Lena was destroyed by fire?" Short was asked.

"You're kidding," said Short. "She's cut at Stallion Stables. Paid $1,000 for her and another mare a couple of years ago."

According to Urquhart and Baker, there is no doubt that Midnight Lena is dead and that Short is simply a victim of believing everything he saw on the pedigrees.

Baker says he has no knowledge how the registration was transferred.

SHORT produced ownership papers showing the horse was registered as Midnight Lena passed through four owners before he bought her. "I'm not surprised," said Short. "You can get papers on almost anything."

Mayburr Magnuson, a

Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' Association of America

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"We recognise that the registrations have been tampered with in so many cases they do not mean anything anyway," says William C. (Bill) Tune, president of the National Walking Horse Celebration, Inc., the organizer of the show. "If a horse is not a walking horse and can walk better than the walkers, I guess he deserves to win."

George Lenox, a Collierville owner, says: "A man could get a mule registered as a Walking horse if he knew the right man. I suppose the only horses you can be completely sure about are the ones you breed yourself, but even then you never know what went on in the ancestry of either the mare or the stud."

ALARMINGLY, few people in the industry appear to be concerned about the fact that their horses might not be purebreds.

"The trouble comes," said Vic Thompson, president of the Walking Horse Trainers Association and last year's "Horseman of the Year" in the industry, "when the man who has been cheated will not expose the fraud because to do so is to voluntarily lower the value of the fraudulently registered horse."

"With papers, the falsely registered horse is just as valuable as a true walking horse with equal ability. Many times the billed owner sells his 'walking horse' as soon as he can so as not to take a serious financial loss."

Joe Wrenhart
Recalls Lena's death

If either the law or the bylaw is enforced, it has escaped the memory of knowledgeable industry sources.

QUESTIONABLE registrations are so frequent that the National Walking Horse Celebration does not require that an entry be a registered walking horse.

Jack Short
'I'm not surprised'
Doubt Arises On Artificial Breeding Use

By WENDELL RAWLS JR.
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Although already ripe with problems about fraudulent registrations, Tennessee Walking Horse breeders decided in 1966 to approve artificial insemination—a practice which raises even more questions about the purity of the breed.

If controlled and used selectively, the practice could be a boon to the industry. If not, it could destroy it, producing an overpopulation of inferior walking horses.

JOE URQUHART, a Columbia, Tenn., trainer and seller of walking horses, contends current practices heighten the possibility of fraudulent registrations because of the presence of a few unethical breeders.

"The possibility exists for substituting the semen of one horse for that of another," he says. "Who can tell the difference if both studs are the same color and the colt is that color."

Harlin Hayes, manager of Harlindale Farms in Franklin where the great Midnight Sun stood at stud, says that top horses are bringing more money than ever, but adds:

"Breeders are losing money on the average walking horses because there are a lot more of them and not as many people wanting to buy."

ONE OF THE LEADING opponents of artificial insemination was John Amos, who until his death in 1966 was the most powerful force in the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association of America.

His chief concern was that artificial insemination would be difficult to control and that the demand for the bloodline of a particular world champion stallion could lead to an overpopulation of one strain.

Amos testified in a California lawsuit shortly before his death that artificial insemination and sorning were the chief threats to the industry.

It was not until after Amos' death that the breeders' association, the heart of the walking horse industry, put its official stamp of approval on the practice.

BUT THERE are those in the industry who say artificial insemination is widely used long before the association's action.

George Lenox, a Collierville, Tenn., breeder, openly advertised his practice of artificial breeding even when it was against association rules.

Hayes, the Franklin stable manager, says:
"We began a artificially breeding Midnight Sun in 1947 and we continued until his death in 1965."

Hayes said the association did not enforce any other rules so Harlindale Farms just "went about its business."-breeding 200 to 300 mares each season.

LEONX, LIKE several other breeders, contends artificial insemination is good for two reasons:
"First, it is the surest way to get a mare in foal. Second, it cuts down on the chances of infections in the mare."

But, he is quick to point out, its use must be accompanied by strict selectivity of mares.
His principal stud, 1964 grand

They point to its successful use in the strain of thoroughbred race horses where it has been a practice for many years.

An average thoroughbred stallion breeds an average of 30 mares a season. Some studs command a fee in excess of $20,000.

THE NUMBER of breedings by a top Walking horse stud range from the 150 to 200 by Carbon Copy to the 400 by Merry Go Boy. And the average Walking Horse stud fee ranges from $50 to $400.

Dr. Dewitt Owen, a Franklin veterinarian, testified in a California lawsuit in 1965 that the normal breeding season for Tennessee Walking Horses was February through September.

BECAUSE of the hypothetical optimum for natural coverage by a stallion during a 20-day period would be about 105.

Third in a series
Walking Horse Soring an Art, But Strictly Illegal

By WENDELL RAWLS Jr.

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Effective "soring" of walking horses is an art...strictly illegal.

Fourth in a Series

"You're an illegal art, but a very widely practiced art,"

The legal practice of this art, designed to persuade the horse to lift its feet in the marching, professional fashion treasured for exhibition purposes, has been attested to by several Tennessee trainers.

According to them, the most accepted method of soring a walking horse is to deposit a chemical blistering agent called "white paste" on the feet of the horse somewhere between the coronet band and the fetlock above the hoof, either in front or in back depending on how the horse reacts.

WHY the ankle tender from the "creeping cream" or "hot stuff," as it is commonly called, the horse is then worked with a chain or roller, or both, around the ankle to add weight.

