

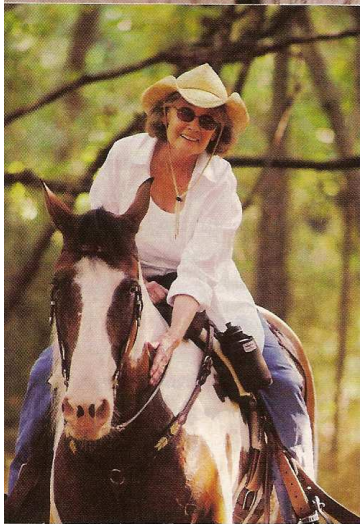
White Rock Stables featured.



A LITTLE BIT

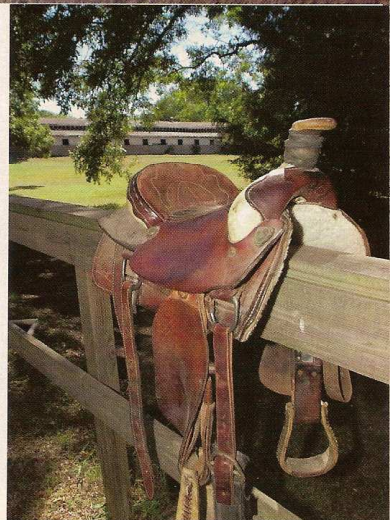
Country

Horse stables have almost disappeared from Dallas except for the ones in our neighborhood

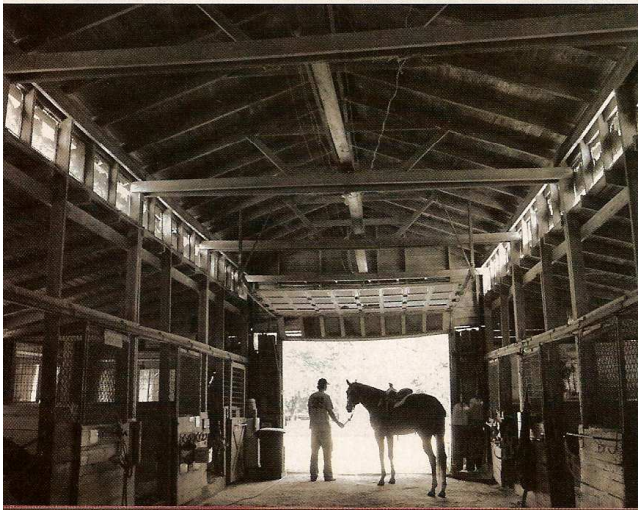


STORY BY KERI MITCHELL  
PHOTOS BY ROBERT BUNCH

ABOVE// Trainer Corinne Frederick rides atop Danny at Park Lane Equestrian Center. RIGHT// A saddle rests on a fence on the perimeter of White Rock Stables. LEFT// The trails behind Rocking M Stables are a prime place for Joann O'Brien and George Henry to go for a ride. FAR LEFT// Brennen Cage leads a horse out of the main barn at White Rock Stables.



