

Dick discovers trusty steed to ride into sunset years



with stamina," says Dick, describing the qualities of the beast he so admires. "They have a particular colour. They were bred by Indians for speed, stamina and strength."

\$600 mare

Dick eventually found and purchased a six-year-old Appaloosa mare for \$600. Since then he has acquired another horse, a colt of "Hafflinger" extraction, a species of horse indigenous to the Tyrolean part of Austria.

While Dick's wife was fully supportive of his new pursuit, his buddies on the job were a little taken back when he waxed rhapsodic about his new source of joy. Now, apart from the occasional horse joke, it is not unusual for serious conversation to turn to the topic of horses. He has even convinced a few of them to try riding.

He is now on the verge of becoming a partner in the Wagon Wheel Ranch. With about 35 horses in the stables, the man who wanted to own one horse has fallen into horse heaven.

Dick's avocation may become a vocation of sorts with his retirement. Between his consulting work and his interest in the ranch, he will be in touch with the business end of both kinds of horsepower in retirement.

Into the sunset

The genesis of Dick's dream lies in a long-held fascination for things "western" - the place and time of cowboys, cattle and rugged individualism. That love turned him into a collector of Western memorabilia such as holsters and guns. At one time he owned 200 Winchester rifles and over 60 Colt pistols, some dating back to 1835. It seems to have been only a matter of time before he turned to the ultimate symbol of the wild west, the horse.

You might say that Dick is concluding his years with the company in much the way the hero in the finale of a Louis L'Amour novel - quite literally riding off into the sunset on a trusty steed.



Dick England with part of his collection of weapons.

Horsepower means two things to Dick England. It's either something activated by the flick of an electronic switch or a big animal you ride for enjoyment.

Dick spent a good portion of his career tinkering with the former, developing big machinery to get out the muck. Recently he has turned to the latter for the pure fun of it.

Now that he's retired from the mines research shop, Dick will go full speed ahead in a long-standing desire to ride and own a horse. About a year and a half ago he decided to take the first step.

"You reach a particular point in life when you say am I going to fulfill a dream or just forget it?" he says.

Dick's search for a steed ended when he chatted with Phil Bertrand, owner of the Wagon Wheel Ranch in Sudbury. "I found that Phil appeared to be the person that if I wanted to learn about horses, he's the one I should talk to," he recalls.

The big moment came when he actually climbed aboard one

of the big animals. "At first when I got on, I didn't know what to do," Dick remembers. "It felt like I was sitting on a big bowl of jelly, with the movement and everything. For the first 15 minutes I just hung on for dear life." A couple of hours later he felt completely comfortable in his lofty perch.

So content was he with the experience that riding became his hobby. "It was a good way to relieve stress," he says. "After a while I made it a habit to go out for a ride after work every day.

"It did a lot for me. When you reach 52 you wonder 'Am I really washed up or what? Is it too late to start something new. Can an overweight, 52-year-old businessman get involved?'"

And the answer became as plain to Dick as it does to anyone who explores a new avenue of life.

Riding regularly, he found the rest of his dream within his grasp. He looked for a horse of his own. Not any horse but an Appaloosa.

"They represent something



The 1886 Winchester Dick England is aiming was presented to an Apache Indian Chief. It's one of his prize possessions.



Dick saddles up for a ride.