

# Australian Shepherd People



The Australian Shepherd Quarterly  
Talks With  
**Leslie Sorensen**  
**COLORADO**  
Ft. Collins, Colorado

*This interview was conducted at the home of Leslie Sorensen on December 19, 1986 by Nancy Rogell.*

**How long have you been in Aussies?**

Seventeen years, as long as I've been married to Dick; he's had them a lifetime. I showed you awhile ago a picture of Queenie taken in 1956 which was one of his first Australian Shepherds. She helped the family, was a good buddy to the kids, raised the children really, and that was Dick's first recognizable Australian Shepherd. They got Queenie in 1948.

**So Dick's been in them a lot longer than you have?**

Yes; I sort of married the breed.

**Did you have other breeds?**

Yes. I was a second generation dog

breeder; my mother raised German Shepherds and we had Willow Grange dogs. My mom always loved dogs. In fact, when she moved to Colorado she swore that she would have dogs one way or the other. She loved German Shepherds so she got her first one from Pat Sandy, Sandy Acres Kennels, who is a close friend and I think was a kennel assistant for Isabel Becker, Willow Grange Kennels, and that's where my mother got her start, with Sandy Acres Angel.

**You decided on the Aussies over the Shepherds.**

My last Shepherd, when Dick and I were married, had just died; he was sired by Lavaland's Tac. His name was Willow Grange Cheyenne Autumn. He had just died, killed through a broken fencing accident, so to speak, got out of the yard and nobody knew there was a hole in the fence. So I didn't have a German Shepherd at the time. When we married, I had all these wonderful Australian Shepherds and was totally overcome by the intelligence and devotion and all the neat things

about this dog. They filled the void in my heart to have dogs.

**Was Dick actively breeding dogs when you were married?**

Yes. He dispersed a lot of his dogs when he went into the service. Several of them never came back into the program once his time in the service was over. They either died while he was gone or were taken away one way or another, and never returned to him. He did end up with about seven or eight of his original dogs when he got back; that's about how many he had when we married.

**Who or what has influenced your breeding program the most?**

Probably purpose - the purpose of the dogs, working. We raise livestock. We haven't always had sheep, but Dick has raised cattle and sheep throughout his active life, from a very young man, he's had a sheep or a cattle program and the dogs have been his right hand men in handling the livestock.

When I came onto the scene, we went right into a steer operation. After a brief time in the Parker area, south of Denver, we went to a small ranch at Toponas and we ran steers. We've always had the dogs around to help us with the ranching chores and handling the livestock. The direction of the program was pretty well dictated by the purpose to which we had the dogs involved in this.

In the last ten years, when the show program has become quite important - conformation, soundness, hip x-raying, eye checking and so forth - some of the old dogs fell by the wayside because they didn't have the sound hips, the eye checks that they had to have. We've gone on from that type of thing, working very hard to get the hips and everything done.

**Should a dog shown in conformation also have herding ability, or be used for herding too?**

Yes. The ability for the dog to get out there and think on his own, to take control of a situation, adds to the dog's overall aura or ability to think and to be workable. Plus, you establish a close rapport with the animal. That continual development of the dog's natural instincts enhances brain capacity; they retain that. Once you put brain stimulation and brain training on a back shelf, the dogs eventually just become ornaments, pets; they lose that sharpness, that ability to think and to read you, to do things before you even say them.

I can think things with some of my dogs and they'll do them without my ever having to speak to them. It's by habit, something that we do every day. They know instantly when we go out what we are going to do and can do the job with nary a word. Then there are times, as in obedience training, the rapport is so close with the dog, and they either read your body so well or they receive mental vibes from you, but it's that fine tuned ... I can't describe it. It's just this one-to-one type thing they get with you, when you work with an animal all the time. I don't ever want them to lose that.

When you have the dog in a kennel situation and all it does is sit in the kennel, he is only a tenth of the dog that you've raised and spent time with and really worked with. That's the worst thing to do, put a dog in a kennel and not take it out and work with it. You lose that rapport, that closeness.

#### **Tell us about the herding instinct testing.**

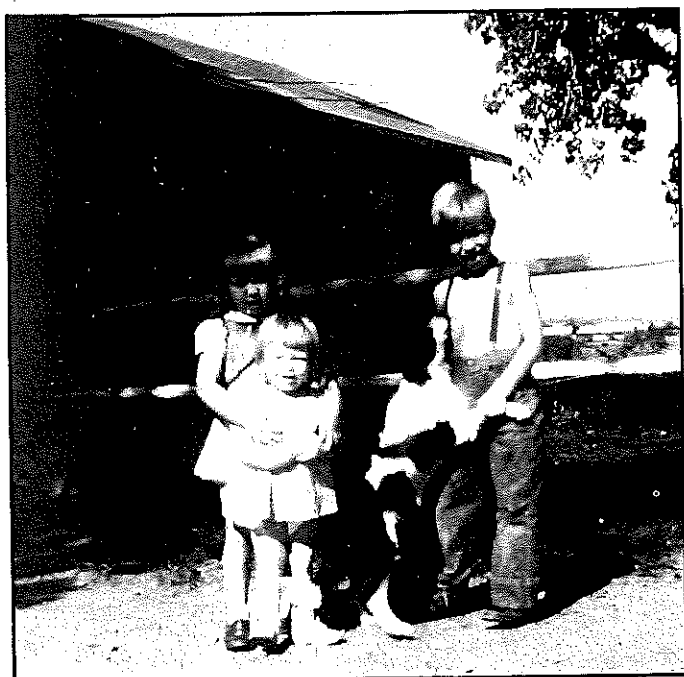
It's not important what breed it is. Any club that wants Dick and me to set up an instinct test, we'll do. We bring sheep. Dick takes whatever scoresheets they want him to use, or he will score them individually on his own paperwork if the club doesn't have their own particular form they want to use. The dogs are brought into the area, allowed to look, on lead; they

are not turned out. They watch what is going on and then one at a time they are taken into a large round pen and exposed to the sheep or ducks. We sit back and observe what the dog does when Richard stimulates the flock of sheep into running or moving or whatever. He has a lot of little tricks that he does to sort of turn dogs on.

Some dogs are kind of inhibited by their owners; dogs become anxious and embarrassed when they're out there alone, just like people do. They almost take on the owner's inhibitions. If the owner is not inhibited, if the owner will run in and chase and clap and be very excited about the dog chasing, very often the dog will immediately go right to the stock. But if the owner is nervous and inhibited and can't talk, can't be enthusiastic, very often the dog's the same way. He can't go out and chase the sheep because he feels this insecurity of the owner. Sometimes Dick will take the dog in by itself without the owner, leaving the owner outside the pen, and he'll go in and just chase the stock. Dick doesn't have a rapport with the dogs; he'll chase the stock and try to get the dog to lock in and make contact with the moving animals. Eventually, most of the dogs we've tested have shown strong herding ability and they'll fall right in; they'll either circle the stock or they'll cut one off and chase just one or they'll go around and want to bring them to Dick, or they'll just

circle around and around, or they'll drive everything away.

They all show probably three types of style which are very typical of herding breeds. If a dog doesn't do anything, that's no reason to be discouraged. We take the dog out and let him watch. Very often the first day of a test, if we have a two-day test, you'll have a couple that sort of bomb out, so to speak, but if they can come back the second day and go into the round pen, it seems like they think about it. The little mental juices get going and they have dreams of what they saw in the pen. We have seen dogs absolutely be alligators the next day; they can't wait to get in the pens, they remembered what it was they had forgotten to do. They get in there and get with it. So if anybody ever takes a dog to a herding test and they only have one day, don't give up on that dog. Try to expose him again as soon as possible. Sometimes it takes a week or two. In training class, we have dogs come in that are sort of casual about the stock. They may or may not chase them. They'll have a few minutes where they are very interested in the stock, and then their interest falls and they forget about it and will go sniff the fence, lift their leg or something. Then they'll come back and be real turned on. Those are the types of dogs that take a little more time. Don't give up on them after one or two times. It's always worth-



Dick Sorensen and his sisters, Shirley and Marty with the resident Border Collie in 1946.



Dick's sister, Marty, with their first Australian Shepherd, Queenie in 1956.

while working with them.

Everybody likes to see a dog go in there wide open and chase and pull wool, herd or eye or do whatever they are going to do on the stock. The quiet dogs, the dogs that don't show much, that's no reason to quit on them or think that they don't have it. It sometimes take a little longer to come to the surface.

**Do you use all of your own dogs for herding?**

I wouldn't say all of them. Probably 50% of the dogs here on the place have been worked regularly at one time, and/or are worked regularly right now. We have some young dogs that have had exposure to stock but do not have the level of training that some of the more mature dogs do.

**What about show and obedience? Do you do that also?**

Yes. Dick had done a lot of obedience training before the Australian Shepherd was ever even allowed in some of the fun matches. He trained his first dogs, for instance, Gunsmoke, in obedience and really enjoyed it. The dog was highly trainable; he graduated at the top of his class. In fact, they had a runoff; they were tied for first and Gunsmoke is very attached to Dick. He could not stand being more than a foot away from Dick at any time. That's the way this dog was raised; he was with Dick 24 hours a day as a 5-week-old puppy. They were never separated. Dick put him on a down stay during this runoff in class and Gunsmoke did not break his down, but he ended up coming across the floor to Richard on his belly and was at Dick's feet on the down stay. Of course, he bombed this out but he never got up. Everybody gives a big chuckle about when Gunsmoke did that in obedience class.

**What was the best dog you ever bred?**

There are a lot of really good dogs; I don't think I've bred that dog yet. We've had some super dogs, all of them very good overall. I still have that goal, the "best."

**How many champions have you bred?**

It would have to be close to twenty. It's hard to keep track because ASCA doesn't have the records to keep track of them and as the years go by, the dogs that finished years ago, the championship wasn't that important. People call and tell you they finished the dog. "That's fine - is he working?" The working was always the most important. A championship was nice but it wasn't really recognized by anybody



Sorensen's Gunsmoke.

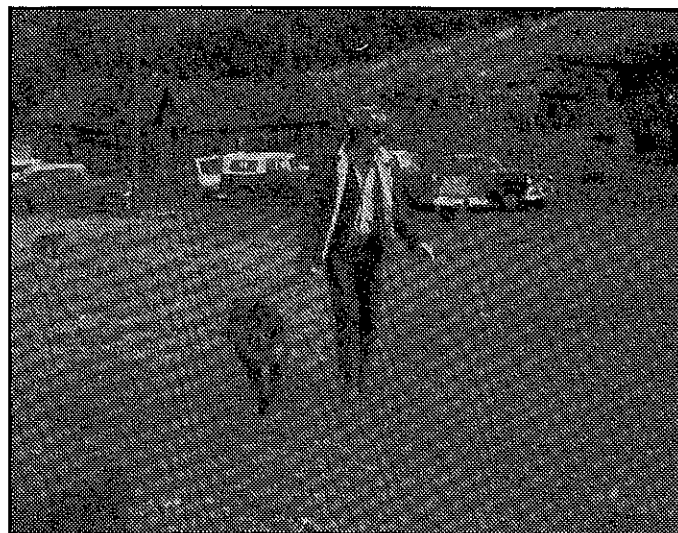
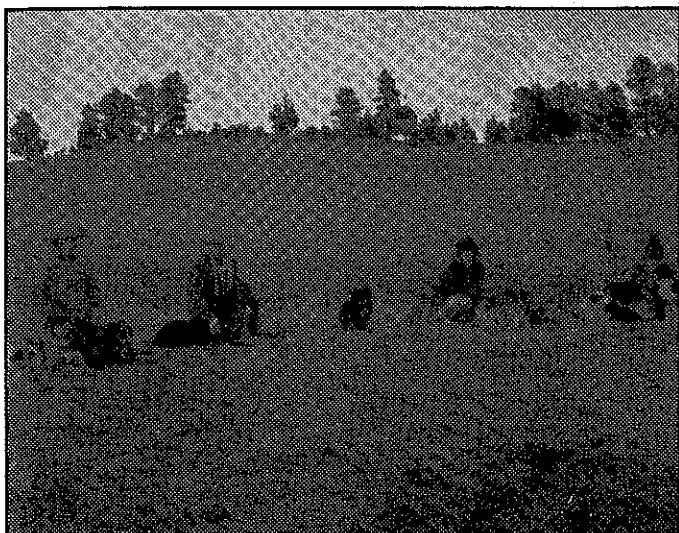
other than ASCA; it was just one of those things. Nobody advertised pushing it, so you'd just forget which dogs had finished. I've never been one to be a fanatic about what dog did this and what dog did that, the exact date of this BOB win or that BIS. I enjoy everything I do with the dogs and I don't get hung up on specifics. I'm not a mental record keeper; I keep good kennel records and who takes the puppies, but I just don't store that type of information in my mind. I would have to sit down and do some hard pencil pushing to come up with all the dogs that have finished.

