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L. H. Melles
Iowa State College

L. F. Boll
Iowa State College

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The White Horse Patrol

Organization developed by livestock men

L. H. Melles, '43, and L. F. Boll, '44

MEN will always love beauty and a beautiful horse will always arouse the fancy and admiration of horsemen and laymen alike. To them nothing is more awe-inspiring than matched and intelligent horses. Horses skilled in acting are usually found only in the circus, but occasionally an individual will delight in owning and training a trick horse. When a number of such men are brought together by this mutual interest, the arrangement that results may well lead to something unique in that it deals with living creatures by nature of different conformation, temperament, and capability.

Organization Visualized

An organization of matched horses was conceived in 1920 by a group of Sioux City, Iowa, livestock men, all members of the Abu-Bekr Shrine Temple. These men visualized a mounted patrol of dashing white Arabian mounts, which would be unequalled anywhere in the world.

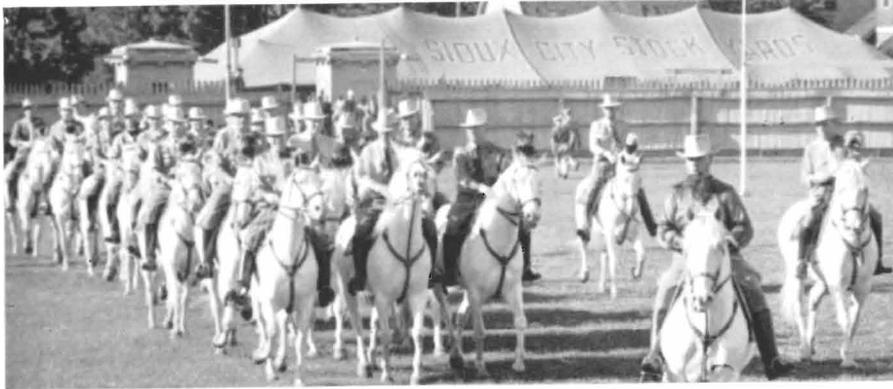
After an exhaustive search for material, the members realized that a sufficient number of horses of the desired qualifications were not to be had. These inspired men were not to be deterred, however, and decided to raise their own animals. To this end, a white Arabian stallion, directly descended from the far-famed mounts of the Arabian desert, was purchased. He was named Abu-Bekr for the Shrine Temple. Although slightly aged now, he still maintains his place in the patrol and takes part in every per-

formance. Today, the majority of the animals of the patrol are sired by this splendid horse. The prepotency of this sire is truly remarkable. The patrol maintains about 20 off-colored mares for breeding purposes, and when bred to Abu-Bekr, over 50 per cent of the offspring are pink skinned and pure white.

Uniformity of Mounts

The process of building the patrol was tedious. When first organized, the patrol consisted of horses of every color and type. The aim of these men was to attain perfection, and many horses were purchased only to be rejected. Disappointments were great and many, but the patrol carried on. Today it has reached a stage where changes come quickly. Undesirable mounts have been disposed of, and the patrol now stands as a model of beautiful white mounts, uniform in quality, size, and conformation.

The patrol is truly an impressive sight, and has received the acclaim of horse-lovers everywhere. The patrol first appeared publicly in 1922, and since has traveled widely from Washington, D. C., to Los Angeles. Their activities are varied. Aside from the interests of the Shrine, the patrol has appeared at horse shows, fairs, celebrations, and in the interest of various civic groups. Almost anywhere a crowd would assemble these horses have appeared and delighted the audience with fancy drills, intricate maneuvers, and trick acts. Due to transporta-



The Abu-Bekr White Horse Patrol as it appears preparatory to exhibition.

tion problems, the only current activity is drill practice to keep the horses in shape.

The patrol appears with a minimum of 36 horses. Not being military, the maneuvers are designed to operate in a small amount of space and, therefore, are the same whether the patrol executes its movements in the street or in a hall. The unit of the patrol is a squad, consisting of 3 horses. Two squads operate as a section.

The training of these horses for the patrol starts when they are about 3-year-olds and after they are well saddle broken. A period of 4 months is required to train a trick horse. The drill horses are not necessarily taught tricks, but many are capable of both. The trick horses perform singly or in pairs, according to the nature of their act. The horses are stabled together with stablemen in constant attendance. Visitors from all parts of the United States, Canada, and many foreign countries have viewed the stable.

Hobby for Members

The organization of the patrol is an outstanding example of teamwork. The patrol is privately owned and maintained. Each man owns and maintains his horse and equipment. The members are business men, using the patrol as a hobby, and devoting their spare time to drilling and training their horses. Their drills are

usually in the evening, 2 or 3 evenings a week. The members of the original patrol were all livestock men, but the scope of the personnel has widened. Bankers, lawyers, and doctors are numbered among them, although the majority are still livestock men.

Additions Made

Many additions have been made to the patrol in recent years. Four new stallions have been acquired, chief of which are Silver Flash, a five-gaited trick stallion, and The Shiek, which is the mount of the captain of the patrol. Three tiny white ponies act as mascots and appear in the drill. A Roman chariot drawn by 4 milk white horses in true Roman style is an added attraction. A magnificent tent is used to house the horses in their pilgrimages. A professional horse trainer is now employed to teach the trick horses. His patience and skill has shown itself to a marked degree in the performance of the troop.

The Abu-Bekr White Horse Patrol now stands as a symbol of beauty and art, the result of the untiring efforts of the members. The success of this organization owes a great deal to the initial members who stuck through thick and thin, and who gave freely of their time and money, always conscientiously striving for perfection.