

2001 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

JACK REILLY

#34538

The Australian Quarter Horse Association honours JACK REILLY with induction into the Hall of Fame.

We have spoken to many people who knew Jack personally and it seems he was quite the colourful character. He was a big strong Irishman, a typical Irishman at that, a tough Policeman in various Departments including the Mounted Division, a champion polocrosse and rodeo rider, a champion wrestler and boxer (in and out of the ring), but above all, a fabulous horseman who played a huge part in the early beginnings of the Australian Quarter Horse Association, so much so that they called him "Mr Quarter Horse"!

When Jack was eighty-five, Joy Tyler visited him and recorded some of his early history. Jack Reilly was born in the copper mining town of McFayle, four hundred miles North-West of Sydney, NSW on 27th November, 1904. Jack's family was a large one, he had seven brothers and two sisters.

When Jack was born, his mother called him Theodore, a name that he really hated. His brothers called him Theo but his nickname was Buff because he used to run around like a sort of Buffalo Bill. When Jack turned fourteen he left home and told his parents he would not return until they started calling him Jack. He got a job on a property at Wilcannia, milking cows, killing sheep and any other odd jobs around the place.



Jack told Joy of the time he went droving from Cobar (NSW) to Arramat (Qld), quite a long journey particularly as it was winter. Jack noticed that all the drovers smoked so when they got into a town he purchased some tobacco. Jimmy Burns, the head drover, told him to buy 2lbs of Black Champion. He learned the art of rolling them like he had been doing it all his life, so here was Jack riding along smoking like he was an old hand at it, but, at this stage he hadn't even done the drawback. That night Jimmy taught Jack how to do the drawback. After their

evening meal Jack lit up, did the draw back and proceeded to be violently ill. When he regained his composure he gave Jimmy the tobacco, papers and matches and never smoked again!

As a teenager Jack was breaking in horses for a living, travelling through Queensland and New South Wales. An outstanding horseman, he broke in hundreds of horses. It was Depression time and Jack learnt from an early age that an income was not always easy to come by. His standard line was "If I can't break in six horses in a week, you can fire me, but if I break them, you pay me one pound a

head". The property owners, more often than not would agree to his terms. At such a young age Jack was quite short and skinny and didn't look tough enough for the task, but looks were deceiving, and there wasn't a horse that he wasn't able to tame.



At twenty four, Jack joined the Police Force and spent some time in the Mounted Division, later being promoted as the Inspector of the Disciplinary Division. Jack became acquainted with many high profile people and due to his career path and personality he learnt to become wise to situations. An old friend, Max McTaggart, recalls Jack saying to him "Maxi, tell a lie and believe it". Another of Jack's old friends recalls a lady approaching Jack at a horse show, asking for his valued opinion on her horse, Jack walked around it a few times before reporting "It has a lovely full tail my dear"!

Jack was acquainted with Samuel Hordern (Snr) and selected a number of horses for the Hordern stable. When Samuel Hordern was married and children

came along, it was Jack who schooled the Hordern juniors in horsemanship.

Jack's first exposure to the Quarter Horse was by chance. On one of his many trips he visited Goonoo Station (around 1940) where he met Don Schmit. Mr. Schmit showed Jack a copy of the very first American Quarter Horse Journal and Jack was excited by what he saw. Don Schmit knew why Jack was so impressed, they were both men of huge stature, Jack around 6'3, both men appreciated a horse of substance - what they were seeing in the American Quarter Horse Journal.

Prior to 1954, when Quarter Horses came to Australia, Samuel Hordern (Snr) approached Jack to select a mare that he thought would be suitable to breed to a Quarter Horse stallion. This was in preparation for the first shipment of Quarter Horse stallions ever to come to our shores.

