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CREATED & EDITED BY HEATHER CARDER

HIGH DIVING HORSES OF THE ATLANTIC CITY BOARDWALK

Atlantic City's Steel Pier was once home to the famous high-diving horses.

By Kris Levin

You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. However, for over a century, a series of equestrian entrepreneurs from the wild world of cowboys proved that they could, in fact, lead horses to ventures a bit more extreme. These carnies led horses to dive into water from platforms exceeding heights of sixty feet, all while swimsuit-clad women clung to their backs—the most famous of whom was blind.

FOALING AROUND IN THE WILD WEST

The basis for this bizarre feat was simple enough. Enormous crowds gathered outdoors to see a horse hoof its way up a ramp before scooting down a sloped balcony to perilously plunge headfirst into the water below, followed by a safe swim to shore with rider in tow.

The diving horse stunt was created by William "Doc" Carver, a dentist-turned-frontiersman. Carver encouraged the spread of sensationalized tales concerning his adventures on the American frontier, exploiting his rough-and-tough image to put on touring Wild West vaudeville shows worldwide. These dramatic exhibitions featured daring athletic feats of horseback riding, sharpshooting, and theatrical recreations of battles, "cops and robbers" style—basically, the 19th-century version of professional wrestling. Talk about horseplay!

In 1881, inspiration struck Carver, quite literally. While touring in Nebraska, he experienced a bridge collapse that sent him, and his horse, careening into Platte River. Ever the showman, in later years, he embellished the tale to include that he was being pursued by bandits. Nevertheless, the seed was planted and The Great Carver Show was born.

Debuting in the summer of 1894 in Kansas City, Missouri, the act took the United States by storm, drawing huge crowds nationwide, eventually spreading to Canada. Later, at the risk of being labeled a one-trick-pony, Carver cut all other elements from the show, saving the spotlight for the soaring steeds. He never performed, instead preferring to

care for the horses at the stables—one unplanned high dive on a horse proved to be more than enough for him, understandably.

With the act continuing as a true box office hit, he continued horsing around on the road for the rest of his career, looking after his horses as the next generation of horse riders jockeyed for position. After Carver passed away in 1927, his son, Al Carver, was saddled with the responsibility of taking over two touring troupes. Eventually, these two became one and the act settled in for five decades of performances at the Steel Pier in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

ENDLESS SUMMER AT THE STEEL PIER

First built in 1898, the Steel Pier remains a seasonal amusement park, host to a variety of games and rides. Its residing dock projects a half-mile from the beach out into the Atlantic Ocean, sitting amid the ambient noises of clanking ride machinery, screams from thrill-seekers, squawking and swooping seagulls, and the churning ocean.

The High Diving Horses were introduced to the Steel Pier toward the end of Prohibition—before Atlantic City was synonymous with rides, games, and *Continued on page 11*

Wildwood Farm
CLIPS & CLOPS
Oak Harbor

October 2021

MEGASUS HORSE RUNNERS

The end of the iron age

No iron, no nails! But that's not all. Megasus Horserunners are flexible and allow for natural hoof movements on all terrains. They protect your horse's hooves, they are easy on the joints and provide a cushioning effect. The Megasus Horserunners give you the full freedom that you need and you can adapt them to your individual needs. Not only can you quickly and easily customize them to your horse's hooves, you can also choose between three different fastening systems. The soles - the Horserunners - remain the same, how you fasten them changes. This gives you and your horse endless possibilities. It doesn't matter if you want to put your Megasus on and take them off at any time or need permanent protection. With the Megasus Horserunners, you are ready for any adventure.

THE BASIS FOR A LONG AND HEALTHY HORSE LIFE

Without iron or nails! The hooves are the basis of a horse's long and healthy life. The Megasus Horserunners allow all-natural hoof movements without chafing or slipping. Like a sports shoe, they provide shock absorption and spare your horse's joints. They protect the hooves from vibrations, concussions, and allow the hoof to move naturally. This positively affects the health and wellness of horses.



ORTHOPAEDICS AND HAPPY LAMINITIC HORSES

Megasus Run'n'Fun as permanent hoof protection for regeneration and supporting healthy horn material or the clippable Megasus Med'n'Rehab for medical care or corrective trims: Our systems were successfully used for laminitic horses and for orthopedic corrections. With the Megasus you can cater to the individual needs of the horse: from more stability, to soft filling, and right up to adjusting the break over of the toe with little effort.

