

Interviewed: May 6, 1976 (Exhibition Park)Tape 88, 1

GROUNDS KEEPER: Mr. Jim Dimond,  
471 Granville Avenue,  
Richmond, B. C.  
(277-7962)

David Stevenson - Researcher

- He worked at Brighthouse, when it was used for training horses, he used to water and harrow it.
- It housed about 300 head of horses..
- There was a track through the bushes where the Simpson Sears and Safeway stores are now in 1947.
- Lansdowne was used from 1950 to 1960 (?) and then amalgamated with B. C. Turf.
- There was no grandstand at Brighthouse then, just a club house which was used as a dance hall by the Kiwanis and the Lions Clubs.
- It was a good track, very kind to the horses, it was a mile track like Lansdowne.
- They closed it because the grandstand was poor, land costs were high and they need to consolidate into one track which was Lansdowne and it went from 1924 - 1964 (?) until they built new barns at Exhibition.
- Sometimes they had crowds of 12,000 to 14,000 people, sometimes they had to open up the center field for people.
- It was difficult to get to the track as the population of Lulu Island increased.
- You couldn't get in and out, that was the problem.
- It was a wider track and easier on horses.
- His job was groundskeeper.
- There used to be quite a few horses from Seattle.
- Today, it's mostly local horses.
- It's quite a thriving industry in B. C. now.
- In old days a big purse was \$12,500; today purses are worth \$30,000 and sometimes worth \$50,000.
- A good horse can make a lot of money in a season.
- There are over 1,000 horses kept at Exhibition Park during the season.
- One nice thing about Lansdowne is that there was lots of room.
- There is at Exhibition Park an inside training track used for wet weather.
- Last year they had eight casualties on the track...a low percentage.

Jim Dimond

HORSE RACING

- This year they had three casualties in one night.
- The present track is composed of loam: it's half clay and half sand with a rock bases, followed by sand and clay and sand again.
- The track is kept just moist enough to make it firm.
- The track requires continual care of watering and harrowing.
- It is easier to care for the track with modern machinery...they used to use horses to care for the track and to pull the starter gate.
- On the old harrows, a man would have to ride behind in the dust, to alter the discs but now it is all done automatically.
- The Exhibition Park track can take all sorts of weather, compared to the Seattle track.
- There are grass or turf tracks and these are preferred by some horses.
- Harness racing is based in Ladner...it's done mostly by farmers.
- It never did get very big, they would bet \$35,000 to \$50,000 while at the Park, they were betting \$250,000 to \$300,000.
- They closed Ladner and they tried it one year at the Exhibition Park, but the weather was so bad they had to stop.
- They harness raced at Sandown in Victoria, but it didn't last long.
- Today, it is held in Cloverdale.
- A harness-race horse is just a "standard breed" he's not a thoroughbred horse.
- They are not as high strung and can work out ten miles a day, they are not geared for speed.
- Harness races are usually shorter, half-mile races, their purses are around \$500.00.
- They still train at the Ladner track.
- He doesn't bet much at the track, and neither do the other maintenance crew.
- The best horse doesn't always win the race.
- There are about 25 - 30 jockeys now and some do very well.
- The jockey has an agent who tries to get him the best mount.
- The owner or the trainers decide who will ride their mount, they must enter horse and rider forty-eight hours ahead.
- It's quite a complicated procedure sorting out the weights of horses.
- If one horse has more win, he has some weight added to him...if a jockey is just an apprentice, he has a weight allowance...so some horses carry more weight than others, this is called a "Handicap".

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HORSE RACING

- If an apprentice rider wins forty races in a year, he is no longer an apprentice.
- Billy Stoure and Ronnie Williams only had their bug for one year.
- Most jockeys are contracted to an owner and will ride only for him.
- There are a couple of female riders but they are not too successful.
- A lot of women ride in the "bush circuits" in the Interior...  
Kamloops, Osoyoos, Vernon, and Williams Lake.
- Sandsdowne is in Sydney, Vancouver Island...he re-built it.
- They tried Quarter horse racing of 440 yards in 1971 but it did not succeed.
- It is more like a business, in the old days it was more friendly and people celebrated the winning of the race but not today.
- There are lots of characters who work at the track and who make it their whole life: e.g. Bill Marsh.
- They have reached their limit as far as housing the horses.
- 1,500 applied this year so they need training centers now at Ladner, and then they come in each day to race.
- They are planning an experience of some of the facilities next year but there is no more room for extra stables.