

A Look at Dick Wallingford



Dick (horse on left) and Rock in action, taking out a load of 18,500 pounds at the Eastern States Draft Horse Association's Round-up Pull. Wallingford is driving the team.

Dick Wallingford is a champion. He is also the president of the Maine draft Horse Association, which governs horse drawing contests in the state of Maine.

Last year, during a season that begins in late spring and runs through the fall, Wallingford has an unbroken winning streak of 43 consecutive first place prizes in contests in Maine, New England and Quebec. Included in that tally is first place at the Eastern draft Horse Association's Annual Round-up in North Swanzey, New Hampshire, where he beat his traditional rival, Danny Reed, a blacksmith from Raynham, Massachusetts. Wallingford picked up number forty three in Toronto in January after crawling over ice-glazed highways in Quebec and eastern Ontario in order to get there. The Ontario Belgian Horse Association's 23rd Annual Draft Horse Sale and Pull lured him with its big first prize of \$300.

YET, HE IS A MAN who is very circumspect about his winnings, for he can stand before a display case which is filled with 127 gleaming trophies and covers one wall of the dining room of his home in West Forks and say with consummate understatement, "This is the trophy room."

by Nancy Martin

He is also a man generous in his championship. Last July, at a horse drawing contest in St. Isidore-d'Aukland in Quebec, Wallingford gave the first place trophy which he had won to his friend and rival, Roger Bolduc, because Bolduc had lost his Belgian stallion. The big roan had studded for the mares on Bolduc's farm and had also brought him the Canadian Championship in horse drawing contests in an annual competition which is held in a small town of the north shore of the St. Lawrence.



Dick Wallingford receiving his 43rd first-place prize at the Ontario Belgian Horse Associations' 23rd Draft Horse Sale and Pull at the Canadian Farm Show in Toronto in January. Rock is the horse on the far right — Dick on the left.

BOLDUC'S LOSS was manifold. It was a deep personal loss because the stallion was so good-tempered. He was regarded as highly as a member of the family. It also meant that Bolduc could not compete for the remainder of the summer, and he was the president of the horse pulling association in that area. Furthermore, he would have to find a replacement for the stallion that sired the purebred Belgians whose sales were a major source of income for the man.

The crowd was very sensitive to the death of the stallion that had died five days before, and Wallingford's gesture greatly impressed everyone there.

CHAMPIONSHIP IS A matter of solid performance every time; in horse pulling competitions, dependable horses bring blue ribbons, but the driver of the team has to have good horse sense if he expects to win. He has to have an eye that knows a good horse when it is in front of him, and he has to have the savvy to get the best from his animals.

Wallingford has this, and it is this quality which makes watching him in competition such a treat.

FIRST OF ALL, he has Rock, a very dependable horse. Rock is 13 years old now; Wallingford bought the horse when it was six. He could see then, even though the animal was not fully grown, that the horse was true, that is a sound horse that will give its

all, Rock is nearly 18 hands high, which means close to six feet at the withers, the highest point on a horse's back; he weighs 2200 pounds, and there is not a bunch on him.

When the drag, or sled is loaded with the concrete blocks that are used for the weight in horse drawing contests, and the team is hitched to the

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drag, Rock leans into his harness and pulls. Every time. Many times he virtually pulled the load alone; nonetheless, he always brought Wallingford firsts and seconds when he competed.

BECAUSE ROCK WAS so outstanding, finding a match for him was very difficult. But then Wallingford found Dick. This horse came from the same area as Rock had, southern Indiana. In fact, they were raised within three or four houses of each other and had actually spent some time together as colts when they were two and three years old. Dick is just a bit smaller than Rock and is a year younger. He is about 200 pounds lighter than Rock, tipping the scales at an even ton.

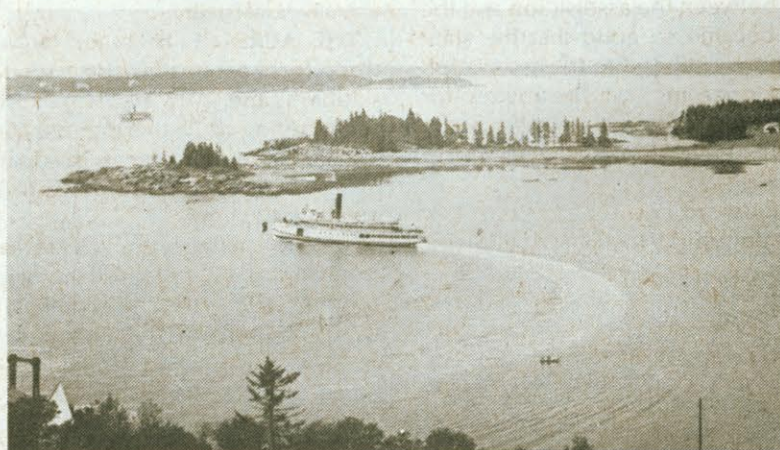
Both horses are blonde geldings and look to have a lot of Belgian in them. Their colors are close. They are well matched.

CLEARLY, Wallingford gets the best from his team. He does not have to yell at them to get them to heave, nor does he have to push their haunches to urge them forward. In horse pulling contests, only the driver of the team is allowed to speak to his animals and touch them.

