

Going to the Dogs . . . er, Dog Shows

Chances are a poll of Western alumnae would show that most have pets. Many of those pets, of course, are dogs. A good number of those dogs likely “sit” for treats and “come” when called if they feel like it. Period. **Nancy Hon Krauth '51** and **Sally Miller Ihne '55** have taken dog training a lot farther. We asked them to write about their experiences.

Nancy's story:

He said “I will” and I said “I will” and thus started 32 years of throwing training bumpers and watching black dogs retrieve them. When Norm and I married, his dowry included two dogs, two shotguns, a truck and a Winnebago travel trailer. I soon found out I would be not only his wife, but also his training gofer, cheerleader and camp cook.

Training Labrador retrievers for field trials starts with getting a 7-week-old puppy with well connected parents; preferably lots of awards and ribbons in their pedigrees. Prospective owners must be vetted as to being worthy field trialers. Did I mention that those little



2007: The Krauths with four dogs then

pups cost several months' salary? When he comes into one's home, there must be a crate available for him to sleep in and be in when he is not being adored by the proud owners. Soon he starts retrieving all sorts of things, but this instinct must be channeled into recognizing ducks as well as plastic training bumpers. As he grows, there will be obedience lessons as well as lots of retrieves. This is where I enter the picture.

Nancy, cont. on page 2

Sally's story:

When I retired in 2001, I had accumulated 46 years of educational experience through teaching English at junior and senior high school, and college and university levels plus being a director of educational television in Iowa, and a dean and then a president of community colleges in Minnesota. But then I retired, and in the summer of 2005, remembering the fun I had in the past training dogs and competing in dog shows, I decided to buy a dog. After considerable research on the Internet and field work — which consisted of attending a dog show where I bought a 10-month old Shetland sheepdog, Odyssey Ernie of Wyowind — I thrust myself back into the field of education ... the education of Ernie ... and of me!

The first problem in educating a Shetland sheepdog is that there is a very good chance he is smarter than you. For instance, when we went to our first obedience class, we both listened carefully to the instructor. He was teaching us, the owners, how to teach our dogs to heel.

Sally, cont. on page 3



July 2007: Sally Ihne (right) with Ernie, on the occasion of his winning his first title, Companion Dog

The Meily Society, named for distinguished alumna and benefactress **Olivia Meily Brice, Class of 1866**, was established in 2001 to honor our **Wise Able Vital Elder** alumnae who have celebrated their 50th reunion and to recognize and encourage the knowledge and energy they bring to the WCAA. “The Anchor” is a periodic newsletter published exclusively for its members.

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Nancy, *cont. from page 1*

Field trials are composed of a number of tests that are supposed to simulate a duck hunt. The dog sits at the side of the handler and watches as a duck is shot and lands somewhere out in a field. His job is to run out



2006, Alabama: Judd, retrieving a duck

and find the bird and bring it back to the handler. Then he must deliver it “tenderly to hand.” Now we all know that Rover thinks the bird is his reward, so training begins with teaching him to

spit out the duck into the hand beside him.

My job is to stand out in this field and throw something for him to retrieve — usually a training bumper with rope attached. I also have to shoot a gun equipped with blanks to signal that I am about to throw. It took a good bit of training for me to do things in the right sequence and get the “bird” in the right place at the right time. If all goes well, the dog goes right out, picks up the bird and returns to the side of the handler and gives him the bird. Training sessions do not always go according to the book, so my job is to soothe the handler and keep him from regretting buying the dog in the first place.

We train every day the sun is shining and temps are above zero. I do not throw birds when it is raining unless I have an umbrella. Bird throwers should wear



2008: Nancy and Norm, ready to set up and dress “masonite man”

white coats so the dogs can spot them when they are 400 yards out in the field. I have white nylon jackets, white down coats and a lovely two piece water-proof suit so I

am ready for all weather conditions. Oh yes, field trialers must have rubber shoes and boots for the water tests and when it rains. If Norm and I are joining a group and have a number of dogs to train, I will need a chair to sit in after throwing my birds for all those dogs. So, in order to get the dog ready to compete, we will have to have a truck with dog kennels and room for the guns, clothes, chairs, bumpers, umbrellas, ice chest for the lunches and of course water for the dogs as well as food and treats, and the radios. Yes, in order to communicate while in the training field, it is helpful to have a couple of two-way radios instead of yelling. We didn’t have these in the early years and my voice is still hoarse.