In an interview conducted with Mr. J.H. Hawksley in 1981 Jack said in relation to the arrival of Quarter Horses in Australia, "Now having the horses arrive in Australia I personally continued to try and induce the people concerned with the horses to start an Association. I realised that when the first horses came to Australia there was never any thought of the horses being used for commercial purposes, but owing to the amount of advertising that was given to the horses, and the first sale of Quarter Horses in Australia, which was at Retford Park, Bowral NSW, and the horses made colossal prices there. My continual arguments that an Association should be formed started to bear fruit and Sir Rupert Clarke called a meeting to start the ball rolling to get an Association going."

It is history now that an initial meeting was held in Sydney on 17th May, 1961 at which discussions took place to form the Australian Quarter Horse Association but nothing concrete eventuated from the meeting.

Quarter Horses were now on the move throughout the Nation by virtue of sales from the Hordern's and King Ranch. Jack himself was now the proud owner of one of the first Quarter Horse Stallions to come into the country. In 1961 Jack and Samuel Hordern (Jnr) purchased JACKEROO Q-34 for the tidy sum of \$6,300. This was a record price which stood for some five years.

It is believed that the sale of horses at Risdon was arranged after Samuel Hordern (Snr) died suddenly and tragically in a car accident. Jack phoned Samuel Hordern (Jnr) and a meeting was arranged at Jack's office at Clarence Street Police Station in Sydney. Discussions centred on the possibility of a partnership being formed between Samuel Hordern (Jnr) and Jack. "I suggested to him (Sam Hordern Jnr) that as my years were terminating in the Police Force we should do something to promote Quarter Horses in Australia and I thought that he and I should buy JACKEROO when he went up for auction at Brisbane, and it was agreed that we would do that. We used the horse throughout New South Wales, I stood him two seasons at Robert Baldwin's place and we bred horses there. During this time there were increasing numbers of horses, part-bred and pure-bred throughout Australia and no Association was in existence."

Up until this point in time any of the horses that were by one of the first Quarter Horses were completely unrecorded and virtually lost to the breed.

Jack retired from the Police force at the age of thirty-seven and it was around 1962 when Jack and Sam Hordern (Jnr) finally became partners, buying a property at Castlereagh in Sydney, which they called HR Run, for the purpose of promoting the Quarter Horse. Jack noted "Over this period, more and more horses were being brought into the country by King Ranch. By the time the Association began to function there were nearly one thousand horses getting around with Quarter Horse breeding. The Association then decided to function and we had a day at King Ranch. They put a number of horses into the arena and we decided then that as Australia was a horse loving country we should try and breed a purebred horse that would be at least equal to or better than the American horse. We adopted almost in its entirety the rules as laid down by the Santa Gertrudis Breed of cattle, with the exception that we dropped one cross, they had three crosses to purebred, we decided on two crosses to purebred."

Jack travelled to America in 1964. "On an understanding with my partner at the time, Sam Hordern, we wanted to get firsthand knowledge of what Quarter Horses looked like in America, what they were doing with Quarter Horses and how they were training them."

It wasn't until another meeting held in 1964 that things started moving along in the formation of the Australian Quarter Horse Association. A small number of enthusiastic Quarter Horse devotees met at various times, with Peter Baillieu as Chairman.

Peter Baillieu, along with Sir Rupert Clarke, Mr. Sam Hordern (Jnr), Mr. Martin Lemann, Mr. Jack Reilly and Mr. and Mrs Baillieu Myer became the six permanent Council Members on 31st December, 1967. Peter Baillieu stood as President of the AQHA from 1964 to 1968.

"At one of our first meetings I was the mover of a motion and it was unanimously passed that when we decided to have the stud book recorded that it should be a true history of the arrival of the Quarter Horse into this country, and to my surprise when the first stud book was produced, a horse that had been bred-up in Australia to become the first purebred took precedence in number to three

of the first horses ever to be imported into the country. In my opinion, the four horses that were imported first should have been balloted to see who got number 1,2,3 and 4 but, unfortunately, one of the horses died - GOLD STANDARD - that horse was dead before the Association was to function at all. I remember later that a special motion had to be passed to allow horses dying – that horse – to be included in the Stud Book.”