The horse tries to throw off the chain which varies in weight according to the resistance of the horse.

The rubbing of the chain or roller against the side of the leg can remove the hair and cause a raw sore unless carefully treated after the work-out or show.

In the show ring, the horses wear a two-inch boot, supposedly designed to keep the front feet from stepping over the back legs.

IN REALITY, the boots act about the same as a chain or roller, adding weight to the feet while providing something for the horse to attempt to kick off.

The oil of mustard, a liquid, is applied with an eyedropper. The amount of the oil depends on the reaction of the horse. Some horses require only a drop to reach the desired gait. Others require half an eye dropper.

There are other methods rumored, but knowledgeable horsemen agree that the oil of mustard is far and away the most commonly used.

No walking horseman will acknowledge the use of wood screws, nails, needles or any other method more severe than the blistering agents.

ACCORDING to industry practitioners, even oxide of mercury, commonly referred to as "creeping cream," is no longer employed.

The reason for the use of any soring method is simple.

The horse, as a rule, produces the desire gas much easier than through their arduous hours required in training without the help of an outsider agent. And the horses generally "reach" of the front legs and more "man-like walk" of the back legs with the aid of hot stuff.

The problem comes, trainers agree, when the amateur rider and trainer apply the mustard without knowing the proper method or proportion.

THE AMATEUR won't spend the time, either to take care of the horse properly after a workout or horse show. He leaves the mustard on the leg, and puts the horse up for the night. This is hard on the horse.

Trainers maintain that proper care after using a blistering agent makes everything all right. They contend that the "big lick", the climbing, reaching stride of the professional walking horse is developed by the public, which would leave the stands in droves without the excitement it provides.

There is some reason for this. The public, perhaps the fact that walking horses can be trained to the proper stride without soring. Reasons for soring to soring include:

- Some trainers don't want to spend the long hours required to train a walking horse without the bottle.
- Many trainers feel that they cannot compete with more established trainers unless their horse is sored for an even bigger buck in order to get the attention of the judges.
- Unless all trainers stop the practice, no one man is going to eliminate the action and go into the ring against other trainers whose horses have been for the big buck.
- Vic Thompson, president of the Walking Horse Trainers Association, reported THE NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN early to complain that some statements attributed to him in this series were "false." The same statements attributed to him in this series were "false."

TUNES as the chief of the stover show and as such disqualified about half the first class before it reached the ring.

"The reaction of both the fans and the officials was not one of joy," Tune said.

After Tune disqualified "half" of the second class, official of the show broke down, and demanded that he stop disqualifying the horses.

Tune said he was there to act as the judge and would perform his duties until the officials removed him from his fonction.

They did just that.

PRESSURES CONTINUE to mount from outside the walking horse industry against the practice of soring horses for show purposes. Humane societies and animal protection agencies have been "writing their congressmen" for years and are stepping up the attack.

THOMPSON declined to comment on reports that the comment about the practice of the ringmaster has reacted to the pressure with the introduction of the U.S. Justice Department's July 2 legislation to prohibit the interstate shipment and exhibition of sored horses for show purposes.

As introduced, the bill would give the Department of Agriculture a means of enforcing the regulation and making sure that the excise tax it provides.

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- Many trainers feel that they cannot compete with more established trainers unless their horse is sored for an even bigger buck in order to get the attention of the judges.

THE BILL carefully defines soring and declares it to be a "cruel and inhumane" practice.

The bill evokes for a fine of no more than $500 and/or imprisonment of not more than six months for the act.

Tennessee law is more severe but evidently less effective than most walking horse people think the Tydings Bill will be.

The state statute says:

"It shall be unlawful for any owner or exhibitor of horses to make the front legs or hoofs of such horses sore for such purposes.

"The offense of which all persons designated and acting as ringmaster of any horse show or similar event to disqualify any horse by the use of blistering compounds or other means, and which is intended to be used shall be a misdemeanor."
By WENDELL RAYLIS JR.
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'Soring' is the most openly admitted evil in the posh walking horse business, but there is wide disagreement among people in the trade just how necessary it is.

Ultimately, of course, the responsibility for the practice rests on the trainers. Some of the trainers say they have to do it, if the horses are to adopt the mincing, prancing gait that will draw customers to the show ring. Other trainers say they can do just as well without it, and a little more careful training and a little more time to do it.

BREEDERS generally, don’t like the practice, and some of them express fear that it will eventually ruin the carefully nurtured walking horse breed. As for owners, well, most of them like the ribbons and prizes, whatever it takes to get them.

"Soring" is the practice of using mechanical and chemical means—commonly, oil of mustard—to make a horse’s feet tender so it will walk high in the show ring, a gait prized by judges and spectators alike.

Tennessee law declares soring of horses with "sharp-pointed instruments" or any "blistering compounds or other devices or drugs" to be a misdemeanor, and provides for fine and imprisonment of any owner, rider, ringmaster, manager or show chairman responsible. Despite this, owner George Lenex compares soring to a sin.

"Everybody is against it, but everybody does it," he said.

THE WALKING Horse National Celebration, Inc., at Shelbyville has vowed that sore horses will not be permitted to show, but raw and scarred horses were seen yesterday in both the walking ring and the Blacksmith quarters where the 31st National Celebration is being held. Walking horse supply booths are shelled with smearing substances to cover raw places on horses’ legs, and there is an ample supply of "freeze" applications.

The state law places the burden of responsibility for seeing that horses are as well as the rider. Under the law, the ringmaster is responsible for reporting sore horses to the horse show manager or chairman, who in turn are held accountable for reporting violations to the district attorney general of the county in which the violation occurs.