WE VALUE INDIVIDUALITY

Your Megasus are fitted to your horse and not the other way around. You can select from out 3 fastening systems and customize the Megasus to your horse's hooves. But that's not all. You can also offer the hoof more stability by inserting our stabilizer. When transitioning from iron horseshoes to bare hoof, horses with thin soles or weak hoof walls profit from stability.

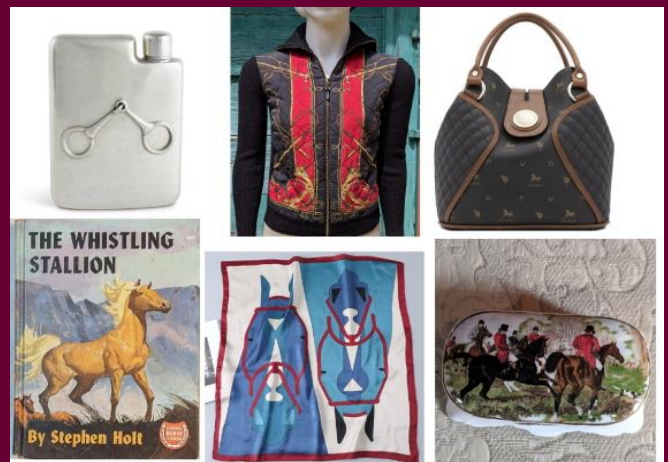


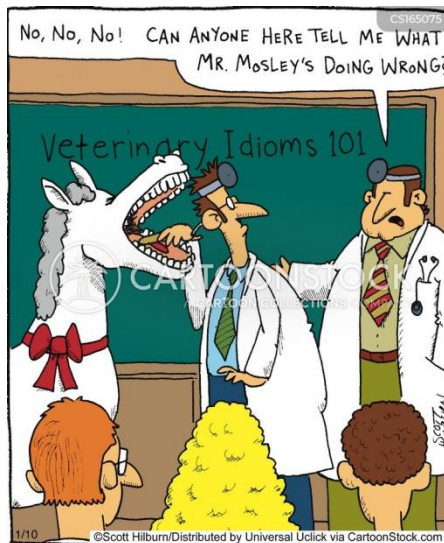
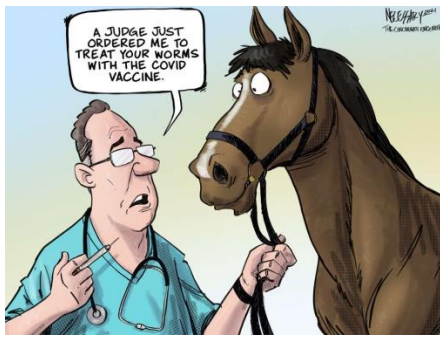
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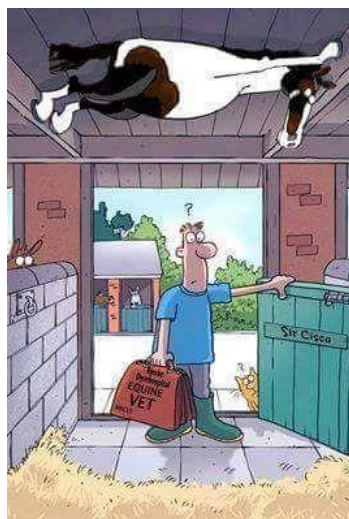
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New Items for October



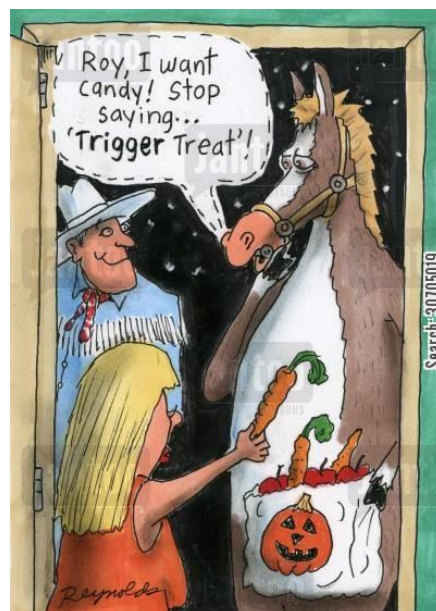
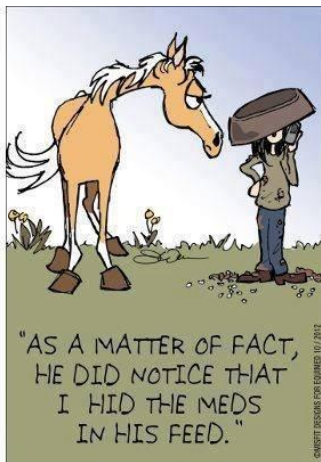


