

PREFACE

When I first wrote *Aboriginal Stars of the Turf* back in 2002, it was about exposing the myth of limited Aboriginal involvement in Australian horse racing and why Aboriginal jockeys were not recognised. The Aboriginal riders in this book are just a few of the many great Aboriginal jockeys who have ridden through Australia's racing history.

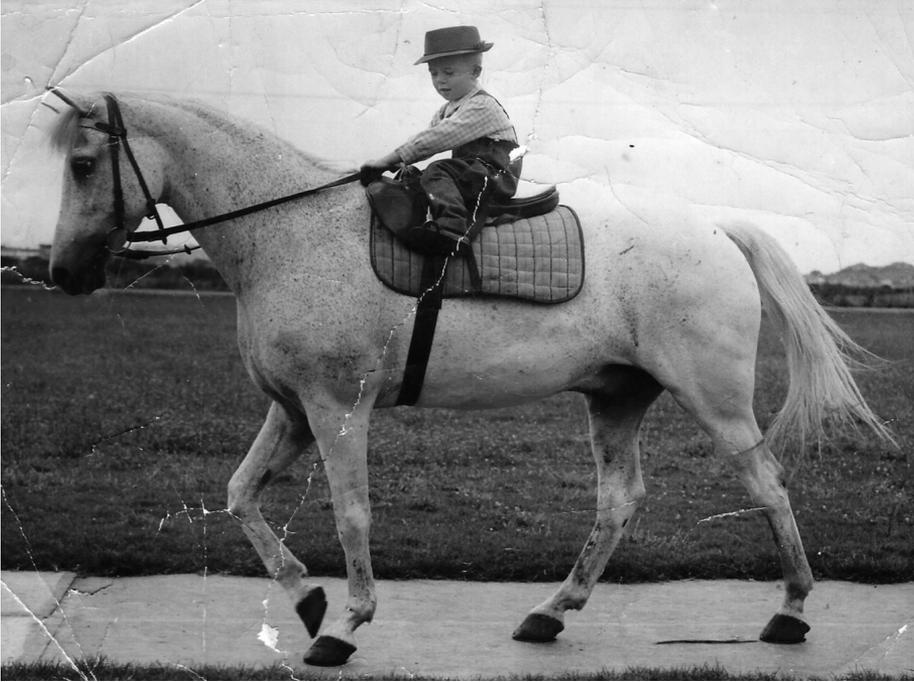
I wish to acknowledge all the Aboriginal jockeys — men and women — who have graced Australian racecourses over the past two hundred years but who do not appear here. As time goes by and my own knowledge and information are enhanced, I hope to recognise many more of these deserving people.

At the heart of this study was a passion and desire to play some small part in the process of revealing another important missing chapter of Australian Aboriginal history. For nearly two centuries, our stories have been derided, hidden and even erased. Yet the mists of the past continue to lift and reveal rich tales of survival and inspiration. We are only now at the very beginning of this process, and our stories can and will play an important role in recognising that over the past two centuries and more, the historical tapestry of this country has been one in which both black and white have been deeply interwoven.

Today, more than a decade after the book first appeared, Aboriginal involvement in Australian racing appears not to be at the same levels as it was in the past. Why have Aboriginal youth looked towards other sporting and employment opportunities? This revised edition will explore these changes and also examine riders who were missed in the past and those who have broken through since 2003.

I think it is important to note that my credentials to write this book come from the fact that I was born at the track. My knowledge of racing was not learnt from reading books or studying racing. Our family stories tell that by the time I was 12 months old I had been in every town in New South Wales — or at least those with a racetrack (and there are not too many towns without one). When I was 4, we lived in New Zealand for a year as my father was riding there; at 8 we were in Singapore and Malaysia, as he had a riding contract for four years in Asia.

Our family — particularly on my maternal line — is steeped in racing tradition: two of my maternal grandmother's brothers were jockeys, her son Eric Middleton was a jockey and later trainer, her son-in-law (my father) was a jockey, and her other son-in-law Ray Wallace was a great money trainer with top class metropolitan winners like Peninsula, Bungan Head and Calico Chief. My maternal grandfather had two cousins who were at the very top of any jockeys' list: Harold Badger and



THE AUTHOR AGED THREE DISPLAYING A NEAT SEAT IN THE SADDLE. COURTESY MAYNARD FAMILY COLLECTION.

the legendary Jim Pike, rider of Phar Lap. My grandmother's brother, Wallace, was killed at Caulfield going over the steeple jumps on Caulfield Cup Day in 1926.

I was riding before I could walk, but a few busters off the family pony and the fact that I was never going to carry a jockey weight convinced me to pursue another career direction. As a young teenager, I recall my father saying to me, 'Son, if you want to be a jockey, you'd better go to India and ride elephants.' Over the years, I maintained an interest in racing, and during the 1970s and 1980s I was fortunate to travel the globe on International Racehorse Transport (IRT), caring for globe-trotting thoroughbreds. At one point, I was a horse float driver and transported some top gallopers — including dual Newmarket winner Razor Sharp.

During that period, I used to swim horses three mornings a week in Newcastle Harbour off Horseshoe Beach. One funny incident I recall was trying to get a horse into the water for Newcastle trainer and character Bill Vallis. The horse had the nickname of Lurch because he was so slow moving and would just dig his feet in like a mule. There we were at the water's edge when Bill said, 'I'll leg you up and you can ride him in.' I was sitting on Lurch's back trying to coax him into



THE AUTHOR RECEIVES AN EARLY RIDING LESSON FROM HIS FATHER MERV MAYNARD. COURTESY MAYNARD FAMILY COLLECTION.

the water, then happened to glance over my back just in time to see Bill bring down a big piece of driftwood on Lurch's rump! Lurch and I must have resembled a Cape Kennedy rocket heading skywards. We plunged into the water about 15 metres from shore before coming back up, and Lurch was swimming like an equine Mark Spitz!

There were so many characters at the track during my young life — real horsemen and women. Sadly, they are nearly all gone today. My desire to write the stories of Aboriginal jockeys was, of course, driven by the fact that, having been brought up on the track, I was well aware that Aboriginal jockeys were rarely mentioned in Australian racing histories. I grew up knowing a whole host of them: Stan Johnson, Gordon Taylor, Normie Rose and Darby McCarthy were all riding at the same time as my father. I used to have a picture of Darby McCarthy that I cut out of either the *Telegraph* or *Mirror*, arriving at Ascot in top hat and tails from a Rolls Royce. It was such an inspiring image.

This book is my way of ensuring that Aboriginal riders are afforded their just place in Australian racing history.

John Maynard, 2013