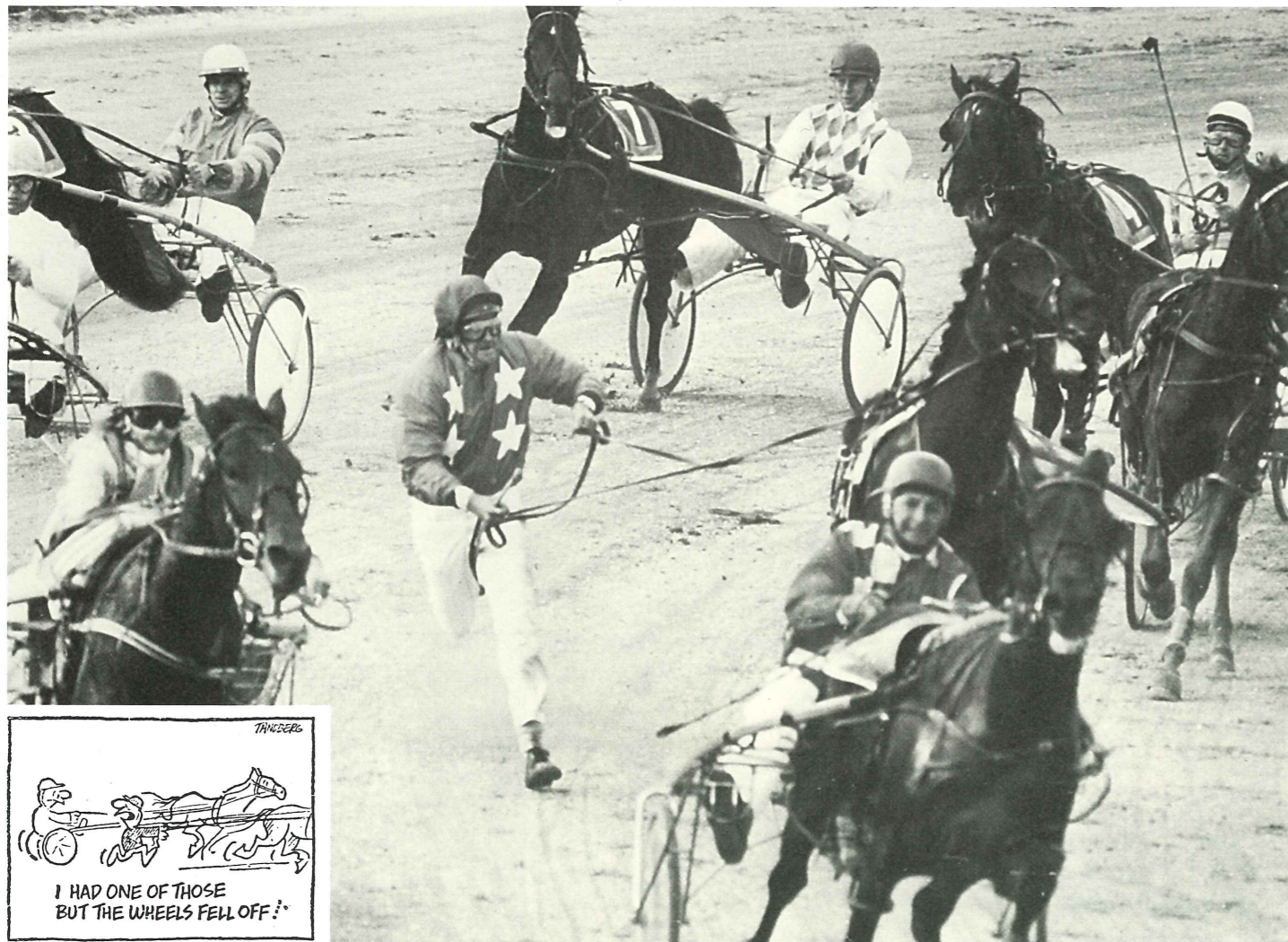


# Kevin's Holding The Breeding Reins

Kevin Newbound has been generally acknowledged as Australia's foremost commercial breeder of Standardbreds for three decades and is proud of the Champions that Forest Lodge Standardbreds have produced but also of all the racetrack stars that have a Forest Lodge stallion or mare in their pedigree. The fascination with the breeding game continues for Kevin, however, his interest is keep burning bright by his partnership with his son Brendan in not only breeding by breaking him and handling the horses at the coalface. Harness Racing International's Andrew McNair spent a day with him and discovered not only Kevin Newbound the breeder, but also Kevin Newbound the trainer, Kevin Newbound the enthusiastic supporter of the trotter and Kevin Newbound the sales company executive.



