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RTCA Network News

RACE TRACK CHAPLAINCY OF AMERICA

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RTCA: At the Starting Gate

A few months ago, I visited Ruidoso Downs Race-track, New Mexico, with our Chaplain, Darrell Winter. I asked Chaplain Winter what he felt was one of the most challenging tasks of his ministry at the racetrack. After much thought, he said that he truly believed that daily devotion and prayer at the Starting Gate was critical because of the various circumstances that



occur there. Afterward, Chaplain Winter invited me to participate in this experience and soon enough, I was sitting next to him, together with other workers, in the back of a large pick-up truck, on our way to the Starting Gate. Here, our Chaplain gathered the workers in a circle and presented a devotional. After the devotion, the participants had a moment of prayer addressing their personal concerns, especially for their protection, and for the protection of the jockeys and the horses they work with.

While observing Chaplain Winter's presentation of the word of our Lord, I become conscious of the many realizations that occur

at the Starting Gate. I observed that:

1) Most significantly, the starting gate is a very dangerous area. Each worker must be extremely skillful in order to do his or her job well and yet, stay clear from harm's way. I realized that these workers earn their living at a very dangerous price.

2) There is much expectation amongst the workers and from the people in the grand stand. Many horses arrive at the starting gate after years of care, training, and preparation. The starting gate, in essence, resembles an accomplishment more so than a commencement.

3) The starting gate is an invitation to race and at that moment, every jockey and horse has the same odds to win.

Our dear brother, Pat Day, a true professional and expert in the field of horse racing, later confirmed my Starting Gate observations.

All these eventualities that happen at the Starting Gates led me to reflect in our personal lives and the ministry of the RTCA.

Initially, when I think about the dangers that these workers face every time they begin their work at the Starting Gate, it makes me reflect upon the different dangers that Christians have endured throughout the ages in order to "race" with the Gos-

pel of Good News. Today, we are so privileged that this bi-millennial Gospel has been entrusted to us so that we can carry the torch of the "light of Jesus" and run the most important race, which is to spread the good news to the multitudes of people around the world. However, the word of God teaches us that the proclamation of the Gospel will not be an easy task and implies danger: "*He who goes out weeping, carrying seeds to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him*" (Psalm 126:6) Not too long ago, many past RTCA leaders experienced these words of the Lord with their hopeful prayers and endurance through difficult times in order to see our organization thrive to be at the Starting Gate in order to begin the "race for Jesus." Many leaders have described the impediments endured in our ministry and on numerous occasions, thought it best to "scratch" our organization off the "race." It soon appeared as if the "horse" that RTCA was riding upon was not willing to enter the starting gate. Yet, because of our gracious Lord, the RTCA has endured and is now racing, better than ever, the race for Jesus.

As I visualize the tense, yet exciting atmosphere amongst the workers and the people in the grandstand, I reflect on the text written by Apostle Paul in the book of

Hebrew 12:1, "*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.*" We, as well as, the RTCA are now starting to race for Jesus. There is a "great cloud" of witnesses constantly surrounding us - people that are praying for us, as well as, people observing our organization and making judgments as to whether or not we are fulfilling our mission. With these challenges in front of us, the starting gate for the RTCA becomes a place where we celebrate our past victories in Christ and the commencement of great accomplishments in His name.

Finally, when the starting gate opens and the bell announces the beginning of the race, the horses expose all their strength and potential. Likewise, the Lord challenges the RTCA to put all our strength together and work to our highest capacity in order to do the best in this race for Jesus. The word of God reminds us: "*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a*

“crown that will last forever.” (1 Corinthians 9:24) For RTCA, the Starting Gate is an invitation to race. We have the opportunity to race for the Lord every single day. Our goal is to run towards Jesus, and as we are racing, we are proclaiming the Good News of our Lord’s salvation. Unfortunately, I have seen so many horses at the Starting Gate begin racing aggressively, but soon enough, their energy wanes, they become tired, and they are not victorious in the end. If our sight is on Jesus, we will race the perfect race. If our trust is in Him, the word of God says: *“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength...they will run and not grow weary”*. (Isaiah 40:31) We do not want our organization to be reprimanded by God, *“You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?”* (Galatians 5:7)

To conclude, we have learned three great lessons from the Starting Gate analogy for the Race Track Chaplaincy of America: First, we know that when we are involved in the ministry during dangerous times, the Lord will never abandon us, for He says, *“And surely I am with you always”*. (Matthew 28:20) Second, We are aware of the grandstand, the crowds of people who continually observe our ministry with high expectation and critical eyes. We always strive to do the best for the RTCA. Yet, we must always remember that our efforts and loyalty to serve our Lord is most important. The Lord has called us to victory and we have the opportunity to race with the strength of the Lord, *“I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”* (Phil. 4:13).

