



# Fall 2018 Newsletter

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As racing gets ready to focus its attention on Churchill Downs with the 35<sup>th</sup> running of the Breeders' Cup World Championships, the TPA is in full swing preparing for two of our biggest events of the year – the Big Sport of Turfdom award and the Mark Kaufman workshop – both of which will take place at the Symposium of Racing and Gaming in early December.

Please read Secretary-Treasurer Dave Zenner's article in this newsletter about the upcoming dates for balloting for the Big Sport of Turfdom award, which the TPA awards to a person or group of people who have enhanced coverage of Thoroughbred racing through cooperation with media and racing publicists. Another important date coming up the deadline for 2019-20 TPA officers and I encourage all members to consider serving.

Our Mark Kaufman panel this year will address the topic of legalized sports betting opportunities and how we as marketers and publicists create an upside for horse racing. With several states already operating legal sports books and more on the way, our panel will discuss how the industry can reach the sport betting audience who fit a natural demographic for a crossover to horse racing. Also at the Symposium, the TPA will award a

scholarship to a University of Arizona Racetrack Industry Program student pursuing a career in horse racing.

Our TPA slogan is "Telling Great Stories Since 1951," and this issue is dedicated to highlighting some of the hard working members of the TPA written by each of our current officers. We hope you enjoy reading each story. I encourage every member to consider ways to keep the TPA relevant and email any ideas that you may have to any of the officers (you can find our email addresses in your TPA Member Directory!).

As the racing year winds down, so too, does my two-year term as president of this great organization. It has been my honor to serve, and I look forward to staying involved as a member.

Sincerely,  
Rhonda Norby



## BIG SPORT OF TURFDOM AND TPA OFFICERS NOMINATIONS DEADLINES

Dear TPA Members:

With the Breeders' Cup and the march to the awards season upon us, the TPA is moving into its busy season and I wanted to take this opportunity to remind you of some upcoming deadlines.

It's never too early to nominate someone for the Big Sport of Turfdom award but as always we will close nominations right after the Breeders' Cup. Please send nominations to me at [davezenner@gmail.com](mailto:davezenner@gmail.com) by November 5. Ballots will be sent out November 7 and due to me at [davezenner@gmail.com](mailto:davezenner@gmail.com) by November 14 at 5 p.m. ET. The winner will be announced on November 16.

Also, nominations for 2019-2020 TPA officers are due to Lynne Snierson [lynnesnerson@gmail.com](mailto:lynnesnerson@gmail.com) by 5 p.m. ET on November 14. Nominations are being accepted for president and two vice presidents. You can nominate any current TPA member including yourself. Each officer will serve a two-year term. Ballots will be sent on November 15 and will be due to Lynne Snierson ([lynnesnerson@gmail.com](mailto:lynnesnerson@gmail.com)) by 5 p.m. ET on November 28. Winners will be notified November 30 and will be formally announced at the Mark Kaufman Workshop at the Symposium.

Sincerely,  
Dave Zenner  
Secretary/Treasurer  
Turf Publicists of America

## JOHN ENGELHARDT

BY JENNIE REES

John Engelhardt has worked in Thoroughbred racing for more than 35 years. President of the TPA in 2009 and 2010, Engelhardt is known for his unabashed enthusiasm for the sport while combining his talents as a photographer, publicist, writer, marketer and broadcaster. The University of Dayton graduate has been executive director of the Ohio Thoroughbred Breeders & Owners since Jan. 1, 2017, after serving three years as marketing and advertising consultant for Pinnacle Entertainment's Belterra Park in Cincinnati. Before the new ownership rebuilt the track and changed the name to Belterra, Engelhardt spent 30 years at River Downs working in publicity, public relations, marketing and broadcasting. He also was chief writer and photographer for Ohio Thoroughbred Magazine from 1980 to 2002. Engelhardt has been a horse owner and breeder and is the host of the weekly internet radio show Winning Ponies at [winningponies.com](http://winningponies.com). He was the impetus behind the Digital Kitchen's production "Ironman Perry Ouzts," the Hennegan Brothers-directed documentary that won the 2015 Media Eclipse Award for best television feature. Engelhardt arranged the 2007 race between Cincinnati Bengals all-star wide receiver Chad Johnson and the racehorse Restore the Roar on the River Downs turf to raise awareness for the charity "Feed the Children." (Johnson won the sixteenth-mile tilt in 11.1 seconds to win by 12 lengths and afterward jumped on an outrider's pony to celebrate.) In 2005, Engelhardt created Peruvian All-Stars Salute to Rafael Bejarano, for which 16 jockeys from Peru rode at River Downs to raise money for the Jockey School of Peru and to honor their head instructor, Teobaldo Vega. River Downs also popularized tracks staging wiener dog races.

