

CONVERSATIONS



Trials of a Horse-Racer

By L.E. Buchholz

Emanuel Buchholz and Lydia Schweigert were married in October 1930. Emanuel lived on the homefarm all his life. It was there that he and his wife became the parents of eight children, two girls and six boys.

Emanuel was one of the better wheat and corn growers in these parts of Lehr, North Dakota. He had good land and knew how to make it produce. He also was a hunter and fisherman. He had a top string of greyhounds that could catch and kill a coyote. I can recall two of his finest dogs were named Lindy and Queen. He preferred to take those dogs out into coyote country and stay with them full speed ahead until a kill was made with a choice team of horses.

He was a skilled reinsman, drove oxen for many years, and was very capable of winning pulling-contests with them. He also had some of the finest draft horses in the country. My dad once gave him a good 80 acres of cropland for the Percheron draft stallion, Rouss. In the horse and buggy era, Emanuel became a harness racer, using some of the finest pacing and trotting horses. Later, he took up thoroughbred horse-racing.

Emanuel was well known as one of the winningest chariot team-drivers ever. He had a home track where much of this was on display each Sunday as he drove his horses through their paces for training and for the entertainment of people who gathered there to watch. His boys were involved in all of this, too, and, early in their lives, he left the riding to them.

But life did not always go well for Emanuel. To be sure, there were mishaps, close calls, and even threats made on his life. One time, in a field of five horses at the track in Wishek, North Dakota, he was hit in the face by a rider he was about to pass. Emanuel fell off and the three trailing horses ran over him.

Another time one of his most promising young horses split a front hoof wide open and ran the last quarter on three legs. Another time at Burnstad, North Dakota's track, one of his mares ridden by Bill Becker hit a tree stump and broke her front legs. The mare was destroyed right there. His chariot teams were



An enlarged framed copy of this picture was on display in one of Emanuel's rooms for more than 50 years. It shows three of the world's fastest harness stallions, owned by the International Stock Farms, owned by M.W. Savage of Waverly, Minnesota. Shown are Dan Patch 1:55, George Gano 2:02, Minor Heir 1:58½. Of these three horses, Dan Patch alone won well over three million dollars for his owner. Both the man and the horse died on the same day, or a day apart from each other. Dan Patch was purchased at \$60,000.

sometimes run into on purpose and badly hurt. A roan horse took ill and stopped, soaked with sweat; the horse began to quiver and tremble—and dropped dead.

Emanuel's wife, Lydia, now lives in Lehr. She is the only survivor of the whole relation. Emanuel died in October 1981.

He loved to play his accordion at the early school-

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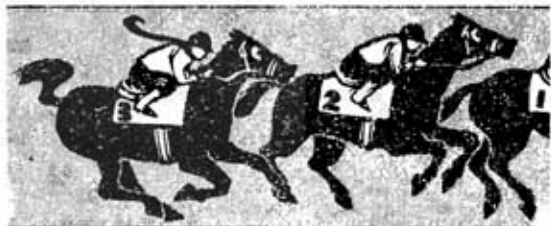
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house and at barn dances. He was in close fellowship with the Carlsons, including Frank and Luther. Emanuel was short, but strong, active, and lightning fast. He preferred to wear the best leather vests and neatly polished shoes. His harness and the buggies, carts, and sulkeys were tops along with his cutter sleighs.

On the home track, as one of the boys was riding a fine young horse in for a start, the horse reared up and fell over backwards on the boy. Another time, on the same track as a field of horses was about to cross the finish line, someone led a riderless horse across the track. The horse was hit, and the rider (also a son) was air-born.

Being that Emanuel had the best of teams for winter driving, he was called on to get doctors and run other errands in the snowbound winter days. He once leased one of his teams to a circuit minister to drive his large mission. But Emanuel soon discovered the minister's son was taking the horses out to give lake rides. Emanuel, without asking or saying anything to the pastor, drove on up to the parsonage barn and took his team, harness, sled, and blankets home. He said nothing and claimed that if he had, it would have been unpleasant to hear.

Lydia was a home-lover. Her poultry and garden crops were most excellent and ever so well prepared.



Racing in the early days of North Dakota could be a rough and dangerous affair.

She did a wonderful job rearing her family, and still never forgets a birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion. Her skill in serving meals and keeping the little ones well clad is not to be overlooked. | |