

## 2014 MEDAL OF ESTEEM

### ROBIN YATES #34421

The Australian Quarter Horse Association honours ROBIN YATES with a Medal of Esteem.

Robin was born and raised in inner Sydney at a time when horses were still used throughout the metropolitan area for deliveries of milk, ice, bread and vegetables. Being near Randwick, Thoroughbred horses were prevalent, and, prior to World War II, with 6 tracks in the Sydney area, for a horse loving young man there were many opportunities to get close to them.



Robin attended Sydney Grammar, and in the latter part of his schooling attended art school in the evenings four nights a week. After leaving school, work as a commercial artist was a short lived career as horses had become his passion. Centennial Park was a popular venue for people who owned or hired a horse on the weekends and Robin spent a lot of time there before getting his first job in the thoroughbred business with a breaker named Jack Sharpe. About a year later, he was employed by the well-known breaker, Harry Meyer.

Over the more than 10 years that he spent in Randwick, his situation changed with Harry to become a partnership until Harry moved away from Sydney. His time was spent on Randwick Race track breaking in thoroughbreds and preparing them for their racing careers. While working with thoroughbreds, he prepared horses for trainers such as Maurice McCarten (Leading Racehorse trainer for 10 years), T. J. Smith, Jack Green, Fred Allsop and Neville Begg.



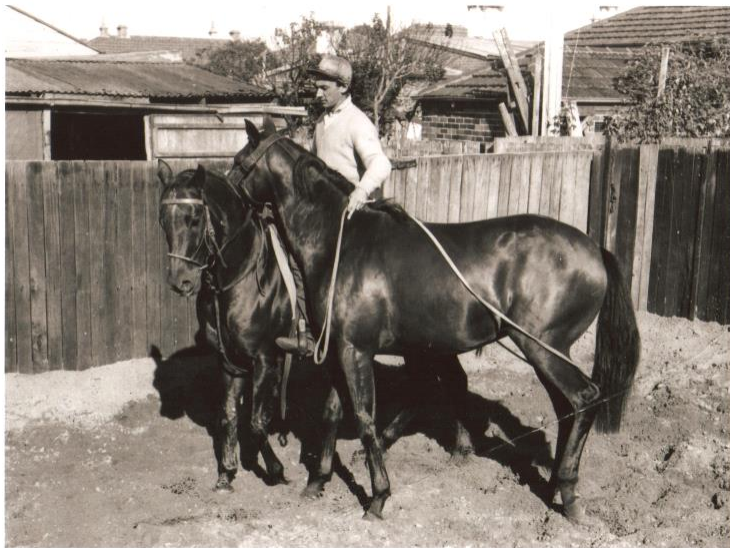
In his spare time, he was a spare rider in the ARRA (now APRA) rodeo circuit, and had some considerable successes. He had many major wins including the Myrtleford Golden Spurs saddle bronc ride twice, and the much coveted Warwick bronc ride as well as the silver spurs for the highest scoring ride of the rodeo.

Robin had always read a lot of American Western Horseman and Rodeo magazines (Rodeo being his other love) and these had featured articles on performance, breeding and bloodlines of Quarter Horses which really peaked his interest in this breed of horse.

It was during Robin's time at Randwick that he saw his first Quarter Horses.

King Ranch imported the first Quarter Horses to Australia in 1954, and they were quarantined at the Livestock Transport stables in Randwick – MESCAL, GOLD STANDARD, JACKAROO and VAQUERO. The four young stallions were in the stables for 30 days, and were unbroken yet so quiet and content. “I just had to slip aboard one of them bareback to see what they were like –so I did” he comments. His first test was MESCAL, who stood there without a bridle or halter, turned back to look at me, and then responded to my leg aids and moved around the yard at a walk – no problem. “This was not what I was used to with the Thoroughbreds”.

A friendship with Jack Reilly (AQHA Hall of Fame inductee), who had a great admiration for the breed, led to a great number of the early crossbred Quarter Horses being broken in and educated by Robin. Many of the flighty Thoroughbreds were pulled into gear and quietened using some of the earliest Quarter Horses in Australia – a good strong horn on the saddle and the strength and calmness of the Quarter Horse helped immensely with Robin’s job.




During this time as the Thoroughbred work was in a large part seasonal, Robin went to the Hunter Valley to break and train, as well as western NSW. He also spent a lot of his off time learning the art of saddlery from Les Hambly and Harry Smith.

In 1959, he travelled with three other Australians as an Australian Rodeo team to the USA. Spending a year on the circuit, and with a little success, he had a great time. Qualifying to ride on the Bucking horse of the Year “Fashion Plate” at Madison Square Gardens in

New York City was a highlight of this trip.

