

# AGRA Hall of Fame **GEORGE SCHOFIELD**

By Neil Brown

## **NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS:**

*Awarded 2006 Ken Carr Medal*

*GOTBA Executive 32 years*

*Greyhound Racing Control Board member 16 years*

*Melbourne Greyhound Racing Association Director 8 years*

*Ballarat GRC Committee 10 years*

*OAM in 2009 for services to Greyhound Racing*



In 1994 I interviewed George Schofield for article which was published in the famous Greyhound Weekly. The irrepressible greyhound stalwart had at that time devoted most of his life to Greyhound racing he was then a sprightly 76 year old.

George has always been a delight to talk with and I have enjoyed our chats over the years.

It is marvellous to know he is still sharp of mind and enjoying life even if he has slowed up a little at 97.

I think I speak for all that know him George has at all times been a thorough gentleman and one of our sport's really good blokes. He is more than a worthy inductee into the **AGRA Hall of Fame**.

I have decided to use parts of my original interview along with an update from recent chats I have had with George, here we trace the footsteps of one the legends of Greyhound Racing.

When it comes to our sport, George Schofield has done it all.

He has been an owner, trainer, breeder, studmaster, administrator, bookmaker and highly respected and much loved muscle manipulator. These days they call them canine chiropractors.

## **I asked George, what's was his home town and working backgrounds?**

**GEORGE SCHOFIELD:** I was born in Lavington in NSW, just outside Albury. My old dad had a farm near Wodonga and I did all my schooling in Wodonga. I lost my mother when I was nine and Dad reared six of us on his own. We moved to Coburg in 1935. I had done my time in Albury as a bread baker so I worked for the late Joe Marshall in Fawkner and Footscray. I used to train whippets for Joe after work and I had a fair bit of success at White City back in the thirties.

## **NB: What was your first involvement in greyhound racing?**

**GS:** I had dabbled a bit when we lived in Albury but I met Charlie Hayson in Coburg in 1936 and the first two dogs I handled for him both won at Napier Park — Coburg Laddie and Ikeay. I then trained with Vern Sweetham for a time before going into the army in 1941 and I didn't come out till 1945. I served mainly overseas. After the war I trained a couple of dogs for Brett Richards who had the Parkview Hotel in Bendigo and it just went on from there.

## **NB: Do you remember your first winner?**

**GS:** Yes, it was a little bitch called Petrine and not long after I had a good little dog called Knocky's Star, who won about 17 races.

## **NB: The art of muscle manipulation. How did you learn it?**

**GS:** The late Ron Bowen came across from Sydney and he used to do all his work at Tiny Miles'. I used to stay there till all hours of the morning just watching and talking to Ron and learning as much as I could. I used to watch quite a few. I remember Bill Conroy doing Fawn Nulla before he won the Australian Cup. I had great fingers from being a pastry cook. They were very sensitive and I reckon you just learnt from running your hands over your own dogs and it just developed as I got better.



## **NB: You had a long involvement in administration. What posts did you hold?**

**GS:** I was always very keen on the owners and trainers and I served on the GOTBA for 32 years. In 1966 I was asked to join the Control Board which I did and stayed a member for 16 years. I was removed in the finish when I wouldn't go along with certain parties but I stood for what I believed in and they got rid of me. Not long after I was asked to stand as a director at Olympic Park and

I was elected and remained there for eight years. The other long term position I held was when the owners and trainers took over the Ballarat track and I served there for 14 years. I am proud to be a life member of Ballarat and of the MGRA.

**From the GRV Website:** Schofield fought long and hard for the benefit of Victorian owners, trainers and breeders in an era in which the industry of today would struggle to comprehend. Schofield's son-in-law Dr. John Stephens, the former CEO of Greyhound Racing Victoria, explained that administering greyhound racing was particularly tough in George's era. "The administrators of yesteryear paved the way for the standards of today. In the old days there was something like 1500 members of the GOTBA and George was on the Executive. The GOTBA was like the union for greyhound racing", Dr. Stephens said.

*“Increases in prize money was not a given, nor were things like racing vests and kennel blocks that were of a today’s standard. George fought hard for a lot of those sorts of things as well as open box draws which for years were conducted by the race clubs. The administrators worked extremely hard to put systems in place that could guarantee the integrity of the sport”, Dr. Stephens added.*

*Schofield’s time as a committeeman at the Ballarat Greyhound Racing Club was also critical as he worked with the GOTBA to save the club from extinction.*

**NB: Name the best greyhounds you have trained and bred?**

**GS:** I had plenty of good dogs going way back. Knocky’s Star was great and then I had Rich Blend who I bought from Arthur Richardson, I then bought Tebessa and of course Shan’s View, for which I might add I paid the unreal price of 2000 pounds (this was a time when 800 pounds bought you a house). That took a bit of explaining to the wife, I can tell you, but it turned out well in the finish when he went to stud.

