

Texas Lottery Commission Press Release - September 19, 2003

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Houston Accountant Nets \$9.8 Million From *Lotto Texas*[™] Jackpot



Brother **John Catchings**, winner **Benjamin B. Catchings** and **Reagan E. Greer**, Executive Director of the Texas Lottery Commission, pose with the \$9.8 million ceremonial check.

(Austin, September 19) - This is the beginning of a big weekend for Benjamin B. Catchings. The Houston accountant has his 53rd birthday on Sunday and attends his 35th high school class reunion in Lancaster, Pennsylvania tomorrow. It all starts today when Catchings officially becomes a millionaire by claiming the \$16 million *Lotto Texas* jackpot from last Saturday night. He selected the Cash Value Option, so his prize is worth more than \$9.8 million.

Catchings said he plans to bring all those events together in a big way.

"I'm going to make sure I have a photo of myself with the oversized Texas Lottery check that says \$9,895,177 on it to show at my reunion Saturday night in Lancaster, since I don't have anything else to prove it," he said. "When they have the part of the reunion that features the person who traveled the farthest to get there, I'm going to say 'By the way, this photo of me was taken yesterday.' "

Texas Lottery Commission Executive Director Reagan E. Greer said it's not often that a jackpot winner figures out his own taxes before getting here.

"As a 16-year accountant for ExxonMobil, Ben took care of his own financial affairs before today, which most of our winners have someone else do," Greer said. "Now it's on to Pennsylvania to wow his old pals with his good fortune and have a fantastic birthday with friends and family."

Catchings was still in bed Monday morning listening to the "Weaver and Dana Show" on "Sunny 99.1 FM" when he heard them say that someone purchased the *Lotto* ticket with the correct six numbers at Kellogg Tower in downtown Houston.

"I thought to myself 'No, it can't be,' so I went to the Lottery Web site to see what the numbers were," he said. "There they were. I kept thinking that there had to be something not right with my ticket, but once I figured out that I had THE ticket, I started hollering and jumping up and down. I'm surprised my neighbors didn't call the authorities."

Catchings told his friends that he had the winning ticket, but almost all of them didn't believe him. His family, however, did.

"My mother is already car-shopping, and John, one of my brothers, flew down to be with me," he said. "Everyone in my family is really excited and happy for me."

What's next for the new *Lotto* millionaire?

"I'm taking a six-month leave of absence from the company, which they generously offered me," Catchings said. "I'm planning to buy a pair of Harley-Davidson® motorcycles for my son and me, and we're going to ride across the country, see America first!"

Catchings says he's going Down Under, too.

"I've always wanted to see the Great Barrier Reef," he said. "I'll probably go scuba diving once I'm there. I also plan to visit Ireland, another place I've always wanted to see."

Once he returns to ExxonMobil from his travels, Catchings plans to continue working until he's eligible for retirement in two years.

"By then, I hope to have traveled enough so I can pick a place to live," he said. "Then I'll probably do something different from what I'm doing now, maybe teach or something else that will allow me to give back to my community."

A fan of multi-draw, Catchings bought tickets for 10 consecutive drawings, selecting his own numbers rather than using Quick Pick. The winning numbers were 13-34-31-26-9 and 19 for the Bonus Ball.

MW Kellogg Tower Cards & Gifts, 601 Jefferson, in downtown Houston, sold the ticket. The retailer is eligible to receive a bonus of one percent of the advertised jackpot, which comes to \$160,000.

The estimated jackpot for Saturday night's *Lotto Texas* drawing is \$5 million.

For more information about the Texas Lottery, please visit the official Texas Lottery Commission web site at <http://www.txlottery.org>