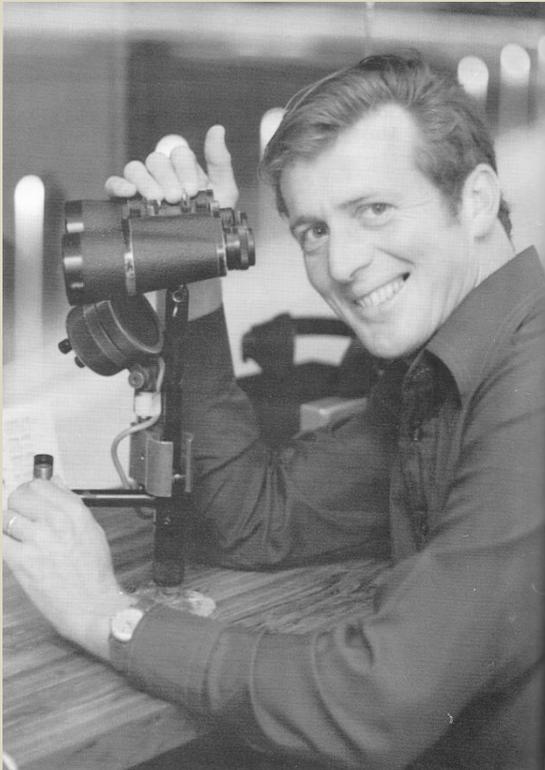


AGRA HALL OF FAME

Paul Ambrosoli (Inducted 2008)

Years involved in industry: 44

Category : Associate



Highly respected radio man the late Steve Cairns wrote in his salute to Australian race callers "London to a brick on" That Paul Ambrosoli is to calling greyhounds what Elvis Presley is to the rock and roll industry. It's an interesting analogy but the more you think about it, it's an acute one.

Paul Ambrosoli has been 'Mr Greyhound Racing' in New South Wales for as long as most care to remember, and the amazing skill and excitement he displays in describing the canine contests is a constant source of enjoyment to his fans Australia wide.

PA as he is affectingly known grew up in the North Shore area of Sydney and went to primary school at Lane Cove and from there he finished his education at Sydney Grammar School. Paul's dad was a tailor and influenced by his family, young Paul reluctantly entered the "rag trade" working as a salesman for a number of years but freely admits the day he left the clothing business was the happiest of his life.

At one period of time for about two years Paul was working 20 hour days, broadcasting, training greyhounds with wife Pat and working in the "rag trade". Not that his life has slowed down much even these days he always seems to have plenty on.

Paul's entry into broadcasting dates back to 1967 when he was working for a bookmaker at Lithgow greyhounds. It was the year that the Penrith Rugby League team was to be installed in

the First Division of the NSW competition, and the manager of 2KA Katoomba, John Conry was having the occasional wager with Paul's boss. Young Ambrosoli boldly suggested to the radio man that since Penrith was in his locality, he should consider broadcasting the games. After many negotiations with League Headquarters, 2KA were granted permission to cover Penrith's home games, for which Paul did the commentaries. After a couple of years, the coverage was extended to include all matches.

Paul had called a few greyhound races prior to this at Richmond and Goulburn (in fact he still remembers going to the dogs very early in life when he plonked 3 shillings on a slow conveyance named April Daisy, (which failed to bloom). It was through this experience that 2KA management asked him to take over the greyhound calls when Frank Kennedy left the station.

A casual position at 2KY followed, before his permanent appointment when 2KY commenced a complete racing coverage in 1971. Ambrosoli has been with the station ever since.

The Ambrosoli's can lay claim to being pioneers of the Londonderry area becoming one of the states most popular greyhound suburbs. When they moved there 30 years ago there were only three resident greyhound families living there, these days the number is countless.

Although Paul calls thoroughbred racing, he has been the course commentator at Hawkesbury and was back up to Ian Craig for almost 25 years. He has not called a lot of harness racing due to the fact they are usually race when the greyhounds are on and his loyalty has always been to that code.

Paul has enjoyed a long association with Ian Craig and there are some remarkable facts about these two men. Both Ian and Paul were educated at Sydney Grammar School. They both started their working careers as salesmen in the 'rag trade', as their fathers were involved in clothing businesses. Craig and Ambrosoli both made their calling debut at Richmond greyhounds before joining 2KA and low and behold, they have spent many years alongside one another at 2KY!

