

A Blast From Our Past

Remembering Dorothy Pearson

On February 11, 2011, the malamute world bid farewell to Dorothy Pearson, a legendary pioneer of our breed. We celebrate her life, and the legacy she left to all of us.

Once Upon Another Time

Researching the life of noted Alaskan malamute breeder and AMCA Charter member Dorothy "Dot" Pearson taught me not only about her, but some of the history of our breed and of the world of purebred dogs as it once was.

Dorothy and her husband Hal owned Redhorse Kennels in Chattanooga, Tennessee. In addition to malamutes, they raised Arabian horses, Nubian goats and Siamese cats, presumably in separate housing! They obtained their first malamute, Banshee of Husky-Pak, on February 29, 1951.

Purchased from Bob Zoller, Banshee already had won a three-point major when the Pearsons bought her. Dorothy credited Judge Carey Lindsey for encouraging Hal to continue showing Banshee, saying "at this time we knew nothing about showing." The Pearsons showed Banshee to her championship, and Banshee also produced a litter of nine puppies sired by Moosecat M'Loot, owned by Cecil Allen in Fayetteville, Tennessee.

Dorothy achieved a breed milestone with one of the puppies from this breeding, Ch Aabara of Redhorse. On June 9, 1957, Dorothy and Aabara won the Working Group at a show in Akron, Ohio. This was only the second time in history that a malamute had won the group, and the first time ever where the dog was shown by his breeder and owner.

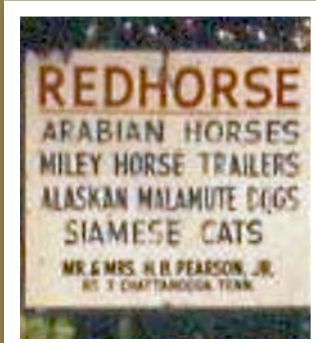
The Pearsons next had an exciting double win at the 1959 National Specialty in Buffalo, New York. Aabara

took Best of Breed, and his dam Banshee took Best of Opposite Sex, at nine years young!

Banshee and Aabara were two of the big-winning dogs of their day, yet neither are the foundation dogs of Redhorse Kennel. Making sense of this requires understanding breed history.

Banshee and Aabara were not registered with the AKC, but were "listed." The AKC Alaskan malamute stud book had been reopened sometime around 1950, and AKC allowed new dogs to be added to the breed. Listed dogs could compete in AKC events, and if they earned ten or more championship points, an application could be made to the AKC to register the dog in the stud book and add it to the breed. The show record and photographs of the front, side and rear views of the dog had to be submitted, and the AKC decided if the dog would be accepted to the breed. Interestingly, some champion listed dogs were not allowed into our breed by the AKC.

Then the Alaskan malamute stud book was closed in the spring of 1953 by the AKC, and some listed dogs missed the chance to become registered. These dogs could still be shown, and thus some dogs that went on to become the top winning dogs of the time never became registered. For several years after the stud book closed, the progeny of unregistered but listed dogs could be shown in AKC events and become champions, so listed dogs continued to be used in several breeding programs and were





Photos this and previous page courtesy of Bob Russell.

Previous page: Redhorse sign in 1974; Dot at the 2003 National Specialty; Dot outside of her kennels in 1974.

Photos this page were taken on a Redhorse visit in 1974.

Above and Right: The Pearson home and kennel was located on 14 acres of land in Chattanooga, Tennessee; Hal Pearson poses with the "red horse" - the Pearson's also raised Arabian horses; Pam Saunders' son plays with a Redhorse puppy.

Below: Kennel scenes; former AMCA Board Member Pam Saunders stacks a Redhorse dog; Nancy Russell's son Charles plays with a Redhorse litter.



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shown widely, and at times very successfully as in the case of Aabara and Banshee. Dorothy and Hal bred both registered malamutes and listed malamutes for years, and were known for breeding and/or showing many listed dogs to championships, including Chs Banshee of Husky-Pak, Aabara of Redhorse, Frey of Redhorse, Furstling of Redhorse and Beltane of Redhorse.

But in the 1960's, the rules changed again, requiring that dogs be registered with the AKC to be shown. At this point, the number of listed dogs being shown or bred dropped considerably. Listed dogs could not be shown after December 8, 1964, unless they had earned at least one championship point before then. If an unlisted dog had championship point(s) as of December 8, 1964, the AKC allowed the dogs to be shown until January 1, 1967. The listed dogs could not be registered.