As soon as the pup is learning what is expected of him and is over 6 months old, we can take him to a trial



1996, LaFarge, WI.: Roy is just fine with his 2nd in Qualifying.

and enter him in the Puppy division. This gives him a taste of what is in store for him in the years to come. It can also cause a lot of anxiety in his trainers when he forgets how to retrieve. Lots more training and Rover is ready to do the real stuff and so we send in \$50 and enter him in the Derby, for dogs up to 2 years of age. Norm puts on his white handler’s jacket

(much cleaner than the training one) and takes the dog to the judging line and tells him to sit. The judge signals for the birds to be shot, one at a time. The dog is supposed to wait till both birds have gone down before he leaves for the retrieves.

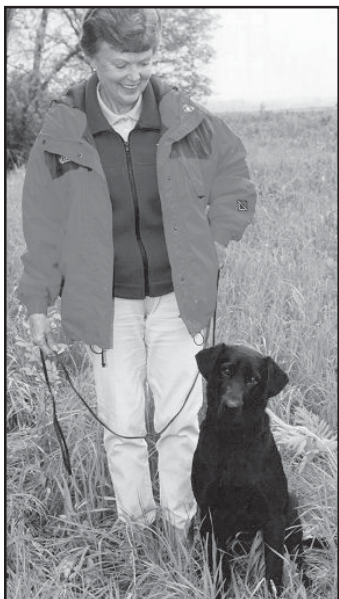
The first trial I attended, our dog, Rubber Duck (Norm named him), ran out before he was sent and caught the bird as it fell. We were immediately excused and headed for home. More training followed.

By the time the dog is doing the retrieves right, he has to learn to do a blind retrieve where there are no throwers out in the field, but there are birds or bumpers waiting to be picked up. The handler uses his handy whistle to direct the dog to stop and turn around to face him. The handler waves his arms to point which way Rover should go to find the bird. This takes a lot of yelling and whistling in the beginning days. I don’t have to do any of this. My job later is to rub Aspercreme on the handler’s shoulders and fetch drinking water for him and the dog. So now we have moved on to two retrieves (a double) and a blind. We enter our dog in the Qualify-

ing event and pack up to go to another licensed trial. Any retriever over 2 years of age can compete in this.

As time goes by, the retrievers get longer and soon we are buying two remote-controlled boxes that will throw bumpers and sound a shot when the handler presses a radio button. These do not take my place; they are the additional stations in the field so that now Rover has three birds to retrieve in training. I am still throwing, but also running to reset the boxes when we need to repeat a throw. Some trainers pay big bucks for machines that have the capacity to spit out up to 10 bumpers, one at a time, but we make do with the single throw boxes. We even have some masonite figures that we set up beside the machines and cover with white jackets to make the dog think three people are throwing. I don't believe he is fooled, though.

Licensed retriever trials consist of four categories: Derby, as noted before; Qualifying, also noted; the



Nancy, with their newest dog, Tripp, who — at 17 months — “shows great promise”

Amateur, for dogs handled by owners; and the Open, which is for dogs handled by professional trainers as well as amateurs. These trials are held every weekend in a year except during hunting season in November and December. Trials start up again in southern states in late January and are held in every time zone, moving to Alaska in June and July. Norm and I and the dogs usually attend about a dozen licensed trials a year. We have owned many Labrador retrievers through the years. We enjoy watching them grow

and learn and compete. Sometimes they fail, but we always hope for better luck next time. They are pets as well as competitors, and we have loved them all.

Sally, cont. from page 1

“And when you stop,” he concluded, “push your dog into a sitting position.”

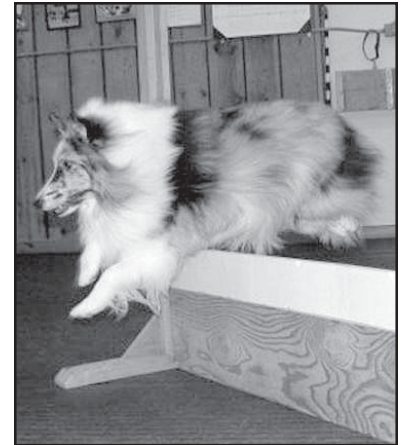
So off we went. We stopped. I turned to teach Ernie to sit, but he was already sitting. Now some people may be naïve enough to think that dogs don't communicate. But they do. His eyes clearly stated, “Well, why do you look so surprised. Isn't that what he told me to do?”