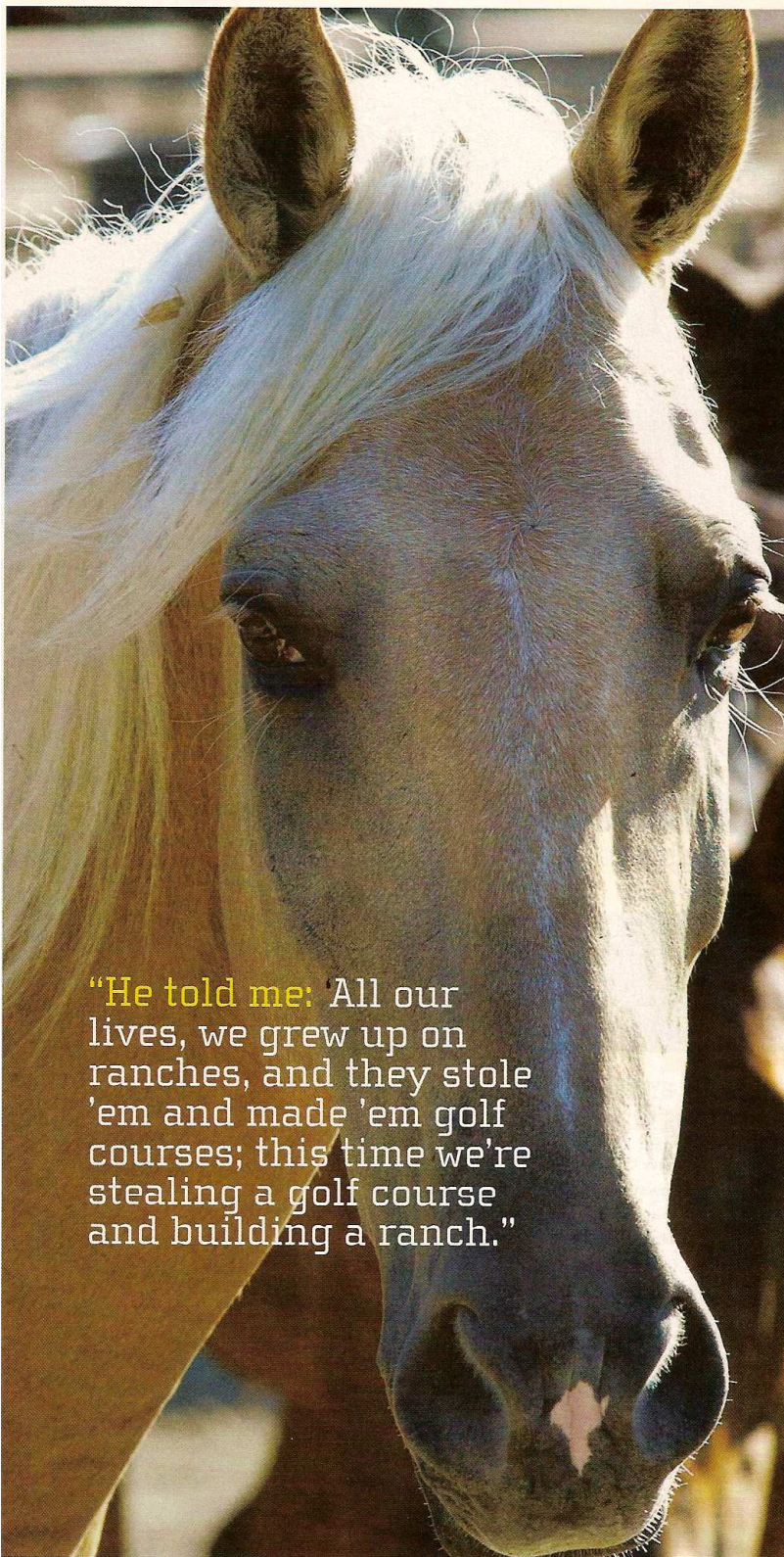
Zooming cars and blaring horns are continually making a racket at the intersection of Skillman and Abrams. But a couple of blocks away, just around the corner from Super Target on Park Lane, it's fairly quiet — except for the occasional whinny of a horse.



“That’s such a strange thing to hear in urban Dallas,” says Lou Zettler, striding through the long rows of stalls in Park Lane Equestrian Center’s new 40,000 square-foot barn.

Almost half of the center’s 150 stalls have filled up since it opened in January, and that’s no surprise, says Zettler, one of its partners. The demand for horse boarding within Dallas is high because the options are limited. Finding stables inside city limits usually means traveling all the way south to Interstate 20. Otherwise, Dallas horse lovers can expect to drive to the suburbs and back on a regular basis.

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**“He told me:** All our lives, we grew up on ranches, and they stole ‘em and made ‘em golf courses; this time we’re stealing a golf course and building a ranch.”

The only exceptions are the three stables in our neighborhood, and two of them are full with waiting lists.

White Rock Stables near the base of Flagpole Hill has been around the longest. The late Tex Oddson built the first stalls in 1948 “when there wasn’t anything around here but White Rock Lake and dirt roads,” says Tex Oddson Jr., who is carrying on his father’s legacy. Almost 60 years later, the 12-acre lot remains fairly secluded because it’s tucked away in the green terrain of White Rock Lake Park.

Another fixture in Lake Highlands is Rocking M Stables, located just across Fair Oaks from the residential High Oaks neighborhood. Of course, the 1.5 acres on which it sits was surrounded by farmland 50 years ago when the late Thomas Ernest Mayes began taking in horses. His granddaughter-in-law and current owner, Molly Mayes, says the new covered arena sits on what used to be his vegetable garden.

Park Lane Equestrian Center is the newcomer, but it’s more of a reincarnation. When owner Jeff Swope began leasing the roughly 300-acre property from the Caruth family in the ‘70s, the first thing he did was build a barn and stables. That was based on a gentlemen’s agreement he made with William Caruth that the land would be used for recreation, continuing the Caruth family’s heritage of farming and ranching.