Dressage Pit Crew



THE NEAR SIDE

by J.L. Werner



WILDWOOD FARM B&B



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A Dental Assistant
*Realized that it takes nothing to join
the crowd, but it takes everything to
stand alone.*

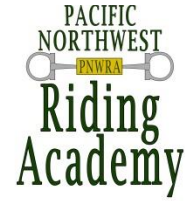
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Come experience the power of possibility with these magnificent creatures and explore the abundance of silent repose.

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WILDWOOD FARM HAS IT ALL!



**“In riding a horse
we borrow
freedom”.**

-Helen Thompson



**“A good rider can hear his
horse speak to him. A great
rider can hear him
whisper.”**

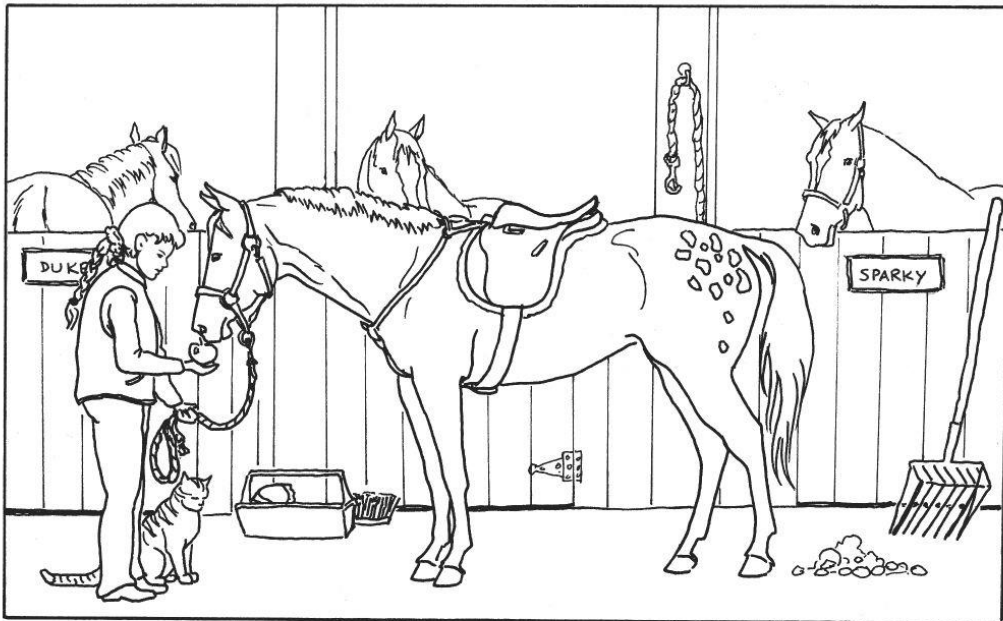
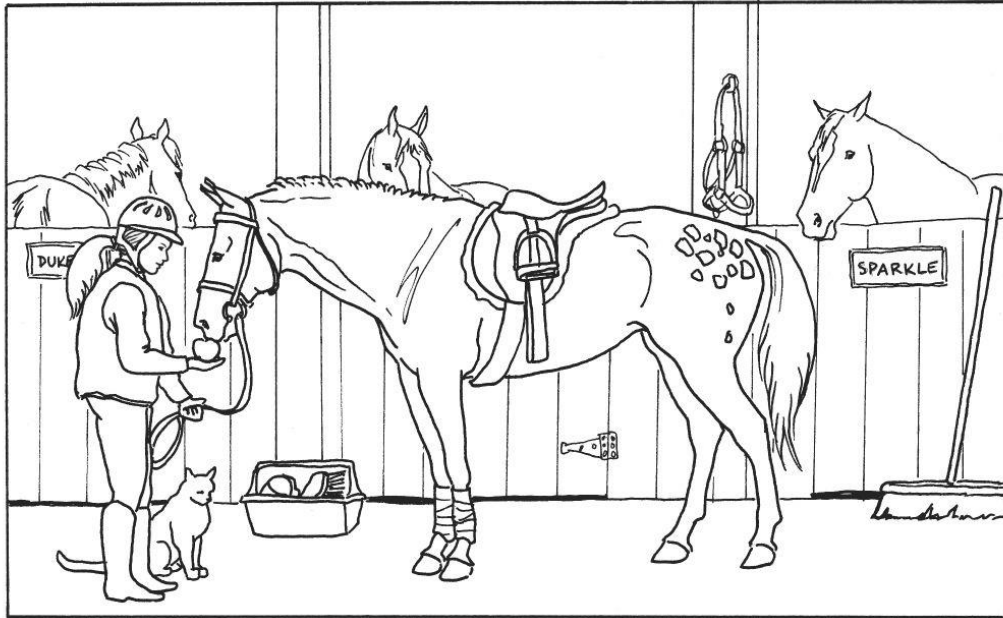
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**PACIFIC NORTHWEST
RIDING ACADEMY**