Stop the race, I want to get on!

So screamed the headline in the Melbourne Age on Wednesday, May 21, 1975, a headline which accompanied a startling series of photographs taken by The Age photographer Bruce Postle that subsequently won an Australian Sports Photograph of the Year Award. Famed cartoonist Ron Tandberg was also captivated by the photo shoot and his humorous depiction of events is also reproduced above.

Interviewed after the Kilmore event where he had been tipped from the sulky of his two-year-old Sengren Suru Kevin Newbound said, "I didn't think my legs could go so fast. Obviously they couldn't because I went down again. I tried to run along beside him but he was going too fast. My legs went from under me and I was dragged along the ground."

He continued the post race interview saying, "You don't get much time to think. It happens so quickly your reflexes take over. I realized there were not many horses close behind me so I thought I'd try to pull him up. I certainly wasn't going to let go as he's a brother to Court Jester you know, so I didn't want him to get away."

The previous Saturday Court Jester had brilliantly won the Victoria Trotters Derby and both he and Sengren Suru (Japanese for Proclaim, the dam of both horses) were bred by Kevin at Forest Lodge Stud.

Kevin suffered slight bruising to his elbows and knees and a gravel rash on one arm and consummately summed up the experience by stating the bleeding obvious, "I'm a bit sore but I suppose I'm pretty lucky when you think of what might have happened."

HRI: Let's start with your early years as a breeder at Chiltern.

KN: Leo and I decided to see if we could breed horses commercially in the early sixties. It started with a couple of broodmares and a stallion imported by Noel Simpson called Honest Time, then we followed up with Trainer Hanover who in his first year set a record for individual two-year-old winners, which was a significant achievement at the time. From there we purchased Lucia's First with Gay Acres insider her and Leo gets a lot of credit for this selection. It was a good old family that Leo knew well as he traveled regularly up Leeton way and rarely missed a M.I.A. Breeders Plate which was always a major meeting.

It was also where he discovered how good a sire Gay Reveler was. Standing up in the Riverina he did not receive huge patronage yet in the one crop that contained Breeders Plate winner High Power there were just 13 foals and of these eleven won races and about six of them were metropolitan winners. Leo was especially keen to get him and he significantly boosted our broodmares and racing stock. I cannot emphasize how important he was for both us and the industry.

HRI: Was Gay Reveler unusual for a sire at that time in that he did have the propensity to leave natural early speed?

KN: Yes. Interestingly he was an unbroken horse when he came to Australia. Noel Simpson bought him to break him in over here and he fully intended to race him. One of Noel's client studs lost a stallion suddenly and asked Noel what he had available. Noel said he had only an unbroken two-year-old (Gay Reveler) and the studmaster said "I'll take him" and so he went straight to stud. A few years later he went to stand in the Leeton area and then he saw his days out at our place.

HRI: What are some of the characteristics of the descendants of Lucia's Maid?

KN: The ability of the mares to produce winners by virtually any sire and multiple top metropolitan types which just went on and on. Gay Reveler suited the line in particular. Gay Debutant, Gay Acres and Mozambique in essence started their own dynasties. At the same time that he purchased Lucia's Maid, astute horseman Bernie Kelly bought her full sister Illinois from the Allens. The Illinois breed is equally strong today, with Bernie now accessing the best stallions available for his mares. Albert Kelly is an especially good horse. The mares all seemed to have a long, loping walk, ideal for the pacing gait. This is not so noticeable now with changes in the breed, but in earlier times it was.

HRI: You and Leo were noted for breaking in and training young stock, a tradition that continues with your son Brendan. How much did this help you as a breeder - did you become more aware of characteristics of progeny or of what you were trying to breed?

KN: I think this would be helpful to anyone. Back in the early days there more horsemen around and we all used horses and carts for transportation, so it was easier to be a horseman and develop horsemanship.

It is a great pity today that many young people do not have the opportunities to develop in this way. So many of the top reinsmen are from Harness Racing families and gain horsemanship from this over time. Just think of the names.

