For the past seven years my wife and I have lived very intimately with the Rocky Mountain Horse. We came to them gradually and now they have taken over. My wife who was the founder of the Rocky Mountain Horse Association has been involved with horse since childhood, I knew they had four legs. While we dating her first Rocky Mountain foal was born. Shortly after our marriage she began her long weekend travels coming home with reels of film taken of horses. Over the next three years she built the data base that would provide the starting point for the breed.

In May of 1985 we finally found a farm and moved in. Nuncio, our stallion arrived and we were addicted. I will never forget the Sunday morning early in 1986 when Rea asked the fateful question, Should I start the registry. We had certainly been thinking about and talking to other owners about it but had not taken the step. We mutually came to the understanding that we had no idea of what we were doing but it had to be done. That Monday she went to the lawyer's office to set in motion the Rocky Mountain Horse Association.

With the association legally established we went to work to make it a reality. We both realized that it was not some thing that the two of us could do. It would need the work of all of the owners that we knew to make the association viable. We also knew that we had a tremendous responsibility to make the organization work. Our studies had clearly demonstrated that there was a grave danger to the breed. The few well bred horses were scattered, no breeding records were being kept, and the numbers were declining. We both felt that a breed organization and registry properly operated was the last hope for this fine group of horses.

Let me digress for a moment from this narrative to explain to the reader why we were so enthralled by these horses. I started as a very skeptical, unbiased, inexperienced observer. I have become a believer, biased and far more knowledgeable in the past 9 years. I am your basic non-rider non-horse person who was dumped into this situation. The Rocky Mountain Horse is simply a joy to work with. In the time I have been dealing with horses I have had the opportunity to handle Thoroughbreds, Tennessee Walkers and Appaloosas, and none of them can compare to the friendliness, warmth, sensitivity and intelligence of the average Rocky Mountain Horse. These horses are truly companionable. I frequently have to work in the pastures with the horses. I always have an audience and constant offers of help. The best way I can summarize my feelings is they are our friends and they approach you from the very first with that attitude in mind.

It is therefore obvious that with this unequaled group of animals in danger of being lost the association members have had and very strong sense of responsibility to save these
horses. Certainly differences in emphases exist in the organization but we have been able to build a solid consensus on the very basics of the breed and means of saving it. The unique steps that we have taken are several. The first step was to persuade the patent office to issue a Certification Mark for the Rocky Mountain Horse. This gives the association the exclusive right to use the name Rocky Mountain Horse and provides us the control of the breed that is needed to maintain its integrity. From the inception of the registry we have required certification for breeding. By this we mean that before a Rocky Mountain Horse starts its reproductive life it must be inspected by three examiners. It is their duty to see to it that the animal exhibits the Rocky Mountain Horse's four beat gait, has the proper conformation and temperament. The registry will only accept those foals who's sire and dam are certified to breed.

In addition to maintain the quality of our non breeding stock all geldings must be certified to show after the age of three and mares and stallions after age 4. In order to maintain the independence of our examiners their decisions are final and cannot be appealed, reviewed or rescinded. While these measures may seem harsh and strict it must be remembered that we are dealing with an extremely small and desirable gene-pool. It is our goal to protect it as best we can.

Besides the hard work of many members we have had some very good luck. Early in our history we attracted the attention of an excellent free-lance writer. It has been her articles that have put this horse before the public. It of course does help to have a very photogenic horse. In addition the age of the actively riding population is advancing and people are looking for a more comfortable ride. We have therefore been able to catch the crest of the gaited horse popularity wave and it has certainly helped to carry us along. The growth of the breed has been excellent, controlled but very significant. More importantly the horse riding public has become aware of the breed. This will provide the economic stimulus which will keep the breed alive and growing.