**Current position:** Executive Director of the Ohio Thoroughbred Breeders & Owners

**Summary of position:** Promote owning, breeding and racing in Ohio. Represent membership at Ohio State Racing Commission and H.B.P.A. meetings. Promote all aspects of the owners and breeders through production of a monthly newsletter on the Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred magazine; quarterly newsletter to membership and all licensees in Ohio and quarterly contributions in the American Racehorse. Operate O.T.B.O. website. Sales

Director of the annual Ohio Mixed Sale covering all aspects of the sale. Coordinate Board meetings including agenda. Operate annual stallion season sale. Be available for speaking engagements as requested.

**First position in racing industry:** Track photographer at Beulah Park.

**Mentors:** In photography, Tony Leonard and Pat Lang.

**Favorite personal racing memory:** Being trackside to witness and capture Personal Ensign and Randy Romero's almost impossible victory over Kentucky Derby winner Winning Colors. It was the Breeders' Cup Distaff and the win kept Personal Ensign's race record perfect.

**Best media/publicity/marketing event that you have been a part of:** It was a long one – Host of "The Regular Guy Handicapping Show" at River Downs for 10 years. A day long, twice weekly show that taught beginners how to read the Racing Form with overhead camera views, and helped veteran handicappers by showing replays and bringing on a bevy of well respected handicappers from around the country.

**Suggestion to increase interest in racing:** Bring some friends, especially if you can give them a tour of the backstretch and later spend the day and show them some suggestions on how and why to bet. Fun is good!

**Anything else you want to add about yourself or about racing and promoting racing?** I think the above about covers the life and times in a career of promoting racing – from the farms to the finish line.



## JIM GLUCKSON

BY JOE BACIGALUPO

Next month marks the 35<sup>th</sup> running of the Breeders' Cup World Championships, horse racing's premier year-end event that was first hosted by Hollywood Park in 1984 and has since crisscrossed the country many times and also ventured once into Canada. Although Hollywood Park is long gone and many other changes have occurred at the event and at host sites, my subject, Jim Gluckson, has been a steady presence at the past 32 runnings of the Breeders' Cup World Championships.

Jim also is someone with whom I have spent the past nine Eclipse Awards ceremonies, oftentimes in the confines of small, makeshift office spaces. Rachel Alexandra versus Zenyatta and Zenyatta versus Blame are just a couple of the



memorable Horse of the Year announcements we have shared at the Eclipse Awards.

### **Current Position**

Jim is a public relations consultant serving the Thoroughbred industry, primarily for the Breeders' Cup, and for the NTRA, as a steering committee member on the Eclipse Awards.

### **Summary of current position**

Jim handles media relations on behalf of the Breeders' Cup, which encompasses a range of activities working in concert with the overall racing and marketing initiatives of the organization. Jim's goal is to pose the Breeders' Cup in the most favorable light through a combination of utilizing traditional and new media initiatives; participating in planning strategy and executing tactics; writing press releases, following up on and placing stories and acting as a company spokesperson. A large part of Jim's work is devoted to working with the host track in arranging for the media to cover the Breeders' Cup World Championships each year. He also handles public relations and organizational responsibilities on the Eclipse Awards, and for the dinner and awards ceremony.

### **First position in racing industry**

Publicity Director for Sports Marketing and Television International (SMTI), in Greenwich, CT, 1986

### **Mentor(s)**

Jim's father, Herbert J. Gluckson and SMTI President Mike Letis

### **Favorite personal racing memory**

Being near the finish of Affirmed and Alydar at the 1978 Belmont Stakes

### **Best media/publicity/marketing event that Jim has been a part of**

The Breeders' Cup World Championships (An easy answer for Jim!)

### **Suggestion to increase interest in racing**

The sale of pari-mutuel tickets (or online bets) is paramount. Easy to ask, but we need mentors to get more people to become regular horseplayers to increase handle each year.

### **Additional comment/words of wisdom**

The second you think you know it all, you are finished. Try to learn something new to help yourself do a better job every day.

## **KEVIN KERSTEIN**

BY JENNIFER HOYT

Kevin Kerstein may be one of the newest members of Turf Publicist of America, but in his role as Publicity Manager at Churchill Downs, he is a very recognizable and welcoming face to all members of the media in town to cover the Kentucky Derby. It is his job to gather and disseminate racing news and information for Churchill Downs and to assist in the media operations for any of the large event days, including this year's Breeders' Cup World Championships.

### **First position in racing industry?**

Clocker and handicapper for Racing with Bruno.

### **Mentor(s)?**

John Asher, Darren Rogers and Travis Stone. These three gentlemen have helped me an immense amount in my career and I continue to learn about the industry every single day.