Since he was a “gifted” dog, practically all the things we learned in those first eight weeks came so easily to Ernie that he was getting bored. He learned to heel, to sit, to lie down, to stay, and to come when called and sit in front of me and then circle to the heel position. Then we started working with a private trainer in small classes.

And a new reward was introduced. Cheese! I discovered that with the sufficient reward, a small piece of string cheese, Ernie could even learn faster. When we drove up the drive at the trainer's home, Ernie ricocheted in one of his spinning circles off the back of the seat and the door. He could hardly wait to get to class.

When I had trained dogs before, I had competed in obedience trials. But now there was a new type of competition. It was called Rally and is sort of a combination of basic obedience and highly modified agility. With the dog at heel position, the owner and handler run a timed course designated by signs that tell the dog and handler what exercise to perform such as various turns, pivots, and jumps. In each level — Novice, Advanced, and Excellent — the difficulty of the exercises increases, and the dog performs the last two levels off leash. Eventually the dog needs to learn around 50 different exercises to compete at the highest level.

Even gifted children have their stubborn moments, and Ernie has his. Being a representative of a herding breed, Ernie has carried on a two-year resistance campaign to the idea of retrieving a dumbbell. This is probably the biggest barrier to his competing in the next level of obedience trials, where he will have not only to carry



No self-respecting dog should have to carry a dumbbell, but jumping is a lot of fun!

To learn more about retriever field trials, check out: working-retriever.com

a dumbbell but retrieve it over a high jump. We are now at the point that he will eventually take it and hold it in his mouth until the command to “give.” He clearly feels that no self-respecting dog should have to put one of those things in his mouth.



After successfully concluding an exercise, Ernie often does an exuberant leap in the air.

By the spring of 2007, Ernie and I were ready for competition in both Obedience and the first two levels of Rally. We completed his Companion Dog title and his Rally Novice and Rally Advanced titles with high scores and a number of prizes. When he wasn't in the prize money, it was usually because his handler (me) had goofed. Not him. (As Gail James discovered during my tennis classes at Western, coordination is not my stron-

gest asset, and for this reason Ernie and I do not compete in fast-paced agility trials.)

And then disaster struck! There was a nine-month period between Ernie's earning his Advanced Rally title and his Excellent title. This was not training time. He knew how to do all the exercises. But the first time we competed for his Excellent title, we started the prescribed exercise, a 180-degree pivot, when a photographer's flashbulb in the next ring went off directly in our faces. I was startled. Ernie was terrified! “I'm outta here,” he said, and he was. He concluded very quickly that rings were dangerous places, and when I tried to compete a couple more times that year, he began stressing the moment he entered the ring, and instead of paying close attention to me, he scouted for the exits and soon was gone. It took nine months — and a lot of cheese and praise — to convince him that he was safe in a show ring.

Last summer we earned first his Rally Excellent and then his Rally Advanced Excellent title, the furthest he could go in Rally competition. To earn an Obedience or Rally title, ordinarily the owner and dog have to qualify in three different shows under at least two different judges. The Rally Advanced Excellent title is different. To earn it the dog and owner team must qualify

in both Advanced and Excellent classes at the same show to earn a leg. And you must earn 10 legs for the American Kennel Club to award the title. Thus, in order to win those two titles, our summer vacation consisted of traveling to shows in Farmington, Jordan, St. Peter, and Duluth, Minnesota; Bismarck, North Dakota; and Des Moines, Iowa. Luckily, Ernie qualified in straight shows to earn both titles.

We are now hard at work this fall and winter, training for the two remaining Obedience titles — Companion Dog Excellent and Utility Dog. We hope to start competing in the first of these by late spring ... if, of course, Ernie decides to put up with carrying a dumbbell! During training we attend classes each week with our canine tutor and with the Brainerd Kennel Club. At home we try to practice every week. Right now, given the Minnesota winter, I train in the house, and each day for about 20 minutes, we practice such things as taking the dumbbell, a recall where Ernie sits, then comes, sits in front of me, and heels upon command. We also practice stands, sit stays and down stays, and upon occasion, when we practice at the tutor's arena, directed jumping. In this exercise, Ernie trots to the opposite side of the ring where I command him to turn and sit. There is a bar jump on one side of the ring and a high jump on the other. I then tell him to “jump” and indicate which jump to take by an arm gesture.