We kept fillies, broke them in and raced a few. If we had a mare we thought a bit of but the yearlings we sold were disappointing we would break in and try a few ourselves just to make sure she wasn't any good. And often that didn't appear to be the case!

HRI: You are renowned for your broodmare band at Forest Lodge. Let's look at your selection process. Raced versus unraced mares?

KN: No preference or prejudice other than in the commercial sense for the first couple of foals. If you had two full sisters, an Oaks winner and



Classic Garry

an unraced mare, in my mind the genes are there and I wouldn't hesitate to breed an unraced mare I liked, even if she couldn't run, provided she was from a top family.

HRI: Do you pay any mind to the "golden cross" theory when selecting a broodmare?

KN: Well, people told me I was mad when I announced I was bringing Classic Garry back from America. The first advertisement for him as a sire said: "Ideal outcross for Meadow Skipper line mares". That was his purpose for coming back, no sentiment at all. And that was where he excelled.

HRI: So you think there is a need for particular crosses, especially outcrosses?

KN: Initially we were always outcross breeders. I am basically an outcross breeder but it is almost an impossibility these days to remain so. To me if you can put some outcross in your family I would rather do that than breeding too close.

HRI: Why do some families become "dead" families? A look at any yearling sales catalogue shows many wonderful mares whose daughters produce very little for several generations.

KN: There are weak branches in most of the top families for a start. I guess if you analyse it most of these weak branches didn't have prominent, successful sires. So many unproven first season sires fail or don't turn out and this can happen for several generations. Any top family that is really taken care of with really successful sires and the opportunity for offspring to race will survive and prosper. Getting yearlings into the right hands is more important today than ever before.

HRI: You are well respected for your "eye". Do you favour a particular type of broodmare?

KN: We all like an outstanding individual, but this does not preclude a lesser type from becoming an outstanding producer. In any aspect of breeding you want to produce a nice individual which has presence, especially in the sale ring.

You don't set out to breed two small horses to each other, although some families might have a tendency to be small anyway. Similarly if you breed two horses with the same conformation faults.

You must always look at particular horses, treat them as individuals and know what you are trying to do. Is the mare true to her family?



Gay Acres

What does her sire typically throw? Then make a decision.

*HRI: Do you like broodmare sires when looking to add to your breeding stock?*

KN: Very, very strong on this point. My first criteria is that the sire was a successful sire of racehorses because I am definite that they produce the best broodmares. Gay Reveler and Windshield Wiper are two classic examples. Mind you nothing would stop me from buying a mare by a sire who did not fire if the bottom line was right.

*HRI: Would you stay away from a known colt sire such as Deep Adios?*

KN: He is the classic example. He didn't sire good fillies and he didn't sire great broodmares.

*HRI: How do you line up sires such as Stoneridge Scooter, Embrace Me and OK Bye who were all leading sires of juveniles, in fact record breakers, in their time as broodmare sire potential?*

KN: Well none of them saw out their time at their initial stud farm. They were therefore not top sires as such but of course they had access to the best mares and as I have said, this would not deter me from buying a mare by any of them if the bottom line of the pedigree was strong. Maternal families are the key and they need good sires to keep them strong.

*HRI: Do you have a wide range of broodmare sires represented in your band?*

KN: We have a selection of mares by leading sires, especially those who sired good race fillies out of strong, producing maternal families.

*HRI: Go through some of the standouts you have bred.*

KN: Court Jester, Rip Van Winkle (technically although we did not plan the mating), Special Garry, Garry Rowan, Garry's Advice, Jotto, Honest Reward, Classic Garry. You know both Special Garry and Garry's Advice were passed in, so we brought them home, got hem going and sold them ready to race. All of the above were Classic type horses.

*HRI: Both vendors and buyers like to see Classic Black Type on a page. Do we have enough such races?*

KN: Any black type race is important. These are the races you breed to win, they are ultra important. We still see two minutes as an acceptable yardstick, which it isn't, really in this day and age. With the races we can claim as group races we do okay.

But just say you have a mare with six winners from seven foals but no black type, she is not rated highly and this makes it hard for the breeder because they can't all be black type horses.