Some dogs finish and people never let you know. There's a champion out there and they have it as a pet; they showed it a few times, finished it and never tell you, so they get by you. I do know how many obedience degrees we have; I've got three CD's and two CDX's and I

worked with a dog through Utility but his age caught up with him before we got the UD, but that was my fault, not his.

**We've all had a special favorite at one time. What was yours?**

I know who Dick's was, Sorensen's Gunsmoke. I hate to keep going back to Dick, but he is so important in this breed, as far as Colorado, and the things that he did - you know, hindsight is always 20-20 - and at the time, it probably seemed totally insignificant to him. These things he did were so important; I always like to talk about it because he's not here and I've got a good opportunity to do it behind his back. (laughter) This dog, without a doubt, was the most devoted, most memorable dog of the whole group. He was the first registered Australian Shepherd that Dick had. He was totally Dick's dog, an extension of Dick's body. There



wasn't one thing Dick did that that dog did not make note of and see and either respond to or something. He could talk to that dog in whole sentences and that dog understood everything he said.

Somebody once made a comment after he had sent Gunsmoke and Queenie back to the truck. The guy came over and told him, "I've got a twelve-year-old boy. Do you think you could teach that boy to do that?" This was somebody that Dick did not know.

As far as my favorite dog, it was a Gunsmoke daughter, and this might even surprise Dick. I absolutely adored Sorensen's Flirt. Of all the dogs we have had, she probably got inside my skin deeper than any of the others. She's still the only dog I cry over; I'll never forget her. There was something for her way beyond what I was ever able to do, as far as producing out of her. She died too young; there was always that missing link that she would have filled with her breeding presence, and that's not speaking about her social presence, the attachment or the dog herself. She was wasted. I don't know if I feel guilty about it. Her death was a total accident; always when they die young it's an accident, a freaky thing, something that would never happen again. You would have traded any of the other dogs involved in the escapade for her; I would have traded ten dogs for her. She is the one that got under my skin.

I don't know if I'm a better person for having lost her, or if I'm a tougher person. I told myself after she died that I would never let a dog get to me the way she did. To this day, I have walled off my dogs a little bit to protect that spot.



Dick Sorensen with Sorensen's Gunsmoke jumping through a twelve inch hoop. Seated is Nightingales Sorensen's Tammy.

#### **That happens to us all. How many breedings have you done?**

I would probably have to do an average on that. Dick and I have been married since 1969, so we probably averaged about four to six litters a year, always having way more dogs than we could ever use. We have had bitches that are five

and six years old and never been bred. They were sort of "saved" but with an average of four to six litters a year. Some years we may have had only three litters; some years we've had eight.

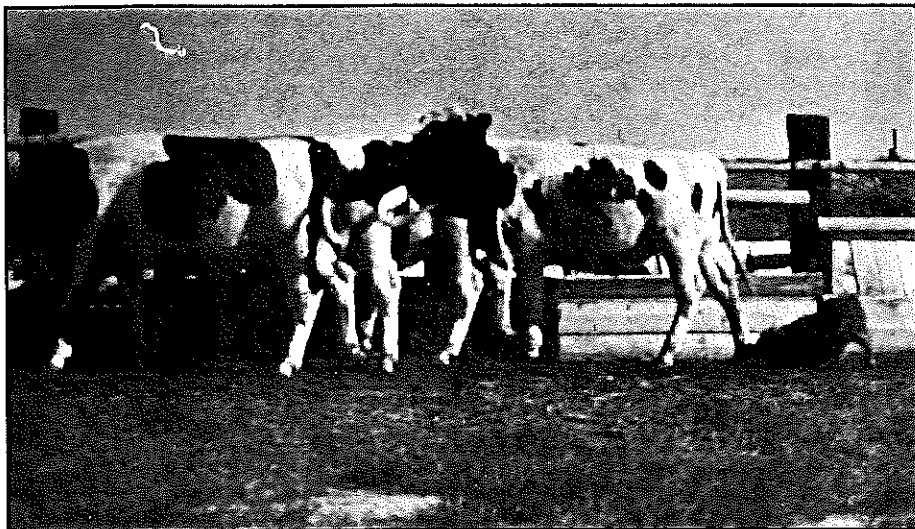
The number of litters that Richard produced before we were married, I wouldn't know; probably two or three lit-

ters a year. He was in partnership with Tom Jeffreys and Charlene Jeffreys Crawford. Tom, Dick and Charlene lived near Boulder and raised quite a few dogs when they lived up Flagstaff Road. I have no idea how many litters a year they produced, but not a lot. If the litters were frequent, the dogs kept back were very few. I know of some litters that were born that had six, seven or eight puppies; the puppies eventually being let out to the public would only be two or three from the whole litter.

They culled first by color, when the puppies were born, because of the merle gene - everyone being familiar with what the merle gene can do to itself when it's doubled up. Any puppies who were off-colored were culled. Well, in those days, and I'm saying pre-1969, any puppies that were born that even had more than white toes or a little white on the chest or even sometimes a pencil line blaze, were culled for even the white trim. The darkest puppies were kept, and I mean darkest by lack of white trim. That was the first prerequisite to culling. Then as the puppies grew up and developed, they were selected for temperament and that sort of thing. I will not speak for Dick or for Charlene or Tom as to what temperaments they liked. I don't know what prerequisite they used in selecting for this. I know the dogs for the most part were used on cattle and they liked an aggressive temperament. The dogs in those days did not lack for aggression, either toward people or toward livestock. They were probably as tough a bunch of dogs as I have ever been around in my entire life.

The way we select puppies today, it seems as the years have gone on, we have fewer and fewer white puppies born in a given litter on a merle to merle cross, either red or blue. Many times, we have litters born with no white puppies on a merle to merle cross. A few blacks, a majority of blue merle or red merle or solid red, which is fine. I don't like putting puppies down anymore than anybody else, but I refuse to keep a white puppy because it's deaf or blind or whatever - they are defective, no matter how much you would wish them to be sound, they aren't. It has nothing to do with the breed, it has to do with the color; the merle gene is one the books call semilethal in that it is not a perfect matchup. There are other genes that are in that same category, but we are dealing with the merle gene so we get the white puppies.

Now when I look at a litter of puppies,



Ch. Sorensen's Cherry Brandy, ASCWD.

I'm getting so I can see earset; I can look at shoulders, rear angulation. I don't cull if I see a puppy with a poor shoulder or one with a lack of rear angulation, or anything that is not right. Temperament, to us, is probably the ultimate culling thing right now. A poor conformation puppy with a marvelous temperament is undoubtedly a better pet than a gorgeous dog with a marginal temperament. Temperament is the absolute bottom line on a puppy; if it is six to eight weeks of age, whatever that area is in there when we do some serious culling, if the temperament is not right, even if that puppy is the most gorgeous thing on four legs and he is a spook, I put him down. I do not pass on my problems to other people to put up with. If the puppy's temperament goes awry after he leaves here, there are sometimes factors that you are not aware of when you had the puppy. He seemed very sound at the time; he's had bad experiences in the new home, but those things you cannot predict.

In the long run, when people start hip x-raying and checking eyes, then you come to another decision. If the dog that you've personally kept back out of a litter has hip problems, then you cull again. If the person who buys the dog from you had hip problems on a dog, then of course, it's their decision to make, either to keep the dog as a pet in their home or have you replace it. As a dog's life progresses, you come to periods of time when you have to make a decision on how that dog is, either sound enough to be a family pet or if it has to be put down for unsoundness, either in conformation or hereditary defects. In the days we've been breeding, we've probably come across some hereditary defects

that you cull for, too. Something that is one man's poison may be another's accepted defect.

I am just a bit ruthless on hereditary defects. Umbilical hernias, a defect that I have seen on a couple of occasions, I have learned about that. I was totally unaware or unfamiliar with that defect. In the particular individual that it was produced on, we thought it was an accident, that the dam pulled the cord and ruptured the umbilical area when the puppy was very tiny. The puppy was sold and went on and produced umbilical hernias in its own progeny. Lesson No. 999.

The second case we saw was in a very tight linebreeding; the puppy was sold as a neutered pet. He was a marvelous puppy, had a gorgeous temperament. Had he not had the problem, of course, he would have been a stud dog prospect for us. It was heartbreaking to have to neuter that male; he had a beautiful temperament, it was surgically repairable type of thing that would not effect his health or his mobility in any way. He had surgery when he was old enough and was neutered at the same time and made a wonderful pet, so I've learned about umbilical hernias.

Bad bites is a defect that probably every breeder of every species has encountered at one time or another. Australian Shepherds are no different. They have this opportunity to have bad bites just as readily as any other breed. The breed is so young when you look at dog history, especially as we know it in the U.S. There's so little recording done of who had a good or bad bite and so on that you almost have to start from where you are unless you've been at it a long time to know what the bites were like ten years

ago. Occasionally you'll come up with a cross or an individual who will produce a bad bite and it's something you just have to be aware of.

Dogs can work. Thank God the Australian Shepherd is dual purpose. If it could only be a show dog, couldn't be a pet or a stock dog, those avenues for usefulness would be closed off to you and all you'd have would be this conformation show dog; you'd probably have to put a lot more down because so few of them really ever become super show dogs. But they are marvelous pets, if you watch the temperament. I stress mellowness; I like my dogs to be protective but not hysterical nor quick to bite. Mellow, calm kind of dog, not a high-strung fence runner. I would not give you three cents for a dog like that. I cannot get along with them. I'm kind of a high-strung person; I like my dogs to be calm.

I like them friendly, loving to be petted by other people. I never worry about my dogs racing out and biting somebody indiscriminately when I invite them in, but when we're not home, I don't expect those dogs would let those same people in the front yard. If the person was a super knowledgeable dog person and had the wherewithal and knew how to get by these dogs, they probably could come up to the front door, but he'd have to be a brave person to just walk into a yard full of barking dogs. I don't think any of my dogs would physically harm him to the point that he would be in danger of losing his life. He might get pinched on; I'm not saying one of them wouldn't maybe grab him by the pant leg, put his mouth on the shoe or something and try to stop him some way. If Dick or the children or myself were being attacked by someone or approached in a negative manner by someone, they would have to go through that dog to get to us.

Aussies read people; they can sense and most Aussies are very tuned to people. The Aussie is especially sensitive to vibes as to how people approach you; they can read your body, they sense what you're going to do. For the most part, they are willing to accept just about anybody at face value except when the bad guy comes along, and thank God we don't come across many bad guys.

I will say that Dick's dogs have mellowed over the years because of my stressing this mellow temperament. It had to come. There are too many Australian Shepherds being bred today that are high-strung, that are fear-biters, that bite first and ask questions later. The saddest kind



Ch. Sorensen's Cherry Brandy, Certified Stock Dog (cattle).

of phone call is the one I get from a family who has an Australian Shepherd and need a home for it because it has bitten the neighbor's kids, the mailman, or them. There are still a lot of dogs out there with this type of temperament.

If there's an area that we need to work on as a group of breeders, it's temperament. I don't mean making "sissies" out of them, making lap dogs out of them, making them totally unprotective. You couldn't ever make the dog, as a whole, that way. But we've got to mellow them out, got to get that high-strung, fear-biting type of temperament eliminated from the breeding program, and there's also the dog that is not a fear biter. He is a very aggressive, overly protective type of dog. They have a much smaller place in the breed than they used to. Those are the type of dogs we saw fifteen years ago that were very

aggressive, very aloof; not fear-biters, believe me. These dudes were not scared when they bit you. (laughter) No way! They had no fear in their body. They met you head on, head up, and if you walked in the door or made a wrong move, there was a good chance that dog would reach out there and take a piece of you. Those dogs are slowly but surely passing on to the big dog heaven in the sky and there are not so many around anymore, but there are still a few breeders that do breed them, that like that macho image. That's why there are some Pit Bull breeders around; they like that macho image of this big, tough, aggressive dog, but there's no place in society for this kind of dog anymore, in any breed, and I'm not just talking about Australian Shepherds. I don't want to walk up to one of these dogs that's barely under control and all he wants to do is eat me for

lunch. They are too dangerous.

**Is temperament the most serious problem in the breed today?**

Yes, really. Somebody might tell you it's lack of working ability or whatever, but we are talking of serious problems. Lack of working ability is not a serious problem; it's a lack, period. A poor temperament is a serious problem; it becomes a problem for other people around you if the dog is in harm's way, so to speak. He is dangerous; he's a loaded gun laying on the table.

