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## Horseback Riding For The Handicapped

By Rick Gerdeaman

Some near-miraculous things are happening to a very special group of physically or mentally impaired young people, as well as some grownups in western Ohio. The group of 70 or so participate in the Equestrian Therapy (ET) Program, a nonprofit organization that helps handicapped children and adults through the experience of horseback riding.

The ET Program operates at the Briarhedge Farm near Lima. Accredited by the North American Riding-for-Handicapped Association, the ET Program is the brainchild of farmers Joe and Ann Fasset.

What started out as a barn for boarding horses has been expanded to include an indoor riding arena, an outdoor ring, pastures and riding trails — all donated by the Fassetts. They developed the idea for the program from Ann's love for horses and her time spent as a volunteer with the Cerebral Palsy Clinic at Lima Memorial Hospital.

"Through my work with the clinic," she notes, "I began to see how useful horseback riding therapy might be. The program is working wonders for so many of the children. The mentally handicapped children lengthen their attention span and concentration, while the physically handicapped get the sensation of being in control. It relaxes their muscles and, for the first time, they're having four legs take them places they can't go themselves. It's just great for improving their self-image."

Established in 1983 as a three-month pilot venture, the ET Program served 56 students in 1984, and now works with 70 of them. Although aimed at helping children, some handicapped adults, as well, have found new hope by participating in the riding therapy.

One of those adults is Jeannette Wood. An eighth grade teacher, she became involved in the program during the summer of '84, and now believes in miracles, too.

"To me, this program has been a lifesaver," she says. "I was diagnosed as having multiple sclerosis in 1977. I was confined to a wheelchair 90 to 95% of the time. My doctor thought I would never be up and walking again. Now I am walking with just a crutch, and the MS is in remission."

ET students must be recommended by their physician or physical therapist.

The program operates on a limited budget of \$16,000 a year, raised mostly from contributions through the community. This covers the cost of equipment, safety gear, instructors' salaries, labor, hay, grain and bedding for the horses. All the horses and ponies used in the program have been donated. There is no cost to the children, except \$18 per year for insurance. No one is refused for the inability to pay.

Since its inception, the ET Program has grown to include 14 ten-week classes, conducted from March through November. The program shuts down during the winter months because of the cold.

New riders require one to three attendants, depending on physical limitations. Standard English type saddles are used, primarily because they're hornless, forcing riders to develop balance without a horn to hold onto. All riders wear helmets, and a special waist belt which has a handle on each side which attendants can grab onto when necessary.

For many of these children and adults, involvement in the ET Program means the difference between inactivity and a life of hope and accomplishment. Smiling faces attest to newfound strength and signs of self-confidence. It's heart-warming to see them sit up in the saddle aboard Corky, Marybelle or Trigger and leave their wheelchairs, crutches or walkers behind.

(Editor's note: If you'd like to explore the possibilities of an Equestrian Therapy program in your community, the Fassetts will gladly



Photo courtesy of The Country Today

The east end of barn has room for two 100-ton silos, which are filled through holes in the roof.

### STILL STANDING AFTER 37 YEARS

## "Tornado Proof" Barn Only One Of It' Kind

By Lois Reis Slattery

Clarence Jansen's barn has caused many a traveler to stop and take pictures, and many a neighbor to poke good-natured fun at Jansen, who designed and helped raise the 37-year-old barn on his farm near Aniwa, Wis.

The shape of Jansen's 96- by 30-ft. barn can be described as a rectangle with the foundation, frame and roof of the shorter two sides rounded. A barn like it is a very rare sight.

William Tishler, a University of Wisconsin (Madison) professor of landscape architecture who has studied historic Wisconsin barns since 1960, says he hasn't seen nor heard of another barn like it in Wisconsin.

Windstorms and chopped hay prompted Jansen, 73, to build his unique barn. The rounded ends, which face the east and west, better withstand high winds. Neighbors were skeptical some 37 years ago when they helped raise the barn, Jansen notes, but the barn still stands. "Oh, a tornado probably would take it anyhow, but it still stands a lot of gale winds."

The second reason Jansen cites for building his oddly-shaped barn is the once-popular method of storing loose, chopped hay in mows. The loose hay often caused barn walls to bulge and Jansen thought his barn design would help prevent the problem.

Some 70 friends, neighbors and relatives helped raise the Jansen barn in November, 1948, under the direction of the late Ed Martin, a carpenter from Aniwa who built many barns in the area, according to Jansen. The barn is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Highway 52 and Marathon County Y, approximately 20 miles east of Wausau.

Footings for the barn are embedded six feet into the ground. Double walls of 1- by 4-in. and 1- by 8-in. concrete blocks are set on the footings and the entire wooden structure of the barn is bolted to the foundation. Jansen had the heavy wooden beams under the mow set close together to prevent sagging. The mow floor is double layer of planks with felt in between. Ten curved and reinforced rafters support the balloon-type roof which is covered with aluminum.

Jansen logged all the wood for the barn from the farm and curved the elm sapling 1- by 4-in. rafters himself.

The east rounded end of the barn has room for two 100-ton capacity stave silos. There's one small wood stave silo inside the east end. Haylage is blown into the silo through a hole in the roof of the barn.

The west end of the barn has the milk house, an entrance and a feed room in the lower half and a 2,000 bu. capacity granary in the upper portion. A hand-built chute delivers grain from above into the feeding room. Some 6,000 bales of hay can be stored in the mow.

The lower portion of the barn's conventional-looking midsection has 25 stalls and cement gutters meant for a barn cleaner which Jansen never installed. Jansen and his wife Mae had 25 Holstein cows and young stock until a year ago last June when they retired.

"If I had to build it all over again, I would build it exactly the same way except I'd built it a few feet wider," notes Jansen.

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share their experiences with you. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Joe and Ann Fasset, 1566 Fairway Dr., Lima, Ohio 45805 (ph 419 991-6311).

You'll also want to contact the North American Riding For The Handicapped Association (NARHA)

which has 330 accredited centers throughout the U.S., all staffed by specially trained instructors and volunteers. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Leonard Warner, Executive Director; NARHA, Box 100; Ashburn, Va. 22011 (ph 703 471-1621).