*HRI: Sires Stake racing. Victoria initiated Sires Stake racing in Australia and Tasmania has assimilated with Victoria. What are your thoughts for the future?*

KN: Sires Stake racing was the initial idea of Bernie Ahern because he was a friend of Jack Baugh. About six of us were approached by Bernie to put up the money to bring Jack out to Australia. The Trotting Control Board asked to be involved once Jack was here. We were trying to lift Victoria to a standard above everyone else and both the sire and mare were to be domiciled in Victoria. You couldn't buy your way into Sires Stake and I believe the scheme has certainly had the desired effect.

*HRI: That was then, this is now.*

KN: Sires Stake racing is nothing like it was. It has been opened right up and Victoria would be regarded as the premier racing State. Futurities still provide a huge amount of money for juvenile racing with breeders contributing and working their own business according to what the rules say.

*HRI: With broodmare numbers dropping perceptibly over the years does this have an impact of the sustainability of Sires Stakes?*

KN: Most certainly. Harness Racing Victoria has addressed these concerns with a new Breeders Bonus of 7.5% cash payment of the advertising stakemoney for Group races anywhere in Australia.

*HRI: The Australasian Breeders Crown. You were involved in its inception. What is its impact now.*

KN: It was certainly established itself as a prestigious series but as we both know there are some faults in there that need to be eradicated very, very quickly e.g. small fields, too many venues. Futurity racing has definitely got its place in a successful Harness Racing industry, but I do not favour closed futurities. In other words I don't like or believe in Sales races because it is too prohibitive, it not inclusive.

*HRI: Some of the sires you have managed which have had an impact. The most obvious one to start with is Windshield Wiper.*

KN: With Alan Galloway starting a commercial venture we could see that we needed a better credentialled American sire than those we had been getting. We did our own research and Windshield Wiper was our target, but if he didn't get him we would have acquired a sire of similar stature.

Windshield Wiper was bought knowing that we were not in a position to buy him outright, so we paid a deposit and set out to syndicate him, which we did. Of the major shareholders, I don't think there would be one person who wasn't satisfied with everything to do with the syndication.

*HRI: Was Meadow Skipper the key to his selection or was it his racing performance?*

KN: Meadow Skipper basically. At that time Meadow Skipper was the hottest sire line and the first horses you were looking at were Meadow Skippers. Windshield Wiper was also a superior racehorse. In hindsight Windshield Wiper will be judged as a great improver of the breed in Australia and already his mares and fillies have been terrific producers, especially of early speed.

*HRI: The Classic Garry story is well documented but it was a big gamble for a colonial bred with a diminishing sire line to be given a chance commercially.*

KN: Garry Rowan had been a wonderful sire to us and we knew what he could do. Classic Garry himself had all the criteria to be given his opportunity. He had impressive speed and racetrack performance, very good conformation and gait.

Classic Garry fulfilled all of these criteria, plus he gave us an outcross possibility because of the number of Meadow Skipper line stallions in Australia. Morley Park and Alabar managed him very well and we retained lifetime breeding rights in him.

**HRI: His broodmares are already becoming prominent.**

KN: The way things are shaping up at the moment he will be successful. It must be remembered that it took people a while to understand the Classic Garrys, to manage his high speed. Personally I wouldn't be breeding Classic Garry mares to high speed horses, I would be concentrating on strength from a sire.

Every successful sire must have high speed and strength, attributes Classic Garry had too, but I believe a sire noted for strength would be best for his broodmares.

**HRI: Then we have Armbro Aussie.**

KN: Yeah. He was a horse I saw in the U.S., a nice horse but not a big horse. He was a well performed racehorse by our standards. He wasn't for sale at that time but I said to David James I could be interested if he became available. A few years later he was for sale and we acquired him. Armbro Aussie complemented Lucia's First's maternal family. I consider him to be a successful sire, not a leading sire.

**HRI: Troublemaker interests me. His progeny were well gaited but did not measure up as major players in juvenile racing in the U.S.**

KN: That's fair comment. He came to us via David James. I told him exactly what I wanted without naming a horse and a week or so later he got back to me with Troublemaker as a horse that filled my criteria and was not on the market, but could be bought. I spoke to Ross and Noel Simpson who was still taking an interest and Mick Lombardo and the deal was completed.

**HRI: Why was he initially located in New South Wales and not Victoria?**

KN: We thought from a monetary point of view he would, as a sire of obvious quality, be well patronized there. The New South Wales Sires Stakes was attractive at that time and none of the owners minded breeding in New South Wales. He had very good numbers of quality mares there, so it was a good decision.