By 1968, Jack was a permanent Councillor and the official Classifier of the AQHA. His position took him to Quarter Horse Studs all over the country and put him in touch with more owners and breeders than perhaps any other person in the Association. During his travels to America he learnt as much as possible about how to classify to the American standards, and in fact, the American Quarter Horse Association made classifiers and very experienced men available to him.

During the 1970's and 80's Jack travelled both nationally and internationally. He was classifying horses, travelling to America to purchase horses for Australian clients, instructing Polocrosse coaches and even testing the waters in other countries like the Philippines and Great Britain, as potential markets for the Australian Quarter Horse.

Jack travelled to the United States regularly to purchase horses on behalf of Australian clients. He brought more Quarter Horses into Australia than anyone else. He was instrumental in the importation of some of the many great bloodlines we have today. The more notable were:

BILL'S CROCKET Q-211 by HOLLYWOOD BILL

BOOTY MAN Q-416 by GO MAN GO

CHICK'S BOY IMAGE Q-420 by THREE CHICKS

MR BAR CHARGE Q-515 by MAGNOLIA BAR

BELINDA KING Q-528 by COMMANDER KING

HUNCH BID Q-591 by TINY CHARGER, purchased from MATLOCK ROSE

DOC'S MISTY MORN Q-594 by DOC BAR, reputed to be the best cutting mare ever imported into Australia and is the dam of MORN DECK.

PARS MUSIC BAR Q-745 by PAR THREE

CUTTERS LUCY Q-840 by CUTTER BILL, another great cutting mare

LION DECK Q-880 by JET DECK

THE AMBASSADOR Q-1838 by JET DECK

DOCS HILLBILLY Q-2016 by DOC BAR

ISLE B SAN Q-2840 by PEPPY SAN

SUPER HOLLY Q-3565 by SUPER HOLIDAY

HOLIDAY STREAK Q-3566 by SUPER HOLIDAY

PROFIT Q-12069 by IMPRESSIVE

SIR HOLIDAY Q-12597 by SIR LIKELY

Jack Reilly was acquainted with Kerry Packer. It seems that Jack must have known Kerry's father, Sir Frank Packer, as it has been reported that Jack knew Kerry as a six year old and taught him to ride.

Kerry Packer invited Jack to his property to discuss the purchase of some horses which would be suitable for his whole family to ride, including the children. Kerry ended the telephone conversation with "and don't bring me any Quarter Horses". For one reason or another Kerry couldn't understand Jack's enthusiasm for the Quarter Horse, but did acknowledge that Jack was a great judge of horse flesh and counted on Jack to find the appropriate horses for his family.

"During my visit to the property it was quite natural that Kerry and I should go riding together. As we negotiated some of the more difficult terrain, Kerry began to praise the exceptional qualities of the horse he was riding, saying how good natured, reliable and intelligent the horse was. He even fired a rifle shot out of the saddle. He's a fine horse, but I'm surprised to see you ride him, I said to Kerry. When he enquired why, I replied because he's a Quarter Horse. It was from that time on that Kerry began to show an interest in Quarter Horses."

In the weeks that followed, arrangements were made by the Hunter Pastoral Company, of which Kerry Packer was the Managing Director, for Jack to visit America on what was to be a substantial spending spree.

"I was looking for an improved type of Quarter Horse, a type which I believe will have much greater appeal to the Australian horsemen and horsewomen. This type of horse is the athlete; quite unlike the first Quarter Horses which were imported to Australia, with their thick, straight shoulders, short necks, heavily muscled and barrel ribbed.

When I selected the horse THE AMBASSADOR Q-1838, his owner was the daughter of the Chairman of Directors of the Howard Hughes Establishment. We were very fortunate in being able to purchase this horse, for about half price, on the understanding that he would be exported to Australia. She did not keep stallions for breeding and would not have sold THE AMBASSADOR as a stallion in America, but she was prepared to sell him to an overseas buyer.