The fun of competition is not the only benefit. Ernie and I have a lasting understanding and mutual companionship. It is also fun to teach such a willing and eager student. In addition, I have made many new friends both locally in the kennel club and at the various shows.

And, I'm back in education. Not only am I training Ernie, the teacher's dream — an exceptional student — but I also work as an assistant trainer with the Brainerd Kennel Club.



Odyssey Ernie of Wyowind, CD, RN, RA, RE, RAE

For more information about Rally competition, go to the AKC website: www.akc.org/events/rally/index.cfm

From Scrapbook & Album

She attended Miss Peabody's Western Female Seminary for only one year (1873-74), but **Lida Calvert Obenchain, class of 1877**, was a Western woman through and through. Writing prolifically under the pen name Eliza Calvert Hall, she was also a teacher, wife, mother, and women's rights activist.



Portrait, courtesy of Kentucky Library, WKU, probably taken at the time of Lida's marriage in 1885.

A native of Bowling Green, Kentucky, Lida grew up in a middle class family, surviving not only the hardships of the Civil War, but her father's desertion amidst a financial scandal. She managed to continue her education, but left Western in order to help support her family by teaching and selling her poetry and

fiction. After marriage to William Obenchain, president of local Ogden College, and the birth of their four children, she found her true calling as a suffragette.

Chafing at the injustice of Kentucky's laws governing the status of married women, Lida became involved with the Kentucky Equal Rights Association and soon national periodicals were publishing her articles advocating the right of women to equality in every aspect of their lives — but especially their right to vote.

In 1898, "Eliza" wrote a short story, "Sally Ann's Experience," in which the gritty title character speaks out on the subjugation of married women and tells off the pious men in her rural church so quick to rationalize their behavior with Bible passages. The story became so famous that it caught the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt and was eventually published as a book. Thankfully, Lida lived to see the changes she advocated so effectively in her stories and articles. She died in 1935, age 79.

*Lida's full story and a reprint of "Sally Ann's Experience" can be found in the April 2008 issue of Kentucky Humanities, also available online at <http://www.kyhumanities.org/magazine.html>. Thanks to alert reader **Betty Maddox Daniels '46** for spotting the article and directing us to it. And remember to send us your discoveries — whether they be pictures, stories or just favorite memories.*

Encouraging Others To Give ...

At her 50-year Reunion, **Dru Zearley Clingman '57** announced the Meed-Zearley-Clingman Scholarship in honor of her parents, James Paul Zearley (Lehigh University '30) and Helen Meed Zearley (Western College '29), and both sets of grandparents.

Edmund Zearley (University of West Virginia 1892) was the only one of Dru's grandparents who went to college, and he saw to it that his three daughters and one surviving son were educated. Her maternal grandfather, Lewis Meed, believed it more important to educate his daughters than his sons since "men could always secure well-paying jobs in construction, steel mills, auto plants, start businesses or farm." Neither of his sons went to college, but all four daughters graduated from Western: **Helen Meed Zearley '29, Mildred Meed Hatfield '32, Marjory Meed Simpson '40 and Regina Meed Burt '40.**



Dru

Both Dru and her twin sister, **Paula Zearley Armstrong '57**, came to Western on scholarships, and saying she is "astonished by the costs of colleges today," Dru wanted to give the scholarship at Reunion "to encourage other individuals or groups or classes to do the same." Having a Navy submariner son-in-law has made her very aware of the sacrifices every military family makes, so the aid is to go to a student who has been in the service — possibly one injured in the Middle East conflict.

She chose to establish the scholarship directly from her IRA account because a direct-transfer from trustee (her broker) to trustee (the WCAA) avoided any income taxes that might have been due had she received the funds and written a check. This provision is in place for 2009 as well.

Establish Your Own Named Endowment

Perhaps you have thought of creating an endowment in honor of an important person in your life but are not certain how it works. There are several ways it can be done, all listed on the enclosed card. You can even create an endowment and have income returned to you for life!

To learn more, send the enclosed card to the WCAA today!

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**“Wise Able Vital Elder” Meily Society members
at our Reunion Luncheon, June 14, 2008**

Join us June 20 for Reunion Luncheon 2009!