

An Important Chapter Comes To A Close



From the Executive Corner

by DOUG BURGE

California's Thoroughbred breeding and racing industry received some very bad news recently with the announcement that Marty and Pam Wygod's River Edge Farm will be closing after 35 years of operation. Located in Buellton, California, River Edge has been one of the most successful breeding operations in the state each year.

In fact, the Wygods were California's leading breeders in 2006, 2007 and 2008, and have bred the earners of more than \$50 million over the past three decades. They have continually stood the leading sires in the state, year after year, and have been one of the largest participants in the California-Bred Incentive Awards Program.

The loss of this historic breeding power house will obviously have long term negative effects on the quality and quantity of horses produced in the Golden State. The Wygod operation is irreplaceable. There are very few that are willing and capable to make the investment that they made.

Fortunately for California, the River Edge-based stallions will remain in the state and be relocated to other farms. In 2009, their stallions Tribal Rule, Benchmark and Bertrando covered 228 of 3,113 mares bred in the state. Their newest stallion, Dixie Chatter, reportedly covered nearly 80 mares this year.

The Wygods have also announced that the dispersal of their California breeding stock and foals will take place at Barretts Equine Limited in conjunction with the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association (CTBA) co-sponsored yearling sale in October. This will provide a significant opportunity for California breeders to purchase some

proven-quality mares. It is extremely important that the industry does its best to retain this breeding stock. With the lucrative racing and incentive program offering over \$30 million, such mares are immensely beneficial and vital to the continued production of top Cal-breds.

Since the farm began in 1975, manager Russell Drake has been at the helm. For the past 15 years, I have annually visited nearly every farm in the state and I can tell you that there is not a more professional, hands-on and successful farm manager than Russell. I hope we can keep him active, as the industry will sure miss his presence.

As I stated earlier, the entire Rive Edge operation will be very difficult to replace, but we do also have many other major breeders/owners who continue to invest in and support California. The CTBA will continue to do its best to represent those breeders/owners and farms, and provide the best programs to market their horses.

On another note, as you can see on the cover of this edition of *California Thoroughbred*, the Cal-bred legend Best Pal is going to be a 2010 inductee into the National Museum of Racing's Hall of Fame. In August, he will become the seventh Cal-bred to be bestowed this honor.

Bred and owned by the late John and Betty Mabee's Golden Eagle Farm, Best Pal retired with 18 wins and more than \$5.6 million in earnings. He is currently ranked second behind only Tiznow (\$6,427,830) on the list of all-time leading Cal-bred money winners.

Congratulations to the Mabee family and everyone at Golden Eagle Farm. 🐾



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