**Are most breeders working on this, aware of the problem?**

Most breeders are aware of the problem. Most prefer the type of temperament that gets along, but there are a few breeders out there who have this image. Maybe they are fearful people, I don't know, but they like their dogs ultraproductive and quick to bite. They love leaving the dog in the back of the pickup truck with the door open and all the guns and money lying on the front seat, and just dare anybody to go near the truck with this little slavering beast hanging down over the side trying to bite your face off. There are a lot of people out there that like that; I suppose as long as there is that demand for a nasty biter, there'll be people who cater to them for the bucks, but that type of dog doesn't have a place in society. It's been on television, and I'm not talking breeds; I'm just talking instances where people have come to harm, they've been in harm's way of dogs with that type of temperament. There are too many people out there now. Society has no need for animals like that of any breed.

I'm a temperament freak. I have to train my dogs, have to live with them; they have to live with other people, go to dog shows. They have to be able to be taught, to be responsive, so temperament is the heart of the dog; it's the bottom line.

**What's your criteria for accepting bitches for outside service?**

We don't get a lot of bitches in here for breeding. They have to have an eye checkup and the hips x-rayed. They have to have a health check, a fecal. I don't ask for a negative heartworm if it's a local dog. Brucellosis, of course, on bitches that come in, even if it is from Colorado, we ask for this.

**For what reasons would you refuse a bitch?**

There's a bunch. Probably they're about the same reasons that you'd refuse a bitch. One because of physical defects, hereditary defects, and then temperament. Then just overall general poor

quality, but ... there's always a but there ... bitches come that are superb stock dogs that are physically sound, have good temperaments, but their conformation, maybe their color or their coat texture or something is not show quality, but I still feel that the working ability is so important that we will allow those bitches to be bred to our stud dogs because the owner may very possibly be trying to improve, and if you can't take a good working bitch with maybe average conformation and upgrade her, then what can a sincere breeder do to improve the overall quality of the conformation of his stock? He can stay at home, breed her to Joe Blow's stock dog down the street, who may or may not have papers, may or may not be purebred; he will add to the general dogdom as a whole. They are nice working stock dogs but continue to split the breed.

Every time a breeder ONLY accepts show bitches to his kennel to be bred to his stud dogs, he is splitting the breed and losing the dual purpose concept. The road to the dual purpose dog is the slow one. Anybody can breed conformation dogs if that's all they have to take into consideration; anybody can raise stock dogs. But to raise good looking stock dogs is kind of where we're coming from, but it's a slower road.

**Would you breed a dog with a serious fault if the overall general conformation of the animal is very good?**

Please qualify "serious fault" for me. Straight shoulder, cowhocks or bad bites?

**Say a bad bite.**

No. I would suggest that they spay the bitch and get a better puppy. I have even given sincere people a dog if they had the right motives and ideals, if they want something better, if they come to me with a poor quality bitch. I mean really poor quality, say a bad bite, which I consider a hereditary defect, and/or a poor eye check or something like that. Maybe marginal hips, it's still sound, a good working dog, but maybe a marginal hip X-ray, I'll give them a dog. The money is not important to me; what's important to me are the people that I'm dealing with, their sincerity of what they want to do with their dog. It's more important for me to have a nice dog in a good home on an individual basis with people than to sit in my kennel and have limited exposure to people and to things.

As long as Dick and I have been raising dogs, we've always had too many dogs. Our young dogs kind of suffer for it.

They have a lot of puppy socialization, if it's one I want to keep. Sometimes they don't have the individual attention that I feel they should have just because I'm spread out a little thin. When I come across a couple, or even a single person, who wants a good dog but they don't have the money to lay out for a good dog, but they have the facility, the ability to feed it well, have the sincere desire to learn to work it or to obedience train, or to even show it in conformation, I'll give them a dog to get that dog in a home on a one-on-one relationship. The money is not important; the relationship is. The home is.

**You kind of help the novice along?**

Where were we when we all started? We were at the bottom, everybody was, and if you didn't have a breeder who helped you, it was hard to do it by yourself. You've got to have somebody help you. As long as Dick and I have raised dogs, Australian Shepherds and the Border Collies, too, but Australians Shepherds specifically, we feel like we've been around as long or longer than any of them, but with a new breed, like when Becky wanted to show AKC, the Aussies not in AKC; she wanted to show in Junior Showmanship, wanted to show with her peers. We had people help us, as many years as we've been raising dogs. She was given a gorgeous Brittany show bitch ... just given ... "Here, take this dog; do something with it." Their ideal was the same as mine. It's really refreshing to find people who are willing even today to start you and help you; it was great.

**What other kind of help do you offer the novice who comes to you?**

Everything. We'll help ... depending on where they live; the geographics of it can sometimes be rather difficult in offering our sheep and our knowledge to start them with that puppy or dog. We have a young man visiting here today, Keith Kitchen, who bought a pet quality stock dog from us at a very reasonable price. I felt that he was sincere and would work the dog and give it the type of home that any dog could wish for. I was right on all counts. Where I missed about Keith is that he wants to show conformation, too; he took this lumpy, overdone black puppy, started showing it conformation, totally show trained it, struggled with this puppy. This puppy had more front and more rear than his little rubber band body could handle; he was an awkward puppy. Keith hauled that puppy to shows, and I mean, we all cheered him on. He took his lumps in the ring because he had this lumpy,

awkward puppy. Now, this ugly duckling has grown into a swan, and I'm thrilled. This was a pet quality puppy. He fooled me.

Now Keith is going to show this puppy in conformation, probably finish his championship, and hopefully maybe do something in obedience, and definitely work the dog. This facility here is at his disposal to work that dog. He lives up here, so it's easy for him; he's in college right now so doesn't get as much done as he'd like to. He has that opportunity. That opportunity is offered anybody that buys a dog from us. If it's not help over the telephone at midnight, it's, "Come to the place; let's look, let's see what's going on with the dog. Let us help you."

**How many times do you breed a bitch?**

Never more than once a year. Probably three or four times over her lifetime. For as many dogs as we have, we produce very few puppies. I have several bitches that all take turns having a litter of puppies, but if I raise two litters that year, there'll be three bitches who will not be bred that year at all, maybe not even the next year for one or two of them. I will raise a litter of puppies out of them occasionally but since I have two to four to pick from that year, that means there are three or four that aren't bred. Then the bitches that aren't bred, maybe their turn will come up again.

In building the breeding program, I sometimes have to wait for males that I think are going to be produced. It takes time for those dogs to be proven out before you can use them. I know a lot of the breeders, know what their planned breedings are. I have a female in mind that we have that I think would line up nicely with that pedigree, and when those puppies come around, if there is a puppy produced that looks like a stud dog prospect, we'll wait on that puppy to grow up and have his hips and eyes checked, to see what his working ability is like, and how he's doing in temperament. Then we have saved her for him and we go on and use that dog.

I buy outside stud dogs. I sometimes will buy young dogs that I think are super prospects; I'll test breed them on a couple of bitches here in the kennel. Sometimes I'll sell them, sometimes I'll keep them. I don't even know what the criteria is for that particular stud dog to stay here. Most of the dogs I pick, that I prove out, sometimes they are purchased as an investment. I've done that occasionally, and then sometimes they are purchased and then just stay here as outside stud dogs, outside



Becky Sorensen in 1985 with a three day sweep of Best Jr. Handler awards and Ch. Colorado's Talk of the Town with a Best in Match.

bloodlines for us. There has been an occasional dog we've purchased that has really clicked with our bitches. Those puppies produced here have just written history. I've made a decision, probably a bad one, to sell the dog prior to those puppies really coming to fruition. These people buy this dog, and boy, have they got the world by the tail because the puppies produced here write history for that particular stud dog. I sold it; I'm out, their gain. Probably, in a lot of this, we've found ourselves in that position. You can't keep everything you raise, can't keep everything you buy, but you're always trying, always reaching for the golden ring. I can honestly say we have made reputations for some excellent stud dogs that are used here today ... not here, but in other people's kennels.

**How do you feel about people who breed to the current winner regardless**

**of the dog's pedigree?**

They are only kidding themselves. Anybody can match up two dogs. Breeders as a whole know the dogs that are in the ring that will do them some good, but just to breed to a dog because he has a big reputation is folly if you are only breeding for the reputation and the wins. It might be the handler at the end of the leash. He or she might be a very well-known person and have a marginal dog, but that handler is well-known by the judges; they get put up more often than maybe they should, and to only breed to a reputation, you're not getting the handler in the whelping box. You are getting the poor beast she's leading. (laughter)

**What age do you evaluate your puppies for conformation, working potential, obedience?**

We do a puppy temperament test, trainability, temperament type thing, for all

our customers. It's written in a book, "How to Raise a Puppy You Can Live With." Claire Rutherford put this book together with some expert help; we love that temperament test. It teaches us about puppies that are trainable, that are kind of natural; it puts them in a submissive through the aggressive category as far as going to a home with children. It separates the ideal pet from the not so ideal pet, and yet you can have a puppy that maybe grades out to not be such an ideal pet, but yet the owner is more suited to that type of a temperament. You have to look at the family when you're placing them.

So seven weeks is very important for that puppy test; that's when we do it. Working ability, watch the puppies at play. When you're out walking with a litter, which can be a challenge, you see which puppies run around in front of you to stop you and which puppies are behind you hanging onto your heels and pant leg, dragging along behind. That sometimes can be a clue to their style of work. Possibly the puppy biting you on the heel and following right behind you is the puppy who would be the driver, the low heeling cattle dog. Possibly the puppy who is making wide outruns on your body and coming into the front and trying to stop you in front might be the dog that will be the nicer fetch dog, maybe be more suited to sheep or a working environment that would require him to bring the stock to you. Watch them at play with each other.

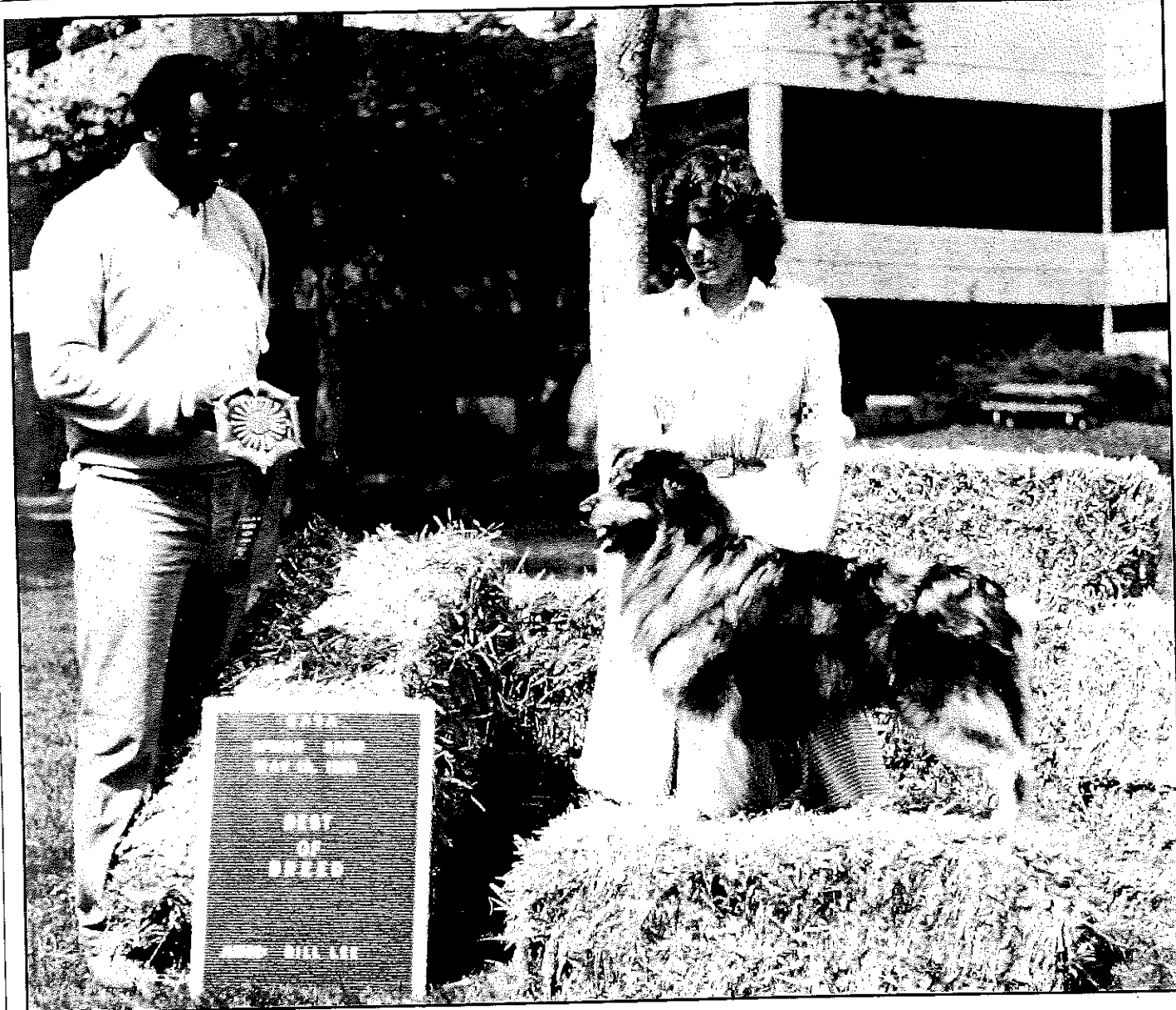
We also have a little test that we do with the wool ball. This shows us early visual capacity plus the scent of the wool ball is very enticing to the puppies. We can see which are the first ones to run and grab it and shred it and which are the ones that approach it cautiously, circling, etc. We can play with this wool ball a little bit and look at working ability. You can also drag a rag across the yard and see which are the first ones to run in and grab it and want to shred it or something. You can look for that early aggression, the early grip, the early desire to use the teeth first, and to hang on; the more tenacious puppies sometimes make the better cattle working puppy. They have the most force; that would be a puppy you'd have to back off lightly for sheep. Be a little more stern with him on sheep or he would want to run in and grab the wool and maybe do some damage. There are a lot of little things, but mostly it's just watching them around each other, how they run and play, grab the other one by the hock behind and bite and make that puppy sit down.



