

Turner, Whitney I - APHIS

From: Cris Van Horn <cris.vanhorn@swpa.gov>
Sent: Sunday, April 15, 2012 4:46 PM
To: fgslr
Cc: Cezar, Rachel - APHIS
Subject: RE: [phoenixhaslanded] FW: No one appreciated him.

Very well put.

Please share your thoughts with Marty Irby, Ron Thomas, and Rachel Cezar.

Martyirby@msn.com
rthomas@twhbea.com
Rachel.cezar@aphis.usda.gov

From: fgslr [mailto:fgslr@usa.net]
Sent: Sunday, April 15, 2012 3:42 PM
To: Cris Van Horn
Subject: Fwd: [phoenixhaslanded] FW: No one appreciated him.

Yes, and in typical attorney fashion, he uses great narrative and lots of words to skirt addressing the problem directly.

Soring is illegal. Most of the TWHBEA judges accept it, condone it, and reward it, becoming part of the problem themselves.

The owners and trainers are conditioned from generation to generation to accept it.

TWHBEA, being the registry of our great breed, are also the caretakers of its reputation. They should have started doing something to the abusers from DAY ONE, to protect the reputation of the breed. Instead, they have allowed one sector to pervert and distort the breed from a classy, elegant, beautiful smooth-gaited animal into a grotesque, mutilated, display of suffering and agony.

That's the problem, and nobody at TWHBEA is addressing it.

LR

----- Original Message -----

Received: Fri, 13 Apr 2012 09:19:20 AM CDT
From: "Cris Van Horn" <cris.vanhorn@swpa.gov>
To:
Subject: [phoenixhaslanded] FW: No one appreciated him.

For your information—Tom Kakassy, former chairman of the TWHBEA Performance Committee, explains why he resigned from the TWHBEA Executive Committee.

From Walking horse Report 4.12.12

Kakassy Interview Sheds Light On TWHBEA Executive Committee

Thursday, April 12, 2012

The Walking Horse Report recently conducted an interview with former Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders' & Exhibitors' Association (TWHBEA) Performance Horse Vice-President Tom Kakassy. Kakassy resigned his post amidst frustration at the lack of action being taken by TWHBEA and its executive committee in a time of need for the horse and more specifically the performance Tennessee Walking Horse.

Below are the contents from that interview between WHR and Kakassy:

WHR - When did you resign from the EC and how did you inform the other members?

TK - This EC is very communicative, and we generally have rolling emails going on various subjects. I had discussed with President Marty Irby various alternatives after the Unity Committee vote earlier this month, and emailed the EC late last week about my intent.

WHR - What were the reasons you cited for your resignation?

TK - The immediate issue involved the utility of participation in the Listening Sessions, but the larger issue has been out front since the recent and unfortunate series of events affecting the breed.

WHR - Can you expand on those reasons?

TK - The short answer is that I had a math problem I could not solve. There is a longer answer; please bear with me. None of the following involves executive session or privileged conversations.

Being an economics major, I like to look at human behavior in microeconomic and in macroeconomic terms. As applied to the horse business in general, I think this usefully identifies problems and solutions. I will pick on Quarter Horses for my example. Problem: 1. On a microeconomic level, it profits a trainer to "tune up" his quarter horse in various ways in preparation for Saturday. 2. On a macroeconomic level, the American public, being reactive to the news cycle and one hundred per cent in love with animals, expresses in various ways, political and otherwise, that it will not put up with this behavior, and that it must be corrected by some internal (breed association, unity committee) or external (USDA, HSUS, US Attorney) controlling group. At that point, the industry, be it thoroughbreds, Arabians, Pasos—has the choice which Dr. Gipson now puts to us: "You guys fix it, or we will fix it for you". One of these two things will indeed happen.

There was, as of about a month ago, a very thoughtful and forthright interview with the AQHA president on the various self-regulatory measures it had put into place to control the problem of the moment, which appeared to be loping too slow and whatever those folks do to make it happen. In the middle of it was a comment I paraphrase: "We better fix this ourselves, because we don't want to end up like that other breed".

I started with TWHBEA with the thought that we need not reinvent the wheel; we simply need our central breed registry to address this situation in order to educate about our padded horse discipline, moderate public perception with quick and reactive PR, fix the problem within the industry, and move on to have fun with our horses. Just like AQHA and the Thoroughbred folks. Certainly there is one hundred per cent agreement on that macroeconomic level that these horses should be happy and go freely. Last week's excellent horse show in N.C. again convinced me that the figure of a 98 % compliance rate or better is just about right.

