



op/ed

by Gary Bizantz

Thoroughbred owner Jack Wolf, Darley President Jimmy Bell, and Jockey Club President James Gagliano deserve accolades for pulling together the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance for retired Thoroughbred horses who have performed so admirably at the race tracks in America. Also, a well deserved "thank you" to the numerous stallion farms who have pledged financial support to the Alliance by donating an annual percentage of stallion seasons fees. With the stallion owners' contributions, The Jockey Club fees, support from Breeders' Cup and TOBA, and owners' support with a voluntary contribution, we have the first real chance to raise enough money to help the accredited retirement centers scattered across America who take care and rehabilitate the great athletic Thoroughbreds who bring us the thrills and excitement we all enjoy. It's a positive step toward solving the unwanted horse controversy which just gets stalled by more meetings and little action.

Arthur Hancock summed it up quite well when he said, "We can't expect to be a major-league product and gain the respect of the fans if we slaughter the athlete we come to cheer."

There will always be some casualties and euthanasia when appropriate, but the majority of retired Thoroughbreds deserve a second chance if they can be repaired and regain soundness.

Thirteen years ago I purchased a farm in California and named it Tranquility Farm. With the help of John Amerman, the late Bob Lewis, Marsha Naify, Madeline Auerbach, CARMA, and a few other donors, Priscilla Clark the farm manager has cared for over 1,000 horses with a good percentage of adoptions and many success stories. Rehabilitation can work if funding is available. I urge the stallion owners who did not participate to reconsider a one-time financial contribution each year. Contributing to the Aftercare Alliance is in the best interest of everyone who enjoys our great sport. I'm hopeful both the sales companies and the tracks can see the light and consider both a percentage of sales and small percentage of handle.

Again, thank you Jack, Jimmy and Jim, and all the others who together put the Alliance on the map. All the devoted fans and employees who have and care for these retired Thoroughbreds appreciate what you have done for them and the horses.

Gary Bizantz has been a Thoroughbred owner and breeder for over 50 years. One of the principal founders of Cobra Golf, he has served as chairman of TOBA, on the Board of Directors of the Breeders' Cup and is a past Director of the TOC. He is a member of The Jockey Club, and currently serves on the board of the KTA-KTOB. He and his wife, Betty, are the owners of Cobra Farm in Lexington, Ky., and Tranquility Farm in Tehachapi, Ca. Comments for publication? Email suefinley@thetdn.com