Can you spot 15 things that are different in these 2 pictures



Answers: 1. Horse's bridle, 2. missing stirrup, 3. hanging halter, 4. brush out of box, 5. cat stripes, 6. girl's halt, 7. girl's helmet, 8. stall name sign, 9. horse in stall wearing halter, 10. polo wraps on horse's legs, 11. pitchfork & broom, 12. manure, 13. breastplate on horse, 14. horse's mane, 15. girl's boots

Nutrition Corner

Understanding Herbs used for Equine Joint Care

Since plants can't fight off insects or animals that want to eat them, they contain chemicals that cause changes in the way the predator's body works. These chemicals do many different things, some good and some bad. Here is a look at the herbs commonly used in joint supplements and the types of chemicals they contain:

YUCCA: Yucca contains steroid saponins, which are related to the steroids in the animal's body that decrease pain and inflammation. But they also decrease the immune response, and have been shown to slow the production of GAGs, which are a major component of joint tissue.

DEVIL'S CLAW: This herb contains several chemicals that are reported to decrease pain. They do not decrease inflammation and are similar in structure to steroids. This herb should not be used with any female (horse or human) as it has been reported that it can cause abortions by stimulating uterine contractions.

BROMELAIN: This is an enzyme found in pineapples. It has been shown to reduce the amount of swelling present in some experimental animals. However, Bromelain can enter the body

Intact because it eats away the outer lining of the GI tract. In cancer patients, it has been shown to stimulate the body's own immune system to kill the body's own cells. Since it is a protein, it can cause allergic reactions. People who handle bromelain have become allergic to it.

BOSWELLA, WHITE WILLOW BARK & SNAKE ROOT: These are all herbs containing chemicals that act as NSAID's. These drugs decrease pain and inflammation and are known to cause severe gastrointestinal (GI) problems such as ulcers. These herbs should be not be used with people or animals that have GI problems. Remember that gastric ulcers in horses are very common.

GLUTAMIC ACID (GLUTAMATE): While this is not an herb it should be mentioned because of its role as an excitatory Amino acid (EAA), and is also naturally released by joint nerves to signal pain. The more glutamate that is released, the more pain is felt by the joint. A popular "Flex" product contains glutamic acid because it claims that it is a precursor to glucosamine. Side effects can be seizures and attitude changes so more research is needed.

WILDWOOD FARM AND TRIPLE CROWN FEEDS.
Our partnership with Triple Crown began in 2014 through a promotion with the USEF encouraging farm members to compare their current feeding programs with Triple Crown products. We have found the TC products to be superior over other products primarily because of the EquiMix technology and the research support of a leading edge team including independent representatives of Equine Universities, Medical clinics and top level riders and trainers

MEET MAX & STERLING

Admittedly, there is nothing quite as cute as a miniature horse, and these boys are nothing short of adorable!