### **Favorite personal racing memory?**

This is a dead heat between two events:

1. Watching Blame vs. Zenyatta in the 2010 Breeders' Cup from Section 314 with my dad was an unbelievable experience. The hype and build up to the Classic was second-to-none. Seeing the race play out that way was epic.
2. Co-hosting 'Inside Churchill Downs' with John Asher and Darren Rogers on my wedding day.

### **Best media / publicity / marketing event that you have been a part of?**

The late John Asher always used to say, "Every Derby is special." However, the 2018 Derby was the most special to me so far. Even though Mother Nature didn't cooperate with the weather, seeing Justify win the Derby and become a Triple Crown winner will be a story I will share for the rest of my life.



### **Suggestion to increase interest in racing?**

Doctoral students could write a dissertation about this subject. However, one of my goals as a publicist is to tell the stories of the horsemen and horsewomen on the backstretch of Churchill Downs. There are so many fascinating stories of owners, trainers, jockeys, exercise riders, grooms, etc. that cross over to different mediums outside of the sport. While fans of horse racing are a rather niche audience, anytime we can tell positive stories that will impact fans outside of the industry – we are helping ourselves bring a new set of eyes to horse racing.

## JOHN DESANTIS (“JOHNNY D”)

BY AMY ZIMMERMAN

### **Current position?**

Senior Vice President Xpressbet

### **Summary of current position?**

To many degrees, Johnny D is the heart and soul of Xpressbet. He is what his customer does – he lives and breathes race. His job descriptions are varied and reflective of a lifetime of racing passions: weekly blogger and handicapper, television & radio personality, VIP Player liaison, wager interface designer, Xpressbet Wager Guide and tournament developer.

### **First position in racing industry?**

Johnny began working in the Hollywood Park Publicity Department in 1979.

### **Mentor(s)?**

Hollywood Park Publicist Nat Wess, Santa Anita Publicist Jane Goldstein and Golden Gate Fields’ Peter Tunney - plus a host of jockeys, trainers, owners and agents.

### **Favorite personal racing memory?**

This is a story best told in Johnny’s own words: “In the summer of 1980, while standing in the doorway to the Hollywood Park jock’s room, I felt something scurry up my leg into my crotch. I jumped and wheeled around. No one was there. Down the tunnel

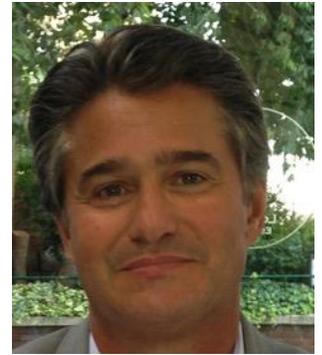
toward the track, about 15 feet away, Bill Shoemaker strutted spanking a boot with his whip. I’d been goosed! Right then I knew I’d been accepted into the world of Thoroughbred racing. I never left.”

### **Best media/publicity/marketing event that you have been a part of?**

Johnny D. served as Executive Director of Kids to the Cup for six years. That was a fantastic program founded by the late Trudy McCaffery. Many KTTC alums are currently employed in varied facets of the racing industry, which continues to be a source of great pride.

### **Suggestion to increase interest in racing?**

Bring fans closer to our top athletes—the horses—and simultaneously introduce patrons to behind the scenes operations at racetracks. From morning workouts to afternoon guided tours of the facility (jocks room, steward’s stand, photo finish booth, colors room, money room, racing office, etc.) racing remains an intriguing sport where competitors—trainers, jockeys and horses—are approachable and willing to meet and greet fans.



## AMY GREGORY

BY RHONDA NORBY

Amy joined Keeneland after 18 years with Churchill Downs Incorporated, where she was Director of Governmental and Regulatory Affairs and Director of Media and Investor Relations. She began her career as a writer for the *Thoroughbred Record* trade publication before moving to Breeders’ Cup Limited as a communications specialist.

### **Current position?**

Director of Communications, Keeneland

### **Summary of current position?**

Keeneland is both a race track and the world’s largest Thoroughbred auction house. The chief focus for the Communications team are those core businesses, but we also support our wagering platform, Keeneland Select; The Keeneland Shop and Keeneland Library. My responsibilities range from strategic planning and messaging to pitching story ideas to media, acting as a spokesperson for Keeneland, building relationships with the press, coordinating production of Keeneland Magazine and collaborating with other staff on special projects and industry initiatives. Communications also works closely with the TPA Fall Newsletter

Marketing staff to formulate strategy and content for our social and digital media platforms, which are an important aspect of our overall fan outreach.

### **First position in racing industry?**

Assistant to the Managing Editor (then Mark Simon) at the *Thoroughbred Record* magazine. The *Thoroughbred Record* was among the first trade publications to cover racing internationally, and the five years I worked as a production assistant and writer were among the best of my career. That experience honed my writing skills, gave me a solid foundation in the horse industry and was the beginning of many lifelong friendships.