**HRI: How would characterize his stock in Australia?**

KN: Most of them are plain horses. Good conformation but plain

straight horses. They raced on very well and he also produced very good race fillies, unlike some other Most Happy Fella line sires. He did this with his fillies in America too which fulfilled another criteria looking further down the track. At the moment I would say that Troublemaker fillies out of good families would be as much sought after as any broodmares in Australia.

They were pretty good two-year-olds over here with APG champions such as Flubber, Tailmade Lombo, Burling Game, Espeshlimade Lombo, Black Line and Lombo La Fe Fe. I assumed as much because our racing style is different. They did not have to have that absolute dash that is necessary in the U.S.A. for juvenile racing.

In Australia we need horses that win at the juvenile level but more importantly, race on. This helps the economics of racing and breeding, and it helps the breed progress. Troublemaker fulfilled all of these, a truly wonderful sire.

**HRI: Your shuttle arrangement with bloodstock agent David James has given you an impressive range of sires that may not have been available in this part of the world under normal circumstances. Let's look at some, Albert Albert first.**

KN: We were very fortunate to get Albert Albert. In reality, David had purchased a controlling interest in him at about the time we were discussing the shuttle concept. You need elite level sires to justify this concept and Albert was very well received by breeders and buyers alike. His numbers were realistic so there was a return for breeders and he leaves quality stock and he has left his mark to date.

**HRI: The enigmatic Beach Towel. Some criticism of him in New Zealand before he served a mare, yet he has been a premier sire of sub 1:50 speed in the U.S and one of the most powerfully put together sires I have ever seen.**

KN: Unfortunately there was a perception that there was a problem fertility wise which we have worked through. The problem was in the semen transportation, not with on-farm breeding. He offers opportunities for the breed and I have no doubt Beach Towel will produce above average horses over here.

**HRI: World Champion Die Laughing. Both Hilarion and Hilarious Way come to mind with this family.**

KN: Much the same story. He was a very good juvenile sire in America. We located this sire in New South Wales because there was a need for a high quality sire based in that State. It makes no sense for one State to have all the elite sires competing against one another and another large breeding State being neglected. By making available our sires for more breeders, everybody benefits.

Victoria has been the leading breeding State for a number of years but New South Wales is improving and we are helping to lift the bar. The wonderful support Die Laughing has received from New South Wales breeders supports this.

**HRI: Is Die Laughing considered to be a fillies sire?**

KN: He has produced some nice fillies and I see no reason why this won't continue.

**HRI: Queensland breeding analyst Tony Bermingham considers Pacific Fella to be the most significant acquisition for many years.**

KN: I was initially keen on Pacific Fella from his race days. David tried to secure him but couldn't and not being a syndicated horse he did not have the big numbers over there in his first few seasons. When Albert Albert was unable to shuttle last season we were thrilled to get Pacific Fella and I was all the more taken with him when I saw him. He is a magnificent individual in every respect.

He was a wonderful racehorse, an especially good Cam Fella two-year-old. He epitomizes the sustainable high speed horse we need today and look at the quality he has already sired with Triple Crown champion No Pan Intended and New Jersey Sires Stake 2YO champion Squaws Fella.

And then there is that wonderful Pammy Lobell maternal family. This horse has got the complete package to my mind and most of my quality mares will be going to him.

**HRI: Grey sires are something of a rarity in Standardbreds. Thoroughbred breeders have no problems with greys. How has Jet Laag been received by breeders?**

KN: He is an interesting one, no doubt. He raced a touch longer than most of our sires, however, he was an eye opener with those exceptionally fast times that he ran. Now with a fast horse, you ask yourself was he a sit and sprint type? In reality he did a lot of work in his races.

What convinced me was that he could run on half mile and five furlong tracks like no other horse could. You need a flawless gait to do this among other qualities. And obviously he is a nicely bred horse. Have a look at his maternal side.

**HRI: There is a range of sire lines represented with your line up. Was this a conscious, market driven decision? There appears to be no sire line you seem to favour.**

KN: I'd rather have three very nice horses by three different sires than three by the one sire. This would muddy the waters a bit, wouldn't it?

**HRI: Jet Laag aside, they could also be considered as being established sires rather than sons of boom young sires such as Cams Card Shark or others. Is there a preference here?**

KN: Well it is, in a sense. No one questions the success of horses such as Artsplace or Cams Card Shark. The only Artsplaces you would like to buy for example for stud duties here, we could simply not afford. I figure why buy a lesser quality horse. Simple as that, really.

