

Harry Rice—Lucasville Legend

Harry Ellis Rice was born in West Portsmouth, Ohio, April 6, 1918, a son of Newton & Rebecca Rice.

He grew up in the Lucasville, Ohio, area, and was a proud 1934 graduate of Valley High School in Lucasville. Harry was a regular attendee of the Valley Alumni Banquets and generously supported its scholarship program.

He became a truck driver, working most of his career for Reinhardt Transfer in Wheelersburg, Ohio.

Harry Rice dedicated his life to rabbits. He was a master rabbit breeder, master showman, master promoter, and master judge for the American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA). He first joined ARBA in 1933, and in 1994 became an honorary life member. In 1940, Harry received his ARBA Registrar and Judge license.

Harry judged in over 41 states and several Canadian provinces and officiated at over 3,000 rabbit shows. These 41 states & provinces were all seen behind the wheel of a vehicle, since Harry would not travel by air. It has been said that Harry “was one of the greatest judges the ARBA ever had and was also one of the association’s most admired senior judges.”

He was a member of numerous local, state, and national rabbit clubs; however, his love was always with the New Zealand and Dutch Rabbits. Harry joined the American Federation of New Zealand Rabbit Breeders, which was the first national club, in 1949. He purchased his first New Zealand rabbit in 1938 at the rabbit convention in Columbus, Ohio.

Harry skillfully served the national New Zealand club as secretary for many years. He was an active member of the Portsmouth Rabbit Breeders Association, who proudly sponsored his banner. And he is a Hall of Fame member of the Ohio State Rabbit Breeders. He was also inducted into the American Rabbit Breeders Association Hall of Fame in 1990, the highest award that can be bestowed on a member. He was elected to the American Rabbit Breeders Association Board of Directors and served on numerous committees.

Along with his wife, Deskie, they formed the well-known KO Rabbitry in Portsmouth, Ohio. The KO Rabbitry was known throughout the rabbit world as a producer of top-notch breeding animals and quality show stock. The 2001-2005 ARBA Standard of Perfection book was dedicated to Harry & sums it up best: he was “The Sage of Portsmouth.”

Harry was preceded in death by his parents; two wives; two daughters; two brothers; and two sisters. He was survived by his third wife of 46 years; one son; and four daughters.

Harry passed away at age 92 on April 8, 2010. His funeral was attended by many family & friends, as well as rabbit husbandry people from across the United States. Harry Rice is indeed a Lucasville Legend.