### **Mentor(s)?**



My parents. They had a small family business and through it, I learned many life lessons such as the value of hard work and customer service. My Dad loved horse racing; he took me to Ellis Park as a very young girl and taught me to read the Daily Racing Form. I have been fortunate during my career to work alongside some of the best in racing, among them John Asher, Jay Privman, Jim Williams and Gary Yunt, and I try to emulate their professionalism and integrity in my work.

#### **Favorite personal racing memory?**

Doing the walk over with Swale before the 1984 Kentucky Derby. It is the only time I have done “the walk” with a Derby contender and I will never forget the crowd and the anticipation. When Swale was at Keeneland that spring with Woody Stephens, I stopped by the barn every morning to see him. He was the first “big horse” I had the opportunity to be around, and to this day, he is still my personal favorite.

#### **Best media/publicity/marketing event that you have been a part of?**

Hall of Fame Jockey Day at Keeneland during the 2016 Spring Meet. We honored one of the largest contingents of Racing Hall

of Fame jockeys ever assembled with special appearances and an autograph signing at the track. It was so rewarding to see the long lines of fans of all ages waiting to meet these legends. At a dinner that evening, the jockeys shared stories about the memorable horses and races they rode. I applaud all the ways racing celebrates its rich history and connects current fans to generations that came before.

#### **Suggestion to increase interest in racing?**

I believe the key to making lifelong fans is to provide opportunities for people to interact with a horse. When that personal connection happens, it all clicks. At Keeneland, we have had a huge response to our “behind-the-scenes” tours that offer fans the chance to watch horses saddled in the paddock, experience the thrill of the winner’s circle and walk through the stable area. I welcome the outreach efforts of Thoroughbred farms and equine-related businesses via Horse Country and the popularity of Old Friends, which offer fans the chance to see a horse and learn about the Thoroughbred industry. These types of experiences are important growth avenues for racing.

## **BRIAN SKIRKA**

BY DAVE ZENNER

#### **Current Position**

Marketing Director, Monmouth Park Racetrack

#### **Summary of Current Position**

Responsible for all aspects of marketing, advertising and executing all branding, events, contests and promotions having to do with Monmouth Park Racetrack, the Monmouth Park Sports Book by William Hill, and Blu Grotto Ristorante.

#### **First Position in Racing Industry**

Assistant to horsemen’s bookkeeper. In hindsight it was the best place to begin, because it was the location of the candy bowl. Through that little office I met pretty much every executive at the track as they stopped for their afternoon sweets.

#### **Mentor(s)**

I try to take a little from every person I associate with, and there are too many to mention who have helped me in a considerable way. Brad Thomas has been a very supportive colleague and friend always willing to offer advice.

#### **Favorite Personal Racing Memory**

Talk about too many to mention! Hard to say that American Pharoah’s Haskell and the entire Pharoah Phan Phestival Weekend isn’t Number 1. But very close 1As would be the 2017 Breeders’ Cup at Del Mar, Hotstufanthensome winning the 2006 Mac Diarmida Stakes, interviewing Graham Motion in the paddock prior to Animal Kingdom vs. Point of Entry in the 2013

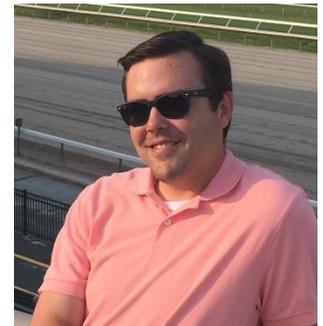
Gulfstream Park Turf, and any time I watch the replay of Rachel Alexandra’s Woodward.

#### **Best Media/Publicity/Marketing Event That You Have Been a Part Of**

The 2015 Pharoah Phan Phestival. The magnitude of the circumstances, combined with the time constrictions, combined with the national stage, combined with everything else that went into planning and executing those three days – it was the most-rewarding weekend of my career and an event I will never forget.

#### **Suggestion to Increase Interest in Racing**

I see two distinct sides. One side is the horseplayers who support racing year-round. For this group, I believe we need to find a way for tracks to work together to not cannibalize each other, run on top of each other, etc. Maximize our assets as an industry so that our horseplayers get the best possible product. Side two is the casual entertainment customer. How do we get someone who might come once, to come three, four, five times? In a world filled with growing entertainment options seemingly daily, I think it’s important to bundle racing as part of a bigger entertainment experience, while – most importantly – making sure racing remains a focus. Festivals, concerts, giveaways all are proven to attract more bodies. But it’s on us to make sure that we introduce racing to as many of those people as possible when we have them. Have video and sound available everywhere so that



all in attendance know when a race is going off, have plenty of betting machines so that finding a place to bet is not a challenge, give them a personal betting tutorial, take them to the paddock,

find some way to make a memory that these casual fans will want to experience again and hopefully share with others.