

# Life turns the full circle

**IT IS NOT OFTEN THAT WE CAN LAY CLAIM TO HAVING OUR LIFE COME THE 'FULL CIRCLE' BUT RACEHORSE OWNER JULIA RITCHIE CAN**

WORDS: SHARON HUNT (EXECUTIVE OFFICER – NSWROA)

**F**ifteen years ago Julia Ritchie was appointed to the committee of the former Australian Jockey Club (AJC) as the first female to serve on the committee.

During this time, Julia was actively involved in the key areas of membership, programming, raceday and carnival planning and marketing.

She was a member of the then AJC Board when it voted to support the merger of the AJC and STC, which subsequently created Australian Turf Club (ATC).

This led to a massive injection of funds for much needed infrastructure improvements to benefit both the ATC members and racing generally.

In May 2011, Julia was elected as a director of the NSW Racehorse Owners Association (NSWROA) and resigned in November 2014 to stand for election to the ATC Board, such elections being the first occasion ATC members had been given the opportunity to participate in the election of the board.

Julia was duly elected to the ATC board at its Annual General Meeting on November 27 2014. She is the first female to have been elected to the ATC Board and thus the "full circle" was completed.

During her 3½ years with NSWROA, Julia continually contributed to promoting and increasing opportunities for owners.

She has also acted as the Dinner Chairperson for the association's annual flagship event, Racing's Night of Champions, in both 2013 and 2014.

NSWROA president Ray McDowell said that the association was most appreciative of the contributions made by Julia to various NSWROA activities and in particular Racing's Night of Champions.

"Julia took on the Chairperson position on Racing's Night of Champions with great enthusiasm which resulted in wonderful results for both the 2013 and 2014 events," Mr McDowell said.



*Passionate owner Julia Ritchie.  
Picture by Steve White*

Julia's involvement in racing and breeding started with her father Bill Ritchie and Bangaloe Stud more than 40 years ago.

"When my father Bill purchased our stud farm Bangaloe Stud at Kincumber back in the 60s, he said he wanted to give his kids a sense of 'natural law' when in fact it was to indulge his passion for racing and breeding," she said.

"I remember attending the races occasionally when little but more as a teenager and growing up with the other 'kids of'."

Julia originally trained and practiced as an architect before spending the next 22 years working in freelance film production and media on both local and international productions. However, she has returned to her first love - the Thoroughbred industry.

Julia is, without a doubt, one of the most passionate owners the industry has. She is actively involved in all stages of her horses' training and development.

As the owner of two successful conditioning and agistment enterprises, Wild Oaks and Oak Ridge, she has first-hand knowledge of what it takes to get a

horse to its peak.

When asked how many horses she currently owns, she smiled and said: "That I would admit to? Too many and not enough fast ones.

"Over the last 20 years I would, on average, own parts of 10 to 15 horses on an annual basis, some who race in the well-known Bangaloe colours of red and black stars plus my broodmares and their progeny."

Julia currently owns part of about 17 racehorses in work and has the bragging rights to some nice ones including Golden Slipper winner Vancouver, Greatwood, Kaepernick and Fiveandahalfstar.

"Brag while you can as the moment can be fleeting!," she said.

After Vancouver had impressively won the Group 2 Todman Stakes before his emphatic Slipper victory with Tommy Berry aboard, the colt was ensconced as favourite for the Triple Crown.

When asked to recall her most memorable moments on a racecourse, her immediate comeback was "Celebrating Golden Slipper Day this year with Gai and watching great horses race on the day.

"Winning the VRC Derby in 2012 with Fiveandahalfstar was fantastic as it was just after my mother passed away and we were all pretty sure she had a hand in it.

"Also sharing that moment with Anthony Cummings and co-owner Hal Dyball who, as a team, we've had more than 17 years together and loved every minute of it."

As to who has been her role model and biggest influence on her in the racing industry "no question about it – my dad, who believed you had to be in it and accept the journey whether winning or losing and enjoy the ride.

"He was true to his word, he said what he meant and was fair in all his dealings and I hope I have been true to that mantra. He also loved the relationships and friendships he made through racing



A jubilant Hugh Bowman returns to scale after winning the Group 1 The BMW at Rosehill Gardens for Julia Ritchie. Picture by Mark Smith

that endured throughout his entire life and he is still missed today.

“I am also fortunate to have developed wonderful friendships with some of my co-owners and trainers who are my mates outside the industry.”

When asked what advice she could give to someone contemplating entering into the ownership ranks, Julia said: “Whether you own an eyelash or a substantial portion of a horse, whether your horse is running in the provincials

or on the main stage during a carnival, it is an amazing journey to be part of.

“Not all of them can be winners but the experience of owning a horse is a winning experience in itself for the fun, an industry and the people it can introduce you to.

“Horse racing is a unique sport where everyone can get to participate in some form or another. And I would always suggest do a little bit of homework and ask people in the industry about what is

involved – the more comfortable you are with it, the more you will enjoy it.”

Are you also passionate about your horses? If so why not become a member of the NSW Racehorse Owners Association (NSWROA) and join like-minded people.

NSWROA membership runs for a calendar year and is now open. Simply visit our website [www.nswroa.com.au](http://www.nswroa.com.au) or telephone the NSWROA office on 02 9299 4299 for further information. **RNSW**

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