Max and Sterling came to live at Wildwood Farm in 2014 as part of a trade for an older appaloosa mare that was more suitable for their owner. She had purchased this pair earlier that year from a seller in Chehalis, but these little scoundrels were constantly finding ways to get out and wreak havoc around the neighborhood, and she was at wits end. We were looking for companions for Giant and Dancer, our original minis, and what could be better than two miniature horses? Well, four of course! We brought Max & Sterling home and after a few disagreements about the pecking order, the four boys settled in to an amiable mini herd. Max turned 22 and Sterling turned 18 this year—about 15 years younger than Giant and Dancer. These little guys are a hit at our Pony parties and with visitors of all ages, you cannot help but smile when you see them – they are perfectly miniature horses! And yes, they do love to wear the man-buns and pony tails the kids get delight in creating!



Max is registered with the American Miniature Horse Association and his full registered name is FGM ELIJAH BLUE; Sterling is unregistered and they are not related.

Miniature horses are defined by their small height. They can be found in many nations, particularly in Europe and the Americas, and are the result of centuries of selective breeding. Depending on the particular breed registry involved, the height of these horses is usually less than 33-38 inches. While miniature horses fit a height-based definition to be considered a very small pony, many retain the physical appearance of a full sized horse and are thus considered horses by their respective registries. Many miniature horses are used as service animals because of their gentle nature.

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN HANDERSON

Well-known farrier and traditional blacksmith.

What do you like most about what you do?

I like working with the animals. I'd rather work with animals than people because I get along with animals, I understand animals. The horse won't lie to me, someone else will. I enjoy the freedom that my job gives me, because if I decide I want a day off, I schedule myself the day off. I can do that pretty easy. You know, my back hurts pretty bad on Saturday when I get done, and I say "Man, thank God I'm done for the week." But when Tuesday rolls around I'm ready to get right back under it because I enjoy doing this.

What do you dislike?

People not showing up for appointments. People not doing what they say they are supposed to do. You know they hold me to the standard, but they don't hold themselves to one. If they want me at their house at 9:00 I better be there by 9:00 or within 15 minutes or I get talked bad about.

How do you set your prices?

I charge per horse. I charge \$65 on the road to shoe, and \$35 on the road to trim, and if it's over 15-20 miles I charge a trip charge. I try to keep that down, too, but with gas being what it is, it can eat up my profit in a hurry. The way I price stuff is I have a philosophy about living. I want to make a living, I don't want to kill people, but I want to make a comfortable living. And I try to do that, I try to setup where I can pay all of my bills, and have a little bit extra. I don't always get that accomplished, but I try.

How much do you make?

About \$130,000 – but the sky's the limit on what you can make. You can go into corrective shoeing and charge \$250 per hour, but you've got to be where the horses are – like Kentucky or Florida.

What education or skills are needed to do your job?

There are a lot of trade school out there who teach this. You don't have to go to school, you can climb into a truck with someone that is good and learn, but it would behoove you to go get your basics because they're going to teach you more about anatomy at the school than you're going to learn from someone. You need to be healthy to do this, there's an old saying in the Farrier trade, "you've got to have a stronger back than mine:", its physically demanding.

What is most challenging about what you do?

The corrective part of it and dealing with client's misconceptions. People have a misconception about how horses should be. They think they know what the horse needs. And what a horse needs varies from show people, to ropers, to cutters, to standard trail riders.

What is most rewarding?

When you have one limp in and he walks off when you're done. That's pretty nice.

What advice would you give someone who is considering this career?

Run, run hard! No, just kidding. If a person wants to learn bad enough they're going to be right there to soak it up. You know it's just one of those things, it just depends on the person. How bad they want something. I don't want to work for somebody else bad enough I'm not going to do this. This job is not for somebody that needs someone to help start them every morning, because it is so physically demanding that on Saturday it's hard for me to get going.

What is a common misconception people have about what you do?

That it's easy to do. It's not easy to do. And that a Farrier just changes the shoes. From the leg down the Farrier probably knows more about horse anatomy than a veterinarian.

What are your goals and dreams for the future?

Well right now there's an association called The American Farrier's Association. And I'm in pursuit of my Journeyman, the highest certification in the country.

What else would you like people to know about what you do?

I don't know, you know there's a lot of learning to this job and I haven't learned it all in my almost 17 years I've been shoeing. There's a lot of clinics that I look forward to going to every year because I can better my knowledge, and the better knowledge I have the better these horses and people benefit from it.



Kit Carson County Carousel

Burlington, Colorado

One of few remaining antique carousels with stationary animals in the U.S.



