

YONKERS' RACING SECRETARY STEVE STARR RETIRES
BY FRANK DRUCKER, Publicity Director, Empire City @ Yonkers Raceway

YONKERS, NY, Monday, July 29, 2019—Long-time Yonkers Raceway racing secretary Steve Starr is retiring, effective Wednesday (July 31st).

Starr has been 'putting together' Yonkers races since early 1976 after serving an apprenticeship under both Ed Parker and Richard O'Donnell. Of course, at that time, New York-area racing alternated, with three-month stays at Roosevelt Raceway and Yonkers.

Before leaving and turning over the big chair to assistant Bob Miecuna, Starr looked back.

"When I first started, we had classified racing, A, B, C, and paper eligibility, so the race office had more control," he said. "It was in the early 1990's that we went to condition racing.

"It became easier. The horses classify themselves and you don't have to be as observant."

Ask Starr about his favorite horsemen and you get names such as Buddy Gilmour ('Straight shooter. Would give you the shirt off his back and the shoes off his feet.'), Lucien Fontaine and Ted Wing ('Professionals').

"I didn't have a problem with anyone as long as they were good to talk to and had nothing to hide," he said. "Maybe it's me, but I think the horsemen worked harder back then. Today, there seem to be three times as many trainers, owners and drivers, so we see a lot more people."

Starr spoke fondly of the Rooneys, whose ownership of the Raceway essentially spanned his time as racing secretary.

"I can't say enough good things about (former YR president) Tim (Rooney), (former general manager) Bob (Galterio) and the family. They allowed me to do my job, paid me a good salary and I was able to get married and raise my own family.

"I guess the best thing I could say is that I enjoyed my job and was 100 percent ready to go to work every day," Starr said.

"I know people who make a lot of money and are good at their jobs, but hate it. I have no regrets.

As for the immediate future, "Spending time with the children and grandchildren.

"I owe my wife (Denise) a lot of vacations, so we're going to travel," Starr said. "By car. I don't like to fly."

Flying wasn't needed when Starr's visited the winner's circle, where Yonkers' horsemen and racing officials stopped by and wished him well.

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(FFI...Frank Drucker, Yonkers Raceway Publicity Director, 914-968-4200)