

heardabout

A Season of Firsts

THE FIRST HALF OF THE WINTER market season has come and gone as we prepare for March deadlines. This has been the year for new things all the way around.

For instance, the retailer reception Tack 'n Togs sponsored at the Denver-WESA Market was an innovation. Some time back, we wrestled with the idea of how to meet retailers at the market, thank them for being loyal readers and forge a closer personal relationship.

We hit upon the idea of an open house to which retailers were invited for a bite to eat, something to drink and a chance to rest their weary feet in comfort and relative quiet.

It worked splendidly, and a large group of retailers showed up on Sunday afternoon for a brief visit and a chance at some neat door prizes. We're still fielding thank-yous from those who attended, so we considered it a huge success and will quite likely do it again next year.

I learned a lot about the challenges of retailing and the future of our industry as seen through their eyes by chatting with our visitors. I'm sure I'm better equipped to produce a magazine that will help them succeed over the years to come by having heard their voice.

This year also marked the first year we held up deadline in order to provide coverage of the Denver Market in our February edition. In previous years, we had simply lumped all of our market coverage into the March edition, which

meant that for readers, news from Denver was already getting stale.

While there's more planning and execution involved, it's worth it to have our content fresh and timely. Our status as the only monthly trade magazine covering the equine industry gives us an advantage when it comes to news value—one we're hoping to continue to capitalize on.

Finally, I experienced another first, this time at the Stanley KOP Market in Fort Washington, Pa. On opening day, a colleague and I had to be at the market for a 7:15 a.m. meeting. Shuttles didn't run until 7:30, so we arranged the night before for a cab to meet us at our hotel, which also happened to be the host hotel.

Saturday morning arrived, and no cab. The cab company had lost the reservation and informed us that it would take an hour to respond.

Meanwhile, the Stanley Market office staff joined us in the lounge and, learning of our predicament, invited us to ride with them to the market in a limo.

Believe it or not, I've lived more than four decades without ever having had the opportunity to ride in a limo. It was a truly unique experience and one of the nicest gestures imaginable.

Also, one last "first." Have you sent in your nomination for manufacturer of the year, retailer of the year or rep of the year? 📧



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