Last, but certainly not least, we need to race diligently, led by God’s might and wisdom. We have and will continue to see the results of our race. Many people who have and will come to accept the Lord in their hearts, and because of this, we can see that lives are being changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. *“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did to me”*. (Matthew 25:40). In addition, after we have race the perfect race, one day, we will be at the heavenly “Winner’s Circle” and the Lord will say to us: *“Well done, good and faithful servant!”* (Matthew 25:21).

RTCA, let’s race this race with our hearts and dedication for Jesus!

Dr. Enrique Torres,
Executive Director, RTCA



RTCA Family News:

E-Tapestry Data Management

On July 10th, our RTCA National Staff members accomplished the first segment of the E-Tapestry training. The purpose of E-tapestry is to enhance our data organization and allow us to better manipulate and utilize the information that we have in regards to the RTCA, such as our large mailing lists, as well as, offering a more accurate report of the contributions and donors of the RTCA. There are four training sessions total - the last one will be on Thursday, September 25th. Praise the Lord for this wonderful tool.

Oklahoma Thoroughbred Association

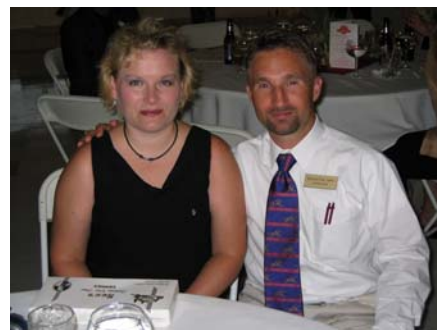
On July 19th, the Executive Director participated in the annual banquet of the Oklahoma Thoroughbred Association. During this event, he was able to get acquainted with many important leaders of the horse racing industry. Some of the leaders he met were Mr. R.D. Logan, the President of Remington Park, and Mr. Ray Bayliff, the Oklahoma Horse Racing Commission Chair.



Chaplain Leroy Sommers (middle), with wife (left), and Mr. R.D. Logan (right)

Chaplain Leroy Sommers

On July 20th, the Executive Director did the official installation of the new Chaplain of Remington Park, Chaplain Leroy Sommers. This ceremony was blessed with the presence of the Lord and with very good attendance. Our prayers are with Chaplain Sommers and his family as they begin a new chapter in their lives here at Remington Park.



Chaplain Leroy Sommers and his wife

Chaplain Peter Crisswell

On July 21st, the Executive Director met with Chaplain Peter Crisswell in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The meeting was excellent and proved to be a very pastoral time together. Chaplain Crisswell is the Chaplain in Albuquerque Downs, Sunray Park, and Sunland Park. Our prayers of support are with our dear Chaplain Peter Crisswell.

Prairie Meadows Racetrack Council

On July 21st, the Executive Director met with the council members of Prairie Meadows Racetrack, and with Chaplain Dennis Luft. It was a very meaningful experience for the Executive Director. This council has Mr. Thomas Davis as their president, and Mr. Charles Schott as the RTCA Regional Director.

Chaplain Dennis Luft

On July 22nd, the Executive Director spent the morning visiting Prairie Meadows racetrack with Chaplain Dennis Luft. He was able to witness the excellent dedication and love in the ministry of Chaplain Luft. Every person they came across, from the backside to top management, expressed their sincere appreciation for Chaplain Luft. The report is that his ministry here has touched many lives. Praise the Lord for this servant of the Lord!



Chaplain Dennis Luft (right)

Arapahoe Racetrack Council

On July 22nd, our president, Don Dean, had a meeting with the Arapahoe racetrack council in the evening. The meeting went efficiently well and they got a lot of things done. Some of the leaders of this council are Mr. Monk Hall, the council president, and Mrs. Cathy Hammes, the RTCA Regional Director. This event was very blessed and we can see the great commitment of these leaders for the RTCA both locally and nationally.



Chaplain Carl Crisswell

On July 23rd, the Executive Director had a meeting with Chaplain Carl Crisswell on the backside of the Arapahoe racetrack. During their visit to the many different barns, a good number of people they came across accepted the Lord in their hearts that very same day. Amongst them were three brothers from the same family who dedicated their lives to the Lord. Praise the Lord for this wonderful event! Chaplain Carl Crisswell is doing wonders with his excellent ministry here. In addition, a beautiful banquet was offered by the management to honor our Executive Director. Our sincere gratitude goes to the Arapahoe management and the RTCA Council Leaders for their time and dedication to our ministry.



Chaplain Carl Crisswell (right)

Chaplain School Committee

On July 25th, a telephone conference was held with members of the Chaplain School Committee. Chaplain Vincent Harris is the Chairman for this committee. All the planning for a successful event has been laid down, and it is our prayer that this upcoming annual Chaplain School will be very enlightening, and very inspiring. May the Lord guide us through this time of planning.

