GUTHRIE, OKLAHOMA—Gary McKinney of Midland, Texas, confirmed to TRACK Magazine late Friday afternoon that Reliance Ranches has completed the purchase of the properties known as Lazy E Ranch and Lazy E Arena.

The transaction was closed Friday morning.

The 960-acre facility in Logan County some 30 minutes north of Oklahoma City includes the 7,400 seat Lazy E Arena; a horse breeding facility that currently stands more than a dozen racing-bred American Quarter Horse stallions; a training center with a 5/8th mile oval race track; barns for conditioning of sale horses; turnout, rehab and layup facilities for racing age horses; and facilities for year-round boarding.

McKinney, who operates Reliance Energy from its headquarters in Midland, owns Reliances Ranches with his son Micah and daughter-in-law Leslie. Reliance Ranches has been operating at the top end of the racing business for the past few years.

This year, Reliance’s Coronado Cartel won the $720,000 Remington Park Oklahoma-Bred Futurity on April 20, and then Feature Hero won the $2.8 million All American Derby G1 on August 31 at Ruidoso. The latter race is the richest purse ever for American Quarter Horses.

Reliance Ranches has been among the most active buyers at yearling sales the past few years. They currently are No. 1 in the nation in money earned in 2013 at $1,899,678. Feature Hero is the nation’s No. 1 money earning three-year-old and overall No. 2 money earner while Coronado Cartel is the nation’s No. 5 money earning two-year-old colt.

“I became fascinated with Lazy E in 1986 while I was watching the Timed Event Championships on television,” Gary McKinney told TRACK. “I had been roping a few years at the time, and I knew then that roping at Lazy E had to be a tremendous experience. Little did I think that someday we would own Lazy E.”

Lazy E Arena was built by Ed Gaylord and opened in 1984 in time for the National Finals Steer Roping, an event that coincided with the National Finals Rodeo then in Oklahoma City. A few years later, the breeding operation known as Lazy E Ranch was begun, and such major stallions as World Champions and leading sires Special Effort and Easy Jet stood there.

The entire Lazy E operation was sold to Lazy E Holdings LLC of Las Vegas, who sold it for an undisclosed amount to Reliance Real Properties LP.

Lazy E currently has some 60 employees between Lazy E Arena and Lazy E Ranch. Dan Wall is the general manager. Butch Wise manages the Lazy E Ranch and the stallions.

Matt Witman will continue in his role as Wise’s chief assistant, a position he has held for more than a decade.

“I don’t think you will notice any major changes at the ranch in the immediate future,” said Wise, who has managed the horse division of the ranch for 20 years.

“We look forward to this new era,” Wise said. “I have known the McKinneys for several years and have enjoyed our relationship with them. The prospects for the future of Lazy E are limitless.”

Gary McKinney told TRACK that he approached Wise about the possibility of purchasing Lazy E while at Ruidoso in 2011. At that time, McKinney and the Lazy E did not make the deal work, but McKinney kept the possibility of someday owning Lazy E in the back of his mind. Earlier this year, McKinney again began working on the purchase of Lazy E.

“This time we worked it out,” McKinney said. “We are all excited about
the future of Lazy E.”

Micah and Leslie McKinney and their six-year-old son Drake and three-year-old daughter Fisher moved from the Llano, Texas, division of Reliance Ranches in October to a new home a few miles from Lazy E in Edmond, Oklahoma.

Micah and Leslie will manage the overall Lazy E operation from an office on the ranch property.

Micah and Leslie are deeply involved in the horse business. In addition to their Reliance connections, last year they founded the Racing Free Incentive Program. Micah serves on the AQHA Racing Committee and chairs the AQHA’s Equine Health, Welfare, Integrity and Research Committee. He also serves on the Texas HBPA and has served on the AQHA’s Champion Selection Committee. He is currently running for a director position on the Oklahoma Quarter Horse Racing Association’s board. Leslie is a mentor for the American Quarter Horse Youth Association.

“Owning the Lazy E is such an amazing opportunity for us. Micah and I grew up in awe of the legacy of the Lazy E and will work extremely hard to maintain that history and the respect that it deserves,” said Leslie.

“We have had the opportunity over the years to meet and work with some brilliant horsemen. We have won with them, lost with them, served on boards with them and now we look forward to providing exceptional service to them through the Lazy E Ranch.

“Our family is electrified by the chance to work with the talented staff already in place, and we are motivated by the way our industry is joining forces to preserve its reputation and heritage.”

Micah said, “Oklahoma has welcomed our family with open arms, and Drake’s response to the news of the closing was, ‘you mean we can go out there any time we want?!’ This morning the first thing he did was pick out his clothes to go to the ranch.

“The Lazy E already means so much to us, and we will not let it down. We will use our energy to work hard for our clients, and we will serve them with integrity and honesty.”

Eddie Willis, who currently ranks as the nation’s No. 1 trainer with earnings of $3,324,686 through November 15, will be basing his training operation at Lazy E. Willis trains both Feature Hero and Coronado Cartel.

Gary McKinney said they will work Dan Wall to expand current events while also attracting other events and possibly creating new events for the arena. The 70,000-square-foot air conditioned facility also has a club and restaurant overlooking the arena.

Lazy E Arena has hosted barrel racing, calf and steer ropings, tractor pulls, motor sports, PBR events, Bullnanza and Dodge National Circuit Finals Rodeo.

Gary McKinney said that several building projects at Lazy E had been discussed including a new stallion barn. The current stallion battery (in alphabetical order) is Carters Cartel, Corona Cartel, Feature Mr Bojangles, Hawkinson, Jess Lips, Louisiana Senator, Mighty B Valiant, One Dashing Eagle, Pappasito, Prospect To The Top, Tac It Like A Man, Teller Cartel and Valiant Hero.

Corona Cartel currently ranks as the breed’s No. 2 all-time sire of money earners at more than $43 million as of November 15. Valiant Hero is locked in a three-way battle for the No. 1 sire of 2013 money earners.

When asked if Coronado Cartel, who has earned $356,748 this year, would have a spot in a new stallion barn at Lazy E, Gary McKinney said, “He is going to stand at Lazy E when his time comes. If there is a new stallion barn, he will have a spot in it.”

A BATTLE AT THE TOP

When Ol Time Preacher Man won the $1,000,000 LQHBA Breeders’ Futurity RG1 last night at Evangeline Downs, his sire Heza Fast Dash became American Quarter Horse racing’s No. 1 sire of 2013 money earners at $3,525,960.

The four runners sired by Heza Fast Dash finished 1st, 3rd, 4th and 9th in the race to take home $630,500 for the evening and to vault their sire into the No. 1 spot.

PYC Paint Your Wagon, the No. 1 sire of 2012 money earners and the No. 1 sire of 2013 money earners for most of this year, now is No. 2 at $3,422,953 in 2013 earnings. Valiant Hero is No. 3, just $2,691 behind PYC Paint Your Wagon.

These were official Equineline records obtained by TRACK early Sunday morning.

This second $1,000,000 race in Louisiana history for Quarter Horses was dominated by horses that were sired by stallions standing at Robicheaux Ranch in Breaux Bridge.

The “Robicheaux” horses finished 1, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 7th and 9th. Another was scratched. They took home $903,500 of the $1,000,000.