



Sister Mary Bernadette drives Zipper, an American Miniature Horse.

\$7,000 Pets Provide Poor Clares' Income

Corpus Christi, Texas (NC) — It may be difficult to sit tall in the saddle atop a horse belonging to the nuns at the Monastery of St. Clare in Corpus Christi. But at least reaching the stirrups and getting up on the horse would prove no problems.

The Sisters' beasts of burden weigh from 18 to 250 pounds and stand only 17-24 inches high at the withers, the horse's shoulder. In fact, many of the "minihorses," especially the six foals, are very nearly "lap horses."

But if their size is small, the amount of money they can bring in sale (two sold recently for \$2,500 and \$3,000) need not be.

From a distance it is easy to confuse the miniature horses with the Poor-Clare's large Collie and trainer John

Garza's huge German Rottweiler dog. But up close, there is no mistaking the horses with their flowing manes and tails, which are never cut — an American Miniature Horse Association rule for competitive horses.

The tiny equines are the nuns' latest in a string of animal-breeding projects, which support the 16 Poor Clares.

Before they took up the reins of the miniature horses in October 1981, the nuns raised Himalayan and Persian cats for five years, and, before that, they bred parakeets, cockatiels, lovebirds and finches.

"St. Francis would be proud of us," said a laughing Poor Clare, Sister Mary Bernadette Muller. "St. Francis was such an animal lover."

Sister Muller, manager of

the horse business, said the nuns slowly broke into the equine world with Shetland ponies which they kept on their 20-acre ranch to "cut the grass."

"The minis are not like the obnoxious Shetlands at all," she said. "They're very gentle and have very sweet dispositions. They follow us around like big dogs."

The American Miniature Horse differs from the Shetland pony in that it is merely a scaled-down version of a full-size horse. The mini has a refined head, whereas a Shetland's head and body are squarer, explained Garza, who has helped with the monastery's animals since he was five years old.

Sister Muller said she got the idea to buy a mini, officially designated as a breed in the late 1960s, when she was thumbing through a horse magazine.

"I wanted to get one for a pet. That was my first idea," she said.

The nun's first mini was a 29-inch stallion, which she spotted at a horse show. From there, her idea blossomed into a 26-head herd, which includes the six foals born since April.

In mid-July, Garza and the Sisters, like expectant parents, were nervously awaiting the birth of one more foal.

Sister Muller's minis are more expensive than the average pet. Each horse sells for \$2-7,000, if it is registered with the American Miniature Horse Association, which dictates the horses be 34 inches tall or shorter.

Prices vary according to height, and where shortness is valued, an inch can mean \$1,000. In shows, the horses are judged on size and conformation.

Garza and 13 minis recently returned from a show in Tennessee where they won more than 30 ribbons and several first-place trophies. That's where the Sisters made sales enabling them to repay a loan which helped the horse venture.

Sister Muller estimates that more than 1,000 people have come to see and pet the tiny horses since December. She said she enjoys them more than the cats, which were caged. "What I like about the horses is that I can leave them and go to prayers with the Sisters. You can't do that with caged things."

"There's something about an animal that has always brought me closer to God," she said.

Reagan Urges House Defeat Nuke Freeze

Washington (NC) — President Reagan urged members of the House July 26 to defeat a resolution endorsing a U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms freeze and U.S. ratification of SALT II.

Reagan warned that a freeze would leave "dangerous asymmetries in the nuclear balance" and that the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty was "flawed."

If passed, the resolution would "seriously undercut our negotiating position" in START (the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks), the president said in identically worded letters sent to every House member.

The letters marked the beginning of a major White House house lobbying effort to defeat the freeze resolution, which gained unexpected Republican support when it was approved at the end of June by a 26-11 vote in the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

The House was expected to start floor debate on the resolution in the last days of July or the first week of August.

Reagan urged the House to adopt in its place a substitute resolution, introduced by Rep. William Broomfield (R-Mich.), which endorses the administration arms reduction program.

In a second letter to congressmen, transmitting the first report of his administration on U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Reagan argued that his arms control approach was both "rational and realistic."

The second letter reaffirmed the administration's policy of "re-establishing our conventional and nuclear deterrent forces," which

Reagan says have lagged behind the Soviet advances to the point where the U.S. now faces strategic inferiority.

Proponents of an immediate nuclear arms freeze argue that the U.S. and Soviet nuclear capabilities are basically equal. An immediate freeze by both sides in the production, deployment and testing of nuclear weapons is necessary, they say, to avoid a dangerous escalation in the arms race.

The freeze campaign has gained widespread grassroots support in the United

States and has gained the backing of many religious leaders and church groups, including more than 130 Catholic bishops and dozens of religious orders.

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Business in Diocese

Peter Kountz, a teacher, administrator and museum curator at the University of Chicago, has been named dean of students at the University of Rochester, effective Aug. 16. In addition to serving as dean, Kountz will be an associate professor of religious studies.

Uniform Sale

A used uniform sale, sponsored by the Women's Guild of Cardinal Mooney High School, will be 7-8:30 p.m., Friday, Aug. 13, in the school cafeteria.

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All in the Family

She Only Eats When She's Happy or Sad

I once weighed a good deal more than I do now. Persistent dieting, desperate prayer, exercise and a husband whose own will-power shames me into self-discipline have helped keep me in line. But the truth is, I'd be a lot trimmer if I didn't backslide now and then.

Backsliding, of which I have made a study, can occur when I am:

- a. Happy.
- b. Sad.
- c. Angry (the washer overflows again).
- d. Frustrated (another rejection slip arrives in the mail).
- e. Frightened (the oldest has the car and is 10 minutes late).
- f. Sick.

Over the years I have learned techniques to cope with most of these. Only the last gives me serious trouble. Incapacitated, I tend to exercise my mouth instead of my legs.

confession may help to cure me. I relate the sinful episode which took place last week.

It began with a small dish of vanilla ice cream, my first in months. It was lovely, no gurgles, rumbles or complaints from the tum tum which had been reacting violently to my fruit snacks.

That was Tuesday. Wednesday I discovered someone had eaten the rest of the vanilla and replaced it with almond chocolate chip.

I resisted, only to relent later. It was almost as effective as the vanilla in comfort level.

Thursday, the men of the house left to go fishing and the girls and I decided to visit a new ice cream stand where apparently I experienced a blackout, since after we got home the youngest told me I'd enjoyed something with hot fudge and extra pecans.

Chagrined, I resolved no more. But a couple of nights later the girls came home with the makings for sundaes. "Sorry, no nuts," they teased me knowing my particular weakness.

I knew I'd sunk to my lowest depths when I heard myself say, "That's okay. Just mix some chunky peanut butter into mine."

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