Leigh Ann set the pace for her sister, Becky. Here she is with Ch. Colorado's Columbine winning overall Champion 4-H at the Larimer County Fair.

We introduce puppies at six to seven weeks, and I'll explain why, into the duck pen sometimes in a group; they are braver usually in a group when they are taken away from their home that they've known. We watch them maneuver the ducks. Ducks are fascinating for the puppies; they can't really do a lot of physical harm to the puppy but they move when the puppy moves and kind of respond like small sheep. They make funny noises and really attract the puppies. At that time,

we can watch individuals maneuver the ducks and how they react to the ducks at this age. Puppies go through a funny period from eight to ten weeks; they have a little mental scared time. It's bad to sell them at that age; it's bad to expose them to new things. We've seen puppies that at seven weeks that will go in and herd ducks like gangbusters; when he turns eight weeks of age, he acts frightened by being in the same situation. That is just a mental development.



Ch. Colorado's Talk of the Town. Multiple BIM Winner. Our most current Champion Stud. His progeny are approaching championships and many work for a living.

Evaluation is kind of fun. Eight weeks is my favorite time for conformation evaluation. The faults that are more glaring in an adult are there at eight weeks; they are just smaller, of course. As the years go by, I get a little better all the time looking at an eight-week-old puppy as far as a conformation prospects or a show quality puppy. That adult dog is pretty much as he is as an adult as he is at eight weeks, as far as his faults. There are, of course, faults of legs and feet structure that correct with maturity. Overall, if you think you have a show puppy at eight weeks, it usually pans out when he grows up.

I like to go over shoulders at eight weeks; seven weeks is a little premature.

I like to watch the movement of an eight-week-old puppy over a seven- or six-week-old puppy; it just seems like that rear is a little more "there" at eight weeks than it is at six or seven. In the next two weeks, then they start to elongate and maybe get more extreme and fall out of that little package that they are at eight weeks; they get ganglier as they get older. Eight weeks is my favorite time to pick a show puppy. I've done a lot of them at seven weeks and goofed, but you always try.

**How accurate do you feel Australian Shepherd pedigrees are?**

Very accurate. A pedigree is only as good as the integrity of the person writing it. We have a lot of pride in who we are -

that sounds corny and it's right off the television - but Australian Shepherd breeders maybe knew many years ago that they had something special; the people who eventually registered their dogs were very proud of each and every dog in that pedigree. They not only had a knowledge of the dogs they had on a personal basis, but these dogs kind of represented a family history, their own family. My grandpa's dog - my old dog that raised the dog - that kind of thing. Very accurately, they kept track of those dogs. How and why, I don't know, but maybe it's because of the personal history of the families involved, and the type of people that they were. They were livestock

people, for the most part, and the salt of the earth as far as being honest. There are a lot of city slickers that maybe might give you a fast buck and a fast talk, a fast sale, but the ranch and livestock people are honest. In my dealings with them as a whole, from the business that I was in, there's just not a better group of people in the world than the livestock and farm people. Since the Australian Shepherd breed stemmed from that type of roots, those origins and those type of people, the records are accurate because they are built on family pride, pride in the dogs, and maybe in knowing they had something special.

I've come across very few pedigrees that I know have been forged. I know of an instance where my own bloodline was absconded with and put on another dog, but this person was not a breeder. He was a puppy mill; he had no stake in the dogs whatsoever except to drag a litter of blue and white puppies along with him and sell them at every livestock show he pulled into. I do know of that instance where my breeding was put on another dog. This gentleman waited two years to get a puppy from us. It was exactly what he wanted; it just happened to be a female and he changed the papers to be a male and he put the papers on his male stud dog because he didn't have any papers on him at the time. He made the mistake of inviting me into his trailer which he took around after every livestock show, every exposition in the U.S. I looked up on the wall and said, "Gee, that's an interesting breeding. I thought I sold you a female." And it happened to have his dog's name on it. I caught him on it. I wrote the registry and they pulled all the papers from the gentleman and to my knowledge, he has fallen from the face of the registered Australian Shepherd world.

There are too many people in this breed now that can catch you at it. There's always somebody out there a little smarter than you are and you might say something to somebody, wishful thinking or something, and it's just not worth it to falsify records. That was my firsthand knowledge of somebody who was pulling a fast one, but he wasn't a breeder. That sort of says it right there.

**Is your breed standard a good one?**

Oh! Hit me in a personal pocket. (laughter) Our earlier conversations stemmed around breed standards. The ASCA had our Colorado Club do the Standard. There were a lot of very knowledge-



Ch. Colorado's Sunbonnet Sioux CD, STD's, red merle was handled by Becky when she was the ASCA top Jr. Handler.

able people there, some good dogs in attendance. We had dogs sitting there from every bloodline. We tried to write a standard that would not discriminate specifically against any one particular bloodline and yet was not so general that it would fit any kind of a bobtailed mutt going down the road. We did a pretty good job. There's some holes in it; there always are. There were some things that the breeders as a whole changed after the standard came away from committee. But the breeders voted for it; it had to do with white trim and the interpretation of the white trim. I happen to be a fanatic about white trim and where it should be and where it shouldn't be, the maximum and minimum allowed. I do not like to see excessive white trim on the dog. It leads to problems down the road, especially when we are dealing with the merle gene. If we weren't dealing with a merle gene it would be a whole new ball game. But when we have novice people in the breed and they allow a lot of white trim on the dogs, then the novices can get into trouble with it. With that in mind, I try to restrict the white trim a little more than what the standard allows for it now.

**You said you were instrumental in writing this?**

Yes. The Colorado Australian Shep-

herd Association was given the job of writing the breed standard for the Australian Shepherd Club of America. Several breeders were in attendance and it was written over a period of several days; it's an annotated standard. There's a complete set of annotations that goes along with it for judges who are interested. Hopefully all judges get the set of annotations. We wrote to many, many expert AKC people asking for their opinion; several of them responded with excellent suggestions. We took that all into mind; it wasn't just a bunch of Aussie breeders with no known background about conformation, throwing their hand in. We actually had dogs present; we had expert opinions that were written about what we had written, and some excellent help as to content, what we could and could not say. We tried to research it very well.

Several of the people in the group had previous breeding experience from other breeds, so that really helped by bringing more of the dog world into play than just limited to our own breed.

**Do you see a great difference in type in your breed?**

Yes. I chuckle ... a favorite thing is when I hear people say, "If this breed goes AKC, they will split the breed." Well honey, this breed is not AKC and it's split. Breed-

ers split a breed, not the AKC. That's my two cents.

People raise dogs to suit their own purpose. If all they do is work stock, they are going to raise a dog that's bred for its working ability and they are not that concerned with how big it is or what kind of hair it's got or anything. They are going to raise it to work stock, period; that's what they breed for, that's what they use the dog for. People who show in conformation are going to raise a dog that they'll want to show in conformation; that's what they want to do with it. The obedience people will seek a temperament, a trainability level and a body type that suits what they want, to compete. Then pet owner, hopefully the poor guy gets a healthy dog with a sound temperament that will be a long-lived family companion. Out of all three groups come the pets. Somebody once told me that 80% of the dogs bred in the U.S. came from backyard breeders, the single female or male owner contributed to more pets than the other 10% who were dog farms and the other 10% who were "professional breeders" as you and I hope that we are. So a lot of the pets that are sold out of a kennel sometimes are pretty marginal dogs, and yet a breeder will always keep in the back of his mind that that pet quality dog is probably going to be the breeding stock of the future, and maybe will contribute 80% to any one breed, as an overall total, so quite a bit of attention needs to be paid to that pet leaving the place. Everybody needs to keep their quality up.

I try to feel, when I sell a pet puppy that is not breeding quality, that it will be spayed or neutered and priced accordingly. If I sell a puppy out of here that I feel will just be a nice pet for somebody, I charge \$50 more at the time of purchase, and if it is spayed or neutered, I pay for this. That helps sometimes when you don't have the money to pay for spaying, if the breeder will do it for you, but you paid for it a long time ago; yet, it sometimes makes people think twice about buying a lesser quality puppy for the same price that a breeding quality puppy would be, but if they sincerely want a pet, they'll buy it, pay the extra money and then have it spayed or neutered later on your nickel.

#### **How would you describe the ideal Aussie?**

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Since you're talking to me, I guess we have to sit through what I think is ideal. Like the question, "What is a medium sized dog?" Somewhere between a Chi-



Ch. Slash V Wild Timber. Winning Best of Breed at a past CASA Spring Specialty, he is our current outcross stud dog.

huahua and a Great Dane, I guess.

Medium size, I would say a male approaching the 60-pound size, a female approaching 35 pounds, but it might be easier for people to relate to this weightwise. A male height at the withers, of course the standard describes this pretty much as a medium sized dog. Twenty-one and a half inches at the withers; 22 inches. I don't even mind a 23-inch male. My females I like to be 19 1/2 to 20 1/2; sometimes a 21 inch bitch, but that's getting kind of big for a girl, even though I like big girls. One of my favorite bitches in the kennel is a big bitch.

Ideally - let's describe the ideal male; we'll go with male characteristics as far as this. Head and expression is very important. The standard calls for the length of the muzzle and the length of the backskull and the width of the backskull to be pretty equal. I prefer the muzzle a little bit shorter, not a lot, but a little. I have a male here who has a perfectly measured, calipered head; if I changed anything about him, it would be the length of his muzzle. I'd like to see the muzzle a little shorter.

I like a well-defined stop. It adds soul to the expression in the face. I prefer a dark eye versus a light eye, especially on a dark dog. The darker the dog, the darker

the eye is the most complimentary. A light eye on a dark dog detracts from the total expression. I like the expression to be intense, to have soul and warmth and confidence when you look at the eye of a dog. We all do.

I love a long neck. Usually a long neck on a dog indicates a nicely placed shoulder. Firm top, a male dog now, would be slightly longer than tall, which is what the standard calls for. I don't really care for square dogs. I never have liked that look, to be square. Our standard gives a more pleasing, more functional overall look when the body is slightly longer than tall.

Croup can be tough to get, a good one, on an Aussie. Sometimes they can be too steep, so I like the ideal type of a croup slope, nice, not too steep; I've kind of got a pet peeve against steep croup because it messes up the set of the hind leg.

Short hocks, nice length of stifle. I have another pet peeve against straight stifles and lack of rear angulation. I like a well-angulated dog in the front and the rear. Fronts are the hardest thing to put on the Australian Shepherd. The ideal front is a well-balanced front, a nice layback to the upper arm, nicely set under the body with the legs, but not like a Terrier front. I don't

like to see the legs on dogs set to the front of the body unless the standard calls for it; it doesn't call for it in our breed. I like to see the legs set well-under the body; it usually indicates a nice length of lower arm.

A nice slope to the pastern. I hate a dog that knuckles over. This usually indicates a poor shoulder assembly or something wrong in the shoulder assembly when in a show pose. When I talk about knuckling over, I'm talking about the pastern being so straight and the knee popping over; they call it buck-kneed in horses, an opposite of being over in the pastern would be calf-kneed, a dog who is very caved back in the pastern and the front of the leg, a very weak pastern. So I like a nice slope to the pastern because it usually sets the leg nicely above the foot and indicates a well-placed shoulder with plenty of length.

I like a dog that appears to be short on top and long on bottom, kind of like a horse. It usually indicates that the shoulder is well-laid back, the croup has a proper set, the back itself is short, the loin has got a nice length. I don't like to see long loins in dogs. I like to see the rib cage carried well-back and a fairly short loin where a man's hand would span the length of the loin.

