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## **From the Office of Secretary/Treasurer**

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Turf writers:

Good afternoon fellow Turf writers and happy holidays to you and your families.

Hopefully by now all Regular members in good standing have received and are reviewing their Eclipse Award ballots for the 2008 racing season. The ballots were mailed around December 10—so if you have not received an official ballot, which includes a login and password to use the new online voting system—please contact me at [tlaw@thoroughbredtimes.com](mailto:tlaw@thoroughbredtimes.com), and I will make sure to contact the folks at the National Thoroughbred Racing Association to get a new one out as soon as possible.

As of Wednesday, December 17, I had only heard from one member who did not receive a ballot, instructions, and *Daily Racing Form* supplement, so that's a pretty good strike rate so far.

Speaking of the *Daily Racing Form* supplement, please consider that this document is fairly comprehensive from a standpoint of containing all the major contenders for the equine divisional honors. However, voters should remember that the past performance data is only through the end of November and the statistical information for the human categories is by no means complete or comprehensive and also only runs through November 30 or December 3, depending on the table.

Speaking of the statistical tables, I would encourage all voters to do additional and thorough research on the credentials of the contenders for the human awards.

The statistical tables for owners and breeders do not contain any earnings for horses campaigned in partnerships or under different names. As many of you know, many owners are involved in partnerships with other owners.

The information contained on pages 25 and 27 is particularly helpful in my opinion because it not only lists the winner of the year's Grade 1 events, but also the owners, breeders, trainers, and jockeys.

Additional statistical information is available on the Equibase website at [www.equibase.com](http://www.equibase.com).

CHANGES: The ongoing and disturbing trend that has seen many of the country's major newspapers reduce coverage of horse racing showed itself again earlier this month with news that longtime Chicago *Tribune* Turf writer, NTWA member, and former NTWA director Neil Milbert would no longer cover racing on the Chicago circuit and nationally.

Neil, who will continue to serve as an Illinois correspondent of industry publication THOROUGHBRED TIMES, started with the *Tribune* as a sportswriter in 1968 after six years at the *Jersey Journal* in Jersey City. He started covering racing in 1970

"The year Dust Commander won the Derby," recalled Milbert. "I've covered racing ever since but the amount of space the Tribune devoted to the sport over the years ranged from a lot to a little."

After some e-mail back and forth with Neil, I asked him if he could summarize his career so I could include it in the next newsletter. The highlight came in 2000, when Neil was "loaned" to the news department to fly to Mobile and Memphis and back to gather material for a series the paper was planning on the air traffic and passenger service problems at the nation's airports.

"Unwittingly, our editors picked the ideal day—on September 11, 2000 (one year before 9-11)—Chicago was hit with a terrible thunderstorm, shutting down O'Hare and disrupting air traffic across the country and internationally. I wound up returning a day later than scheduled via Minneapolis."

Such a delay turned out to be the "perfect storm," according to Neil as the paper's mega series titled "Gateway to Gridlock" won a 2001 Pulitzer Prize for explanatory reporting. Neil can boast of a replica of the Pulitzer on his office wall and a letter from the Tribune editor at the time paying "tribute to your Pulitzer Prize-winning work."

Neil went on to say that his contribution felt like "that of the holder for the extra point in a 7-0 Super Bowl game, but I'm not about to argue with the eminent ex-editor of the Tribune."

I'm not about to argue, either, and the 14 writing awards Neil earned during his newspaper career, including six related to racing, are a testament to his fine work.

Best Sports Stories, a now-defunct yearly panorama formerly published by E.P. Dutton, chose five of Neil's stories for inclusion: Canonero II's 1971 Derby, Secretariat's 1973 Belmont, Cannonade's 1974 Derby, Foolish Pleasure's 1975 Derby, and Seattle Slew's 1977 Belmont.

In 1987—two years after returning to Turf writing as his primary responsibility after nine years on the hockey beat—the *Tribune* bestowed on Neil an "Outstanding Professional Performance" award for "building a neglected area of coverage, Thoroughbred racing, into a showcase of reporting and writing excellence."

In 1985, Milbert won an American Horse Publications award for news writing for his coverage that appeared in *The Thoroughbred Record* of the fire that destroyed Arlington Park and the immediate aftermath of the disaster.

Neil is a past finalist for the NTWA Walter Haight Award for career excellence in Turf writing, including earlier this year.

Neil is an utterly professional, respected, and intelligent journalist, as well as one of the most positive, upbeat, and humorous individuals anyone could ever

meet. If you are ever around and hear Neil utter the phrase, “funny story ...,” take a moment to listen because what you’ll hear next will not only entertain you, but also inform you.

**MORE CHANGES:** Just after the news of Neil's upcoming retirement from the Tribune, fellow NTWA member John Scheinman alerted friends and colleagues that The Washington *Post* has determined drop coverage of horse racing.

John was a longtime freelancer for the *Post* who covered the Triple Crown, Breeders' Cup, and of course, Maryland racing. He said of the *Post's* decision: “for me ... as of January 1, I will no longer be doing the work I have approached with joy for the past eight years.”

John, who also serves as Maryland correspondent and is a regular contributor of THOROUGHBRED TIMES, won the 2007 Red Smith Kentucky Derby Writing Award in the advance story category.

In addition to his strong interviewing and writing abilities, John is somewhat of a Youtube legend in some corners of the Turf writing community and I've attached a link to see him in action. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqWV7Vx7HQs>

**HAPPY NEW YEAR:** I'd also like to wish everyone a Happy New Year and hope that 2009 is a safe and prosperous one for all. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns via email at [tlaw@thoroughbredtimes.com](mailto:tlaw@thoroughbredtimes.com), at my office at 859-260-9800 ext. 125, or on my cell phone at 859-396-9407.

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