

## *For the Love of the Game*

I got involved with the TOC because I love horse racing: the sport, the horses and the people. I love going to the track and placing a bet; maybe I'll get lucky. The track is its own world. The backstretch at 7 a.m. is bustling with trainers and workers and riders. And later when the track opens for business, no where on earth is there a greater melting pot of people. But this sport that we love is in trouble. It's too late now to point fingers and quibble over the details or wax nostalgic about the past. We have just got to do a better job if we want this industry of ours to not only survive, but to flourish.

No question about it, the TOC has an outstanding board and staff. I've seen the staff close up for the last two years, and they are a hard working, dedicated group. Our board is passionate and devoted; together both have made TOC one of the most respected organizations in the nation. But we can do better. We must do better, if we want to insure the future of horse racing.

The Thoroughbred Owners of California has an all volunteer board; it is not an easy job for those who are willing to serve. It takes dedication and commitment. Everyone who owns a horse in California, by virtue of their CHRB license, is an automatic member of the TOC, and it is our job on the board to see that every California horse owner's interests are preserved. The future of horse racing in California and across the nation is literally in our hands. We can't pass the buck on this one, but we can't do it alone either.

We need to come together, as an industry, for the sake of horse racing. Whether you're an owner, a trainer or a horse breeder, we share the same dream. Every horse racing association, organization and business has got to work together for the good of the whole.

All of us can do better. We have to, or this industry won't be around in a few years. And if we don't start working in concert with each other, there won't be any profits for any of us to divide. If we don't overcome the differences that have kept us apart, we will surely fail.

Trying to bring this industry together has been anything but easy in the past. We have let egos and special interests destroy our common goals. We have forgotten that we are not only in business, but that we are the stewards for our business. This is not just an industry; it's a way of life. It's history and tradition, and if we don't preserve what we have, it will be gone. The jobs will be gone, the money will be gone, the tracks will be gone and the horses will slowly go the way of our disappearing landscape.

The future is in our hands. Together we stand, divided we fall.

*Marsha Naify*



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