*From GRV Website: Shan’s View was an odds on favourite in the 1960 Australian Cup final, but tragically broke down, ending his career. With four kids aged six and under, it is fair to say that the injury left George’s late wife Marie relatively unimpressed with her husband’s investment. However, Schofield then put Shan’s View to stud, and he later became a champion sire of his day.*



**NB: You’ve always had a large family involvement George, would I be right in saying that?**

**GS:** Yes the family commitment has been great, my wife was very understanding about the amount of time I spent at meetings. At one time we had 34 brood bitches and eight stud dogs with pups everywhere. We sold them all over the world. The three boys helped and of course Maureen still is terrific. She worked very hard around the place from a very young age. If it had not been for the wife and kids I would never have been able to manage.

**NB: What was your favorite track to race on?**

**GS:** Napier Park down the straight, was my favorite. The circle there was good as well. Any track is good if you are getting winners.

**NB: The trainers you’ve most admired over the years?**

**GS:** There’s been many. I would say Ned Bryant, Alan Roberts was a marvel, Bill Conroy was very good, Paul Hogan, Jack Hayes, Harry Nugent and Dougie and Gordon Harwood. There is an equally as good a crop of trainers of the recent two decades. Graeme Bate, Jason Thompson, Kel Greenough, Darren McDonald, the Dailly’s, Tony Brett there’s been plenty of top trainers, too many to remember.

**NB: The best sprinter and stayer you’ve seen?**

**GS:** Rookie Rebel was brilliant and Brett Lee, this dog racing now Fernando Bale looks as good as any. While Bold Trease would stand on his own as a stayer — four Sandown Cups, you can’t beat that. You can’t leave out Lizrene and Zoom Top as well, great dogs.



**NB: What makes a champion stud dog George? You had one of the best in Shan's View.**

**GS:** You need a strong dam line, an unbroken line. You can't have a dog that has been one out in a litter. Temperament is also very important, a dog you can take to the track who knows where it is and one you can lead with a thread of cotton away from the track.

**NB: What about a brood bitch? What do you look for?**

**GS:** Again a strong dam line, conformation and a wide pelvis so they have no trouble whelping. I think bitches who have been good stayers have proven the best over the years.

**NB: What do you think is the most important aspect of training?**

**GS:** The basics — good feeding, a good warm bed and you must be very regular, they are very much creatures of habit. I always say the difference between a good trainer and an average trainer is attention to the little things. I got told that 80 years ago in Albury and it still stands up today.



**NB: Besides greyhounds, what did you enjoy doing the most?**

**GS:** No risk, I can answer that straight away. Getting crippled dogs going again. The satisfaction and sense of achievement is all I'll ever wanted. I got a lot of publicity through the TV shows, Don Burke and so forth, 'Talk To The Animals' it was fantastic, I liked doing it the best. People appreciated it so much.

**NB: George, you were one of the first people to supply greyhounds to America, how did that come about?**

**GS:** I had an American, Ed Moses, stay with me for six weeks and that led to us sending him dogs to his kennels in Florida where he had a lot of success with both racing and stud dogs. That was in the early seventies.

**NB: You've treated all kinds of injuries over the years, are dogs sounder today than they used to be?**

**GS:** Dogs in the old days raced with plenty of injuries, sprung toes and all sorts of things. It had a lot to do with the tracks. They're much better looked after today so injuries are fewer, no doubt about it.

***As I stated at the top of this tribute during his lifetime George has been an owner, trainer, breeder, rearer, stud master, chiropractor and administrator. He was also a bookmaker at the Sandown, Ballarat and North Melbourne [MGRA] clubs when he returned from four years of war service in 1945.***

***During his time George has also worked with the Victorian Police Dog Squad, the Australian Customs Drug Detector Dog unit, the Office of Corrections Dog Squad and with Dogs from the Security & Emergency Services Group. To think that someone who has had such an impact on the canine world and on greyhound racing in particular is still actively contributing to the sport today is as fitting as it is staggering.***

***He was also inducted into the Victorian Hall of Fame as a pioneer with seven others in 2007. Plus he won the 2006 Ken Carr Medal, and was acknowledged on a National scale with the Order of Australian Medal he received in 2009.***

***It is more than fitting he becomes part of the AGRA Hall of Fame in 2015.***