The opportunities for the EC to jump in and make a difference have been immediate and varied. On PR, as you know, Jeffrey, my understanding of journalism is that when that reporter makes that inevitable call to our central breed registry and says: "Mr. X says this bad thing about your horses—what do you say?" we have the short window of that news cycle, that now being just a few hours, to either set that record straight or to suffer the consequences of "TWHBEA had no comment". As recently as December, I promised our national board that this would never happen again, as it happened on the first of September, 2006. I was dead wrong to promise this, as I promised something I could not then deliver, and it has happened multiple times in the last 90 days.

This came to a head, in my mind, while we debated what I thought was beyond debate: whether and how to put out responsive and positive publicity and whether and how to encourage the Unity Committee. As you know, the former never happened and a very divided EC narrowly voted to "reject the bylaws" for the Alliance. That's the math problem. What I thought would be instant and unanimous votes became monthlong debates. I thought the hardest about a question Dr. Linda Montgomery asked me: "Where do your loyalties lie?" My answer to her was that they lie with the performance horse, but perhaps the better answer is that, if there is some conflict between serving on this board and working for the

UC in helping performance horses, I should no longer be an ineffective performance VP and should direct my energies toward the UC.

WHR - In your opinion do you think TWHBEA is supportive of all aspects of the breed including the performance horse?
TK - I don't know how to answer that because I'm not sure what TWHBEA is, in that context. In a member-driven organization, I have been amazed at the diversity of opinion and by how fervent people are about their positions. It's clear that a significant portion supports performance horses, some number actively oppose them, and very many are tolerant and simply prefer their own disciplines. I have all kinds and like them all, including our yard ornaments, and this "faction" attitude could not surprise me more.

WHR - In your opinion do you think TWHBEA is supportive of the Unity Committee? If not, can you expand on why they are not supportive of the Unity Committee?

TK - As with the last question, it's hard to characterize the general membership; as to the EC, we have on the table the narrow rejection of the proposed bylaws, coupled with a well-supported vote to endorse the concept of the Unity Committee and a recommendation that the UC work with USDA. I find in my work that what sometimes appears to be a general oral agreement runs afoul of problems when we try to put specifics on paper, and I think some of that happened here, as the going got tough when it got down to specifics.

It is clear that Marty Irby, Tracy Boyd, Rob Cornelius, Margo Urad, Christy Lantis, Wayne Dean and I are and have been almost universally supportive. Wayne has sometimes been loud, in his gentlemanly way, and I'm afraid I have been obnoxious at times, being a lawyer and also having been raised by Yankees. A slim majority has reservations. Ms. Joyce Moyer and Ms. Linda Starnes have tried especially hard to respect all viewpoints. You are asking me to characterize the positions of other folks, but perhaps especially those who have some history with TWHBEA are genuinely concerned about repeating some of the past missteps—financial concerns; legal worries; worries that the authority of the EC was being exceeded; the delegation of authority; acting too quickly; the personalities involved; alienating a part of the membership.

I can't tell you how strongly people honestly feel about this. There may not be crying in baseball, but there was in these debates. As I say, none of those are my concerns, and when I found that we would neither initiate these promotions, nor endorse without any qualification another entity which does, I found myself out of a job. I have no intention of sitting around for the next eight months. I have four horses to work, and occasionally have to go to my day job.

WHR - Why has TWHBEA failed to respond to the negative attacks of the HSUS and media on the industry?

TK - I have thought long and hard about this. Last year the EC generated the response to the HSUS petition and it got a great reaction. David Landrum crossed the Calsonic ring to thank the EC for doing it. We generated position papers on mandatory penalties, humane training techniques and equine slaughter. I was very, very surprised at the pushback to well-crafted, polite and measured responses, for the same reasons I described above. Obviously, I do not believe this will change. On the other hand, the EC just strongly supported President Irby and VP Lantis in their excellent presentations in Maryland.

WHR - What are your plans?

TK - Assuming that it continues and I have the chance, I will do anything I can for the Unity Committee, which needs to immediately get back up and running. By definition, it's bigger than any one organization. We need to all be on board, one hundred per cent and right now. There's a lot to be done.

Thanks for the chance to explain all this in detail.

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