

College Cossacks

Organization gives its last exhibition

R. E. Norton, '44

THE vacant Field Artillery stables behind the Stange Memorial Clinic now provide only a reminder of the life which was once there. Most of the horses were removed to remount depots after they had been given a Mallein test and encephalomyelitis vaccine. Others that were not considered capable of rendering competent service in Uncle Sam's fighting forces were destroyed. The departure of these horses spelled the end of Iowa State riding organizations and teams for the duration and perhaps permanently. Of the riding organizations and teams which were disbanded by the war, the College Cossacks was probably the most popular among the veterinary students from the standpoint of numbers participating.

History

Since the R.O.T.C. Unit at Iowa State has been mechanized, the College Cossacks may never ride as a group again. The last show was held after school on a typically cold and blustery day of March, 1943. This performance was, perhaps, not as spectacular as in previous years, for the column had shrunk from a length of 18 horses to 12 horses due to the number of experienced riders who had gone to war. But in spite of the lack of experienced men, Capt. D. A. Larson put a team on the armory track which did what every previous team had done—it gave the spectators a good show. After this last exhibition the thin veil of slowly falling dust seemed to bring the curtain down on the final act of a series which at one time had lured crowds far greater than the handful of spectators which had

filed out a few minutes before. But what about these past performances? Who knows how and when the Cossacks started? No one seems to know definitely, so it is considered appropriate to gather the shreds of information into a brief history.

The first of Iowa State's acrobatic horsemen were organized in 1928 and went through a routine known as "Monkey Drill." Just what resemblance the acts of these men had to those of their arboreal relatives is not known, but their ability



Cossacks form a six man pyramid at the Military Circus

and fortitude is not questioned. Coached by Lt. H. M. Jones, 14 riders performing on 7 horses went through many elements of mounted gymnastics at a halt and at a gallop which were later taken up by the College Cossacks. Much of the rou-

(Continued on page 42)

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COSSACKS

(Continued from page 22)

tine consisted of drill at a halt and included nearly every movement possible to do and yet stay on the horse. Drill at a gallop included dismount and mount with and without jumps and to stand with and without jumps. With the horses coupled in pairs, dismount and mount the off horse to a stand was performed and Roman riding was also done in "Monkey Drill."

Add Color

After three seasons, "Monkey Drill" was succeeded by the College Cossacks whose first practice was begun in May, 1931. In the spring of 1932 the coach, Capt. Richard M. Wightman, utilized 12 horses and 26 men in putting on a full cossack show. The cossack routine differed from "Monkey Drill" in having fewer maneuvers with the horses at a halt and a more extensive program with the mounts at a gallop while coupled in pairs and threes. The latter change added much color to the drill as it included, among other things, the pyramid formed by six men on a three horse team. In 1933, the cossacks expanded their program to include 30 horses at the Veishea show by supplementing their routine with such acts as a pick-up race and mounted wrestling.

Keen Competition

Coached by Major Jesse B. Matlack, the cossacks continued to develop in ability during the period of 1934 to 1937. Their popularity also increased. Prospective riders turned out in quantity and competition for positions was keen. At the beginning of the 1935-36 season, 40 men with previous experience and 85 new recruits reported for practice. Since a complete team required but 36 riders, it was possible to select those who excelled in ability and performance. The same was true during the following years, enabling the organization to maintain a high standard of skill during each succeeding season.

In the fall of 1937, Capt. T. C. Woods was appointed cossack coach to be followed by Lt. Kenneth P. Burns in 1939, and Capt. D. A. Larson in 1942. With the exception of the 1942-43 season, a full team of 18 horses, 36 riders, two guidons and a cadet captain were used.

Name Changed

The acrobatic horsemen made their debut to the military circus March 1, 1930 while their act was yet known as "Monkey Drill." On February 28th, the following season, "Monkey Drill" was again given at the military circus. Three months later, "Monkey Drill" was changed to the College Cossacks who have since performed annually at Veishea and at the Military Circus.

Just what the future will bring in the way of the return of Iowa State riding organizations is a matter of conjecture which perhaps should not even be discussed before the ax has fallen on the Axis. But we can hope that some form of activity will arise to fill the gap and continue to make our education more enjoyable and perhaps somewhat more complete.

Atabrine, synthetic substitute for quinine, is being made at the rate of a billion tablets a year. Whether atabrine is microbicide against microbial pathogens in animals remains to be determined.

—J.A.V.M.A.