The bottom line long and deep bodied, not excessively deep. You can get carried away with deep body and the dog gets clunky, can't carry himself well over jumps, but the brisket at least carried down to the point of the elbow.

Then you get to personality; that means a tremendous amount to an individual. I like an outgoing dog who usually has no fear of strangers, a dog that is watchful, protective when in the home environment, and yet fun loving and easy to get "up." With a chirp of your voice and an up gesture from you, he's happy, he's watching, interested in everything you are doing; he sees everything that is going on around him, a dog who is visually alert, always seeing and watching what's going on. He watches your hands, watches your body English, and is really aware of what's going on.

Color - rich color. Black dark, dark red, a clear base coat; if it's a blue dog, no reddish or muddy colors in the coat. Where the gray area of the coat is gray, it should be from the lightest of silver or to the deepest of smoke, but no reddish, ruddy cast to the blue or the blacks. The red dogs, the darker the red, the better; red is a color that has trouble with the sun, which will lighten the reds and burn the

dog's hair. All breeds that come in this red color have problems with that, so the darker the red, the better the depth of color, and the easier it is, perhaps, to keep that dog in fairly presentable condition.

Nose, well-colored; I do not like to see pink spots on puppies past three or four months of age. I like to see this colored in by weaning time. Lips with full pigment; I don't like to see pink in the mouth or a lot of pink on the lips. Well-colored lips and eye rims also well-colored.

If there's white trim on the dog, it's strictly confined to the trim areas, especially the blaze, especially white on the hind legs or a white sock behind. I don't like to see white up the leading edge of the stifle on a dog; it indicates possible production later in that dog's life of a patterned coat. I like to see the blaze confined to the smaller areas of the blaze area on a dog's head; I don't like to see a huge bald face. That bothers me.

White on the neck - from no white on the neck to a full collar, as long as it's confined to the neck area and the white collar does not go down onto the body. To me, trim is like frosting on a cake; a good dog is a good dog whether he's got white trim or not. People who select dogs for the color of their trim are fooling themselves. An all black dog with not a white hair on his body is as stunning an animal as the dog who has a full blaze and a full white collar; they hold their own anywhere. They almost have to be better because when they're black or dark, they create more of a silhouette and faults show up more readily, so the darker the dog, if you're considering showing him in conformation, almost has to be a better dog because he shows up more in the ring than does a dog who has broken body color, like the merles. It's easier to cover up faults when the color pattern is broken on the coat.

Movement - free moving, ground covering, no crabbing. Correct rears, not cowhocked, just really from a judge's eye view, sound coming and going. Nice balance front and rear; there's nothing sadder than a dog with a tremendous rear drive without the front to handle it. I'm probably more conservative when I judge dogs than I am at home. I will give way to a dog who is more balanced maybe than to one who is prettier or has a better rear than he does have a front, and maybe be criticized for it, but will go for a dog that's more balanced, and maybe not as dramatic from the side, but is more correct coming and going. That's from a judging standpoint.

### **What are the more serious faults or problems in the breed today?**

Front assembly, shoulders. Shoulders are the hardest things to get on these dogs. Some kennels maybe will scream they can't get good rears, but in judging the dogs and having been almost coast to coast in judging this breed, looking at everybody's bloodlines and having my hands on them at one time or another, a variety of dogs from a variety of geographical areas, shoulders are the hardest to get on them, good shoulder placement, good fronts.

### **Is the growing popularity of the Aussie helpful or harmful?**

I like that phrase, "The eyes of Texas are upon you." When a breed becomes popular, it's amazing what public opinion will do to breeders. All of a sudden, you've had these dogs for ten years, and the spotlight falls on your dogs. You start sitting back and thinking, "Gee, what will people think of my dogs?" It makes you start to look around at what other people are doing with their dogs. In the last ten years, it's been a plus. A lot more people are x-raying hips, more are checking eyes, more are cautious about temperament. It's not just the local rancher down the road buying your puppy anymore; if he runs out and bites somebody, the guy out in Timbuktu, he probably doesn't care, probably hopes the guy gets bit anyway. But now, with the spotlight a little more on the breed, people are sharpening their pencils a little bit and maybe doing some more homework.

### **What are the changes you've seen because of this popularity?**

An improvement in overall conformation, an awareness of what you have, what you're doing, maybe more thought placed on the overall concept of the breed rather than on just one thing. I'm hoping that dual purpose is being stressed more now than it used to be, people not just breeding for one thing or the other.

### **How do you feel about the way the voting went, not getting AKC recognition?**

It upset me. People will say, "I remember ten years ago ... when Leslie Sorensen was against AKC," and I was. I thought AKC recognition would be a negative as far as the dogs were as a whole then. I've changed my way of thinking through education, through becoming more knowledgeable not only about the AKC but about the people who are involved with AKC registered dogs and what has happened to the Australian Shepherd

in the ten years ... I'm saying ten years because I'm trying to be fairly current on this ... without AKC recognition, and the things that were told to me then still are true today. Something I remember Ruth McGuire telling me to my face, "Leslie, the AKC does not breed dogs; breeders breed dogs, breeders split a breed; the AKC is a registering body only." I thought, well, that's probably true, and you know, it still is today. I've seen the breed split right down the middle because of the breeders; they breed what they want to breed, regardless of who is registering the dog.

We have a breed that we're showing in conformation, we're showing in obedience, or trying to, we're showing him in the stock ring, we're working them at home. There's nothing that we do with the dogs that AKC would change other than open up another avenue of competition for us. I felt, when the majority of breeders voted against the AKC, they told me that there was something I could not do with my dogs. Let me put this another way: If I told you, Nancy, as an Australian Shepherd breeder, that you could not work your dogs, I forbid you by my vote to work your dog in competition, that's how I felt when they told me I could not compete with my peers in an area of competition that I wanted to; they forbid me from doing something with my own animal that I sincerely wanted to do. It would not have changed their breeding ethics; maybe they were afraid that it would. Maybe they were afraid that when the "eyes" of the dog world fell upon them, they and their dogs would fall short and they somehow would be left behind.

**What was the main deciding factor that caused the vote to go the way it did?**

Fear. Fear of competing, or having their dogs held up to the dog world as a whole and not passing muster. All we asked for the vote was to seek Miscellaneous status so that a junior showman could show in Junior Showmanship, our dogs could compete in obedience for obedience legs, and those that wanted to show in conformation could compete in the Miscellaneous class for nothing, for practice, for fun match stuff at big bucks. I'm talking about a \$14 entry; if you reverse it's the fun match entry of \$3. The gas is the same, the motel room is the same, no matter where you go, whether it's a specialty. We are paying entry fees of \$9, \$10 and \$12 a class at our specialties, so I'm not really talking about that much more money. For the vote to go it as it did, was



Ch. Colorado's Clint, our resident Gun Smoke "gene" bank.

a real shocker. But history repeats itself. A lot of the other breeds that have been denied AKC registry by their breeders had split, as had ours; we now have another registry, the American Shepherd registry. Those people are probably made up of the several hundred people that were denied the opportunity to show their dogs so they want to show them. They've started their own registry and are going to go on in spite of the people who drug their feet and have had lack of foresight or whatever to go on - lack of confidence, I have no idea. Lack

of knowledge - I don't know how to really pinpoint it, only as a fear of the unknown as a reason they voted against it, but the people that do know and that want to go on, want to compete with their peers, have formed their own registry and are going to go on.

In time, when they achieve AKC Miscellaneous recognition, those that voted no are going to kill themselves getting their dog registered and AKC recognized. I'm not saying anything new here; it has happened in the past and history

always repeats itself.

The upsetting thing to me about this whole split is that they want to change the name of the breed to the American Shepherd; they will find a lot of conflict about that, not only from other Australian Shepherd breeders, but from people who have white German Shepherds who call them American Shepherds. There is an American Shepherd club already, made up of white German Shepherds; I know there is going to be a problem there. When and if this thing comes to another head, I think we will go back and use the Australian Shepherd name, achieve AKC recognition and will go on; I don't know when, but that's what's going to happen.

**Do you show your own dogs?**

Yes, I sure do.

**How important is grooming for the show ring?**

Important. There's nothing worse than going over several hundred dogs and smelling pretty bad by the time you're through, so taking a dirty dog into the ring is kind of an insult to the judge. What you're kind of doing is telling the judge that you don't respect him, to bring him a dirty dog. Respect your dog. I always like to bring the dog in well-presented. I don't feel trimming whiskers is necessary, but if that's your bag, whatever. Feet neat, nails trimmed, coat, of course, always clean. If there's any coat that needs to be removed on them, the fetlocks or pasterns or anything, the hocks, take those off, those fuzzy areas. If the coat is obstructing the view of the hock, the bloomers behind, they should be shortened and shaped so that the hind leg becomes visible and is not covered up by heavy bloomers, especially on the heavily coated dog; they tend to carry a lot of coat behind. Some bitches can, too. That area should be considered and neatened up.

I don't believe in doing major coat shaping to fill in real questionable areas. There is such a thing as grooming to win, I understand that, and there are times when a coat detracts from a nice croup or would make a dog appear high in the rear if he has excess hair; then I would consider reducing the volume of the coat in that area if it seriously detracted from an otherwise nice, balanced dog. A thorough brushing is really important; just have that coat in peak condition, very clean and the ragtag ends neatened up and nails trimmed. Teeth cleaned, please, folks. As a judge I have looked at many, many dirty teeth on dogs. It's kind of like, you look at this gorgeous, immaculately groomed dog

and then open the mouth and it's filled with yellow plaque covered teeth; it's a real letdown to look at a nice dog with dirty teeth. This is probably an area that some really top handlers sometimes forget. As far as the dog's overall health, it's very important to have clean teeth. I probably learn more about grooming with the Junior Showmanship background that Becky has and what Junior Showmanship judges were looking for in the grooming of the particular dogs that she was handling. That's where I became very aware of the condition of the teeth of the dog. Leigh Ann, our older girl, showed in that, too; that's when it became very apparent to me that the inside is as important as the outside.

**Would you like to elaborate on what you felt the Junior Showmanship judges were looking for?**

Cleanliness on the part of the child and the dog. Clean ears, neatly trimmed, not extensively groomed, but clean and neat to the level that it was pleasant for the dog. He would appear nice looking and neat. Naturalness, ease of handling, a team - those things might not be real obvious to someone watching, but the judge sometimes bases more on the partnership between the child and the dog than they do on maybe perfection or artificialness. Some children that handle have been so coached they look like little robots. That really detracts in the eyes of some judges from the overall performance. You can usually tell a child and a dog who have worked together often because they have that smoothness, a natural companionship and communication between the child and the dog, that really enhances the overall performance. That's very important. A relaxed attitude on the part of the child, and an alert relaxed attitude, a familiar attitude on the part of the dog. Boredom is the hardest thing to keep out of a good showmanship dog's mind. They do get bored with it; it's hard to keep them fresh and really up. I've seen that happen. The dog gets bored with the whole thing and that's kind of sad and can be kind of tough on a child; they are trying their hardest and they've got this dog that's asleep, that's been through it so many times.

**Can you give us a judge's viewpoint of the Australian Shepherd in the ring as opposed to the breeder's?**

When a group of dogs comes into a ring, as a judge I get the feeling about the class as a whole; it's called first impression. Sometimes it doesn't hold up; some-

times the dog you get the first impression of is not the dog that you will use as your eventual winner. When the dogs come into the ring, you get that first impression and it's very important to a judge. This is very important in a big class. More often than not, this one pans out, that the first impression that you get of a particular dog coming into the ring is the dog that you'll use.

I stressed balance before in a dog; I probably stress balance more when I'm judging than I do at home. I will fall in love with certain individuals in my own kennel that I can win with that I probably wouldn't use myself. I might not put them up where somebody else might. Back to judging, I look at a very balanced individual, a dog who is correct coming and going and nice from the side with a good, long, ground covering, balanced stride that's not an overdriven behind nor lacking in front, or too much front and not enough rear. I like a nicely balanced moving dog; one that is balanced is usually more correct than one that is one way or the other.

I don't nitpick for color when I'm judging. I like clear, rich color; I will penalize a dog if he has very poor color, muddy color or no color, a real washed out or diluted color. I don't make any preference for white trim, copper trim, no trim ... the trim areas are where I am totally open. I never look for a "flashy" dog; I look for a good dog. The color is just extra, if it happens to be on a really good dog. I will put up a Plain Jane dog if it's better than a flashy one.

