



Alan Landsburg

A Fond Farewell...

Fourteen years.

Not a very long time in the mind of someone who has lived seven plus decades. Frankly, it seems like the day before yesterday. Fourteen years have passed since I sat at a table on Hollywood's Turf Club terrace listening to an impassioned speech about the inequities of the CHBPA.

"The trainers are destroying us," my friend said. "Us," in that case, were Thoroughbred owners. We were lumped together with trainers in a holy alliance called the California Horsemen's Benevolent & Protective Association. The organization was neither benevolent nor protective, at least as far as owners were concerned.

Within the executive councils of the CHBPA, trainers outnumbered owners because of the providential ruling allowing the spouses of trainers to be elected as "owners." To be sure, horses ran in the names of trainers' spouses, but their presence gave the trainers a 2-1 vote edge. Outvoted, owners decided to stage an uprising.

The heart of the revolution emerged when trainers decided to protest Marge Everett's decision to have Friday night racing. The trainers demanded a boycott of the entry box. My friend bellowed, "They are holding our horses hostage to their wishes. They are our employees, and we never gave them our permission to boycott racing."

The ironic footnote to the boycott threat was the concurrence of the uprising known as the "Watts Riots." Danger intervened, and racing was cancelled for the night, and weekend. No boycott occurred, and saner heads determined that night racing was good for racing.

It was out of that tempest and argument that a few owners chipped in a hat full of start up funds, and put the case for a separate owners' organization before one of racing's very good friends, Senator Ken Maddy. Finally, in strife, anger, and deep resolve, I started my 14-year journey with the TOC.

TOC has grown stronger, while earning the respect of most racing organizations, becoming a model for defending the rights of owners in this most exciting game. Fourteen adventure-packed years. Fourteen years of building racing friendships and the respect for individuals who are dedicated to racing. They were as hard as they were satisfying. The 14 years end for me the day after this year's Kentucky Derby. I made far more friends whom I hold dear, than enemies whom I condemn for inflicting wounds on the sport that I love.

And with that, I say goodbye to the corridors of racing's power in which are made the difficult decisions that need to be taken to support racing. I will now stay on the sidelines, watching my beautiful horses prove their mettle, and take the short walks to the pari-mutuel windows to put a few bills on their noses. To Mace and Marvin, to Jack and Tom, to Marsha and Madeline, to Marty, Wayne, Jess, and Harry, to Phil, David, Bob, Billy, Donna, and Drew, to Mary, Lucinda, Kellee, Guy, and Loxi: Carry on guys and gals, and make racing the best you can for the wonderful people who share our love of those magnificent creatures called Thoroughbreds!

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