

John Albert Hennah, was called Jack by most of his friends and acquaintances and in his later life as Pa. Jack was one of the early businessmen in Hastings and was credited with helping many young men getting a start in business. If they showed talent and character he would often approach them with a proposition to get into business to encourage them to stay in the town. This includes the man who started the first Ice Cream making business in Hastings. The Vet who established its first Veterinary Clinic, specialising in horses of course. And a young builder that built a huge business with his assistance after the Hawks Bay earthquake in 1938. He also supported almost every sporting code and club in the district, although an Anglican by birth he was on the Celtic Ruby Club Committee for several years was a long term member of the Hawks Bay County Club and the card room was considered almost his private domain. He supported and Tennis, Cricket and Golf and was always a discrete and usually anonymous donor to all the Churches at Christmas and all the local sports clubs, the HB A&P Show grounds and HBFMC as a shareholder and supplier.

Jack loved gambling and was very successful at it. In large part because he was always calculating the odds. He also had an incredible memory and even years after an event he could recall the weight a horse had carried in a race, or a hand of cards and his playing partners and who had played what cards in what sequence.

Jack had an early introduction into the "Sport of Kings", from his father Herbert, and no doubt learnt the art of calculating the odds and bookmaking on all sports from an early age growing up in and around his parents many Hotels in the mining and port town of Greymouth where he was born.

Because of his habit of using different birthdays to get different documents at different times in his life there has always been some confusion as to his correct date of birth.

Jack first change of D.O.B was when he wanted a trainer's licence so he could train his own horses but the minimum legal age was 21 and he was not old enough. However he had a good friend from his childhood who worked for the Greymouth council, who as a favour supplied the underage Jack with a birth certificate with the required D.O.B and his long and very successful training career, was away.

Later in Life Jack didn't want to sit his driver's licence for older drivers so he gave the clerk filling out the forms for the drivers licence a later D.O.B and was not asked for any proof, hence the three different dates. Jack's Army Records in the Military Archives from when he was called up for WW1 shows he was born in Greymouth in 1885. His true D.O.B is thought to be 1887.

Jack came to Hastings when he was about 12 years of age, because of his mother's health. His mother Elisabeth Annie, known as Annie, who had been born in Plymouth in England had developed diabetes, and the treatment recommended was to shift to a sunnier, dryer climate. Her health deteriorated and Annie died in 1902 and she is buried in the Hastings cemetery.

Jacks father, Herbert, was himself a colourful character and entrepreneur who had left Cornwall in England as a 17 year old when his father, a mining accountant and farmer had died suddenly of stomach cancer. Herbert came from a well known Cornwall family often referred to as the Clan Hennah, His Grandfather was a Vicar at St Austell in Cornwall and the brother of the Famous Captain William Hennah who assumed command of the 74 gun "Mars" during the battle of Trafalgar after

Captain Duff was decapitated by a canon ball in the opening exchange of the battle. William was later awarded the Order of Bath. He was famous for the condolence letter he wrote to Captain Duff's widow and a copy hangs in the maritime museum at Greenwich in England.

Herbert arrived in Lyttleton New Zealand in 1864 and got involved in Gold mining on the West Coast with a group of other Cornishmen who formed the Cornish Gold mining Company. It appears he saw more profit in other areas and at different times owned at least three different Hotels on the West Coast. Firstly at Rutherglen, where he organised and sponsored the first known horses races on the West Coast. The race track was around a lagoon at Rutherglen that had soft swampy edges to stop the jockeys taking short cuts. First price for one race was a saddle and bridle worth 5 pounds. Herbert also had the White Heart Hotel on the waterfront in Greymouth, now gone, and the Recreation Hotel that had holding paddocks and stable for 200 horses. The Recreation Hotel still stands today, although much altered.

Herbert started the one of the first freight companies on the Coast it caused enough interest to be mentioned in the Canterbury newspapers with his "combined team", Herbert had a bullock between the shafts and one each side and a horse in front. The reason was the driver could sit on the wagon and steer the horse, which was much easier than walking beside the oxen walking over the soft black sands of the West Coast beaches and up the rivers, which were the first access roads until the roads were cut into the hills and valleys. Herbert also started a sawmilling and timber company in partnership with his son-in-law John George, who had married his daughter Jessie. Depending on which D.O.B used for Jack Jessie was between 7 and 10 years older than Jack.

Herbert's Aunt was married to another West Coast gold miner and then Publican, who later became MP for Westland and then Prime Minister of New Zealand. Richard John Seddon. Jack rarely mentioned any of his family's connections or history he preferred to take people as he found them and be judged the same way. He had many famous sayings one of the most common was, "Your word is your bond".

When Herbert and Annie came to Hastings in 1900 for Annie's health they left Jessie and John George with the Licence for the White Heart Hotel and running the timber company and brought with them young Jack his mother Annie's health gradually deteriorated and she died in 1902. Herbert returned to Greymouth in 1911 to retire, he died in 1925 and is buried in Greymouth.

About 1901 Jack went out to work at Maraekakaho Station which was then still about 40,000 acres and employed several hundred men, his job was helping the cook and driving the cream and Freight and mail trap to Hasting twice a week taking in also the betting bag for the bookmakers in Hastings and returning with whatever mail and freight there was and the bookies bag with the payments for the punters which the cook at the station payed out to the winners.

Pa used to tell the story that he had plenty of time on the way in and on the way back driving the trap to open the bag and read the bets and count the betting money on the way in and back and soon realised that there was always a lot less money won and payed out, than bet on the various races and other sporting events, so he decided not to lay off the bets with the bookie in Hastings but hold the bets and it worked. This was the beginning of his very successful bookmaking and training career. Jack also trained and managed Boxers and runners and apart from his much favoured beach and hill exercise when training for both human and equine athletes and long walks, he was a firm

believer in a good balanced diet, with plenty of vegetables and fruit. Although Jack finished his formal schooling at about 12, he put huge value on education and always encouraged others to get a good education.