I never look at the handler. I have a terrible time when people come up to me afterwards without their dog and ask me what I thought of their dog because for the most part I don't even know who they are. I don't look at handlers. I'll pick a color of some clothing on the first person coming in so I know where to stop when I'm going around, to make sure that I keep everything organized in the ring. I only concentrate on the dogs. Sometimes during the course of judging, if someone will ask me right after the class what I thought of their dog, I will try to give an opinion at that time, give them my thoughts at that time. I have, on occasion, asked people not to come up to me and ask me what I thought about their dogs without their dogs. I don't look at people. You would think that you would, but I don't when I'm judging. When I'm outside the ring, of course you take in the whole picture of the group, but in the ring it's a different story; I only look at the dogs.

I don't take size into a lot of consideration when I'm judging. I will use a good

small dog as easily as I will a good big dog. I try not to put a lot of stress on a big dog; big, to me, is sometimes not better unless he is better, and then I'd go with him. You try to pick the best dog out there, knowing what you know about the breed.

Temperament and showmanship also have a part of it. No one likes to judge a dog who is timid, who is wanting to snap and bite. I will excuse a biter from the class, or a dog that I cannot put my hands on. I will not tolerate that in my class, in my Group. I have used dogs who have come into the ring with leather buckled on collars, enormous leashes tied full of knots, that were super dogs, they never gaited, they jumped all over their handlers; the lady or gentleman was totally unknowledgeable about ring procedure or what I wanted them to do, but they had a super dog, and I have used a dog that had a behavior problem as a winner in classes before. So behavior of the dog ... it makes it easier to judge if he's well-behaved, but it's not a total prerequisite to placing a class. I've used dogs that have been bad actors, as far as being rambunctious before. I have been in the ring with people who, if the dog moves a foot, in Winners, you lose; that is ridiculous. That, to me, shows a man or a woman judge who cannot make a decision. Dogs that move during the final pick ... these are not statues. These are breathing animals and they make mistakes and they may move while you are judging. That's probably a pet peeve about judges who want dogs to be a plastic statue in the ring. I don't care for that and I don't ask for that in my own judging. If he moves, so what!

Expression ... animation is all important, but I will look past a head when I'm judging. If a dog has a superb body and a good way of going and everything nice about the dog is good, I'll use that dog over a dog with a superb head and not as good a body. I'm not a headhunter type of judge. That has surprised me as the years have gone on. I thought I would be a real headhunter, but I have looked past that on certain individuals with certain, what I felt were in a couple of them, flawless body and movements. The head was kind of average. I would have improved greatly the head structure. This surprised me at the time. I used a bitch at a Washington specialty one time who could have used some help in the head. Other judges had put her up; I finished her championship that day, putting her Best of Breed over many specials, but I did not find the movement and the body conformation that I



found on my Winners Bitch. I took her all the way. I'm sure I had some heads going, scratching and wondering, "What is she doing?" But others had felt that way about that bitch before; she had some five point majors before she came to me and I finished her. She had a very plain head, was not particularly a showman, but boy, when they turned the leash loose on that dog, she never touched the ground; she was gorgeous, like something I hadn't seen very often. It's like a gift to have a dog that can move like that. I've seen it occasionally before and since, but it's unusual. I took her all the way and had no qualms about it whatsoever. So apparently, I feel as a judge that I can look past my specials if I don't find what I want there and go on with my Winners if they have what I need. Some judges won't. I've heard judges say, "I'll go Best of Breed with my specials no matter what's in the ring." That, to me, can be sad; sometimes a special cannot be the quality that the class dogs are; I don't like to hear that.

**Are Australian Shepherd judges today well-educated and knowledgeable in the breed?**

Since we are a rare breed, it can be a

problem, especially when we're trying to bring new people into the breed who are very knowledgeable in their own field and with their own breed, but conformation is conformation, and movement is movement. In a herding breed, it's pretty darn similar. If the judge is a knowledgeable, competent person in a herding breed, they usually make excellent Australian Shepherd judges.

Everyone has their opinion; everyone will pick a little different type than somebody else, but basic movement is the same. The handlers and the breeders of the herding breeds make very good judges for Australian Shepherds. We always need more people to come in and help us judge Australian Shepherds. Sometimes it's hard because the specialties will duplicate on the same weekend that other AKC shows are, so we have fewer and fewer people to pick from; we do lap over the AKC shows. It can be hard to get judges. I have been places where the judging has been very poor; that makes me wonder, of course, how well the standard is written when that happens. It probably just comes down to individual likes and dislikes of those particular

people. I find the herding breeders, handlers and judges are the best judges.

**What dogs do you feel have been instrumental in your breeding program?**

First off, I have to mention Sorensen's Gunsmoke. I don't know how many of our readers are familiar with horses, but in the quarter horse field, Leo was a very notable stallion, very important in a brood mare line. Gunsmoke was a top sire of females. Now I'm not sure if it was by our selection of taking pick females back always or if it really was the females in his litters that were more outstanding than the male dogs. I really feel that the latter is the case, but I'm open on that, too. Somebody may have another opinion who is not close to the dogs as we were then.

Gunsmoke produced an outstanding male dog by the name of Rowes Comanche Warrior; he was featured in a previous Australian Shepherd Quarterly. Rowes Comanche Warrior was the first working titled dog of the breed, was an excellent sire, very long lived, a tremendous producer. Gunsmoke probably is best known for his male dogs through Comanche. But the list of females goes on and on in the brief breeding time that the dog had and the few bitches that he was bred to. The females were outstanding, not only in their own right, but in their ability to produce.

He was Dick's first registered dog, a tremendous individual, a dog way ahead of his time. He was very unforgettable. You could never come across such devotion from an animal to a person as Gunsmoke's devotion was to Dick. If you could talk to anyone who knew Dick and Gunsmoke, they would say, "Now that was a pair, a man and his dog, of the ultimate meaning of that phrase." Devotion on both sides, constant companionship; it was really something to see.

Gunsmoke tolerated me, he allowed me to enter his life because I became a part of Dick's life. I never had the devotion that Richard enjoyed from the dog. I enjoyed Gunsmoke more through his puppies than what he would ever allow me to be as a good friend. He tolerated me, made space in his life for me because he had to. I admire the dog for it; I don't hold it against him a bit. For an animal to have that type of devotion to a man and allow someone else in his life speaks well for the dog, even though he never lavished the attention on me or on anyone that he lavished on Dick. We all understood.

But his puppies were an absolute joy. They had this head and coat and expres-

sion, this do or die attitude, in every single one of them. Little, fat tumble bugs - they all were so cobby, so nice and just so together, had such neat little personalities, every one of them. He stamped his puppies with a look that I've never seen in anybody else's bloodline except through Gunsmoke. He was one of those rare individuals that could produce himself, not only his temperament but his individual type, his longevity, just everything about him. He was exceptional, kind of a Man O' War among dogs, so to speak. He was very special and I probably spend way too much time talking about him. In the short period of time that I knew him, I feel honored to have that opportunity to be around a dog like that and to enjoy his puppies.

**Did he give your breeding program a definite type?**

Absolutely, unequivocally, a type and a temperament that you never get over. You always are looking for the "Gunsmoke pup." The Gunsmoke pup was the pup that had an incredible head, an incredible expression, the ability to look straight into your eyes; he never left your side even at five, six or seven weeks of age; he followed you right at your heels wherever you went. He did his best to do everything that you did. He bent over backwards to try and understand everything you were saying. He had incredible concentration. The face was complete with a set of eyes that you could just swim in, the depth of character that was in those faces. It's an uncanny thing, hard to put your finger on it, but we would get those particular puppies in a litter out of Gunsmoke, and they were just incredible. It's not just because I'm being sappy or anything; it was just that way and it's hard to say.

We've always been looking for that Gunsmoke type of dog, even today. I have a double bred grandson of his by the name of Ch. Colorado's Clint. Everything about the dog's type is typical Gunsmoke except his head type. That has been an unfortunate thing, as far as Clint is concerned; his head type was not the old Gunsmoke head. But Clint produces in his puppies that devotion, that do or die, want to be with you attitude. I really am tickled to death to have a dog in the breeding program like him.

We have one Gunsmoke daughter left, Colorado's Perky Miss, a multiple champion producer. Her daughters all work; she has titled working offspring and I know that when Perk has a litter of puppies, there are two or three in there

that are very special. Her mother was a Woods bred black bitch, Ch. Nickel's Little Bonnie; she was way before her time. She was an older female when we bought her. In six months, I finished her championship; she was five or six years of age and had had a litter of puppies if not every year of her life, possibly twice a year. (laughter) Raised a family of children before we got her, had been a working stock dog. She worked when we got her. She was probably the toughest female I have ever had my hands on. She was a fighter, a ruthless heeler on stock; I mean no stock could stand her down, they could not back her down. She'd wail into them and move them no matter what, she was so tough. She was aggressive, but had a pleasant disposition to be around, maybe a little bit on the high strung, quick side, but very interesting.

We bred her to Gunsmoke and produced Colorado's Perky Miss, who has gone on and done very well for us. Perk really epitomizes everything I'm looking for in a bitch as far as conformation and type and bloodline, mostly because she's a Gunsmoke daughter. She has a toughness about her that's like her mother, which sometimes I hold against her because she can be a little aggressive with other females, but I appreciate everything she's done for us. As far as type, I really like her; she's super and passes herself on to her puppies.

I mentioned a bitch by the name of Flirt; she was a Gunsmoke daughter. Flirt never really had the opportunity to produce the puppies that she could or should have. As an individual, she was tremendous; she had the marvelous temperament, the cutest head with the cutest set of little ears you ever saw in your life. She moved like silk. We won Best Blue Merle color class with her in California many years ago before they dropped the Best Color class. She had many wins before the championship program was in effect; probably would have been a champion had we had a conformation program in effect at the time she was being shown. The few puppies she did have were marvelous, just like her, the good and the bad. My only regret was that I was never able to breed her to our J Bar D Blue Boy. I think she might have been our missing link, so to speak, in the pedigree and the development of the female line of the kennel; I wish I'd been able to have her longer before she was killed.

Another very notable Gunsmoke daughter that we owned was a bitch by the



Sorensen's Gunsmoke, April 27, 1964 - November 22, 1977.

name of Sorensen's Blue Mist. She was bred to Wood Stubby and produced J Bar D Blue Boy. He was probably an ideal combination of the Wood's bloodline, developed by Fletcher Wood, and Sorensen's Gunsmoke. We had a very nice blend there. The Gunsmoke kind of mellowed out the aggression of the Woods dogs, made them a little more eager to please, and yet we got a lovely size and a beautiful blend of color and a nice conformation type from the dogs, from that blend; it was a very nice cross for us and we did it several times, maybe not direct crosses to Stubby again on Gunsmoke daughters, but grandchildren type of crosses, which were very nice.

Sorensen's Blue Mist produced several nice individuals. She herself never had a lot of puppies, but her most notable was Blue Boy, a stud dog that we used in our later breeding programs.

There are probably several other Gunsmoke daughters out there that I haven't mentioned and I should; maybe they'll come to mind later on.

A dog that we purchased as a stud dog was Ch. Taylor's Shamrock of Silverledge, CDX, a red merle male that we bought as a stud dog; we owned his sire at one time, Taylor's Luke the Drifter, CDX and we bred his mother, Taylor's Calamity Jane, CD; she had two legs on her CDX but got so ring wise they could never get

the X. (laughter) The little devil. He was quite an outstanding stud dog. He would occasionally produce a fault that we couldn't live with, very small ears and they had the audacity to stand straight up occasionally, but for the most part, his sons and daughters were outstanding. Probably the most incredible obedience trainable dogs, they could achieve a sharpness of competition that is hard to put on certain dogs. They could take the repetition, were very susceptible to encouragement and praise, and yet worked with the precision that it takes to achieve really high scores. Rocky was that way, Shamrock; he was that type of obedience dog. Jean Taylor trained the dog, did an incredible job on

the dog. He was so foolproof, you could probably set a bomb off next to the ring and he would not have taken his eyes off of you or broken his pattern or his train of thought at any time, probably the most foolproof dog I've ever worked with, because of her training talents. Jean is a tremendously thorough trainer.

Rocky was bred to Ch. Slash V Little Rock Daughters. A very notable champion that we produced from that cross was Ch. Colorado Sunbonnet Sioux, CD, STD sheep. That was Becky's showmanship dog, a red merle female that Becky won the ASCA Junior Handling Award with. She was incredible in obedience, marvelous on stock; here was a young ten-year-old girl in national specialty competition going through a started sheep class with probably 21 entrants; she took a second place with a score of 98, working Barbados sheep, who are totally unworkable. Some of the best handlers and the best dogs in the country could not get through that course and Becky and Sunny went through that started sheep course and did the slickest little job you have ever seen in your life because Sunny just had this rapport with Becky; she knew when to put on the pressure, when to back off, when to go out and when to be steady. It was really impressive; Becky got quite a bit of attention out of that and so did Sunny. It was a wonderful thing to see, such a young handler that skunked the big guys with her sweet little dog, to go out and do such a beautiful job.