After this rule change, some breeders, including Dorothy and Hal Pearson, revised their breeding programs to use only registered dogs. Thus two registered dogs that the Pearson's purchased - Ch Durango of Husky-Pak from Bob Zoller and Ch Timber-Trail Cheechako, CD from Delta Wilson - are now counted as the foundation dogs of Redhorse Kennel.

Dorothy went on to become the best known Alaskan malamute breeder in the south during her era. She and Hal finished several champions and bred many fine dogs. They competed in obedience as well, putting a Companion Dog title on their foundation bitch Cheechako. Their breeding program relied heavily on dogs in the Husky-Pak lines, so that Redhorse Kennel was at times affectionately called "Husky-Pak South." They won the Working Group again with their dog Ch Viking of Redhorse. Their litters ranged in size from one puppy to 13, and their final litter of two male puppies was whelped in 1976.

Ready to Serve

In addition to their contributions to the breed, Dorothy and Hal served the AMCA in many roles over the years. Both were founding members of the AMCA, and Hal was AMCA Vice President in 1955-56, then President in 1956-57, followed by serving on the Standard Review Committee in 1959-60. Finally Hal served on the Board of Directors from 1960-61.

Dorothy started as the AMCA Southern Area Editor, and went on to become President and Secretary, and was heavily involved in the chondrodysplasia program for many years. After receiving the AMCA Humanitarian Award in 1975, Dorothy was the second ever recipient of the AMCA Award for service, presented to her in 1986. This award recognized her years of dedication to the AMCA and specifically cited her "quiet, cheerful and efficient manner."

In a special memorial tribute to Hal Pearson, longtime friend Bob Zoller stated "Hal was blessed with a wife, Dot, who shared his love for Arabian horses and Malamute dogs. Both served our breed and AMCA for many years as officers, directors, members of the Standard Review Committee and in so many other ways that I cannot remember them all. The Pearsons never refused to help our breed and move our club from a small 'closed corporation' to a fully represented national club...no easy task in those early days."

Telling Tales

Friends and competitors spoke highly of Dorothy, describing her as "quiet" and "serious." Ben Ogburn added "she was always so helpful and friendly, she reminded me of my grammar school teacher!" Ben recounted a kindness Dorothy did him years ago. He set out to collect all the AMCA Newsletters ever printed, but his collection was missing three issues. Dorothy had all the issues, but she had them bound into a book, and could not make copies. So, she re-typed the

missing issues for Ben, being sure to make them exact replicas, even retyping spelling mistakes! After doing all that, she simply asked if there was any more she could do to help.

A competitor of Dorothy's recounted her grace and skill in the show ring, explaining "she was a talented handler, and usually showed her dogs herself. At one show in Tennessee, she placed first and I took second with my puppy bitch. Dorothy turned to me and said, 'I knew you were the real competition; your girl has such lovely bone. You'll do a lot of winning with her!' I'll always remember showing against Dot Pearson, and that she was so gracious a person, and complimented my pup. She demonstrated great sportsmanship, whether she won or lost."

Linda Dowdy recalls working with Dot on the Chondrodysplasia Committee. Linda says "The plan was written in 1971 by Henry Dodd, Ken Bourns, Alice Jean Lucus and me. Dot then joined and served as our secretary. Remember - this was pre-email! Copies had to be made and snail-mailed out. Dot handled all our correspondence, and all the records of test-breedings and certifications. It was a huge job, which she did quietly, without any fanfare, and very efficiently. Dot was truly a wonderful friend, and an enormous asset to the club. She always signed her hand-written notes to me as 'Nuff said, Dot.'"

In remembrance of Dot, to thank her for her years of contributions to the club, words fail me, so these will have to do: "Dot, you were a wonderful friend. Nuff said, Linda."

Acknowledgements

This memorial tribute was compiled by Karina Burger, AMCA Newsletter Articles Coordinator. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all of the contributors to this story for sharing their wonderful memories, documentation and photographs. Thank you Virginia Devaney, Bob and Nancy Russell, Ben Ogburn, Bill Matott, Mike Chilinski, Linda Dowdy and Robert Zoller.



Photos: Hal and Aabara winning BOB at the 1959 National Specialty; Dot with Musher Lane Sitka and the E litter; Dot and Ch Frey of Redhorse; Dot and Aabara; Dot and Banshee winning BOS at the 1959 National Specialty; Dot and Ch Husky-Pak Kiowa; Dot and Ch Suisun of Redhorse, 9.5 years old; Moosecat M'loot, sire of Aabara; Dot winning group with Ch Viking of Redhorse; Redhorse foundation bitch Ch Timber-Trail Cheechako, CD.