

# AGRA HALL OF FAME

## Ray Herbert (Inducted 2008)

Years involved in industry: 40

Category: TRAINER

### NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Winning Trainer 1945 Melbourne Cup
- Winning Trainer 1929, 1939, 1948, 1949, 1953, 1954, 1955 Victorian Waterloo Cup
- Winning Trainer 1938, 1948, 1950 NSW Waterloo Cup
- Winning Trainer Coursing Age Classics - 7 times

Ray Herbert trained greyhounds from the mid 1920's until the 1960's and was widely acknowledged as the master trainer of his time. Described as a shy and gentle man, Herbert, of Diamond Creek, was a father of three and his eldest son Robin often handled his greyhounds at race meetings. Coursing was a huge part of greyhound racing in Herbert's era, and among his achievements were a record 10 Waterloo Cups, which was and still is the pinnacle race on the coursing calendar.



"Dad was comparable to the likes of Bart Cummings in horse racing. He knew how to get his dogs up for the big races and he had the gift of the gab", said Robin Herbert, who left school at 14 to help his dad with his greyhounds. "Dad won the Waterloo Cup many times in the days when it was a huge event. Thousands of people would go to the Waterloo Cup, which was held at a different country track each year. There were always a big number of bookmakers there. Dad also won the Melbourne Cup with a greyhound called Yarloop", Robin added.

Robin said before reflecting on his father's winning ways as a greyhound trainer. "He knew how to feed an animal. He'd make a broth out of lamb and would pour it over Weetbix. And he'd let his pups drink bucket loads of milk from his cows", Robin recalled.

Herbert's training methods involved a lot of walking of his dogs, as well as swimming and galloping them. "He always had about five or six race dogs at a time, but if you include pups and

stud dogs we probably had about 50 dogs on the property", Robin said. "We'd do a lot of walking along the nearby gravel roads in Diamond Creek. But on days when we felt weary we'd walk them behind the back of dad's Ute. There'd be three of us - dad, myself and dad's first cousin Claude Wilson, who worked for dad. Two of us would hold about six dogs each on a lead while the other would slowly drive the ute. When we did this it wasn't just the race dogs that came along, it was also the stud dogs, while the pups would gallop along behind us off lead."



The president of the Victoria Coursing Club (Dr. M. G. Seick) presenting the trophy to Mr. R. W. Herbert, whose senniters, Silver Chief and Ever Bright, divided the Star Produce Stakes at the Gosling field coursing meeting.

"Dad never over raced his dogs and he didn't work them every day, but we would take them to a paddock in Yan Yean about once a week and let them gallop as part of their training regime. We also had a big dam and would give the dogs a lot of swimming." Robin remembers life on the farm being particularly hectic. "Dad worked all the time. He was a quiet man who was very dedicated to his greyhounds and was very methodical. We raced his dogs as much as four times a week at different tracks across Victoria.

Despite learning so much about greyhound racing from his dad as a youngster, Robin got out of the sport at a relatively young age. "I got out of greyhound racing when I was 25, about a year before dad died and worked in the cattle industry. I've made a career out of farming, but in a way I regret not staying in greyhound racing. I guess the main reason I got out of it was because I knew from working with dad what a big commitment it was", he said.



Ray Herbert's youngest child Denis was only 10 when his father died, and any aspirations he may have had of following in his legendary father's greyhound training footsteps were put to pasture very early on. "I was suffering from a lot of serious allergies as a young kid including rashes and severe asthma, and it wasn't until I was six or seven years old that we realised it all came about because I was allergic to dog hair", Denis recalled with a laugh. "Dad had a pair of overalls he used to wear all the time while working on his dogs and he would leave them hanging up in the bathroom. But once we discovered my allergy to dog hair he stopped doing

that and I wasn't allowed to watch him work on his greyhounds anymore in case I got too close".

Denis has maintained a keen interest in his family's history, in particular the feats of his dad. "Dad wasn't aboriginal but after he died I discovered that he had named a lot of his greyhounds based on aboriginal words, such as Karween and a few others including his champion coursing dog Byamee, which means 'Godly'. I know this because I've kept his 1946 encyclopaedia, from which he got the names from", Denis said.

Ray Herbert passed away on April 20, 1963 aged 61; incidentally on Denis' 10th birthday. Ray's brothers Eric and Gordon were heavily involved in the administration of greyhound racing. Eric was one of the original members of the group that established 'Speed Coursing' at the Sandown racecourse in 1934, and was also President of National Coursing Association [NCA] and President of the Australia & New Zealand Greyhound Association [ANZGA]. Eric was also Chairman of Directors of what is now the Sandown Greyhound Racing Club. Gordon served as Chief Stipendiary Steward for 25 years with the NCA [1937-62] and also held a similar role for the Greyhound Racing Control Board [1955-62].



**RAY RANKED WITH ALL-TIME GREATS**

*Ray Herbert, one of the most successful breeders and trainers of greyhounds ever, died suddenly within a fortnight of the passing of his brother, Gordon.*

Ray first came into prominence in field coursing when in association with his surviving brother, Eric, they won successive Victorian Derbys, in 1927-28, with Orion and Some Laddie.

These were the forerunners of a long string of outstanding field and track greyhounds produced by the Herbert kennels.

Eric dropped out of active confederacy with Ray when he was appointed as judge of Victorian field coursing classes in 1944.

Ray set a record, equalled since only by Noel Banks, by winning seven Victorian Waterloo Cups with Silver Chief (1929), Cooney and



**RAY HERBERT** — photographed after winning the first of three Victorian Waterloo Cups with Byamee, in 1922.