Rocky as a stud dog produced some very nice males. We sold probably most of his offspring, but have kept back Sunny in the breeding program. Sunny's children have been marvelous; she's an excellent brood bitch, an excellent family companion. She's a wonderful helper around the stock. When we have tough sheep, we get Sunny because she puts on this - I don't know, it's something about the pressure that she puts on the sheep that is not threatening. She can work ewes with baby lambs and get them farther, easier than any of the other dogs that we have. I'm not real sure what it is she does that gets the job done when the other dogs can't do it. All they do is get into a fight. Sunny goes in there and just kind of quietly and gently gets the job done; it's an interesting technique that she uses. I enjoy watching her around the young stock with mamas on the fight because she gets the job done. She doesn't upset things and yet she makes them do what she wants.

Talking about red merle bitches, Ch.

Sorensen's Cherry Brandy would have a working degree that, in those days was called a Certified Working Dog degree, the CWD, comparable to an Open Trial Degree, on cattle. She won the first invitational stock dog trial that the ASCA ever sponsored, held in Santa Rosa, California, in the early 1970's. We flew out there, were invited along with several other dogs to compete at the trial, which did raise a few eyebrows; believe me, there were some letters of protest, that they would have an invitational trial and not have it be open to all. But there were reasons why it was invitational. They wanted to present in as short a period of time the best quality working dogs that were under control and it was during a period of time that there would be a lot of observers at the trial and they wanted it to be a good one, so they tried to get dogs in there that they felt could keep control of the situation and get the job done in a short period of time. It was a kind of pilot program, too; they wanted to have it run as smoothly as possible.

Cherry went out there with me handling. I was sort of present in the ring; she did all the work. I was in shock the whole time. (laughter) It's like being out there ten minutes and having three hours go by. If it hadn't been for Jean Carrillo, I don't think I would have lived through it, but we made it and we won it with a panel of three judges. Cherry did an excellent job; she made almost all of her obstacles that she had to go through, and all I had to do was close the gate. She was a product of some old Woods breeding and some old Nevada and Arizona bloodlines. Her sire was Piz's Joseph, a son of Wood's Jay. Cherry was out of a bitch, J Bar D Brandy. Brandy was a red merle female sired Rowe's Warrior Bow, he was sired by Ronsley's Charcoal Smoke. Bow was a dark red merle dog, a super worker. I had the opportunity to see an old movie of Bow working on a ranch in western Colorado and it was great. Comanche was there working; it was the neatest movie. I wish everybody could have a chance to see that. That's the background Cherry came from. She was an excellent working ranch dog. We had her when we lived on the western slope, too. Every day she worked cattle, really had no formal trial training, but was just very obedient and experienced, a think for yourself kind of stock dog. Probably all her ranch experience had a great deal to do with winning that trial. She handled this every day, tough cattle, tough country, tough weather, miles and miles on horseback, behind the

horse, until you got to the job and then miles and miles all the way back.

Cherry was bred to Ch. Slash V Little Rock. We had a very nice cross there that worked very well. Little Rock was a dog that we'd bought from Terry Martin; he has since gone on and his sons and daughters have achieved probably more success in the conformation and working field as dual dogs than maybe any sire, but he's right up there with the top producing sires of dual dogs, who do everything and do it well.

Cherry was also bred to a dog from Ardith Bruce's breeding, Sorensen's Red Man, also known as Taylor's Red Wilbur; we bred Cherry to Willie and produced Ch. Sorensen's Colorado Royal, one of the first red merle champions of the breed. We sold Ch. Sorensen's Colorado Royal to J. T. Walters in Muldrow, Oklahoma; that put some of our bloodline in the southern part of the country. If anybody would ever come across that in their pedigree, wondering what this Colorado dog is doing in their Oklahoma papers, that might be the reason. J. T. Walters bought several dogs, dogs that he fancied and paid sometimes tremendous prices for them. He raised some very nice dogs. J. T. is a quarter horse breeder of international renown. He would give or sell a puppy almost to every quarter horse customer who crossed his path. I'm not sure if he raises dogs to this day, but I do know he purchased some very outstanding dogs from a few of the breeders around the country. His daughter, Patsy, bred dogs also; I'm not sure if she still raises Aussies or not, but I know she was involved with the dogs at one time. J. T. bought three or four dogs from us.

We bred Ch. Sorensen's Cherry Brandy to Ch. Slash V Buckeye Bobby; everybody in the Aussie world knows Bobby. He's a tremendous producer from a tremendous bloodline from a tremendous litter. Cherry clicked quite nicely with Bobby. We raised some very nice puppies out of them. J. T. Walters, again, bought one of Cherry's puppies by Bobby as well as a red merle male and female out of Colorado Silver Buffy sired by Taylor's Luke the Drifter. Buffy was a bitch with no known background; she had a generation, Neighbor's Blue and Neighbor's Blue Suzie, if you can believe that, and she's red merle. She really didn't have much of a background, but she had her ASCA papers and she was a superb working dog. As far as an Australian Shepherd working, Buffy had as much eye as the



Colorado's Perky Miss. Multiple Champion, working title producer. Last daughter of Sorensen's Gunsmoke. Age: 11-1/2.

strongest eyed dog of the breed today. She was the most immaculate low heeler; when she would grip the heel, it was exactly the same way every time. She never got kicked, was probably the smartest working dog, very calculating, very careful, probably because she had an extensive background working horses. You better be smart or you're dead in working horses because they kick so accurately.

We took Taylor's Silver Buffy (her name was either Taylor's or Colorado Silver Buffy, depending on if it was National Stock Dog registry or ASCA) and bred her to Taylor's Luke the Drifter, who was a Wood's Stubby son out of Bjork's Chulla, CDX, and produced Sorensen's Colorado Sunset and a dog by the name of Cash. Cash and Sunny went to J. T. Walters.

We used Bobby quite well; he was a marvelous outside stud dog for us, clicked very nicely with our Woods bitches. We got red color out of him, too, of course, and a very sound, nice mind, very sound conformation. Bobby himself had marvelous conformation; he was a small dog but very correct moving, very nice side gait, and an excellent stud dog. Bobby probably has established himself in the history of the Australian Shepherd as one of the very exceptional stud dogs in producing dual dogs, conformation winners as well as working dogs. His last owner was Rick Dill, who lives in Texas; I'm not sure if

Bobby is alive to this day. I would doubt it, but he might be.

As I mentioned before, Cherry was bred to Little Rock, Ch. Slash V Little Rock, a dog that we bought from Terry Martin. Terry and I liked each other's dogs and I could buy a stud dog from Terry who clicked, typewise and pedigreewise, sometimes, very nicely. Terry always tried to keep the dual concept in mind; she had very sound dogs and I liked what she was doing with her dogs. Our current Terry Martin bred dog that we have now is Ch. Slash V Wild Timber. He himself is a very unusual dog; he's the product of two opposite breed types. He has a very small sire; he has a very large mother. The bloodlines are not particularly related in any way. Timber is a perfect blend of the sire and the dam and he produces himself 90% of the time. We will get an occasional small puppy sired by him, and an occasional very large, coarse puppy, but for the type of genetic setup that he himself is, and the ability to produce himself as well as he does, is unusual. You wouldn't expect a dog with his different type sire and dam, his different pedigree, to produce as well as he does.

Timber has earned a home here. His puppies have been outstanding in all areas. They win in the Breed ring, they work; they have very nice temperaments, are very mellow. They have excellent color. I

can, of course, always fault them in conformation a little bit here and there in the front assembly, which we're always wanting better front assemblies on the dogs, but overall, Timber has been an exceptional stud dog. As the years go by, people in other parts of the country realize what a genetic power he is and will return to his type and/or to him personally and use him again. I use him about every two years; when I breed the dogs. I'll linebreed for a couple of years and then I'll go back to my outcross stud dog. Then I will come back and linebreed for the next couple of years, and outcross again. That is why every few years, I buy an outside stud dog. I try to buy a type of dog with a dual background that will not take away from what I'm trying to continue to establish. I have used Flintridge bloodlines, Slash V bloodlines, and that would include also Buckeye Bobby, who is Red Rustler breeding; I've used Rustler, and that is also behind Timber's bottom side. His mother is of Rustler bloodlines.

I have liked what I have gotten from the stud dogs that we purchased, for the most part. Every once in awhile you'll get into the house of horrors and go, "Whoops!" (laughter) Nothing ventured, nothing gained, but if you don't try to advance, you won't. If you're not willing to make a mistake, I don't think you can advance. I like to experiment with different bloodlines. I always keep type in mind, keep the dual purpose pedigree in mind, but I do like to experiment. I am not the type of breeder who is stuck in the kennel; I try and appreciate what other people have done and if it looks like it's something we can use, I'll try it.

I enjoy the dogs, enjoy trying new things. You never know. You might hit on a couple of more magic crosses in your lifetime as a breeder and really do the breed a service. Basically, the dogs are dual purpose; they have to be that way because our customers demand it. He's a stockman for the most part. If I had to rely on the show ring to sell all my puppies, I would only be able to sell one or two out of every litter. The pet person, for the most part, never heard of an Australian Shepherd. There are a few out there; we do sell a few pets, but the majority of our customers are the livestock men. He wants a companion for the family, he wants a reliable stock dog, and he wants a show piece. Face it - everybody wants to be proud of their dog. That's why we have purebred dogs; people have pride in

ownership and the Australian Shepherd is probably one of the most beautiful breed of dogs that's around. The usefulness just makes them that much more beautiful.

We've talked a little bit about the Flintridge influence in our breeding program. Since I had no Flintridge breeding on any of my bitches, I decided, with the help of a friend, that we would try to lease a foundation Flintridge bred bitch. We selected and were fortunate enough to lease Ch. Posey Patch of Blue Mist; she finished her championship with three five point majors in three days. At age nine months, she was Best Opposite Sex at the National Specialty many years ago with many mature bitches in the ring; she was a puppy, was out of coat, and just blew them away. Fate smiled upon us and we were able to bring Posey here.

She was bred to Ch. Slash V Wild Timber while she was here, producing very nice puppies by him. In the back of my mind, I had coming up out of Colorado's Perky Miss a young male, Clint; Dick named him a very simple name and it fit. He eventually became a champion. Clint was bred to Posey well before he was a year of age. Let me tell you, this was a juvenile dog when we bred him. In the litter were two male puppies born. When I'm telling you Clint was young, I'm trying to think if he was even eight months old. He got the job done and Posey had two puppies. One male died within two or three days and the other male thrived; he became Ch. Colorado's Talk of the Town, a multi Best in Match, Best in Show Australian Shepherd dog. He is my current stud dog right now.

Another favorite Clint daughter that I have is out of a Wild Timber/Posey Patch daughter called Christmas Posey; her name is Colorado Poudre Posey. She probably will never finish her championship. She's a large bitch, has the most incredible front I have ever seen on a bitch or a dog. In fact, her front is so good, the rear can't keep up with it. She doesn't quite have it together. When you gait her in the ring, it's like hanging onto a thoroughbred horse. She takes off and you are merely a passenger at the end of the leash. She can outmove anything in the ring, but she is not typical. She has such extreme angles, so much rear angulation such a long neck, and is so different, is so dark blue, and so different in type that the judges don't know quite what to do with her.

I call her Freckles; she's going to be one of the best producers that we've ever

had. I should breed her; she's four years old, she has three points; she has more major reserve wins than any dog in the history of the breed because she is so extreme. They don't quite know what to do with her. She's a bit "out of type." But she has many good features and is the type of bitch that will put herself on her puppies.

Her sire, Clint ... when I said I was excited about him coming up ... I'd like to go back just a little bit into his sire's background. He is sired by a very interesting, beautiful, moderate blue merle dog, Dorn's Poudre Lakohta. We found him in the backyard of Kathy Dorn; he is, in every sense of the word, a backyard champion, an undiscovered, unsung son of Ch. Iacovetta's Buck and out of a Gunsmoke daughter, Dressel's Duchess. From my viewpoint, he was probably the most exciting genetic addition to the bloodline that I have come across. We've bred several bitches to him and have never been disappointed with the puppies. I only wish I could have kept more because they were so outstanding.

Kay Harris owns a bitch by the name of Colorado Smooth Smoke; she at one time was bred to Dorn's Poudre Lakohta. That was, overall, the best litter of puppies I have ever had my hands on. I would love to repeat the cross, but Cody who is Lakohta, is not at stud anymore. I wish I could turn back the clock and keep a few of those puppies; they were so exceptional.

Freckles, Poudre Posey, is the same type of bitch as Smooth Smoke, a very extreme, tall, rangy, terrifically angulated front and rear, long necked, classy head type of bitch as Smooth Smoke. I would like someday to breed her to the type of dog that Dorn's Poudre Lakohta was, going back to the Gunsmoke and the Flintridge again. It seemed like it was a very interesting kind of cross. I currently am working on developing that into the program, the older Flintridge bloodlines. I prefer those over some of the newer dogs that I see today.