ON THIS SMALL TOWN COUNTY fairground in Colorado sits a fully operational antique carousel in the U.S., which still hosts its original animals and scenery paintings.

The Kit Carson County Carousel is a wooden stationary machine, which means the animals don't move up and down, as with most modern carousels. That doesn't deter from the excitement of riding this wonder though, as it moves along at swift 12 mph; most modern-day carousels only move around 8 mph.

The 46 animals in the menagerie are all hand-carved and hand-painted, and include a diverse selection beyond the traditional breeds. In addition to the 4 chariots and 25 horses, you'll find three giraffes, camels, goats and zebras, two burros, a lion and a tiger, a hippocampus and a St. Bernard. All contain intricate carvings and decorations on their bodies and saddles; indeed, the saddle trappings are similar to those used by cavalry mounts in the 18th century Napoleonic Wars.

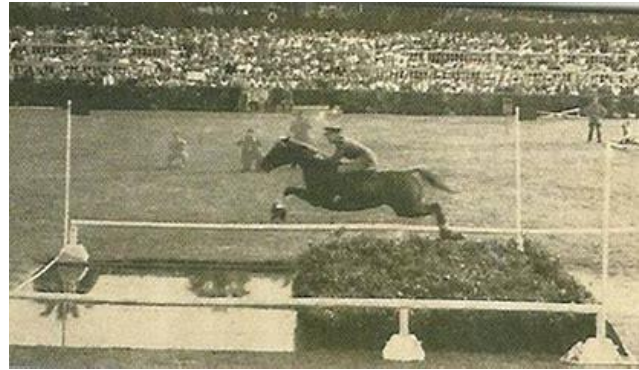
Also in the interior of the carousel, at the top, are 45 separate one-of-a-kind oil paintings of various cosmopolitan scenes, some rather amusing. A monkey sits and eats from a bowl in one, a boy teases a chained dog with a cat, a goat eats a young girl's hair wreath of flowers, a cigar-smoking dog stands at his master's attention on the dinner table, and various others.

Built in 1905, the carousel came to be the Kit Carson County Carousel after purchase from Elitch Gardens in Denver in 1928. It spent several years in storage during the depression era, which caused surprisingly little damage. In 1981, several of the animals were stolen, but eventually recovered, and it was ultimately designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987. Restoration of the dodecahedron structure housing the carousel in 2001 completed last phase of the most recent and extensive 25-year restoration process.

Know Before You Go

Getting to the carousel can be a little tricky. You have to weave through the little town of Burlington just a bit, so make sure you have a map handy. It is not very well marked from I-70, but is just a short mile or so from the interstate. The carousel is typically open from 11 am - 6 pm between Memorial Day and Labor Day and only costs 25 cents to ride! There is also an associated museum on site that folks can visit for additional dollar.

The Most Spectacular Horse Jumps!



Potoooooooo

Newmarket, England

A misunderstanding gave this 18th-century racehorse a most amusing name.



WHEN IT COMES TO NAMING racehorses, breeders aren't afraid to get weird. But there's perhaps no Thoroughbred with a name as unique—or amusing—as this.

In 1773, a healthy chestnut colt with a blaze was born. According to the lore, his owner, Willoughby Bertie, 4th Earl of Abingdon, planned to name the foal “Potatoes,” and told a stable hand to write this chosen moniker on a feed bin.

But the stable hand made a bit of a mistake. He thought his boss had asked him to write “Pot-eight-O's” and spelled the name as such. Supposedly, the earl was so amused by the gaffe, he kept the wonky spelling. (Some records shorten the name to Pot-8-Os or Pot8Os.)

Potoooooooo went on to have a successful racing career, racking up several wins. He retired from racing in 1784 and became a prolific stallion, siring more than 100 winners.

After Potoooooooo died in November of 1800, he was buried near a tree in Hare Park, the farm where he'd been retired. His body lay undisturbed for about 200 years, when a storm felled the tree and uprooted what's believed to be his remains. Now, the skeleton stands within the National Horseracing Museum, in the company of other legendary—though less legendarily named—equines.

Know Before You Go

The National Horseracing Museum is open Monday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. An adult ticket costs £12.

High Diving Horses of the Atlantic City Boardwalk *contd from page 1*

Gambling. During this time, the boardwalk was predicated upon outdoor events, indoor cinema, and theatrical attractions. The Steel Pier was a hotspot for big-time acts, jazzy dance halls, and vaudevillian variety performances.