Bringing home a Turtle brand regulation approved bronc saddle, a bull-hide roping tree, and a trophy roping saddle for winning a Wild Horse Race in Nemo, South Dakota, Robin had the intent to change the Australian Rodeo rules so that they were identical to those of the PRCA, and to change the equipment used in Australia so that it matched that of the PRCA in the USA. He succeeded in these endeavours. His other great aim was to build and show people how to use good western saddles.



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**AUSTRALIA'S LEADER IN CUSTOM-MADE WESTERN SADDLERY SINCE 1960**

During the next 10 years, Robin worked on showing people the values of the Quarter Horse, with emphasis on their great qualities of athleticism, calmness, attractive conformation, and all round use. In 1960, Robin started his saddlery business and worked from his shop in Sans Souci. He was a well-known and popular supplier of Western Horse equipment for a great many years, making custom saddles and tack. Indeed, his popularity as a saddle maker forced him to quit horse-breaking and concentrate on his custom saddlery business. He produced many trophy saddles for the ARRA and various western breed Associations, and donated a lot of saddles and other trophies to various events. He was, for a long time, the man to go to for all western equipment, show or work, as well as what to wear. He supplied it all, and was an authority on what you would need to have. This was really opportune in an era when people were feeling their way to get towards being professional and current – a hard call in the era pre internet, and email etc, and when posted items took months to get here, and when there was not many places to get western attire or equipment.

One of his successes was getting Quarter Horse classes included in agricultural shows. He also ran saddle bronc schools at Helensburgh and did regular bronc instruction for two years; ran saddle making schools in Sydney for some years; conducted horse breaking and training schools throughout the Rural Studies section of NSW TAFE for over 10 years; and wrote two books on saddle making – one a basic instruction and the other an advanced instruction.

His massive involvement in the promotion of the Quarter Horse started to snowball. In 1972, Robin and his wife Pauline were instrumental in the formation of the County of Cumberland QHA, along with other members of the committee who included Sunny Scott (Johnson), Ken Cowley, Arthur Flynn, Sam Hordern, Ken Binns, and Clive Robins, and they ran two shows in Penrith in 1972, and 1973. It was then decided to move to Bossley Park to the BBM Arena which was built by the very generous Bob Crosby, as

there was more room. They ran their horse shows at this great venue (for the time) and the classes also included some sprint races. CCQHA was about showcasing every facet of the Quarter Horse, which included Sprint Racing, and as such, they were one of the earliest all round promoters of the Quarter Horse. Robin also tried to cater to the evolution of Western events, and in 1979, the CCQHA ran a one off Quarter Horse World magazine Reined Cowhorse Show, and a straight up Western Pleasure Horse Show.

1974 also saw the County of Cumberland Quarter Horse Association (of which Robin was a major influence) run an indoor rodeo and Quarter Horse show. Robin was the arena director and program manager, remembering that this was a big gamble in that this was unknown territory as it was the first indoor rodeo and horse show held in Australia. The question of how to fund the Rodeo and show was answered by the running of a highly publicized Quarter Horse Sale at the Chevron Hilton Hotel in the middle of Sydney. This highly publicized event was attended by Sydney's elite, and the importance of this sale to the fledgling Quarter Horse industry was highlighted by the attendance of the then American QHA President, Hugh Pelz.



*Robin Yates with his gelding, King Ranch Hanover.*

Seeing that Youth were so important and could get so much benefit from involvement with the Quarter Horse, Robin and his wife Pauline, through the CCQHA got a major sponsor, Calf Manna, and in 1979 ran the first Youth Challenge and Junior Encouragement Show. Junior Encouragement was for Youths 12 and under, and the Challenge for 13 to 18 years, with prizes including silver services, trophy buckles and saddles. This was a mammoth success with over 80 Youth competing! This event attracted entries from the three eastern states as well as New Zealand. These Youth Challenge shows continued to be held in 1980, 1981. Many of our top trainers and competitors today came through these shows, some having their first taste of Quarter Horses here – Peter Rogan, Neil Roger, and Eddie and Sean Flynn (now very successful cutting trainers in the US), April Hanby, Kim McTaggart, Peter Gray, and Warwick Schiller to name a few.