Executive Committee Meeting

From August 3rd to August 6th, the Executive Committee members met in Saratoga Springs, New York. This meeting was very productive and came with many blessings. Details of this meeting have been given to you in the minutes sent in the last Network News.



Special Luncheon for Major Contributors

On August 5th, a special luncheon was presented to the major contributors of the RTCA. Amongst the many people present were: Mr. Kenny Troutt, Mr. Pat Day, Mr. Elliott Walden, Mr. Don Dean, Rev. Ed Donnally, and our Executive Director, Dr. Enrique Torres. Many of the attendees clearly stated their intentions of continuing their support to our ministry. Praise the Lord for their sincere support to the RTCA!

Executive Director on Vacation

On August 11th to August 22nd, after three years of working for the RTCA, the Executive Director went on a two-week vacation with his family. The vacation proved to be very refreshing with many great blessings.

Prayer Breakfast at Ruidoso Downs

On September 1st, Rev. Ed Donnally represented the RTCA at the Prayer Breakfast at Ruidoso Downs racetrack in New Mexico. This event was of great blessings with wonderful speakers such as Mr. Burn and Mr. Badilla. In addition, the attendance was significantly high. Rev. Darrel Winter is the RTCA Chaplain at this location.

Ruidoso Downs Brief Report

A Brief report of the ministry at Ruidoso Downs: Chaplain Winter informed us that they have very strong children ministry programs set up; such as, a

weekly daycare center, and Vacation Bible schools. Their Track Churches have grown to 120 with new faces coming in week to week. They have a Pot Luck dinner every Wednesday that draws about 50 to 60 people. Chaplain Mark Greene reported to Chaplain Darrell Winter by saying, "We had a great service with the Hispanic people at Ruidoso, about 30 was the attendance today. Some new decisions, Praise the Lord!" Please pray for the continued outreach and that the gospel will reach and transform many of the people here.

Upcoming Mission Projects

The RTCA has decided to contribute \$20,000.00 to go towards upcoming Mission Projects. During our last Executive Committee meeting, a task was assigned to the Executive Director to present a list of possible organizations that need our contribution for mission projects in the USA as well as other countries. A list has been created and sent to the Executive Committee members for final approval. Many recommendations from our RTCA family have been incorporated in this list. In our next RTCA network news, the list will be included in the mailing.

Annual Banquet of the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association

On September 5th, the Executive Director, Dr. Enrique Torres, and our President, Mr. Don Dean, represented the RTCA at the annual Banquet of the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association in Lexington, Kentucky. This is one of the most influential organizations in the horse racing industry. During this event, Kenny Troutt and Bill Casner were recognized with the most notable award possible: The Industrial Service Award. They were noted and recognized for their significant contributions to Churchill Downs' Klein Family Learning Center, the Race for Education, and the Race Track Chaplaincy of America. The RTCA ministry was well recognized at this Gala event with more than one thousand attendees. Our sincere congratulations and gratitude go to the Troutt and the Casner family for their dedication to the RTCA.

Shoemaker Foundation Banquet

On September 6th, the Executive Director and President Don Dean repre-

sented the RTCA at the Shoemaker Foundation Banquet in Lexington, Kentucky. This organization has a noble purpose of providing support and aid to jockeys who have gone through major accidents. We truly congratulate them for this great gesture, and we pray for their continued success in their kind efforts.



RACE TRACK CHAPLAINCY OF AMERICA

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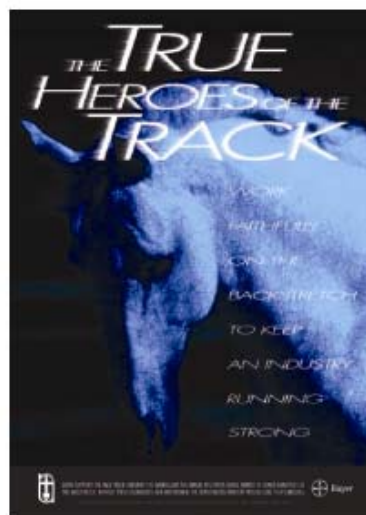
The Race Track Chaplaincy of America's * White Horse Heroes Luncheon *

You are invited to the RTCA's White Horse Award Heroes Luncheon at Santa Anita's Seabiscuit Court on Thursday, October 23rd, 2003, beginning at 11:30 A.M.

The RTCA will present the White Horse Award to the one backstretch or racing farm workers judged to have performed the most heroic act in behalf of human or horse.

The presentation will be televised live by TVG. Pat Day and Elliott Walden will help host and Kenny Troutt, co-owner of WinStar Farms, will present the Award. A special seafood buffet is included.

Tickets are \$150 each and tables are available. Please contact the National RTCA Office at (310) 419-1640 to reserve.



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