

AGRA HALL OF FAME

Howard Ashton (Inducted 2008)

Years involved in industry: 60

Category: Administrator

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Honourary Secretary AGRC 1952 - 1971
- Secretary-Manager AGRC full time from 1971-1996
- Racing Operations Manager AGRC 1996-2000
- Brought AGRA Group Racing to the table late 80's

Howard Ashton was introduced to greyhounds by his father, a stalwart of the sport, at the age of 15 in 1952 when pilot dog racings was conducted at the Waterloo Corner track in South Australia.

Howard Ashton is very much a South Australian born in Norwood spending some time growing up in the country then back to the suburbs where he has remained to the current day.

Perhaps always destine to be involved in Greyhound racing he can't remember not being around Greyhounds as a young boy.

"My dad always had dogs for as long as I can remember we had them at home I started helping Dad when I was 8 or 9 it's hard to recall it's long time ago now. I enjoyed them from a young age and Dad was very dedicated to training and coursing them in particular back in the 40's and 50's." Ashton said.

The young Howard enjoyed the major and only two sports of that time cricket and Australian Rules playing junior football for North Adelaide.

He became honorary secretary of the Adelaide Greyhound Racing Club by default when the person holding the position didn't turn up one Saturday. The person in question was never to be seen again disappearing with the club funds.

"I just remained in the job wasn't much of start we had no money and had to start a fresh we were racing out at Waterloo Corner in those days I was about 15 or 16 at the time." Ashton said

He became Honorary Secretary of the AGRC at only 21 years of age when the club moved to Bolivar where it conducted mechanical lure racing without betting. In December 1971 Howard was appointed full time Secretary/Manager of the AGRC (Adelaide Greyhound Racing Club) and now had an assistant and maintenance man to help him keep the wheels rolling at Days Road, Angle Park. However, it still wasn't unusual to see Howard watering the track in preparation for Thursday night race meetings.

Howard saw, and presided over, many changes that occurred in the industry – one of the most significant being the legislation that enacted betting on the greyhound code which was the catalyst for the development of greyhound racing in South Australia.

Gaining Government approval to race legally as well as bet on Greyhounds was tough struggle with Howard at the forefront of the push.

“It was not an easy time we had quite a bit of opposition to us going ahead including the Anti-Tin Hare League, but we found a sympathetic politician a chap by the name of Dave McKee from Port Pirie and in time we got legislation passed in the parliament. At that time we were going to race were we were at Bolivar but the road authority widened the road and took part of our land so we sold it and set up at Days Road Angle Park. It was hard work raising funds getting to the stage of racing. I was appointed full time in 1971 and we raced at Angle Park on April 20th 1972 I’ll never forget it, it was a great night.” Ashton said.

We had a lot of help along the way from many sources, one in particular was Sandown Park a couple of us spent almost two months over there, as guests of the club. They looked after our accommodation and gave us invaluable advice and assistance with everything we needed to know to get going. The late Jack McKenna was a fantastic bloke his generosity and knowledge was second to none.



Howard is a Life member of the AGRC and has an upstairs room at Angle Park named in his honour a fitting tribute to someone who achieved so much. He was Secretary-Manager full time from 1971 until 1996 when he became Racing Operations Manager until he retired in 2000.

I asked Howard who he acknowledged as the best administrators he worked with.

“Brian Johnstone was a stand-out a great friend; he worked tirelessly for the club a wonderful man. Ken Carr was a great operator I very much enjoyed our time with AGRA over the years, I also had a lot of time for Ted Thompson from the NSW GBOTA and Ken Norquay both outstanding dog men.” Ashton said.

One important suggestion the late Ken Carr and Howard brought to the AGRA table and agenda was Group racing, after being passed in 1990 it has become such an important part of the national landscape.

Finally I asked Howard to name the best South Australian and National dogs he has seen race in his time?

"Bristol Sue was a brilliant dog can't remember a dog that chased harder, and her sister Ascapella Lass was an outstanding stayer, of a more modern time Just Bidy and Kate's a Scandal were both brilliant dogs. The best from other states Brett Lee set our track a light here, Sandi's Me Mum was a wonderful bitch as was Flying Amy.



Howard made a remarkable contribution to the greyhound industry. His loyalty and genuine interest in our sport were hallmarks of Howard's career with both the Adelaide Greyhound Racing Club and as Racing Operations Manager with SAGRA (now Greyhound Racing SA).

Howard has continued to follow greyhound racing since his retirement and is never far away from Angle Park, he has been close to the sport he has loved all his life and has never stopped working for its improvement. Only last week July 2011 Howard Ashton was

appointed to a new advisor board in South Australia and as always he is more than happy to add his invaluable knowledge and experience to help Greyhound Racing in his home state, a state he has already contributed so much of his time and energy too.