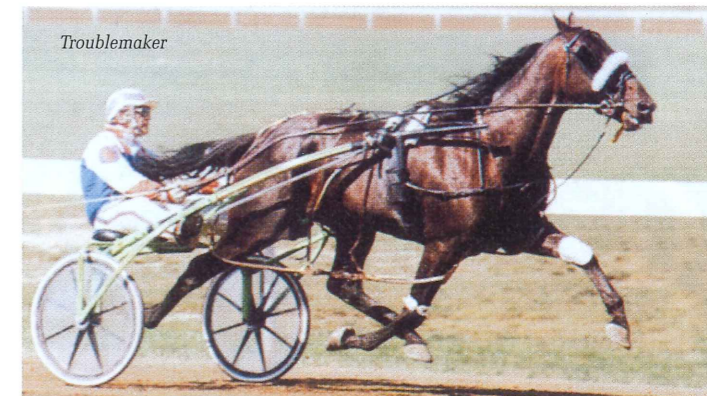
**HRI: Does the shuttle arrangement then enable you to offer a wider, more upmarket range of sires than we used to acquire?**

KN: Yes, it definitely does. It is modernizing the breed to an extent as well because we provide access to largely proven sires in their prime. There is another important point which needs to be made here. Some argue that with high quality shuttle stallions coming in, that many smaller studs, which in the main took a punt on an unraced or average racehorse from a popular sire line, would have gone out of the game.

In fact many of these smaller studs have been able to stay in the game by switching to become semen bases or breeding farms. They can serve their existing clientele or better, attract new clients without having to outlay money for a new stallion every few years. This is a necessary service for all breeding today.

**HRI: On service fees, more particularly in relation to frozen semen, I believe there should be a clear correlation between service fees and stakemonies available, particularly with juvenile racing. If breeders here are paying parity with those in the U.S. or European counterparts, who are racing for a much, much greater stakes pool, then economically it does not make sense. Another aspect is that it would be like trying to put a Rolls Royce engine into a V.W. To my mind \$3,500 is about tops for a service fee.**

KN: I guess in times gone by filling books set a market value for all horses, but particularly a popular, well credentialed sire. If you tried to stand a horse here at a price of \$6,000 to \$7,000 you could not fill the book, so what you are saying is economically accurate and realistic.



**HRI: Many breeders have welcomed the move by Michael House, John Curtin and others into delaying the payment of service fees until after foaling. Is this a good thing for the industry?**

KN: It is totally unviable in my opinion. Mostly, the people who provide stallions and semen will get no income for twelve months and yet will incur costs just the same.

Administratively, what compulsion would there be for people who breed to pay the fees owing? Who will enforce payment? Basically there is no support from Controlling Bodies as it is. A mare could have had three different sets of owners by the time you try to collect your money. This is fraught with danger for a short term goal.

**HRI: You have been a mentor of sorts for several major breeders over the years. Names such as John Lohman, Brian Gourley, Mick Lombardo, Jack Munnerley and others. How has this evolved?**

KN: Just by meeting the people. The friendships have transcended horses. We'd still be personal friends without horses today.

**HRI: What sort of advice have you given?**

KN: Well, Mick and I went to New Zealand quite often, looking at yearlings. I might say that this purchase may not be necessary and so on.

With John (Lohman) most of the mares that he ever owned I found somewhere along the line for him. Brian and Marilyn Gourley have been family friends for many years and lots of breeding discussions have taken place along the way.

There are many good people we have dealt with and I like to think that I have given advice to help them stay in the industry in one form or another.

**HRI: Aussco, now Board and Company was set up with what aims in mind?**

KN: There was some dissatisfaction with Harness Racing sales in Victoria and New South Wales. Wright Stephenson, Dalgety's and so on were not there to promote the industry with the sales just tacked on to their businesses to make a few dollars.

A group of breeders decided to do something for the industry because we had never had a voice. We provided several sales whenever people wanted them for the sake of the breeders and at least we got some control over our own industry. Of course later the Australian Pacing Gold sales race concept came along.

**HRI: Recognising that you are with an opposition company, can you put on your commercial breeders' hat and explain your thoughts on the Gold concept?**

KN: Put simply I don't like the Gold concept, it is too restrictive for a start. We would all be better off if it was an open futurity race, quite frankly.





