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Colt's price tag just happens to be just right for new church

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Jesus, it seems to some, is smiling on Bethlehem, Ga.

Just last month, the most noted and generous of the town's 400 residents, the man who owns Harrison Poultry Inc., sent a nice piece of horseflesh up to the Keeneland yearling sale. The colt, a half-brother to this year's leading 2-year-old in Europe, fetched a nice bit of scratch: \$3.9 million.

For Harold Harrison, 79 years old and still living just across the street from the house where he grew up, that huge sum indicates "divine providence."

A week before the horse he bred hit the auction ring, you see, Harrison

took the plunge to build his church, Bethlehem United Methodist, a new home — for precisely \$3.9 million.

"My Lord is looking after me," Harrison said yesterday. "We've been needing to build a church for a long time, and finally I told them I would build it and pay for it."

What he didn't know at the time, though, was that Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum of Dubai would be making such a hefty contribution to the building fund. Maktoum was smitten by the colt's beauty, and wound up on the winning end of a bidding war with Ireland's Coolmore Stud for the colt.

In Bethlehem, a northern Georgia

See COLT, A5



FILE PHOTO



Harold Harrison, above, said it was "divine providence" that his colt, left, sold for \$3.9 million at the Keeneland sales.

COLT: 'It was the Lord's way of blessing him'

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town between Atlanta and Athens, the news of Harrison's good fortune was greeted with good cheer but little fanfare.

Harrison is a self-made man with a magnanimous soul — so it came as no surprise to Bethlehem that his good deeds were rewarded.

"It was the Lord's way of blessing him for being so generous to us," said the Rev. Rebecca Jones, pastor of Bethlehem United Methodist. "He's earned everything he's got. But he is also faithful to his commitment to do right with what he earns."

Harrison spent 50 years building up his poultry company (motto: Golden Goodness) from a small egg business housed in a barn to a plant that turns out 800,000 broilers a week and employs 600.

Harrison came into the horse business "by chance. His wife wanted a riding horse, but had to give up that idea when her doctor informed her a back problem would keep her from the saddle.

"So I said, 'Let's just get us a racehorse and breed some,' Harrison recalled. "We went to Ocala and bought a mare for \$17,000. I have a good friend, a vet up in Lexington, Dr. Fred Arnold, who came by one day and looked at the mare and told me I should come up to Keeneland. I did, and I got carried away and bought four or five mares. I'm self-taught and I did a lot of reading. I know just enough about genetics to be dangerous."

Or enough to be wildly successful: The \$3.9 million colt, the priciest ever at a Keeneland September sale, is the second offspring of the never-raced Mr. Prospector mare Mr. P's Princess, and the stallion Kris S.

Harrison, who keeps his dozen horses in Georgia, recently sold the mare and her latest



CAMILLE WEBER/STAFF

foal to Coolmore for \$800,000.

All that business aside, the 200 members of the Methodist church of Bethlehem are waiting for another kindly act of God. They want to get the white brick church open by next September — but rain has been delaying the contractor from pouring the foundation.

"The Baptists built a nice new church last year, so we're going to have two real nice churches for the size of town we've got," Harrison said. "I read somewhere about a town of 5,000 that didn't have even one church. That shouldn't ever be."