

1997 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

GREGORY PAUL LOUGHER

1915 – 1986



The Australian Quarter Horse Association honours Gregory Lougher with induction into the Hall of Fame.

Greg Lougher was born in California. A keen athlete, he won the San Francisco 100 metre Swimming Championship and was the first intercollegiate rodeo champion riding for the University of California at Davis where he was studying to become a vet.

Before going to Davis, Greg spent a few years running wild horses, breaking them in and selling them; driving the big teams of horses making hay and competing at Rodeos to make enough money to go to College. His studies were interrupted when he was called up to serve in the Army during World War II. He was an instructor in horseshoeing, riding and shooting. He was first out of 5,000 men in marksmanship. He was stationed in China, India and Burma with the U.S. Cavalry and the mule regiment where he was assigned to Merrills Marauders. They had to pack guns and ammunition through swamps, mined jungles and parts of the Himalayas. Greg had to keep the mules on their feet and he was able to build a foot with packing, Stockholm tar and a makeshift shoe when necessary. His brief veterinarian training and his experience in Asia just added to his skills as a horseman.

After the War, Greg started training horses professionally. He started with Thoroughbreds, and then showed and trained hunters, jumpers, American Saddlebreds and Tennessee Walkers. He schooled polo ponies, drove trotters and showed and trained California Bridle horses and was one of the first cutting horse trainers in California.

Greg was said to be the best Hackamore reinsman of his time and his skill with the hackamore endeared him to Luis Ortega, the world's foremost rawhide craftsman, who showed Greg some of his secrets. Greg made many hackamores with a feel that only someone with his touch could do. His work is still respected.

Greg Lougher received the Silver Medal from the SPCA (RSPCA) for his act of bravery in swimming through a flooded river in the Big Flood of 1955 and rescuing a great bridle mare he had shown and three other mares. It was quite a feat to save them and he had to head and tailed them then ride the bridle mare through the flooded river to the bank. He then went back for a child's pony and together they struggled to the safety of the bank. Many animals were killed in that flood and the courage that Greg Lougher showed was recognized on National television in April, 1958.

Whilst running a successful training and breeding operation in the U.S. Greg met David Briggs and Bill Gunn. They went into partnership and brought 31 Quarter Horses to Australia. The trip to Australia involved a six month quarantine stay in England and at least two months at sea - or so Greg thought. He loaded the horses onto a freight ship at the Stockton, California wharf in June, 1965. He then said goodbye to his friends, helpers, wife Carmel and two daughters (Gail and Lori). Alone, he looked after the horses for six weeks in their tie stalls. He fought seasickness, the oppressive heat going through the Panama Canal and the rough Atlantic seas. Keeping the water up to the horses was a full-time job and there was feeding and stalls to clean, as well as keeping the health of the horses in top order. The horses could not lie down and had to stand the whole trip. Due to an unscheduled stop at Le Havre, France, the horses were not permitted to unload in England as, at that time, there was an outbreak of Swamp Fever in southern France. Greg was told he had to destroy the horses or take them back to the U.S.

Belgium came to the rescue and Greg and his horses spent three months in quarantine there. He was asked to give demos at horse shows. The people had never seen Quarters Horses ridden, let alone reining or whatever Greg could demonstrate in the limited spaces. They loved what they saw and Greg took every opportunity to promote the breed. The interest did not waver when he finally arrived in England. He was invited to exhibit them at some of the largest horse shows – he even took them fox-hunting. No one ever used stallions, and to be well behaved was even more unbelievable. Many of the top horsemen and women came to him during that six month stay in England. He worked with Pat Smythe, one of England's top showjumpers. He showed her his training methods and gear that helped her to reach the top of the tree that year.

Greg could not get all the horses on one ship out to Australia, so they landed in two shifts in September, 1967. All the horses were taken to Sam Hordern's property at Penrith where they spent another few months before they finally reached their home at Murrurundi, N.S.W. While Greg was in Penrith he was asked to give a cutting demonstration on Clover Cherry at the Warwick Gold Cup. He was then given special dispensation to enter the Gold Cup on Clover Lori (neither had competed in a campdraft before). Clover Lori had only been off the ship three weeks and had not had much work. Greg and Clover Lori were tied for first going into the final but he ended up fourth overall. This was a remarkable feat, and he even straightened his glasses and hat before he reached the first peg! The interest in Greg Lougher and his horses grew.

Greg gave demonstrations in cutting, reining and cowhorse in country shows in N.S.W. Then the big breakthrough came, not only for Greg but the Quarter Horse breed. The Sydney Royal Easter Show asked Greg and his two daughters to demonstrate his horses in the main arena as a main attraction. Thousands of people filed past the four horses in 'A Block'. Spectators would gather to watch the horses being exercised. Clover Cherry, Clover Lori, Clover Drift and Clarence Robinson paraded down the main street of Sydney to open the Show. Quarter Horses had been in Australia for quite some time by now, but never had they received such publicity. Greg was asked to return next year. He went to the Adelaide Royal as well.

Perhaps the reason Greg Lougher was so well admired was the fact the he was a true horseman. He could ride any style of horse (he even rode the famous horse, *Five Minutes to Midnight*) and saw good in every breed. He gave schools at Ron Males stud to Arabian enthusiasts, at Gatton College he worked with Reg Williams, educated Sinclair Hill, the great polo player and his horses and Sinclair even credits Greg's helping him achieve his ten goal rating. He gave schools at Clover Leaf where Jim Haydon and Ian Johnson, Jim Page, Graham and Merv Lamey, Joy Peel, Brian and John Cobcroft, Terry O'Hanlon and many, many others came. Graham Amos, Donald Gunn and even Chilla Seeney, all at some stage were inspired by Greg Lougher.

Greg Lougher served as a member of the AQHA Board, was given a Life Membership and a special award from the Association for his contribution to the breed. Clover Cherry, Clover Lori and Clover Drift were also recognized with a special award – the Award of Honour. Few people are ever held with such respect as Greg Lougher was, and still is in the horse world. His name is mentioned when Australian Stock Horse breeders get together remembering about starting their breed. Greg Lougher created so much interest in the Quarter Horse, something had to be done. In no way would Greg Lougher ever say he was solely responsible for the popularity of the Quarter Horse. The horse has a lot to do with that, as did many other hard working devoted breeders and members, but he sure did get the ball rolling!

Greg Lougher died in 1986 in California. He was cleaning a stall and had a heart attack. Some friends of his took his ashes to Battle Mountain in Nevada where he used to run wild horses and which he loved so dearly. They scattered his ashes on that mountain. As they did, a band of wild horses bolted past in the valley. He will always remain with horses, his true passion, but let's hope in heaven they're all Quarter Horses. With pride and respect, Gregory Paul Lougher was the first person inducted into the AQHA Hall of Fame.