Aside from the legality of the practice, it has put Tennessee, heart of the walking horses industry, in an uncomfortable position vis-a-vis other states where walking horses are raised and shown. A primary concern of many horsemen now is that the rules in other states are being tightened drastically, as these states react to pressures from outside the horse industry.

HORSES ARE being disqualified “with even a small scar” in his state, said Guy Ward, California attorney, and buyers soon will be unable to exhibit Tennessee horses anywhere outside the state.

"When that happens," he predicted, "pressure in the pocketbook will help stop soring."

On the other side of the argument, Bob Franklin, a California trainer, said he could bring a horse to Tennessee for exhibition, because he "trains to show."

"And you can’t compete there if your horse isn’t sore," he said.

MORE TRAINERS from other states feel that the laxity in enforcement of Tennessee laws is intentional, for the benefit of Tennessee horses, and the need of state trainers don’t score in Tennessee will continue to thrive in the state where the blue ribbons are won.

This, some think, poses an ultimate danger to the breed. Soring "misleads people not thinking a mediocre horse is a great horse," according to Harry Hayes, manager of Harlinda Farms, Inc., and "Midnight Sun" until his death in 1965.

OTHERS POINT out that a horse with less natural ability and more "bottle" sometimes can defeat a horse with more natural ability but no "bottle."

Then, if the horse has less natural ability should become a world champion, he will be demanded for breeding, while the more gifted horse will lose.

In this case, the true walking horse blood is not passed on to the next generation. But efficient gait will strain.

Some walking horse folk are more concerned about the fraud perpetrated on the viewing public, which thinks it’s seeing the true walking horse when it is really seeing an artificial, exaggerated performance, manufactured literally "out of a bottle."

Knowledgeable walking horse people say walking horses didn’t always exhibit the length, climbing gait, with the rear end of the horse tucked under to give the illusion of "walking like a man."

The trend, it is said, is to an artifical, exaggerated performance, and the public has gotten accustomed to it.

J. T. NELMS of Nashville, one of the six judges of the current celebration in Shelbyville, stood under the tin roof of the shed in the Triangle Community Center yesterday, toyed with his cigar, and expressed his sentiment in the matter.

Without the excitement of the "big lick," which soring produces easier than any other drug, he said, people will lose interest in walking horses. It is an analysis for which many trainers agree.

"The owners want the sore lick," said one trainer. And, said an owner: "When my horse enters the ring, I want him sore."

Without soring, he added, the horse could not compete.

This viewpoint is by no means unanimous.

S. W. BECHO JR., a powerful member of the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association of America, said his late, great stallion, Merry Go Boy, won the world’s grand championship twice "without either hot stuff or boots."

Most trainers agree that they can "make a walking horse" without soring. But they say they don’t have time to do this if they get a horse in January and the owner wants him ready to show in April. From this standpoint, soring is a time-saver in training (and a work saver). The consensus, however, is that soring will eliminate "about one week in four." The question boils down to this: if they get a horse in January and the owner wants him ready to show in April...
damage to the industry itself.

One of the ways the show horse industry is protected is by the use of a three-inch boot made of leather. This boot is not as effective as the two-inch boot, and doesn't allow as much looseness in the ankle, like a chain or roller.

THERE IS NO QUESTION, however, that a practice which has been excused as an emergency measure, has become standard operating procedure for some trainers who do not want to take the time and trouble to train a horse properly. Nothing is more in order, and cannot.

Charles L. Mulline, a Pennsylvania owner-trainer, contends that the industry must become repopulated with trainers who know how to train a horse, and not just pour a bottle in it — it must separate the true trainers from the "bottle-happy idiots." How can such a result be brought about, though, if the bottle goes bad trainers and poor horses an edge over competent trainers and good horses?

"Tell us the rules, then everybody abide by them completely," is a common solution proposed by trainers themselves. Veteran horseman Randall Hicks of Arlington, Va., says the present breeding association rules would eliminate the souring problem if "all judges would force the trainers to comply with the regulations.

THE TROUBLE is, said Vic Thompson, president of the Federated Walking Horse Trainers Association, the breeding association makes the rules for all Tennessee Walking Horse exhibitions. They are "enforced only outside Tennessee."

Joe Urquhart, Columbia trainer, says he is responsible for eliminating souring practices "ultimately lies with the trainers. If they don't stop it, he says, the responsibility devolves on the horse show managers and ringmasters.

"A judge can tell when a horse is sore without having to see its feet," said Urquhart.

Toughener, Blood Stopper Medication for Chain-Rubbed Areas

Medication to the sored area comes in the form of a skin toughener and blood stopper where the chains have rubbed the front area of the pattern. This medication, medical as grease, is applied before the horse is put into the stall after a workout or a show. Some trainers say they spend as much time caring for the feet as in any other aspect of training.

Representatives of humane organizations from Denver to Washington are attending the current celebration in Shelbyville, gathering data for the hearing.

Joe Urquhart: "Judges can tell" obviously, it can conceal evidence of souring, too.

To complicate matters, according to Belch, the trainers demanded a two-inch boot for walking horses. He himself, he says, has contended for years that each horse would wear the boot itself, suited to him—"like people wear shoes."

The three-inch boot is not as pliable as the two-inch boot, and doesn't allow as much looseness. It was found around the ankle, like a chain or roller.

Vic Thompson: "Tell us the rules, then everybody abide by them completely."
Walking Horse Association Plagued by Lawsuits, Public Pressure

By WENDELL RAWLS JR.

