



# op/ed feedback

Now that I am home from the November sales, I have time to reflect on the sad fact that the Thoroughbred industry has lost yet another major breeder. The Keeneland Sale saw the final mares of Rob Whiteley's Liberation Farm dispersed.

I am old enough to have known Rob while appreciating his contributions to the industry since 1983 when he worked as president of Fasig-Tipton's appraisal division. Before that, he had spent many years hanging around race paddocks, studying conformation and races, and teaching handicapping classes (he took the students to Monmouth Park after class to test each morning's selections). When he wasn't directing the doctoral program in Counseling Psychology at Rutgers University, he could often be found down in Steve Haskin's research library at *Daily Racing Form*, studying pedigrees.

In the late '80s he was picked by financier Carl Icahn to build and manage his horse operation known as Foxfield. For Icahn, Rob had instant success, selecting and racing many good fillies to put in the broodmare band, including champion Meadow Star and multiple Grade I winners Colonial Waters and Rose's Cantina. Rob also bought large blocks of shares in stallion prospects for Foxfield, including Deputy Minister, Gulch, Crafty Prospector, and Silver Deputy. His matings helped turn those horses into major stallions. Over the years, he gave many stallions a boost by producing over 200 stakes horses. During his time at Foxfield, Rob not only did the matings of the mares, but also selected several successful foal shares. When I was associated with Fares Farm, we bred Grade I winner Fabulously Fast on a foal share with Foxfield. Rob made an art form of breeding top horses out of older mares that others had given up on. Results of Rob's matings for Foxfield include Better Than Honour, Silverbulletday, Blushing K. D., Helmsman, Crafty Friend and Great Navigator.

When Foxfield's holdings were dispersed, Rob started his own Thoroughbred breeding operation, Liberation Farm. His farm met with amazing success in breeding top quality horses for the commercial market. Liberation Farm bred or co-bred many top-class runners, including Belmont S. winner Ruler On Ice, Grade I winners El Corredor, Roman Ruler, Henny Hughes, and Champagne d'Oro, as well as Grade II winners Strong Hope and Badge of Silver. Between Foxfield and Liberation Farm, Rob accounted for 17 Grade I winners. In the history of the American turf, I cannot find anyone who accomplished so much on a consistent basis over so many years with the limited resources he had available. Had he not been working with bankers controlling borrowed dollars in a recession, his operation would have continued to be a shining example of how to run a breeding operation in order to get top-class athletes as well as commercial sale horses.

Yet, even beyond his success as a breeder, Rob's greatest legacy is probably the example he set by his unwavering efforts to help the industry be better. Being a co-founder of the Horse Farm Workers' Educational Assistance Fund and the Consignor and Commercial Breeders' Association (and the educational sale booklets he wrote or edited) are just two of his many projects. In addition, Rob is a brilliant thinker and sometimes wrote thoughtful Op/ed pieces with suggestions to improve the sport of racing and its image. His final Op/ed, [Safari Imepasua](#), is a final gift that we all need to take very seriously.

We all know we are in trouble. We work in an industry that has gone from being the number one spectator sport to being such a low priority to NBC Sports that it would not switch recently from the Towson State football game to the Breeders' Cup. We have lost most of our media coverage and we have too few end-using owners to buy our yearlings. Still, our racetracks, state governments, and racing and breeding organizations fail to work together for the benefit of the sport. **Cont. p12**

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In addition, as I look over the sales results from November, I am very worried. As Rob has pointed out several times during the last few years, declining revenue for mare owners will cause additional industry contraction and reduce revenue for stallion owners and other service providers in the years ahead. We now have a scary situation where a few sale horses bring premium prices (while many good horses go begging for buyers). This causes the middle market to be seriously depressed and the lower market to disappear. We need all three tiers to be on solid footing. Of 3,958 horses catalogued at Keeneland in November, 125 brought \$60M of the \$143M total. In other words, 3% of sale horses accounted for 42% of the revenue. The producers of the other 97% of catalogued horses (3833 horses) only received 58% of the sale's total revenue, which is not near enough to have a healthy business and which paints a dark picture for the future.

We all should have started listening to Rob's observations and advice a long time ago. But, as today is the first day of the future, we should start listening now and begin working together before it is too late.  
*Bill Munn, Fort Lauderdale, Florida*

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#### 2012 Horse of the Year: I'll Have Another or Little Mike?

"With December knocking on our door, the 2012 horse racing campaign for Horse of the Year is drawing to its conclusion. As in the past few seasons, without a clear-cut choice who everyone can agree upon, the debates for the Horse of the Year honor are already in full swing." **Alan Horvath, BleacherReport.com**

#### Another Problem for Horse Racing: Fewer Foals

"As gamblers place fewer bets at Arlington Park and prize money drops for winning horses, the effects are felt far from the track. The number of Thoroughbred horses born in Illinois has been dropping steadily, to 429 this year from 1,009 in 2006." **Alan Horvath, BleacherReport.com**

#### The \$10 Million Mare: Horse of the Year Havre de Grace Sets An Auction Record

"The 5-year-old bay mare stepped into the ring as easily and confidently as she stepped onto the racetrack and into the winner's circle, and the show began. Seven minutes later, she walked out of the ring having made history." **Teresa Genaro, Forbes**

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## More **DIRT** on Kitten's Joy - New Graded Stakes Winner

Multiple Stakes Winner CSABA wins the Grade 3 Fred W. Hooper H. at Calder on **DIRT**.

Two days earlier, Stakes Performer #28, Heart of New York, ran second in the Lie Low S. at Aqueduct.

In 2012, World Class Sire Kitten's Joy is the sire of 12 Stakes Winners / 28 Stakes Performers

# KITTEN'S JOY

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