Jack was a perfectionist as Walter Kupa from Fernhill who was a local hay baling contractor used to say, Jack set by far the highest standards for the baling of his Lucerne for the horses of all the people he made hay for. It had to be perfect, not so dry the leaf would fall off or not so moist that even the slightest mould would grow. The sniff and taste tests were like watching a fine wine maker at work.

Jack applied the same high standards to his oat purchases and he bought only the best black oats from Southland each year and used to visit the farmer each year and payed a premium for his first pick of the crop. Jack bought a railway wagon full every year and stored it in his own part of the HBF Co-op grain store which he checked regularly. He often said the difference between the best horses is in the feeding.

Jack shifted to Hastings and became a permanent resident at the Albion Hotel and first leased and later bought the billiard salon in the main street that became his bookmaking base. Combined with his very successful owner trainer career it made him a wealthy man, and he spent the next sixty five years breeding, trading and racing his own horses all over NZ and each winter crossing the Tasman by boat taking a small team of two to three horses to Sydney for the winter racing. One of his earliest successful horses was Flower Girl where he won three races at Hokitika and two at Kumara in 1907, in those days one horse could often race in several races in one day. The last horse he raced was a filly called Honey Bun in the 1960's.

Jacks best known horse was Padishah, who he bred and raced for almost ten years, he won the HB Gold Cup and Wellington Cups and also the Dual Grand National steeplechase and Hurdles in 1939. He had 59 starts over nine years for 11 wins and 5 places and won stakes of 5,375.00 pounds ,it was always reckoned that Jack with his unique ability to score big odds made substantially more than that from the poor old bookies.

For many years Jack took a small team of normally 2 or 3 horses over to Sydney for the winter by ship, these trips slowed a little after he was married to Phoebe O'Connell the widow of his good friend Joe O'Connell who was a hurdle and steeplechase jockey who broke his neck in a race fall and died. Phoebe had a baby son Jack and after marrying Phoebe they had six more children together who in turn presented them with 25 Grand Children. Their Children were Joyce, Patty, Mary, Joan, Maurice and Phyllis.

After the 1938 earthquake that flattened large areas of Napier and Hastings Jack had a big problem. Over the years as a bookmaker and in racing he had put all his profits into shops and commercial properties mainly in the main street of Hastings, "on the sunny side", as he used to say. They were now all virtually destroyed, or unusable.

His first call was to a good young builder called Peter Bridgeman who he contracted to rebuild his shops. He made Peter a proposition that he would pay his weekly wage bill for as many tradesmen and labourers as he could find, and he would pay for all the materials as required to do the work, if he would rebuild Pa's shops first. Peter agreed and they together got the Hastings shops rebuilt in

record time. A lot of those buildings still stand today and some are still owned by his grand children.

Jack got a Government subsidised funds through the Bank of New South Wales for \$ 8,500.00 (pounds), to help with the rebuilding costs. That winter he and one of his great racing and card playing friends Bill, "W.R", Richmond sailed to Sydney with three young horses to contest the winter racing season. The most successful horse was Gold Mag; it won three races on end the second horse won two and the third one race. Jack sold all three horses and with a reputedly large suitcase full of money from the sale proceeds of the horses and his betting success at very good odds from the unhappy Sydney bookies, "Lucky Jack", as they now called him in the Sydney racing papers, sailed home with his greatly relieved companion who had been very worried about being robbed, as they had been told elements of the Sydney criminal fraternity thought they could rob them before they could get safely aboard the ship to come home carrying around all the cash. The story goes that Jack organised a dummy suitcase as a ruse and although shots were fired Jack & WR both arrived safely aboard to the protection of the ships security. Jack never again went back to Sydney, he had been told it would be detrimental to his health, and he believed it.

Back in Hastings Jack gave the manager of the Bank of New South Wales \$ 8,500.00 pounds back for the building development and was advised the Government was writing the loans off to ensure the redevelopment went ahead. Jack insisted and said, "Use the money to help someone else, it helped me and now it can help someone else, less fortunate". The banker finally agreed and wrote Jack a letter thanking him and assuring him the bank regarded him as a special client and would give him special consideration for any future ventures he might wish to undertake.

Throughout Jack's business life he helped a large number of people both to get going in business and those down on their luck, during the depression he let people suffering hardship charge basic food and clothing to his account at HBF Co-op and never asked for payment, although a lot of people as they got back on their feet did try and repay him, he would usually refuse the offer and say I've had a good run with the horses you keep it, but don't put it on the TAB. Jack was always being approached for advice on all manner of topics and always obliged if he could. He was also not shy when asked about any horses prospects in an upcoming race to say, "Save your money, I could beat that thing home", it always sounded hilarious coming from this aged slightly stooped old Character.

Jack by this time had a large portfolio of buildings and also bought a farm West of Hastings between Fernhill and Puketapu. He loved nothing more than to drive out to the farm and in his later years be driven out to the farm, and inspect the broodmares and other thorough breeds grazing on the rolling limestone hills. He thought the limestone hills of Hawks Bay were the best natural horse country in New Zealand.

Jack was very astute man and a great judge of character, and he rarely made mistakes when backing people or a horse. He also loved a good story and was a practical joker and raconteur he seemed to know everything about everybody. He could tell amusing stories for hours going back over the years when most travel was by ship or train and he had a huge range of contacts and friends from all walks of life. He could play cards for days while travelling or staying in Hotels and while away on racing adventures.