

Wally Wood

Clarrie Neal

Compiled by Clarrie Neal from information given by Jean & Colin Cubitt, July '99

Wally was born into a family that have always shown a keen interest in the racing and trotting industries. Wally's grandfather Harry Wood managed Clydesdale at Marsden Park in the late 1800s when it was owned by and used as a country residence for John Hardie, the Mayor of Sydney. The property flourished, becoming a showplace of comfortable country living and successful farming. Harry continued as manager when the property was sold to George Kiss in 1904.

Harry worked at Clydesdale, training trotters for several years before he moved into Riverstone to set up his own spelling stables on the corner of Riverstone Road and Railway Terrace, naming their home 'Clyedo'. *Clyedo* was a champion trotting pony (he only stood 13 hands) of the 1900s and was owned by George Kiss.

Harry's son Aubrey married Dulcie Schoffel and they lived at Marsden Park before they moved into 44 Railway Terrace, Riverstone in c1922, where they raised their five children - Joyce, Marjorie, Jean, Wallace, and Doreen. Helping his grandfather look after the horses at the spelling stables led Wally to a lifelong connection with horses.

Wally's first horse was named *Valoria* and came to his grandfather's stables to spell after it broke down. While at the stables it broke down a second time so the owner gave it to Harry to give to Wally when he was a teenager. Wally rode the horse at shows and gymkhanas and as his sister Jean recalled he used to keep all the ribbons he won in a sugar bag hanging on the stable wall.

Wally attended Riverstone Public School then Granville Technical College for three years. Wally often came home from Granville with dirty school clothes, it was some time later that his parents realised that a lot of his time at Granville was being spent at the nearby stables and not at the school. Wally was a keen sportsman and loved Rugby League, playing several seasons for Riverstone and later in his career was called up to play 2nd Grade with Parramatta when that club was formed.

During the Second World War he was called up into the Army where he served four and half years, much of it in New Guinea. Also in his group were his friends from school, Noel (Butch) Drayton and Laurie Williams.

When discharged from the Army in 1945 he bought an old Ford truck and used it to deliver fruit and vegetables in the Windsor district. Wally would travel to the Sydney markets with Dick Stacey in his truck to get his supplies. He worked on this run for three years until he got the opportunity to

buy the shop in Railway Terrace from Charles Knight in 1949. He operated the shop with his sister Jean until it was sold in 1962. Other staff members were Verlie Sullivan, Dot and Howard Perrott, with Kenny Donnelly and Eddie Phillis doing the home deliveries of the grocery orders.

Wally married Elva Sullivan on the 27th July 1948 and they lived in Castlereagh Street until 1962 when they moved out to Oakville. Wally and Elva had three children, Peter, Joan and Bruce.

Wally bought his first trotter *Minton Raider* in 1949 and gave it to Laurie Moulds to train. A little later he bought a sulky from Laurie and began to train the horse himself, being a part time trainer for the next 11 years. He had many successes during this period and as he was spending less and less time in the shop, decided to sell it in 1960 and become a full time trainer. Early in his career Wally had considerable success with *Regal Prince*, a horse he part owned with Eric Conway that won five races at Harold Park.

Wally became a leading driver/trainer in Sydney, winning several blue ribbon events. He won the NSW Derby with *Don Ngaree* in 1961, a horse owned by Blacktown businessman Jim Sing. He won his second NSW Derby in 1978 with *Wilbur Post* that also won a Penrith Derby. *Triumph Lad* won the Victorian Sire Produce in 1982 and *Summit Road* won the first Inter City Pace at Maitland.

Other good horses he trained were *Determined Boy*, *Brien's Bruce*, *Chantilly*, *Jack's Flight*, *Chameda*, *Gay Glen*, *Sparkling Bruce* and *Shadow Prince*. *Shadow* broke down after winning the Mercury Cup at Bulli and became the family pet, spending his days in a paddock at Riverstone.

Wally won a treble at Harold Park one night winning with pacers *Carmel Reid*, *The Pet* and the trotter *Sonny Teal*. He won twelve out of thirteen starts with *Legal Raider*, a trotter owned by Hector Magennis, and also won several races with *Merry Dance*. Another big win was with *Century Ann* in the J. L. Raith Memorial Stakes at Harold Park.

Later in his career he won many races with *Never There*, *Ideal Society*, *Mister Nibbles*, and *Port Talbot*. Like many other good driver/trainers Wally did not always totally agree with the stewards and copped his share of suspensions. He was fortunate at these times to have his brother-in-law Colin Cubitt to look after his horses.

Wally aged 64, died suddenly when he suffered a heart attack while driving his float past the Doomben racecourse in Queensland on the 2nd July 1986. On the 8th July a very large crowd attended his funeral service at the Castlebrook Crematorium at Rouse Hill.

In 1987 the NSW Trotting Club honoured Wally by recognising his contribution to harness racing by naming an event at Harold Park the Wally Woods Invitation Stakes. Today Wally's family continue the family tradition with sons Peter and Bruce both becoming successful driver/ trainers.