Behind the Tennessee walking horse and his problems stands the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association of America—plagued by lawsuits, threatened by public pressure, split by internal conflict.

Adjudged three years ago to have violated antitrust laws, the association is involved in another suit now, and its former president is faced with still another—both growing out of the original suit.

THE ORGANIZATION, which controls the Walking Horse industry, is beset by public criticism over such practices as “soring” horses’ legs to give them the prancing stride admired in the show ring. The practice, against the law in Tennessee and other states, may become the subject of federal legislation.

A rebel faction in the association, failing to get two board members elected this year, charged the dominant faction with padding membership rolls in order to win.

On top of all this, two association members have questioned the registration of colts, claiming their association isn’t what it ought to be.

In 1963, a California member, R. Mitchel McClure, found himself unhappy with some of the words and actions of the association’s executive secretary, Tom Fulton, and said so. A board of directors meeting was called at his request to discuss the matter, but McClure wasn’t there. He said he couldn’t get there because of illness.

THE BOARD suspended him from association membership. McClure promptly filed suit against the association, claiming a considerable loss of money as a result of his suspension.


He found such illegal activity “in part motivated by the selfish personal financial interests of certain of the officers and directors of the association”—including S. W. Beech Jr., who was president in 1963 when the uproar started.

McClure got a judgment, a director of the association was fined $15,000, but this was not satisfactory to him. So he filed a damage suit against Beech personally, who has been director of the association continuously since his term as president.

McClure’s attorneys will begin taking depositions Sept. 15 for the suit against Beech, which will be heard in U.S. District Court in Columbia.

 Shortly after the 1966 ruling, the association discontinued the office of executive director and asked Mr. McClure to resign.

But Fulton maintains he still has eight years to go on a contract that paid him $14,500 a year, and that he was fired. So he has filed suit in Marshall County, and a hearing on that case is scheduled for October.

With all of this fuss and furor going on about the way the board of directors was handling things, George Lenox, Collierville, Tenn., owner and breeder, started a loyal opposition within the association.

He began a campaign last January to elect two board members in May, under the banner of the Blue Royalty as an opposition to the association’s dominant White Royalty.

Lenox and his adherents charged that “25 members were hastily added” to the roll of the association shortly before the election.

They took the matter before the annual meeting May 24, but were turned down. The membership fees and dues had been paid, and the by-laws were ruled in order.

ONE OF THE things that made Lenox unhappy about all the new members is that the association bylaws do not require a person to own a Tennessee walking horse in order to become a member.

State Sen. Joe T. Kelley of Columbia, president of the association, said he would favor changing the rules to require all members to own a walking horse, but said no such rule change was brought up at the annual meeting.

“On, God, yes, we have problems, serious problems,” conceded Kelley. “There are many problems within the organization.

“I think many of Mr. Lenox’s ideas are wonderful, but many appear to be harmful. I think his plans are honest and hurting us some.

“The biggest problem facing the breeders association is lack of togetherness. We need to be working together, rather than trying to be splitting apart.

“We need directors who are not interested in their personal gain, but in the interest of the walking horse industry as a whole,” was Kelley’s comment on the matter. “I would never want to be either a director or an officer.

“I just don’t want people to become discouraged by buying horses and entering the walking horse industry. I fear they must belong to an ‘in’ crowd to win. Whether justified or not, that image is held in many minds.

Involved in Lenox’s rebel movement was a charge of incorrect registration of a colt, a charge which he said the association “has not disputed properly.”

Lenox alleged that a colt was registered as being by his stallion, Carbon Copy, when actually the mare was at his farm "trying to be bred at the time the colt is registered as foaling."

HE SUPPORTED his contention with a report from Dr. Cameron Shaw of Collierville, a veterinarian, saying that the mare had a breeding problem which required hormone treatments to correct.

Lenox’s charge and his evidence—part of it involving a gestation period of 11 months and 25 days, which he said was about a month too long—was heard by the association board, but they judged the evidence “not sufficient” to invalidate the registration.

He has requested a rehearing, and also asked the board to honor his request that his notarized signature as owner of the sire be required on all applications for registration on colts by Carbon Copy.

LENOX WAS not the only one to complain of registration practices. Dr. Russell Myers of Woodbury put a complaint before the board that Milton Alexander of Readyville, Tenn., registered two colts as being by last year’s world grand champion, Chancy’s Royal Heir, when actually they were by Myers’ stallion, The Man of the Hour.

Myers said he sold Alexander two mares in foal to The Man of the Hour, and that the transfer slip shows his horse as the sire.

Myers says transfers of ownership show both mares sold to C. L. Kline, and lists each mare as being “open” — that is, not in foal — at the time of transfer. Myers said he did not sell the mares to Kline. Efforts to reach Kline for comment were unsuccessful.

Mr. S. Sharon Brandon, association secretary, said the board does not assume the role of legal arbitrator in such disputed cases, but must depend on “the integrity of the individual” in registering all horses. "If the records are in order, we must register the horse," she said.

WHEN THE court rules on either case, or any other, "we added, "then the board will take appropriate action against the guilty party.

"Kelley said that both cases are "in the hands of lawyers, ours as well as theirs.

"Our doors and records are always open to anyone who wants to check," he said.

"We opened them to Mr. Lenox and will open them to anyone who has a legitimate purpose to need them.

"We are required by law to register a man’s horse if he provides us with the information he desires. We want to get reliable and unbiased registration, we want to rid ourselves of the guilty person.