Ambrosoli has had many funny situations happen to him while on air at racetracks he remembers a couple for us. When 2KY changed its night-time format in February 1973, they sold the 7 to 10pm timeslot to the

Italian community. Consequently the only English spoken came from the mouths of the racecallers and the studio co-ordinator, Frank Fraumeni, when he crossed to the track. Unfortunately when the change took place, the management failed to advise Ambrosoli. "Imagine my amazement when at 7 O'clock a voice came on and said; "chinko, chinko", he chuckled.

I thought I had tuned into the wrong station. When I found out what had happened, I pondered the dilemma of the listening punter".

For more than seven years, 'Mama' Lena Gustin anchored the program, which brought in a large advertising revenue for the station and made her a well-known personality.

"Mama Lena was a remarkable character and a person for whom I had the greatest respect Paul said. "This lady's aura was such that if she walked on the podium with the Pope, I suspect her ardent followers would say; 'I know that's Mama Lena, but who's the bloke with her?'"

Ambrosoli will never forget the night at Dapto when he was overcome by a bout of the hiccups during the running of the final race, a 720-metre event.

"Now there are some things that are funny", remarked the studio announcer, Doug Melton, "but a racecaller with the hiccups takes the cake!"

Melton proceeded to tape the description before replaying it over and over during the final hour of his night show, roaring with hilarity on each occasion.

His favourite place to call was without doubt the old broadcast box in the back straight at Wentworth Park. "It was great to call there, one received a greater panorama of the race as it developed over the latter stages". He said.

He is also fond of calling from the Queen Elizabeth Stand at Randwick and used to really enjoy calling the distance races at Harold Park. "The 800 yard races at Harold Park were the best in the world, with the exception of Irish live hare coursing, I very much enjoy calling at the Wauchope track it is similar in layout to Harold Park". He said.

Like many of Ambrosoli's actives, he has been doing them for a long time, he's very proud of the fact that in November this year it will be his 29th anniversary of calling at the famous Coonamble Carnival. "It's very special we have 70 races in three days and have a great time." Likewise he has called every Canberra Cup since the club's inception.

Of course his talents aren't confined to just calling and Paul is in demand throughout the year as a very accomplished Master Of Ceremonies. He has officiated at almost every NSW Greyhound of the Year and hosts the biggest Melbourne Cup lunch-on in Sydney. Many in the sport have been privileged from time to time to marvel at Ambrosoli's incredible memory retention when he has held a large audience spellbound delivering his poetry recitals of the ***Dog Punters Lament***, the ***Owners Lament*** and ***the Dream Sequence***.

I asked Ambrosoli if he still got excited on the big nights. "I get excited on the small nights, and I'll never get tired of calling, where ever that may be. Every race is different to me and I've never loss the passion for greyhound racing." he said.



What about the best dogs he's seen over the past three decades? "I've no doubt Zoom Top was the most versatile. An incredible greyhound, I remember been down to my last five dollars at Harold Park one night and I took 11 to 2 in a top grade sprint race. She ran past crack sprinters to beat them, as she liked. The best sprinters I've seen would be Roman Earl and Brett Lee, with a special mention to Worth Doing; he did things in races I didn't think were possible. Another that comes to mind is Farraflash which gave the leaders impossible starts before flashing down the outside running rail at Harold Park to score," he said.

I asked Paul if he still followed rugby league with interest and the fortunes of which club? "I grew up supporting North Sydney of course and went to many games, but after calling Penrith for so long I follow their fortunes these days. I'm a weekend follower, I can't get to games but still take an interest." he said.

Ambrosoli has also over the years become famous for his advertising campaigns, he has had long associations with

De Costi Seafood, Debortoli Wines, Troy Labourites and of recent times Corinthian Doors, some in the sport have suggested he could sell ice to the Eskimo's.

These days Paul still enjoys his heavy schedule but would like more time to visit more of Australia, he's loved what he has seen so far and believes Australian's in a lot of cases don't realise the beauty we have on offer in this country.

Finely what about something we might not know about Paul Ambrosoli? "I don't think there's anything, I certainly can't play a musical instrument. Perhaps the water I've always loved anything to do with the water. I could sit and watch the ocean for hours it's always fascinated me." he concluded.

The voice of New South Wales greyhound racing has never sounded better, the excitement he puts into a maiden or an Easter Egg final has always been a constant source of enjoyment too many.

Ambrosoli retired from race calling in 2016 and is enjoying retirement with his wife Pat and extended family. He still gets along to the Greyhounds and is a welcome guest wherever that may be.

***** In the year 2000 Paul Ambrosoli was awarded the Australian Sports Medal for services to Greyhound Racing.

***** Some material used in this article originated in "London to a brick On" with the permission of author the late Steve Cairns.