After a change in ownership during the Second World War, the boardwalk changed the nature of their offerings quite a bit. Now, aside from the ubiquitous Ferris wheel and merry-go-round, a carnival atmosphere filled the air—clowns, acrobats, and trapeze artists, tightrope walkers and motorcycle-riding daredevils, stilt-walkers and unicyclists, flagpole sitters and the incomprehensible human cannonball—a man shot headfirst out of a giant cannon; it was a regular three-ring circus! And with this change came the perfect opportunity for Carver's team of diving horses.

Water Circus performances in the open-air portion of the pier promised the "thrill of a lifetime." With a capacity of over forty thousand, leagues of day-trippers milled around eating saltwater taffy and acting as true cheerleaders for the synchronized human high divers. But, despite their marvelous feats, they always played second-string to the main event—Doc Carver's horses were too hot to trot.

Animal attractions were collectively one of the biggest ticket-selling items the Steel Pier had to offer. Boxing bouts with Kangaroos. Cats playing poker. A chicken playing the piano. But, none of these acts could surpass the magnificent equestrian high-dives of Sonora Webster Carver.

ATLANTIC CITY'S MANE EVENT

Sonora, wife of Al Carver, brimmed with chutzpah and joined the horse riding squad as a teenager in 1923. Touring with the horses across the country before they found a home at the Steel Pier, Sonora's job was to wait at the ledge of the wooden diving ramp and mount the horse as it galloped past her. Before long, she was promoted to lead diver, partaking in two-to-six jumps each day.

Tragedy struck when one of Sonora's daily nosedives became a living nightmare. In 1931, while soaring through the air with her prized stallion, Red Lips, the duo somehow became off-kilter. While the act typically allowed for the horse to hit the water first and safely break the water tension, this time Sonora hit face-first with her eyes wide open. Still, only in her mid-twenties, Sonora was permanently blinded by the impact.

But even so, no one could convince Sonora to get off her high horse. Despite all adversity presented in the wake of her newfound blindness, Sonora persevered and continued diving. She retired when the show was put on hold at the start of World War II in 1942. For her, stopping due to blindness was never an option. She felt her vocation was far too fun to give up—it was not a matter of courage, but of love. Sonora went on to write a memoir, *A Girl and Five Brave Horses*, which was adapted for the silver screen in Disney's 1991 film *Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken*. Sonora lived to the age of 99, remaining for her whole life just miles away from where she found fame at the Steel Pier.

THE END OF AN ERA

All things must come to an end and, for the golden era of Atlantic City and the Steel Pier, that came to pass in the late-seventies.

Amidst an economic downturn and increasing crime rates, the seaside community lost its appeal as a family destination. The grand opening of Atlantic City's first legal casino in 1978 coincided with the closing of the dilapidated Steel Pier.

In its final years, the High Diving Horses were shadowed amid allegations of animal abuse by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Rumors persisted that the horses were spurred into vaulting via trapdoors, electric cattle prods, and pinpricks, but these claims have remained unsubstantiated and rejected by all involved in the performances. Despite a plethora of rider-related injuries, including the blinding of Sonora, numerous broken bones, and even the fatality of eighteen-year-old diver Oscar Smith in front of a live Texas audience in 1907, allegedly no horse injuries ever occurred.

Wildwood Farm CLIPS & CLOPS Oak Harbor

2326 Happy Valley Rd
Oak Harbor WA 98277

The original bones of the Steel Pier burned down in 1982 and the rebuild was reopened in the nineties with a focus on thrill rides and carnival games. Attempts of the diving horse [act's return](#) to Atlantic City were made in 1993 and 2012 but were met with less than [unbridled](#) enthusiasm. Today, just blocks away from the Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditorium on the world-famous Atlantic City Boardwalk, the Steel Pier remains a seasonal amusement park, host to a variety of games and rides alongside the smell of fried food and fresh saltwater.

Regardless of which side you fall on the debate, there is no denying that its rise and fall is nothing short of iconic. The Steel Pier was a central pillar in the golden age of "America's Favorite Playground," as Atlantic City was known at the time, and was encapsulated by Doc Carver and his wonderful flying horses—and that is straight from the horse's mouth.

