

# ARABBING: More Than a Way of Life, continued...

Arabber Preservation Society photo



**An Arabber's horse wearing the traditional Baltimore Fancy Harness.**



**Shauna Chaney and Carlton Street Stable owner Levar Mullen outside the stable's entrance.**

Anne Litz

completely and in Baltimore, there are only three stables remaining. The Carlton Street Stable is the oldest stable in the U.S., according to Muller. "It was started in the 1850s and was a coal, ice and wood distribution center," Muller said.

Growing up in the trade, Muller stays in the business because, "we are a service to the people and a service to our community." He went on to explain that the urban areas of Baltimore still need these resources. "That history must continue."

In 2020, the Carlton Street Stable became the first Arabbing stable licensed through the Maryland Horse Industry Board. It currently houses seven to eight horses and four wagons. MHIB Executive Director Ross Peddicord recently visited each of the remaining stables stating, "not only do these three barns maintain the Arabbing tradition, but they also serve as neighborhood community centers in West Baltimore."

Johns purchased Bruce Street Stables about eight years ago. Her family has been in the Arabbing business since her grandmother became one of the first African American women Arabbers in Baltimore. Johns says the Arabbing industry will continue because, "When all else fails, grab the horse and go!"

At Bruce Street, Johns typically houses five horses at any given time. "Right now we have three minis and two Arabbing [horses]," she said. "We have two more horses out at pasture in Virginia at my cousin's place. I send them there to stretch their legs and get some rest."

Chase also got involved in the business through his grandparents. In his case, he started tagging along with his grandfather when he was just six years old. "It's a family thing," he said, explaining that he has several uncles, cousins and other relatives all involved with Arabbing. "During my grandfather's time, there were at least 15 stables in Baltimore. Way more than

that," he reminisced. "We are the last three."

## The Power of the Horse

Chase was drawn to Arabbing because of the horses, stating, "I went with [my grandfather] because of the horses. [Arabbing] is all about the horse."

Johns has the same feelings, explaining that Arabbing is more about the horse than anything else. "A horse is a totally different animal. Arabbing is one with horses. There is something about them that just draws people in."

Chase added, "In the city, people are used to seeing dogs and cats, but not horses. Every time I bring out a horse, people flock to us." Chase also explained that he wishes more people would see how important the horse is to their way of life. "We love and cherish our horses just as much as we love our kids! Some of the animal rights people are misguided."

Muller equates Arabbing in many ways to selling ice cream from a van stating, "Seeing the horse and wagon is like seeing the ice cream truck come around the corner. Kids just love to come up and pet the horse." Muller added that the horse is what creates such a unique experience for the community.

"All of these stables are engaged in educational and community outreach through horses," Peddicord said. "Horses allow people to dream, to think about someone other than themselves and show kindness and affection."

Keeping the horse as the star of the show is one of the main reasons that Baltimore's current Arabbers are looking to preserve the culture and industry. "Arabbing teaches kids there is a different way of doing things. A different way of life," Chase said. He went on to add, "Kids see the easy way to make money on social

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