



**FINISHING WORKOUT** at Olympic Village, near Melbourne, Australia, Galina Popova (left), Russian sprinter and long jumper and Olga Kosheleva, Soviet sprinter, get drink from Julian Grima, groundsman. (International)

## Is That So?

By EUGENE BURNS  
Ranger-Naturalist

A never-failing source of campfire argument concerns the top speed of mammals. Apparently, I've added fuel to the argument by writing pieces on their various speeds—from the slowpoke two-and-a-half mile per hour mole to the cheetah of India, which is credited with 70 miles an hour, attaining an acceleration of 45 miles an hour within two seconds. For our American speed-king, I cited the pronghorn antelope "at about 80 miles an hour."

On the pronghorn's speed, I was called and called hard—by P. Y. Whitney of Vanada, Mont. Mr. Whitney states that he has run down pronghorn with a horse, his dog has overtaken them, and he has timed them by auto at less than 30 miles an hour.

**Checked With Authorities**  
Besides my own observation I have checked with authorities. Among those stating "about 80 miles per hour" are George C. Goodwin, of the American Museum of Natural History, who says that a pronghorn antelope can do nearly a mile a minute; the *Encyclopedia* edited by Ray Camp, which says that many bucks have been paced at 80 miles per hour, and several motorists have made reports of pacing dogs at as much as 68 to 70 miles per hour.

Unless I get corroborative evidence backing me up from some of you outdoor readers, I'll have to eat my words and like 'em. (And for the person coming up with what seems the best answer to a pronghorn's speed—whether it favors Mr. Whitney or me, makes no difference—the judges will award the weekly 30-volume set of the *Encyclopedia Americana*.)

Let me give you some quotes from Whitney's correspondence which has been running now over a year:

**World Record for Dogs**  
"The speed of horses and dogs is a known quantity," he writes. "A 22-second Quarter horse runs 40.9 miles an hour. And the dog Damon Runyon," holds the world's record for dogs, running the quarter at the average speed of 34 miles an hour."

"Now, Mr. Burns, for many years I have been around average horses and plenty of pronghorns and I've owned a few coyotes—and jackrabbit catching dogs. Observing them all well as to speed, I have come to the conclusion that no animal that runs can beat a race horse for one-fourth mile or more!"

"And at that, distance, I would include a cheetah."

To back up his statements, Whitney quoted Bob Seward of Ingemar, Mont., who has ridden the Montana range for nearly 40 years.

Mr. Seward states that he too has matched the speed of a good horse with that of an antelope. Upon several occasions he has overtaken a herd before it was run down. Furthermore when he weighed 147 pounds he owned a horse which could outrun a herd of antelopes. To this 147 pounds add a 40-pound saddle which makes 187 pounds! Also Seward states he has seen coyote hounds outrun antelopes.

**Time Feature**  
Whitney says: "To account in part for the exaggerated antelope speeds, there is a time feature little understood in regard to overtaking animals. For the pursuer to catch the pursued, it is necessary to gain quickly. Hence, a man in a car attempting to come abreast, alongside the road, must drive much faster than the antelope is running before it angles away."

"Now Mr. Burns, whereas both of us may be wrong concerning this matter, only one of us can be right. Right? Would you care to do anything about it? Come on out to Montana and I'll show you that a cowboy on a good cow horse can bend or head a herd of antelope. To be more specific—start behind them, pass them, and turn them in a different direction. All I ask is that the ground be hard and dry, and the day pleasant. The results would show that the antelopes run under 30 miles per hour."

All right, men, Whitney has put it on the line. What's your decision?

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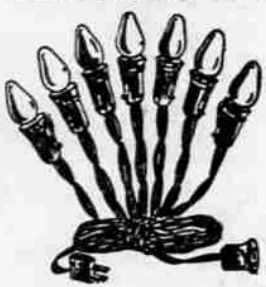
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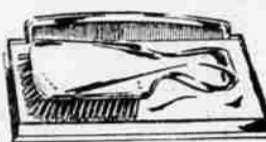
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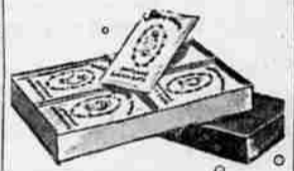
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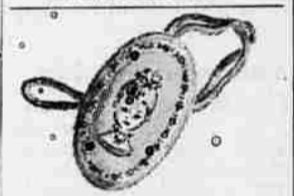


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