THE AMBASSADOR was a six year old sprint stallion who had won \$40,000 in prize money. It was our intention to race him a couple of times for advertising purposes before entering him upon a breeding program."

In the earlier days of Jack Reilly's life, the 1930's, when he was still a young man, he recalls some memorable times. These times are not relevant to the Quarter Horse Association but definitely give an insight into Jack's personality and the way things used to be!

"I was the first man ever to ride a very famous bucking horse in this country called Rocky Ned and I rode that horse for 37 seconds on the Moree Showground. The first time this horse had ever been ridden in those days - that was long before rodeos came into existence. I would ride horses in Campdrafts long before the campdrafting rules, as we know them, took place. It was a completely different idea and we could just run the cattle about within the area and the judge would give you whatever points he reckoned.

The first time a rodeo was held in Sydney, that was the start of the rules of the Bushmans Carnival, and the rules of the rodeo as they know them today, I was out there in my official position as a member of the New South Wales Police Force.

Following on from that, I went to Moree and there was a bulldogging event on there and the late Wallace Munro was a Councillor of the R.A.S. I decided that I would have a go in the bulldogging event, at that time I was in fairly good condition. I was the Australasian Amateur Police heavy weight boxing champion and heavy weight wrestling champion, I was in really good nick. This big steer, and he was a big steer, was let out and I threw him in a very quick time. It was then that Mr. Munro insisted that I be picked to compete at the Sydney Royal when they were next running a rodeo.

At this particular time the R.A.S. brought out a number of Canadians and Americans and Canadian Indians. I was selected and sent to Merriwa to train with the Canadians and the Americans and they really did everything in their power to teach me to bulldog.

In December, 1992, at the age of eighty-eight, Jack Reilly passed away. Robert Baldwin officially represented the AQHA at Jack's funeral on 30th December, 1992 and had the honour of writing and delivering the following Eulogy.



"The man I knew in the late 1950's when I was twenty-eight years old was a Police Inspector in charge of the Police Disciplinary Divisions, Darlinghurst Police Station in Sydney. The man spent every available hour with horses:- A champion Rodeo contestant, a champion Polocrosse player, a champion Boxer, a champion Wrestler and a bushman who started to break in horses in Northern NSW and Queensland at the age of fourteen, and about everything else you named he could do.

Jack suffered fools badly, he hated people without initiative and drive and (to coin a phrase of the modern day) wimps. He always was generous with his praise to people who had a go, and consequently, you either loved or hated Jack.

I purchased my first Quarter Horse from the Reilly/Sam Hordern partnership, QUARTER STAFF, a great horse. In all, I only purchased two horses from Jack, they were both champions. All his life he had the ability to suit the horse to the person and I learnt to respect this great man.

It was his persistent drive to persuade the early importers of horses to form a registry. He never gave up, and this he eventually achieved. He really deserves the honour of "Mr Quarter Horse" and Honorary Live Governor.

I had great pleasure to be able to work with Jack breaking in young horses. An experience of which very few have had the pleasure. In my lifetime I have seen many of the greats, Jeffries, Wilton, Myer, Stanton and others and never have I had higher regard for any, on handling young horses, than that of Jack Reilly. I have based all my training of young horses upon his teaching and believe me, when Jack taught he took no prisoners, you took the pressure or else.

He leaves a lovely daughter Monica who I regard as a great friend. Jack had a very generous and soft side he did not project, but anyone watching him with a foal or child would see it.

Thank you Jack for your teachings, thank your family for the friendship and I would be proud one day when handling a young horse if someone would say "you are Jack Reilly's best student."

Foot note: This article is the result of information obtained from Mrs Joy Tyler, Mr. Robert Baldwin and a transcript of a 1981 interview conducted between Jack Reilly and Mr. J.H. Hawksley of the AQHA. The publisher has relied on the information supplied and takes no responsibility for any inaccuracies or omissions. The Quarter Horse News would like to thank those who contributed to this article.

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