

Silver Anniversary

1968 — 1993



Bernese

MOUNTAIN DOG CLUB OF AMERICA

GOING FOR THE SILVER:

The First Twenty-five Years of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America

There is something about the quarter-century mark that gives rise to careful introspection. Twenty-five years in the history of an organization is not enough to make that organization "old" so the thoughts need not be about long-gone traditions, times, and people. But it is enough time to permit the group to have gone some way toward reaching at least some of its goals.

Part 1 of this commemoration of that quarter-century reviews the years leading up to the organization of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America. It then summarizes some achievements of the Club in the years since 1968, when a scattered group of American fanciers dedicated themselves to their breed. Many people have been responsible for the development and progress of the Club. Over that twenty-five years, scores of people have been active: Club officers and members of the Board of Directors, Standing Committees, Specialty Committees, and the real backbone -- the Membership, all share in making this Club what it is. So congratulations to all of us!

Part 2 is historic, giving views of some of the stalwarts who dedicated twenty-five years to the Club. Their different vistas provide breadth and depth to the silver anniversary celebration.

→ Part 3 is a 32 generation pedigree of one dog, whose name was drawn by lot. Only the computer revolution made this possible!

Most of all, this is a celebration of our dogs, those wonderful friends and companions who kept us together and, we hope, on track through this span of time. We have tried to do our best for them, but now pause to re-dedicate ourselves to doing better in the years to come.

A number of contributors helped to produce this booklet. We thank Ron Smith and Barbara LeVine for assistance with the 32-generation pedigree, and Eve Menegoz and Brenda Abrams for providing photographs. Debbie thanks Dean for putting up with life as a computer-widower, and Mary thanks Ingrid, Imme, and Wacho for tolerating the time spent staring at a similar machine.

- from the Editor*, Mary Dawson and Deborah Godfrey

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The original publication of the Silver Anniversary booklet which covered the 1st 25 years of the BMDCA contained valuable articles by several BMDCA members. This document contains the Cover, parts 1 & 2 and pictures extracted from the original publication. The articles here are presented for educational purposes to inform newer club members of the BMDCA's history. Some of the tables referenced in the text are not included. Statistics for OFA evaluations or other information represented in the tables presented in the original publication are now available through the BMDCA Yearbooks, the Berner-Garde database, the AKC or online at bmdca.org.

We would like to thank the BMDCA and its committees and members for documenting the club's early days in the original Silver Anniversary publication.

PART 1.

HISTORY OF THE BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG CLUB OF AMERICA

Way back in the dim recesses of time, that is, in the obscure pre 1968 interval known as B(efore) C(lub), there were Bernese Mountain Dogs in America. How many and which ones came first may never be clear. Surely Swiss farmers immigrating into the New World brought with them their valuable dogs for help around the farm. So far as solid facts are concerned, however, we know only that in January, 1926, the farmer Isaac Schiess of Florence, Kansas, imported a pair of Bemer Sennenhunde from Switzerland. They were the bitch Donna von der Rothöhe SHSB 23314, breeder Franz Schertenteib, and the dog Poincare von Sumiswald SHSB 21565, breeder Fr. Iseli. Mr. Schiess made every effort to register this pair with the American Kennel Club but was unsuccessful in his efforts. Later in 1926, Poincare and Donna produced a litter, but again the AKC refused to register them. Mr. Schiess, little daunted, registered them instead with the Swiss Kennel Club under the kennel name 'of the Clover Leaf.'

About ten years later a second attempt to gain AKC recognition for the breed met with more success. In 1936 Glen L Shadow of Ruston, Louisiana, imported another pair from Switzerland, the bitch Fridy v. Haslenbach, bred by Fritz Stadler, and Quell v. Tiergarten (kennel name Felix), bred by A. Schoch. Mr. Shadow's enthusiasm for the breed and his work on its behalf were vital to the recognition of these dogs by the American Kennel Club. He was modest about this achievement, writing, 'On April 21, 1937, I had a letter from Mr. Perry B. Rice, Secretary of the American Kennel Club, stating that the Board of Directors held a meeting on Tuesday, April 13, 1937, and it was officially decided to recognize the Bernese Mountain Dog as a new breed in the Working Class. These are the first and only dogs of this breed to ever be registered with the American Kennel Club or the Secretary of Agriculture.' The June 1, 1937, issue of *American Kennel Club Registrations* carried the listings of the first two Bernese Mountain Dogs ever registered in this country, Mr. Shadow's Fridy (A-156,753) and Felix (A-156,752).

The name selected for the breed in America, Bernese Mountain Dog, reflects the precedent set in England. It is not a literal translation of Bemer Sennenhund, which literally becomes "Bernese Alpine Herdsman's Dog,' too much of a mouthful for American fanciers! The standard accepted for the breed in 1937 was derived from the standard current in Switzerland.

The breed was slow in gaining a foothold in its adopted homeland. Fridy and Felix produced two litters, but no dogs were registered during World War II, when all importing stopped. Mr. Shadow's dogs produced three more litters. In 1949, 1950, and 1951, Robert M. Youngs, Stewart G. Mayse, and Yvonne Auer imported dogs from Switzerland. Miss Nelly Frey bred a pair in

1959.

Still, in the early 1960s it was difficult to obtain information on the breed in this country, although by 1962 owners in far-flung reaches of America were listed with the AKC. From the south were Dr. C. Walter Mattingly in Louisiana and Dr. Judge M. Lyle in Texas, and in the upper midwest, Bishop W.W. Horstick and his daughter Mary Alice. Enthusiasts in the Pacific Northwest included Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hutchins, Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Harberts, Bea Knight, and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Thompson. These people worked together to promote the breed. Bea Knight established a Bernese program using her imported Gretel v. Langmoos and the Horetick's Ultra v. Oberfeld. The Thompsons imported Bella v. Moosboden and, mating her to the Hutchins' Bobi v. Bauemheim, began the 'Bella" line.