In the ‘80s, the stables gave way to Scotty’s Golf, but its pigeon putt course “didn’t fly,” Swope says, and about a decade after it closed down, Swope

## A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY

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**LEFT//** A Palomino at Rocking M Stables.  
**ABOVE//** Corinne Frederick and Danny take a practice jump in one of Park Lane Equestrian Center's training areas.

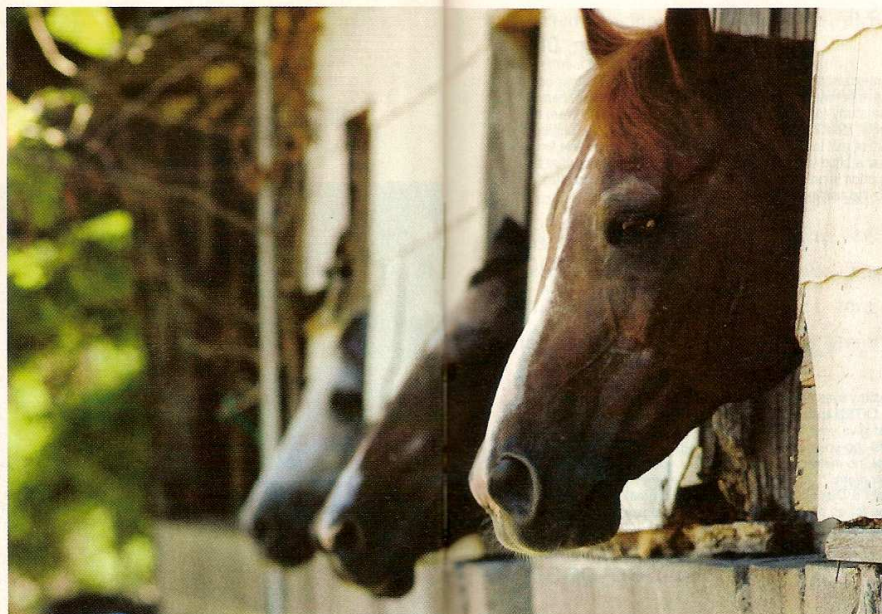
decided to pursue his dream of rebuilding the horse stables next to the driving range, mini golf and batting cages of Swope's Park Lane Ranch. When the word got out, Swope received a reaffirming call from one of his old friends.

"He told me: 'All our lives, we grew up on ranches, and they stole 'em and made 'em golf courses; this time we're stealing a golf course and building a ranch,'" Swope recalls.

It's no coincidence that all three stables are thriving in our neighborhood. The vast White Rock Creek greenbelt, especially the wider segment stretching from the lake northwest to Fair Oaks Park, affords riders plenty of wooded area and trails. White Rock Stables boarders can sometimes be spotted on the hike and bike trails alongside joggers and cyclists, and Rocking M backs up to Harry S. Moss Park, partially designated as a nature preserve, which makes it off limits to development but prime for horses.

Both Park Lane and Rocking M offer training facilities for children and teenagers wanting to show horses, but plenty of their clients simply saddle up and hit the trails.

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Horses stick their heads out of the main barn at White Rock Stables.

"If you took our stable and cut off access to the lake, you would cut off a lot of the appeal of the facility," Swope says.

Any competition between the three is "friendly," Zettler says, because with waiting lists at both White Rock and Rocking M, Park Lane can relieve some of the pressure. Mayes, whose 70 stalls are full, says each barn has a distinct appeal.

"We're different sorts of facilities. There's something for everybody," Mayes says. "This is a very busy barn with a little bit of family flavor, and White Rock has its own flavor. People are very loyal to Tex."

The atmosphere at White Rock is exactly what someone who has never visited stables might expect — a tall barn with a sloping roof and wooden beams, a tack room crowded with saddles and bridles, even quail and peacocks gallivanting about the property.

Though Rocking M has been around awhile, its new arena and recently refurbished stalls give it a homey but updated

feel. Park Lane is the most modern; Swope is particularly proud of the automatic feeders and fire sprinklers, and Zettler says each stall contains its own tack locker so boarders don't have to share a room.

Their approaches may vary, but each barn has the same primary focus: the horses. And it's a lifelong love for this animal that sustains the stables as well as their owners.

**"If you took our stable and cut off access to the lake, you would cut off a lot of the appeal of the facility."**

"My horse was six months old when he first came here, and I just moved him back in," Swope says. "He's 26 years old and doing well. I rode him to the lake the day before yesterday — we just go a little slower now." ♦