ONE OF Lenox’s complaints is that the election of the future judges is open to question. Futurity judges are elected by a vote of those members who pay a fee to enter horses in the future, but must be chosen from a list of licensed judges.

Last year Lenox complained to the association that a total of 56 votes was "cast by nine
people. None of the ballots was signed." He based this charge on the opinion of a Memphis handwriting expert, Earl E. Davenport, who analyzed the signatures on the ballots and concluded that 30 of them were filled out in the same handwriting, six more in a different handwriting, five in another, four in another, three in another and two each in four other hands.

The voting regulations in the Kentucky election do not require signatures on the ballots. The result is that morning,蜂 remarked: "Lexis used to send his ballot to me to fill out as I pleased, before he got involved in this proxy thing."

EVERY NEW member of the board has to have a sponsor before he can be accepted. Of the 25 members of the association, 33 were sponsored by F. A. Self of Mobile, and 35 by C. M. Waters of Alexandria, La.

In Alexandria, 23 members listed the same postoffice box number, 1749. In Mobile, 43 members listed only "Mobile, Ala." as an address.

Lewisburg has 69 members listed, 19 of them listing 116 E. Wingo St. as the address. This is the address of a printing office which handles an association account.

Other membership listings by towns include: Newbern, Tenn., 32; Woodbury, 17; Athens, 17; Eddyville, 16; Pulaski, 24; Tullahoma, 17; Nashville, 9; Shelbyville, 11; Fayetteville, 9; Columbia, 16; Hayti, Mo., 11; Springfield, Mo., 13; and Clinton, Mo., 1.

Concerning the association's elections, Beech says: "It's just like electing a county road commissioner. You get behind your man and get your man and get your people to work."

IN THE EARLY 1960s, the late John Amos paid more than $200 in membership dues for a group of Eastern Kentucky coal miners.

The meeting in question was in April 1961 and came to light during the California suit.

When questioned about the incident, Amos, once the association's most powerful member, said: "There have been a number of years in which those coal miners voted, but that was the only year they had been transported by bus.

"THEY MADE a whole day out of the annual meeting, and visited a number of points of interest in Middle Tennessee, went over to Chattanooga, to Lookout Mountain, just took some time off on their own book."

"I don't remember when it started, but it's been done for some years. Until proxy voting was forced on the association."

Fulton testified that the theory behind such action is: "You don't let is a dog if you think he will bite you."

The importance of membership in the association is that it is the licensing agent for walking horse judges, and has a licensing committee for that purpose. Some members contend that judges are thus placed under pressure to please the committee, which varies from year to year.

Members contend they have to play "politics" in order to maintain their credentials. There are no "politics" as such in the association, according to Kelley, but he conceded that "there are many, many things wrong in it."
$ $ $ Ride On Judge’s Decision

By WENDELL RAWLS JR.
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One of the most vulnerable practices in the Tennessee walking horse industry is judging—where one man’s word means not just ribbons and glory, but dollars... sometimes a lot of dollars.

It isn’t just the prize money. Winning or not winning can mean a difference of $10,000 in the price of a horse.

AND YET, the judge who determines the winning horse may be a trainer, who knows that one of those horses is ridden by another trainer who in turn may judge the show in which the judge himself will ride the next night.

Or one of the horses may be ridden by a very close friend, who entered this show just because he is judging it.

Or the judge may be a breeder, one or more of those horses may be from his own stallion’s heritage. If such a horse wins, horse owners are going to be more inclined to want colts from that stallion.

THE JUDGE, whoever he is, finds himself in this situation, with a wide open decision, because a show decision rests on his judgment, and nothing else. In contrast to other sports, there can be no objectively clear-cut winner of a horse show. There is no finish line, no scoreboard.

With as much money as there is on the line, the judges—one or three—cannot be conscious of the issue, whether it’s a one-night horse show or the Walking Horse National Celebration in Shelbyville.

Winners of the National Celebration have sold for more than $100,000.

IF THE JUDGES had seen things differently and the horses had finished much lower, their value could have dropped to as little as $10,000. Breeders pay high fees for champions to sire their mares.

Even in smaller shows, if a horse that is for sale should win, he is worth much more than if he should finish fourth.

"The difference in the average horse can be as much as $10,000," said one owner. "Many times the judge is apprised of the transaction, and called on for a little help."

VICTHOMPSON, president of the Walking Horse Trainers Association, contends that most judges place the horses as accurately as they can. But when one horse is only slightly better than another, the only criterion is the “human judgment” of the judge, who can only say, “That’s the way I saw them.”

Whether they’re trying to favor someone or to avoid favoring someone, sometimes the judges make decisions that seem to the audience to be way off-base. The stands rose with a chorus of “boo’s” at the announcement of the winner of one recent Middle Tennessee show, and then cheered the second-place horse.


IN THE one-night show, the judge is generally a trainer with a judging license issued by the association. Licensing is handled by a judging committee from the association’s board of directors, but Kelley commended:

"The only thing the license is worth is a little prestige. What he meant by that was that the license isn’t required by all horse shows. The board consists of a list of certified judges, but a man isn’t excluded from it if he doesn’t want to be there. Kelley says, "The committee must receive a written complaint within 30 days to take action toward removing him from the list, and very few such complaints are filed."

"TEMPERS flare," he said. "But people cool down after a couple of days."

Charges that shows are "fixed" are frequent, even at the Celebration. Often the charges obviously stem from bitterness at losing.