*HRI: The question of the integrity of a Sale with buy backs is a perennial one.*

KN: So many buyers are lost through this. Weeks, perhaps months are given to buyer analysis then they can find out that the yearling was never for sale at market value at all.

*HRI: Is there a place for more than one Sales company? Pyne Gould Guinness do such a creditable job in New Zealand.*

KN: New Zealand breeders breed to sell. This is a key difference. There are many different markets, regional markets and so forth in Australia. Not every yearling bred is a precocious juvenile type and our different sales reflect this.

*HRI: There seems to be trend towards shorter races evidenced by the Australasian Breeders Crown distances of 1950 metres. Some breeders are suggesting that a strongly run mile is less of a staying test and that not running all major classics at 2400 metres will destroy the integrity of the breed. Whilst I disagree what are your thoughts?*

KN: I fully agree with you. To my mind it is the only staying test. The fluid gait of today doesn't need to race in excess of 2500 metres. In fact there should be more mobile trotting races in their class which would provide truly run races. The TAB punter also wants a quick race - look at the success of the dogs.

*HRI: You have always had an interest in trotters, going back to the time when you stood Fairlane Hanover.*

KN: Fairlane Hanover added much needed trotting blood to our own ranks. Most importantly he threw well gaited stock and many of his mares were successful matrons. It has to be said that trotting breeding was always a commercial risk in those days. We were premature commercially.

*HRI: And then Extrovert.*

KN: I did a very non commercial thing - I imported a wonderfully bred trotting mare by Speedy Somolli. She was in foal to Joie de Vie and the resultant foal, a May foal, was Extrovert. He always displayed sheer ability and actually raced as a two-year-old.

Extrovert has been under represented at stud but his stats speak for themselves. His first crop of twelve foals produced eight individual winners. We put him into training again, so we lost that continuity with his stud career. Despite that he now has breeder acceptance, with an \$18,000 yearling going through the ring last year.

*HRI: Where is trotting right now? I notice that you do not have a trotting sire on your shuttle roster.*

KN: Not yet, but the right one will present himself in the not too distant future. As for trotting, any professional trainer who does not have two or three trotters in his stable is financially negligent!

They are letting themselves and their owners down because there are lots of opportunities to win attractive stake money. More trotters are being bred, the breed is better, easier to train and trotting races are on virtually every race program in Victoria.

Trotters also give administrators another avenue to fill programmes. So, I believe the future is heartening.

*HRI: What a piece of ingenuity with Albert Albert for this season. He is located for the US winter in California, which is milder and chilled semen is shipped directly to Australia.*

KN: It is the concept of the future for commercially valuable sires such as Albert. It is kind to the horse, particularly an aged horse. Semen is collected and shipped as per usual to Australia where it is on-shipped from Melbourne Airport.

Stallions at the American end do not infringe any local rules and the whole exercise is cost effective. I would point out that we would not have proceeded with this option if we were not entirely happy with the expertise in the U.S. or the logistics at this end. Albert too is very fertile and we anticipate that more farms will follow the lead.

*HRI: If, for example, premier quality sires became available via the Californian connection, would the genetic pool already in Australia and New Zealand impact on the results of those sires? I am thinking of In The Pocket and the Albatross sire line - Vance, Sokys, Holmes - which did very well here compared to their achievements in America.*

KN: It can be a factor as In The Pocket's siring performance over here suggests. Albatross sons possibly accessed a genetic pool not available to them in the U.S.

In my opinion outcrosses are very, very important. Classic Garry was the result of a need for an outcross sire. He bred more Windshield Wiper mares than any other type of mare, but he did well with a variety of Meadow Skipper line sired mares. Big Towner, Direct Scooter and Abercrombie, all wonderful sires that they are, were the result of a need for an outcross. I cannot overestimate the relevance of this.

*HRI: It s a problem for our industry to attract younger people. What would be your advice to a young player in the breeding game?*

KN: The main emphasis should be on mares, not sires. Sires statistics are a minor part of establishing your operation. If you are going to the sales to buy a filly as a potential broodmare, do not buy her if her dam's first two foals have not raced well.

Trainers are not always the best people to help select broodmares. Talk to several successful commercial breeders first.

*HRI: Than you for sharing your thoughts with us, Kevin.*

KN: My pleasure.