

“Wool King” in Hamilton

Merv Mibus



Merv Mibus of Glenara, Dunkeld, Victoria was one of Australia's leading superfine wool producers, a founding father of ASWGA and member of the Council for 28 years.

Merv was born at Hamilton on 24th March 1925 the sixth child of Otto and Meta Mibus, nee Schurman. He grew up on his parents Lake Linlithgow property Fairfield. Educated at the Warryure Lutheran School leaving at the age of 14 just as World War Two broke out. He worked on his father's property developing a keen interest in superfine sheep and wool. From the age of 12 watching his father and older brothers classing the stud ewes and guessing which ram they would be mated to.

After working for 10 years on Fairfield with the family he married Elma Irene Keller after a courtship conducted largely by written correspondence and occasional phone calls. They were married at Pella, near Rainbow on 10th August 1949 setting up home in an open paddock on the Mibus family farm which they named Glenara where they raised their family of six children – Rosalie, Peter, Joan, Lynette, Kaye and Trevor.

Starting with a flock of 150 superfine sheep the Glenara flock has increased to 7,000 and become highly renowned for its excellence, locally, nationally and internationally and is continued on today by his sons Peter & Trevor.

In 1988 with the growing reputation of the Glenara stud, Merv together with sons Peter and Trevor, started their own very successful annual on-property ram sale. Merv died on the day after the 21st auction and was still keen to hear the results.

Merv always enjoyed working with sheep and superfine wool, always looking for improvements and working to the highest standards of excellence. A special interest became the presentation of Geelong superfine lambs wool when this product was at the peak of its fame. Glenara received world record prices for lambs wool in 1982 and 1986.

He taught his sons the love and commitment of growing superfine wool and also passing his knowledge to his grandchildren.

In July 1982 Merv was recognised for his involvement in and commitment to the wool industry by being crowned the “Wool King” in Hamilton. He was the longest serving member of the Council of ASWGA serving for 28 years. He was elected Federal President from 1980 to 1983 at a time of tremendous challenge for superfine wool.

When Merv became President there was a significant imbalance in the Stockpile with nearly a years supply of superfine wool in the stockpile and considerable pressure from other growers to cease supporting these types as it was felt that if demand rebuilt the flocks could reconstituted. His dogged determination and refusal to accept this that finally led to a reluctant AWC recognising that superfine wool must be supported and that it should again lead the industry. It was reputed that he had a special chair at Wool House where he would wait determinedly to put the case for superfine growers to the Managing Director and Board of The Australian Wool Corporation. He gained the support of the leading superfine processors in Italy, UK and Japan and built the foundations for the dialogue with these firms that continues to this day. The result was that the recommitment to

research and promotion for superfine wool was restored with the superfine sector again leading the industry. He made many friends with the worlds leading superfine processors travelling overseas on a number of occasions and many International and Australian wool industry leaders visited him at Glenara to observe shearing and wool preparation first hand

For many years he was the Editor of the Annual Newsletter the main communication vehicle for ASWGA, making sure that each edition was of the highest standard. He also prepared the prize winning fleeces, for display on the night of the Zegna Dinner for many years.

Merv was committed to “best practice” in the Australian wool industry serving on several committees for the review of the Woolclassing Code of Practice. On one occasion being appointed the sole grower representative on the committee.

Merv described his life as being for family, faith and farm. He recalled his parents teaching him the Christian faith and made it his goal to pass this faith on to his children through teaching and regular church attendance.

He was an active member of the Trinity Lutheran Congregation Warrayure and held numerous positions including church Elder and Chairman of the Congregation always sharing valuable wisdom and guidance. He served on the Lutheran Church Home Mission Committee and Council for Mission for 25 years commencing in 1966 and on the District Church Council for 6 years.

Merv is survived by his devoted wife of 59 years Elma, six children and their spouses, 14 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.

The superfine wool industry has much to thank Merv for and those who knew and worked with him will honour and treasure his memory, leadership and guidance. The final words are best summed up in the final lines of his funeral obituary.

*“Think of Merv as living in the hearts of those he touched.
For nothing loved is ever lost and he was loved so much
We give thanks to God for what he has done through Merv”*

July 2009