Rock and Dick pull out a load in an even draw. Without a hitch. Wallingford walks beside the team, speaking to them and holding the reins slack so that they can have their heads. The required distance is covered, usually six or 20 feet; the whiffletree or evener, the device which connects the harness to the drag, is unhooked by the evener men, and Wallingford walks the team back to his place at the perimeter of the ring.

IT IS LIKE WATCHING a chauffer-driven Rolls Royce. No noise. No muss, no fuss, no bother. Nothing but smooth, dependable performance,

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and why not? The man has been competing and winning for 20 years.

At horse pulling contests, the teams are divided into two classes: light weight and heavy weight. This is determined by the combined weight of

the team. Usually, the light weight teams weigh less than 3300 pounds while the heavy weight teams weigh more than 3300 pounds.

ROCK AND DICK compete in the heavy weight division, and the heaviest load that they have drawn out so far is 21,000 pounds.

In these contests the horses are engaged in the kind of activity for which they were bred, hauling heavy loads. The teams start pulling with a light load; then, as in weight lifting, the load is increased. Each team has three tries to draw the load out, and the winner is determined through a process of elimination.

THE MAINE DRAFT Horse Association organized itself in 1958 to block legislation that was slated to ban horse pulling contests in the state. Through the efforts of the association the legislation was stopped, and better organization of the contests

evolved. Rules governing the contests became standardized, and relations between the teamsters' groups and fairs improved. A law was passed prohibiting the doping of horses. Relations between the association and the state became so good that the state now pays a stipend to the association for its prize money. The money for the stipend comes directly from the income derived from the racetracks in the state.

Wallingford has been president of the Maine Draft Horse Association for the past three years. The vice-president is Irving White of Weld, and Irene Mehuren of Morrill is the secretary-treasurer. There are 300 members.

DICK WALLINGFORD was born on October 5, 1925 and raised in Auburn, Maine, where his father, John Wallingford, ran a logging business and dealt in horses. Mr. Wallingford competed in horse pulling contests that took place at the fairs during the summer.

Dick was 18 the first time he drove a team of horses in a ring in competition. A year later he joined the Navy, and a year after that he married Winona Brown, whom he had met in high school in Lisbon Falls. He got out of the Navy in 1945 after having spent a year at Yale and another year at the University of North Carolina, training to become a pilot.

AFTER HE WAS DISCHARGED, he moved to West Forks and bought 14,000 acres of land and ran his own lumber camp during the late forties and early fifties.

He employed 110 men. The work force included a cook, a second cook, two cookees, a clerk and a foreman.

BECAUSE THE CAMP used 30 to 40 horses in the woods for cutting in summer and hauling in winter, Wallingford kept a full time blacksmith. The men groomed their own horses; a feeder cleaned the barn, fed the animals, checked the harnesses and looked after horses that were sick or sore.

In 1966, Wallingford came out of the woods. His four children had been born by then and were ready for school. He sold the land. He is still

engaged in the logging business although, now, he oversees the cutting on someone else's land. He is presently working 26,000 acres, from which 3,000,000 board feet of lumber was sawn last year.

THE ACREAGE IS larger, but the work force is smaller. He uses four skidders and two trucks. Six men work cutting while two men are trucking. One man does bull dozing, gravelling and miscellaneous mechanical work.

Besides selling John Deere lawn and garden equipment and logging supplies, he holds the patent for heavy cast aluminum hames. These are the pieces which fit outside the horse collar to which the traces are fastened.

HAMES HAD FORMERLY been made out of wood. Wallingford experimented in making them because the wooden ones would split, bend or weaken when repairs were made.

After whittling a pair of hames from mahogany, he cast them in lead and bent them to fit the horse's neck. The first hames he made were of steel, but these were too heavy. Next, he tried aluminum. The aluminum was too light so he tried heavy cast aluminum.

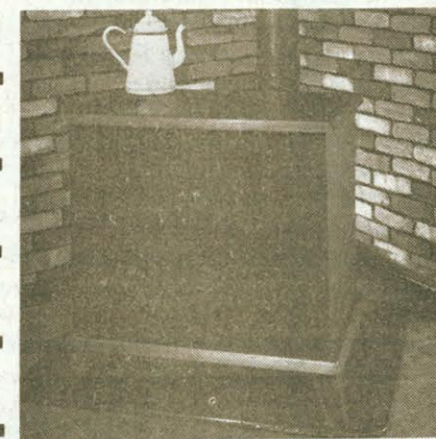
That's when he got it; he took out a patent and has been filling orders for 50 to 60 sets of hames per year for the past 12 years.

MRS. WALLINGFORD accompanies her husband in all the travelling he does in order to participate in horse drawing competitions. They pack their trailer, and off they go. If they are not attending a pulling in Union or Skowhegan, then maybe they are at a square dancing convention in Portland. For a winter weekend they may be somewhere else on their snowmobiles.

Their children are established, on their own, so Wallingford can lean on a fence on a Sunday spring afternoon that promises early smelts and fiddleheads and talks about getting a farm so that the horses can have real fields in which to graze instead of the patch he cut out of the woods for them along Route 201.

HE CALLS TO ONE of his horses that he uses as an alternate. The horse lifts his head and looks at Wallingford, then plods across the field to the fence and looks to the man for some attention.

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