#### **Tell us a little bit about yourself, your background.**

I'll start with my mother's; she's the most important part of my background right now. She's the dog lover. As a child, she dragged home every stray dog that she could put her hands on. My grandmother would not let her have a pet of any kind. When she grew up, she vowed that she would move to where she could have a pet. She came to Colorado when we were quite young; I was seven years old.

The first thing she did was buy a German Shepherd. That became the basis for my dog beginnings, which were caring for, leash breaking, cleaning up after, feeding, loving and socializing German Shepherd puppies. We had a couple of litters out of our female before we retired her. That built the foundation for my love of dogs, plus perhaps there was a strong hereditary influence from my mom.

I had dogs all my life. My childhood buddy was an Irish Setter, Princess Scarlet O'Hara, a field bred Irish Setter that I absolutely adored and who was my constant companion. We covered more miles of Littleton and Englewood than any one child and one dog could possibly hope to cover. We lived at Tobruk Kennels; my mother worked for Joan Rejholec when they had the South Broadway location for Tobruk Kennels. My mother was her kennel help. I lived in the kennel with Shelties, adored them, had much fun socializing the puppies, and tearing at a mad pace down South Broadway, leading Smoky by the neck as fast as I could go, trying to get him to gallop. (laughter) Joan had very carefully trained the dog to only trot on lead and of course, I did my best to get him to break gait and to gallop and could never figure out why I couldn't get that pretty blue Sheltie to gallop like a horse on the leash. Smoky, being the well-trained little individual that he was, never broke pace.

We lived in a small motel across the street; I spent my days running back and forth across South Broadway with any number of animals and dogs, probably in and out of Otto and Joan's hair ten times a day, underfoot constantly, and enjoying every minute of it. I have a very fond personal memory of Tempy, their sable stud dog, Tempest Storm. I remember Buttons, who was Joan's little house dog, a little black tri Sheltie bitch, very fondly and enjoyed her very much even though she might not have enjoyed me the same.

I grew up with German Shepherds. After I was older and out on my own, I had a German Shepherd as a constant companion. I spent a lot of time at Willow Grange Kennels with Isabel and Louise Becker. My favorite Shepherd of all times, besides our old Angel, was Willow Grange Cheyenne Autumn, a marvelous dog and I thought the sun rose and set on him.

When Dick and I were married in 1969, I inherited, very happily, a marvelous group of Australian Shepherds. From that point on, my love affair with Australian Shepherds, and of course, Dick began.

We now have Border Collies as well. Dick is very enthusiastic about the working dog, is an ASCA licensed judge and spends a lot of time with the sheep. He has always had an ultimate desire to have a top trial trained Border Collie, would like to compete at the top of the ladder. The Border Collie trials and the people and dogs that compete at those are at the top of the ladder.

I've worked in animal health for many years. Valley Veterinary Supply was probably my all time favorite job. We worked with livestock people. My job was in management, purchasing and selling and keeping track of all the inventory of animal health products, vaccines, pharmaceuticals, prescription drugs, etc. I did everything, bought it all, sold it all, packaged it all, shipped it all; took care of all the customers and maintained the inventory.

I left there in November of 1985 to continue the development of my dog food business. Through the years, you find that feeding dogs is 50% of your time and cleaning up after them is the other 50% and you squeeze in loving them the rest of the time. I liked to feed one of the popular performance brands that many people feed today and enjoyed the condition that it kept our dogs in; the puppies looked marvelous, and had no complaints whatsoever with feeding this performance product other than the fact that it became very expensive as the years went by. I was one of the first people to feed the product when it came into Colorado. As the price rose, my paycheck didn't, I began to think about developing a product of my own that I could feed my dogs, maintain them in a condition that I had been accustomed to, and keep them in this super condition. I began to venture into dog food manufacturing. This was about four years ago.

Our first contact was with Dr. Lon Louis, who now works for Hill's; he's done a lot of work in the Science Diet formulations and some since then, prescription diets for Hill's, and he gave me my first at home, make it yourself, dog food formula.

The hardest thing was a manufacturing process and we started with a pelleted product, which is not bad. It was not suitable, really, for little puppies but mature dogs could eat it quite nicely. Later, I of course found out as we grew in this business and began understanding raw products and the manufacturing process as such, why the pelleted product was not as digestible as an extruded chunk type product.

A few more years went by; I began to make better and better contacts in the dog food manufacturing business and developed a vitamin premix that holds its own with the best of the performance brands. When I talk about performance brands, I am not including the grocery store dog food. I am only including the dog foods that are sold through specific dealers and pet stores, etc. I'm talking strictly about the performance diets that we are used to in the competition field, so to speak.

The eventual formulation of the dog food resulted when I combined with Colorado State University and a couple of the canine nutritionists there and my current manufacturing company. We developed and brought to fruition Pro Dog 27 Dog Food. That's kind of where we are right now. I've added a second formula, Pro Dog 24; it's lower in fat and protein for people who do not want to keep their dogs on a high protein, high fat diet. There are a lot of people out there who do prefer less of a caloric type intake for their dog.

As far as we're concerned, our dogs are in a kennel situation, they are highly stressed, they are asked to support puppies who are gorgeous all the time, so we like to have the higher protein, higher fat diet that a lot of people feed when they're in the same situation we are. The dog food business has grown remarkably. Many months we sell two semi loads a month; every time it doubles on itself, I am amazed. It's the potential that is really beyond me right now. I'm a dog breeder; I'm not a dog food magnate. All my needs are culminated in what my dogs need. Through these needs and these demands that the dogs require is kind of where this has developed into something that I can live with and apparently a lot of other people are happy with, too.

The next thing that I insisted on for the dog food, besides the best of the best, was a price that people could afford. I think my product fell into a niche where there was some need of a performance diet that people could afford. It's priced more with a popular supermarket brand, the Purina type brands, and yet is the quality of the products that cost perhaps 30 to 60% more. I apparently am not alone in my personal needs because a lot of other people have picked up the product and are finding that it keeps the dogs in good condition, they are saving money, and not giving up on what they feel they need in their dogs, too.

The future of the dog food business looks good. I'm always amazed by the

progress and the continual escalation of quantity that we sell. I'm hoping that will always continue; it's enabled me to not be forced to work for somebody else. I can spend more time here with Dick and the children and the dogs. Dick and I look to the future of continuing to compete and to share our love of competition, our love of the dogs. We enjoy traveling. It seems like everything that we do and enjoy revolves around animals, the sheep and the dogs, so if you're hobby is your life, I guess we are super fortunate to be able to find ourselves in that position that he and I enjoy doing everything together. This revolves around our animals. We don't have to go out for external types of things. We have what we love at home and it's right here. Home is where the heart is, so to speak, and we are lucky in that aspect in that we like everything we have here.

**What do you feel has been some of the drawbacks or the benefits to being in dogs?**

Earlier in this interview, you talked to me about some favorite dogs that I had. There are times, when raising any type of animal or livestock, you lose them. That's the saddest, most unhappy thing about animals; they don't live forever. I can take the broken legs, the accidents, the occasional dog fights where you have dogs chewed up; you take them and sew them up and do all the tough stuff, the surgeries, anything that happens to the dogs, I can take. I've been through it before and it doesn't really bother me. I'm upset, but you handle it, just do it and get the job done. You've got a good vet and you press on with their health and get the job done.

The saddest thing is the old dogs. That's the hardest thing about raising animals; they get old and die. I'll never get over it. I don't have trouble selling puppies to good homes. I don't have trouble taking dogs back from bad homes. I've rescued dogs every once in awhile. We'll hear of a dog that's in a bad situation and usually we can talk the people out of the dog and get the dog back; maybe it's not one of my own but somebody else's. Those things you pretty well take in stride, but the old dogs is the hardest thing, having them die.

The benefits of raising dogs are probably pretty selfish. It can be an ego trip; we all have pride in our animals. We feel responsible for their being here, feel that maybe we've created them a little bit. It's rewarding as far as your successes in the ring and the success your children have in the ring, either in obedience or

conformation or trial competition. We're proud of the puppies that they produce for us; proud of the successes that they have. Most of all, it's the warm love and companionship and the never let you down attitude that they have for you. Something that's a simple thing and kind of corny, but I feel very close to - that when you spell dog backwards, it spells God, and I think in every dog is a little bit of God. There's no one, no friend, no being on this earth that loves you and trusts you so unquestionably than a dog. Of course, the dog being the closest to us, that's where I relate most

of that. I really feel that about the dogs. They are really incredible, not just our own, but anybody's dog. People are lucky to be able to have them. They add a total dimension to your life that is pretty hard to fill except maybe with your own children.

#### **Has it all been worth it?**

Absolutely. Look at the memories I would not have if it weren't for the dogs. This conversation would have never happened if it weren't for the dogs and for my love for Dick and his love for me, and our love for these darn dogs. (laughter)

**Thank you very much. •**

ring problem.

I took along the bitch's medical history as well as her breeding history. She had produced a litter of eleven pups on her first mating just after she was two years old. They gave her a complete physical including ECG, X-rays of lungs and abdomen. They found nothing. The only thing left to try was exploratory surgery. I agreed to the surgery as I wanted the answer to this problem.

This was the only bitch left that was in my kennel when the railroad had sprayed a defoliant on their right of way. Our kennel runs abutt the railroad land. Every bitch on my property at the time of the spraying except this one had developed tumors approximately two years later. I was expecting something similar. However, I had hardly gotten home when the telephone rang and it was the Vet School. They had decided to do a complete blood workup before surgery and found the bitch was diabetic. Since blood work had been done on several occasions prior to her seasons and there were no abnormalities, it was conclusive she had progesterone induced diabetes.

The progesterone level is 0.5 to 1.0 ng per ml in a bitch prior to her season. It rises from 1 ng per ml in late proestrus to a peak of 30 to 60 ng per ml approximately 25 days later. It then declines gradually to 4 to 5 ng per ml by three days prior to whelping. A sharp fall back to 1 ng per ml occurs 36 to 48 hours after whelping. Several studies have compared circulating levels of progesterone in pregnant and nonpregnant bitches and found little or no difference.<sup>1</sup> This is important as it allows you to test for progesterone induced diabetes for approximately 60 days after standing heat even if the bitch is not pregnant.

Should you have a diabetic bitch you should be aware of the effect progesterone can have on the need for insulin. It will require frequent monitoring for that 60 day period. We check the urine twice a day; early morning and 7 hours after the insulin injection. This way we can adjust the next dose accordingly. Don't forget the rapid decline coinciding with whelping. If you do not drop the insulin dose fast enough she can go into insulin shock. If progesterone induced diabetes goes undetected and untreated the bitch will very likely become permanently diabetic.

<sup>1</sup>Soderberg, Susan F., Canine breeding management. Vet. Clin. North AM. [Small Animal Pract.] 5: 86, pg. 425 ••

## **Progesterone Induced Diabetes**

*Nancy C. Russell  
Sussex, Wisconsin*

If you have a bitch who repeatedly reabsorbs puppies, ask your vet to check her for diabetes. However, if she has progesterone induced diabetes the test must be done after standing heat and before the whelping date. Although this type of diabetes is not uncommon in humans neither my vet nor the reproduction experts at several vet schools suggested checking for it. It was discovered accidentally.

This bitch had reabsorbed several litters in a row. Every pregnancy would appear normal. She would be gaining weight, have a shiny coat, good appetite and maintain her usual activity level. Puppies could be palpated 18 to 30 days and then the uterus would remain firm and enlarged until the sixth week. Then she would start to lose weight and the coat would lose its sheen. Sometimes her appetite would be affected. However, she never really acted sick nor was there ever any discharge.

The vet suggested progesterone shots after the first couple of litters were reabsorbed. This did not help. Actually

unknown to us it was making her condition worse. Of course, all the usual reproductive problems such as brucellosis, thyroid and bacterial infections had been checked for and ruled out.

The next pregnancy we started weekly blood tests to see if any infection could be detected from an elevated white count. I had already tried amoxicillin prior to mating and during the pregnancy as another breeder had had success with this. There was a very slight raise in the white count at the fourth week. We started her on Keflex. The white count dropped the next week; elevated the following week but not so as to indicate any major problem. No temperature, no discharge but the weight loss had started, the uterus felt mushy and the coat lacked luster. I really didn't need to take her for the exam the seventh week. I knew the answer by looking at her; the pups were gone. But I went anyway. My vet shook his head when I asked, "Where do we go from here?" He had already consulted with the experts by phone and no one had any more ideas to try. So I asked for a referral to the University of Wisconsin Vet School. Perhaps if they examined her right now they could find a reason for this reoccur-