But the story is that recently, at Petersburg, a judge was handed a list of winners, compiled by a groom, before the show began. The patron and a friend bet on the winner of each class as they entered the ring, and the patron won every time.

THAT DOESN’T necessarily mean there is a "fixed" horse. Kelley explain that trainers always pick shows where competition is limited, and they can be pretty sure their own horses are the best. Too many horses, too many, can compete except in the Celebration itself.

Judges for the most prestigious of all walking horse shows are picked by a secret committee, according to William C. (Bill) Tune, president of the Celebration, and trainers who might have an interest aren’t usually on the judging team—they’re exhibiting in the ring.

"We pick three so that the pressure can’t be leveled at one man," said Tune. "And we keep the committee secret so pressure can’t be exerted on them about selection."

YET PRESSURE from the crowd can have a great effect on judges. Many claim the raucous reaction to Betty Sain’s Shaker’s Shocked had a lot to do with his getting the world’s championship in 1967.

The big black stallion has placed very low in subsequent celebrations and didn’t finish in the top 12 in the Aged Stallion class last Wednesday night.

The matter of "springing" — testing the horse with chemicals or by mechanical means — so he will lift his feet higher — is left almost exclusively to the judges, especially at the one-night show.

This year, judges in Tennessee were not required to inspect their horses without their boots, the protective covering around the ankle. Since it wasn’t required, most didn’t.

IN THE FINAL analysis, the judges may not tie (place) many horses wrong, according to one owner, but he adds, that’s because "no one will make a total fool of himself in front of thousands of people."

Celebrity can be done about the vulnerability of the judging process is a question for discussion. But George Lennex, Collerville, Tenn., owner-breeder, outlined what he’d like to see eventually:

"Long for the day when an unknown trainer can bring a horse in from the woods and have it judged solely on the merits of the horse."

"When we reach that level, we can’t breed enough horses and the trainers can’t train enough horses to meet the demands of the people."

People get discouraged from ever entering the business, because of all the things they’ve heard about having to spend money."

Seventh in a Series
Horse Acquired as Soring Exhibit

By WENDELL RAWLS JR.
THE MONTGOMERY ADvertiser
A Montgomery-based horse protection association purchased a Tennessee Walking Horse at a Shelbyville sale yesterday which the group said will be used as a "blatant example of soring".

A veterinarian for the group said the horse, a three-year-old gelding, is "the most unsound horse" he has examined and that poor training practices have made him "worthless" as a walking horse.

THE HORSE is expected to be taken later this month before a special Senate committee studying legislation that would make the soring of horses a federal offense. It is already unlawful in Tennessee.

The horse, a registered gelding named Papa Charcoal, was purchased for $500 by Mrs. William Blue of Washington, D.C., president of the American Horse Protection Association, at an auction sale operated by S. W. Beech Jr. and Pete Yorky, two Tennessee horse breeders.

The sale, called the "Sale of Show Ring Champions," is being held at Shelbyville, scene of the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration. However, the sale is not on the show grounds and is not connected with the show or its officials.

"WE BOUGHT this horse as an example of blatant soring," said Mrs. Blue. "It is obvious that trainers and exhibitors have contempt for the well-being of the horse, the sufferings of the animals and the interest of the public." The horse is a trade, not in the animal or sportsmanship.

Soring is the practice of using mechanical and chemical means to make a horse more 'sore' by increasing its speed and agility. The horse was purchased at the auction by Roy Davis, a Calhoun, Ga., horse owner. He said he took it in trade for a recently handled horse of his own.

"HE'S JUST one of the horses I bought up here to sell," said Davis. "I don't check them very closely."

Registration papers given to Mrs. Blue show the horse is the grandson of the great Henry Go Bey, a two-time world champion walker who died earlier this year. The papers showed the horse had passed through three owners before Davis, the last being Mrs. Patricia Gober, Pratville, Ala.

Mrs. Gober said she traded the horse in March 1968, and that he had passed through several traders before he got to Davis.

"HE WAS NOT sored while we had him," she said. "We never sored him."

Mrs. Gober, who said she is opposed to soring, said the horse had not been gelded when she sold him.

Mrs. Blue said the horse was wearing the "training chain" when he was offered at the auction but that she was assured by stablehands that the chain was not serious.

Beech said he and Yokley were "the agents" at the sale and that neither knew anything of the horse's condition. He said a veterinarian had checked all the horses and informed new owners of their conditions.

"It's not against the law to soro a horse," he said. "But it's against the law to soro a horse or show a sore one."

THE CONDITION of Papa Charcoal is not surprising. For he is the product of an industry where the soring of horses is the "rule" rather than the exception.

In Tennessee, especially, it has become an art, an illegal art but one which trainers say must be learned in order to compete.

The fact that Tennessee law expressly forbids it and makes it punishable by fine and imprisonment means little. That law and a commission requiring judges and horse show officials to report violations are seldom, if ever, enforced.

Although several of the leading trainers, like Vic Thompson of Shelbyville and Joe Urquhart of Columbia, disagree, most say the "art" is necessary to produce the "big horse." The climbing, reaching stride of the professional walking horse.

Without this "paint," they say, horse shows stand not be filled.

The ultimate responsibility lies with these trainers, but most are reluctant to stop unless all others do. Owners and breeders seem to be interested mainly in winning, even if the trainers have to "sore" to accomplish it. Trainers who want to stop soring are getting little help from breeders.

In fact, the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association, the heart of the industry and the organization which makes the rules for the showing of the Tennessee Walker, is so beset with internal problems and outside pressures that the entire walking horse business is suffering.