*The 1981 Youth Challenge contestants, 13 to 18 years, with Robin standing in the center.*

From 1976 to 1980, the CCQHA also ran the Champion of Champions shows. To put this into perspective, these were the biggest shows in the Nation. A win at one of these Champion of Champions made you just

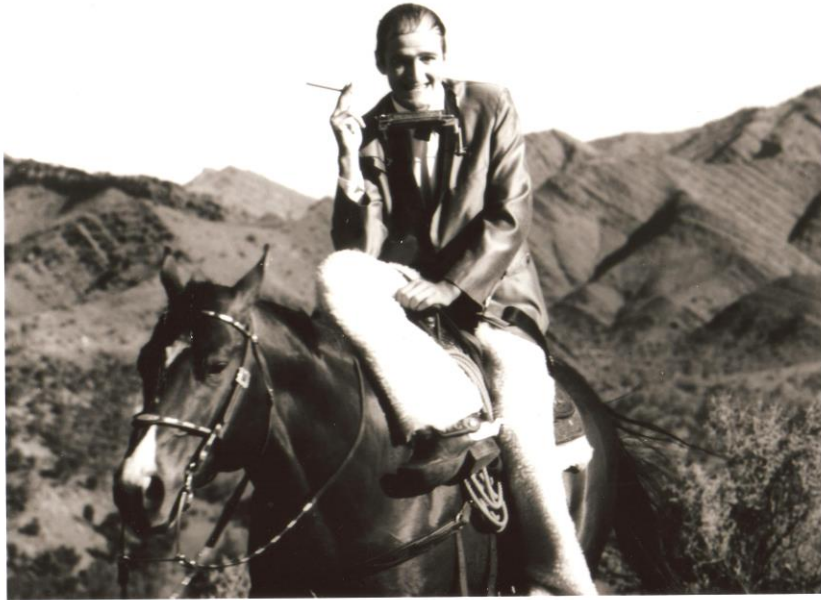
that – a Champion. Contestants travelled from across Australia to attend and these were the showcase for the trainers and breeders to show their abilities, get clients, and generally network. Many people fine-tuned their craft with what they learned at these shows. One of these early competitors and pioneers in the fledgling Quarter Horse business was Graham (Dodge) Lamey. When asked about the County of Cumberland shows, he said that these were the shows that started the horse scene as we know it, and the place many trainers used as their market place, and created opportunities for up and coming trainers and horses. For that time, it was a very professional place to exhibit, and really started that professional outlook towards training and horse showing. Trainers like Phil and Taureta Webb, the Loughers, Fred Johnson, Merve Lamey, Joe Davis, Denise Cooper (Campey), and exhibitors such as Trish Winchcombe (Lamey), Sunny Johnson, Ricky Glen, Sarah Roger (Welk), and so many more were regulars at the CCQHA shows.

Moving to Sydney Showground as a venue in 1982, Robin continued to run western performance shows, which included the Sires' Classic Futurities, a yearling halter and two year old Pleasure Futurity set that was only open to horses by the prepaid nominated sires. These futurities proved a great success and were judge by three judges for each class. These shows ran until 1988, when Robin retired.

During all this time, Robin did not let his artistic skills lapse. He wrote a huge number of articles for various western magazines, as well as doing cartoons for various magazines, including in the USA.

Another promotion that Robin was involved in these early years was a cigarette commercial. 'Norman Gunston' (Garry McDonald) was the human star, but Neville Fennell's imported Quarter Horse stallion WARNING FLAG Q-200 was the equine hero. This took a couple of days to film, and although the cigarette brand was not successful, it was great promo for the Quarter Horse. Robin was the horse manager for WARNING FLAG for the shoot. This included having the cameras run on tracks close to the horse, and the temperament of the horse was outstanding as Norman lounged there with his legs on one side of the horse espousing the qualities of cigarettes! This ad was shown both on TV and in movie theatres for a period of time. He was also involved in other commercials – cigarette commercial with

Tony Barber; Baileys Whiskey ad; a Luxaflex commercial with him bronc riding; and an ad for NSW Tourist Bureau with Stuart Wagstaff.