CLOSE SCRUTINY of the walking horse business by T.B. Rawls Jr. of The MONTGOMERY Advertiser is the result of "soring" practices. The horse was purchased at a Shelbyville sale by representatives of the American Horse Protection Association.
ing the death of Midnight Lena.

MIDNIGHT LENA, a horse at Stallion Stables at Unionville last week. The owner, Jack Short, executive secretary of the Walking Horse Trainers Association, was surprised to learn of Lena's death. She has passed through four owners before being purchased by Short.

The man who owns Midnight Lena died in the fire, B. C. Baker of Centerville, says that he has no knowledge of how the papers were transferred to the horse belonging to Short.

THE BREEDERS Association, which controls registrations and is now embroiled in controversy over two such questionable registrations. In one case a Memphis breeder is complaining that a colt was registered as being by his world champion stud when it was not. In another Woodbury owner says that two colts by his stallion were registered as being by a stallion of another.

Breeders, who have been plagued by such problems for years, the breeders association has added to its woes by approving artificial insemination, a practice which makes horse breeding easier, but raises even more questions about the purity of the breed.

IF CONTROLLED, it could be a boon to the industry, but as practiced now it can destroy it. The presence of a few unethical breeders heightens the possibility of fraudulent registrations.

As one trainer said, "The possibility exists for substituting the semen of one horse for that of another. Who can tell the difference if both studs are the same color?" Although the breeders association did not approve artificial insemination until 1966, many breeders acknowledge they have been using it for years. Some use it selectively; others do not.

BEECH, a Belfast breeder and a power within the association, had been a strong advocate for artificial insemination. "How am I going to turn down a friend if he has a $100 mare and wants to breed her to one of my studs?" he asks.

Testimony in a recent lawsuit disclosed that in 1963 Beech's late, great stallion, Merry Go Bey, was bred to 49 mares. He was 19 years old at the time and artificial insemination was still against association rules.

Artificial insemination has been used effectively in the thoroughbred horse industry. Among racing horses, a world champion stallion averages well over 100 mares a season. The fees range from $50 to $100.

NEAR THE TOP of the list of complaints about the walking horse industry is its system of judging, a system which puts the judge in a most vulnerable position. Most horse shows have only one judge and he almost always is a trainer or a breeder. These men more often than not are close friends of trainers and breeders with horses in the show. The judge knows well that he may be showing a horse the next night in a show at which one of these men could be the judge.

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The pressure is compounded because the value of a Tennessee walker depends on his show performance. Winning can mean a difference of $10,000 in the price of a horse, possibly even more.

WITH THIS much money on the line, the judges — whether one or three — cannot be conscious of who is riding the horse.

Whether trying to favor someone or not, the judges sometimes make decisions that seem to the audience to be erroneous. At one recent horse show, the crowd booed the winning horse and gave a standing ovation to the second place finisher.

The Walking Horse National Celebration at Shelbyville takes more pains in selection of judges than most shows and always has three in an effort to lessen the pressure on an individual. Too, the celebration has a special, secret committee to pick the judges.

UNFORTUNATELY, such safeguards are not commonplace throughout the industry. Joe T. Kelley, a state senator and president of the breeders association, points out that the judges are licensed by the association but that "the only thing the license is worth is a little prestige." Kelley says the license is not required by all shows.

Of the breeders association, Kelley candidly admits "we've got problems."

THREE YEARS ago, the association itself was adjudged to have violated anti-trust laws when a federal judge in California found it guilty of monopoly, boycott, restraint of trade and conspiracy.

In that lawsuit, a California horse owner was awarded $15,000 for being wrongfully suspended from the association. Not satisfied, the breeder is now suing Beech, the Belfast breeder who was then president of the association.

The association is also being taken to court by its former executive secretary, Tom Ful lon of Chapel Hill, who claims he parted with eight years remaining on a written contract.

WITHIN THE association, opposition to present association directors is mounting. Led by George Leago, of Centerville, Tenn., the opposition claims about irregular association elections and favoritism toward members of the dominant faction.

Some trainers, especially those outside Tennessee, complain that the association does not enforce its own codes as it should. Some refuse to compete in the state because they say they must "forswear" horses to do so. Others complain they are being disqualified for scoring while Tennessee trainers are not.

Vic Thompson, president of the trainers association and last year's "Horseman of the Year" in the industry, has written several letters asking other trainers to clean up the industry or watch it die.

THE AMERICAN Walking Horse Association is at odds with Tennessee-based associations over conflicting rules and for what an American association official termed "the general conduct of the walking horse people."

Public pressure is mounting in the form of protests and campaigns by humane associations and the threat of federal legislation, such as the bill on soring sponsored by Sen. Joseph Tydings, D-Md.

The pressure may become intense enough to force the industry to police itself. So far it has not.

Worst Case in 21 Years as Veterinarian

Dr. William R. Porter, a Maryland veterinarian, examines wounds caused by soring on leg of a Tennessee walking horse purchased by representatives of the American Horse Protection Association.
Tennessee Walking Horse
Is In Deepening Trouble

THE Tennessee Walking Horse is in deep trouble. The reason for this is that many breeders, owners, trainers and judges have kept their heads in the sand while a tidal wave of adverse reaction has mounted over the practices within the sport, which has become a major industry.

Criticism from the halls of Congress to the courts of California, from the fairgrounds of the U.S. to the barns of owners who deplore the practices they know are going on, seem to feel nothing can be done about them. Something must be done.

The procedures, which include fraudulent registration, “sorin” the front feet of horses, lack of control over the purity of the breed and irregular judging practices, and a relaxed view of what constitutes a Tennessee Walking Horse, could have been curbed by self-regulation in the industry.

The Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration at Shelbyville has strict rules. Officials of the celebration, while delighted because the show has received national attention, are concerned because methods of regulation sometimes seem inadvisable. Mr. W. C. Tull, president of the celebration group in Shelbyville, is to be commended for the support he expressed for positive efforts to halt bad practices.

The Shelbyville Celebration brings horses and visitors from throughout the nation and even places outside the continental U.S. This is pleasing for the state. The sponsors of the celebration have worked long and hard to win this success. Nevertheless, there is no better time to bring a painful subject to the fore than while so many Tennessee Walking Horse fans are present. If all who are devoted to the industry will recognize the evils during this week of great celebration a step will have been made.

This newspaper has given freely of its support and aid in sponsoring the walking horse through the long years of struggle for recognition. It is proud of the role the subsequent deserved recognition around the world for the Tennessee Walking Horse. It is pleased to sponsor a class trophy at the Shelbyville Celebration. But its concern for the future of the Tennessee Walking Horse can be no less than it was years ago.

The practices which have brought so much criticism exist and give rise to widespread rumors, which in turn give birth to other rumors until at this point there is a cloud over the industry. However, the reaction of some in the walking horse industry has been to deny that anything is really wrong, while hitting back at critics as uninformed or de-gutter s nuts. Some do speak their concern.

In a letter the other day to members of the Walking Horse Trainers Association, Mr. Vic Thompson, president, warned: “We are going to have to do something concerning our rules, judging and several other things.” He noted that the Tennessee Walking Horse Show Association, the U.S. andlexington shows have either dropped the walking horse classes or are planning on it.

Continuing, he said: “The general public is fed up with all the inspection, changing rules, sore horses” and other things and said he despaired of the breeders’ serious thought, “or we will all be out of business.”

Mr. Thompson is hardly uninformed about things going on, and despite those who might fault him for bringing the subject up, evidently he is aware that the handwriting is on the wall unless something is done.

- A Federal Judge in California has found the Breeder’s Association guilty of restraint of trade and acts of monopoly... will leave. Tennessee Walking Horse.

- Sen. Joseph Tydings of Maryland has returned with new legislation in Congress to stop the cruel practice of “sorin” or mistreating the horse’s front feet to force the animal to use an artificial gait. He now has the support of the Department of Agriculture, along with various humane organizations. The new measure, if passed, would ban exhibition of treated horses, under penalty of fine or imprisonment.

- More and more exhibitors are turning reluctant to enter horses in shows where “sorin” is even rumored to be allowed.

The practice of “sorin” has been condemned by the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association of America and the American Horse Show Association, but little has been done to put an end to it. once and for all.

But the time has come for self-regulation by the industry, or the alternative of having it regulated tightly by federal and state levels. That is the handwriting on the wall, and it ought to be clear to every breeder, horse owner, trainer, judge and show promoter as well as every admirer of the Tennessee Walking Horse.

After having struggled so long to win acceptance of the breed, it would be tragic to remove it from the public eye and from competitions because of the blind attitude of those who walk at practices that ought to be outlawed for all time.

Sunday Morning
August 31, 1969

Tennessee Walking Horse
Needs a Win

THE TENNESSEE walking horse is an admirable animal but the industry and sport in which it competes. Tennessee Walking Horse.

The problem areas include in human treatment to the animals, commonly called “sorin” in walking horse circles, fraudulent registration, irregular judging procedures and a lack of control over the so-called purity of the breed.

This week the 31st Annual Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration is underway at Shelbyville and the sponsors of the event have said clearly they want to help in any way possible to clean up these practices. There are walking horse shows all the year around but the Shelbyville celebration is the grandaddy of them all.

At a time when walking horse fans are in this state and all around the world, attending a program whose sponsors are publicly committed to helping to stop bad practices, there needs to be honest consideration of what the evils are and how they can be cured.

A series of articles by Wendell Rawls, correspondent for the Nashville, has appeared in this newspaper during the last several days candidly discussing the difficulties. This newspaper, which has worked to develop support for the walking horse industry and for the breeder and which is proud of the walking horse an animal of beauty and power and grace, is deeply concerned about the future. There is going to be stricter regulation and an enforcement of rules—even of laws, if the walking horse is to be saved.

As with everything else, if the people who control the walking horse business from the inside don’t clean it up, the crackdown surely will come from outside.

The walking horse is advertised as the world’s best pleasure horse. But when a horse is ridden into the ring with front feet so sore he can’t bear to touch the ground, the fancy dancing he does may be a pleasure to some who don’t know or who don’t think. But it certainly is no pleasure to the horse.

It is no pleasure for out-of-state breeders of walking horses when they find that the breeder’s association is being run like a closed corporation for the benefit of a few. It is no pleasure to unsuspecting novices to the business when they find they have been bilked by some sharp “horse trading” or that peddlers are so uncertain they can’t tell whether they have a walking horse or a common plug.

Not all owners and trainers are guilty of these abuses, by any means. But those who are embarrass the state and in the end will only hurt themselves. The walking horse, a champion by nature, needs to be treated with the care of a champion. Only then will the walking horse industry win.

Wendell Rawls Jr., Jack Corn, Jimmy Ellis and Margaret Lindsey Warden contributed expertise to this series of stories which was co-ordinated by Jimmy Squires.
Save the Tennessee Walking Horse