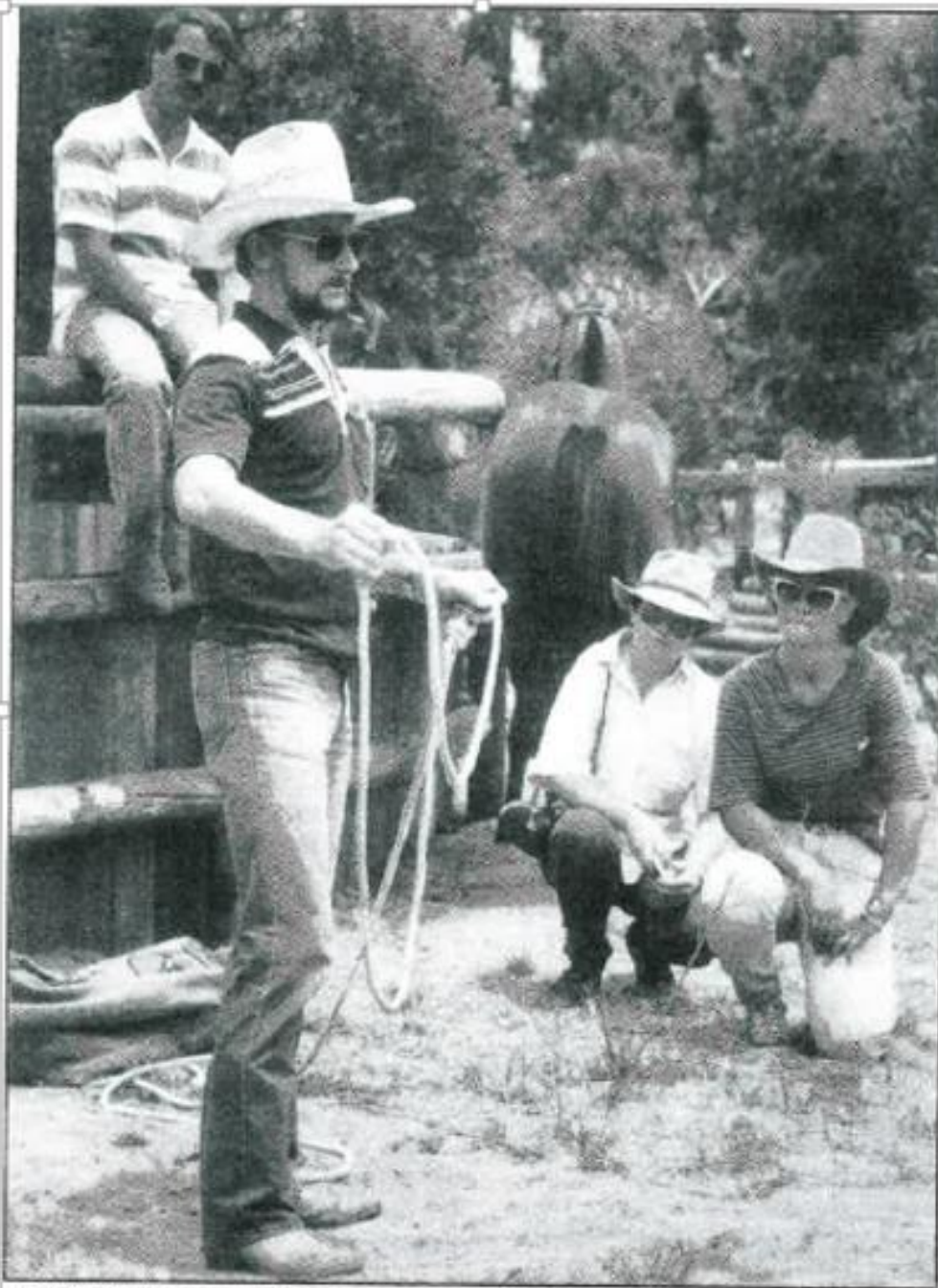


*WARNING FLAG Q-200 AND 'NORMAN GUNSTON' (GARRY MCDONALD)*

Robin is a life member of the Australian Professional Rodeo Riders Association (and served on the Board of Directors for 10 years); the American QHA, the AQHA and the Australian Stockmans' Hall of Fame. He has owned the horses CUTTER SUE R1-327; TYRONE ROWDY R1-375; CLOVER OSCAR R1-230; KING RANCH FLUTE R2-407; KING RANCH HANOVER R1-2898; KING RANCH INSPECTOR R2-926; KING RANCH JOVE R1-14608; and imported the mares KAWEAH OWYHEE Q-772 and LADY LEO WESS Q-771, as well as the stallion TOM'S BID Q-374. His son Duane was a great Youth competitor, winning many championships and events on his horses KING RANCH FLUTE, CLOVER OSCAR, and KING RANCH HANOVER, before Duane decided he did not want to be involved with horses anymore. He was All Round High Point Youth for Australia for three years in AQHA.

There is no doubt that Robin Yates has spent a huge amount of his adult life in the active and very visual promotion of the Quarter Horse, both through articles and through running major events to showcase this great breed of horse. In these formative years of the AQHA, he was a dynamic force in moving towards a professional manner of showing and training in the Western Scene. He has never ceased to espouse the outstanding virtues of the Quarter Horse and it is clear to see, when talking to him, that he has an undying enthusiasm for this great horse, and his dedication and drive are commendable. In a time when the entire western scene was new and alien, he made it achievable and believable through sheer determination and drive. He maintains an interest in the AQHA and its horse shows, although being retired from the horse scene since 1989. He promoted Quarter Horses and the western industry very visibly through many articles in major publications, including the promotion of the Chevron Sale in the Australian Women's Weekly which showed Australia the availability of a good looking horse with a

gentle temperament.



● ROBIN Yates talking about rope work to students (from left) Peter Bismeyer, of Wanneroo, Anne McLennan, of Mount House Station, and Vicki Hull, of Forrestdale. **Picture — Kevin Davidson.**

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