Showing Bernese was a lonely business in those days. Success came first in the obedience ring, when a C.D. was earned by Aya of Veralp, owned by the Horsticks, in 1962. In 1966, Bernese owners showing in conformation were encouraged when Sanctuary Woods' Black Knight, bred by Bea Knight and owned by Roberta Subin, received Fourth Place in the Working Group at the Riverside Kennel Club show. Black Knight went on to become the first Bemese conformation champion in the United States.

By 1966 the breed had made enough headway for owners and breeders to communicate more and more. The next step came in 1968, when fanciers in California led the way in forming the Bemese Mountain Dog Club of America.

Table 1. Bernese registrations 1937-1967

Year	#Registered	Year	#Registered
1937	2	1953	2
1938	1	1954	5
1939	0	1955	3
1940	8	1956	3
1941	0	1957	6
1942	0	1958	0
1943	0	1959	7
1944	0	1960	10
1945	0	1961	7
1946	1	1962	4
1947	1	1963	6
1948	7	1964	11
1949	2	1965	17
1950	1	1966	31
1951	2	1967	22
1952	0		

The Beginning

California was the Garden of Eden for the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America. The origin of the Club can be traced to the determination and organizational abilities of Carol Pyle of California. Carol, who was introduced to Bernese Mountain Dogs by Bea Knight of Sanctuary Woods Kennel in Oregon, foresaw the need to bring scattered and still scarce owners, breeders, and dogs together across the country. Thirty-three members, owning about 50 dogs, got the Club off to a good start. Initiation of a Club Newsletter by Carol helped bring people together in their interest in the breed. By the year's end, membership had risen to 62 and AKC registrations of Bernese Mountain Dogs reached 43.

A Bernese Quarter Century

In 1969 the Club had over 70 members and was ready for its first election of officers and board. It was soon time for the first Fun Match, held in California in 1970. Another first came in 1971, when an 'in person' meeting of the Club was held in Harrisburg following a supported entry at a show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Twenty regular and three junior members attended this landmark event! Fun matches picked up steam, with "Bemerfest II" in California and 'Oktoberfest*' in Michigan. Over the years fun matches evolved into AKC sanctioned events, and finally the Club held its first National Specialty in 1976. After the completion of six specialties, the BMDCA attained "Member Club" status with the AKC in 1981.

One of the earliest concerns of the fledgling group was a constitution and bylaws. Many drafts were circulated among the Club membership. Final approval from the AKC came in 1972. The five major objectives stated in the Constitution continue to challenge the membership and to provide the framework within which the Club functions. Highlights of the Club's first quarter-century are recounted below within this framework.

Objective a.) To do all possible to bring the natural qualities of the Bernese Mountain Dog (Berner Sennenhund) to perfection.

This is the primary purpose of the organization. All other objectives can be considered only in relation to the welfare of our breed. This involves not only breeding programs that are aimed toward 'perfection' but also raising and training dogs in a manner that is consistent with the character and the heritage of the breed. The "perfection" that is sought in appearance can be measured against the breed standard; "perfection" in temperament is examined at obedience trials, tracking, carting, and Canine Good Citizen tests.

Another measure of perfection is that in soundness and health, concerns of the BMDCA since its beginning. One of the early interests of the Club was, understandably, hip dysplasia, a condition known to affect most heavy dog breeds and certainly present in the Bernese. Members have been encouraged to know the condition of their dogs' hip structure and to take this structure into consideration in planning breeding programs. This has been conscientiously done, for the

most part, and the resulting improvement reported in the breed by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals is very encouraging (Tables 2, 3). Other orthopedic problems, this time in the elbow, have been more recently reported in Bernese. Radiographic evaluations for these conditions are becoming standard practice in breeding programs. Both OFA and the California-based Institute for Genetic Disease Control provide radiographic evaluations and maintain a registry for hips and elbows.

A highly unwelcome problem, early death by cancer in our breed, became an increasing concern during the 1980s. In 1990 the Club embarked upon a three-year project in cooperation with Morris Animal Foundation for study of cancer in Bernese Mountain Dogs. Results are not yet complete, and long continued study will be needed before we come to grips with this serious problem. Because some cancers appear to be hereditary, this genetic predisposition must be considered along with everything else in breeding for perfection.

Under the supervision of Martin and Barbara Packard, the BMDCA maintains a database containing pedigrees, health and other records for Bernese Mountain Dogs. Club members and others are encouraged to participate to ensure the completeness and accuracy of these important records.

Objective b.) To encourage the organization of independent local Bernese Mountain Dog Specialty Clubs where sufficient fanciers of the breed exist to meet AKC requirements.

As numbers of people and dogs increased, and centers of Bernese concentration grew across the country, regional groups sprang into existence. Early associations of fanciers include the San Francisco Bay Bemers and the BMDC of Menomonee Valley. From a few, regional clubs increased until there are now eighteen recognized by the BMDCA. Some groups have changed name, others have divided into two, all provide important activities centered on Bernese Mountain Dogs. A Regional Club Council under the umbrella of the BMDCA coordinates these distinct groups. Hikes, seminars, standard study, social events for dogs and people, any and all activities related to the well being of the dogs come within the domain of regional clubs. The vital function of hosting national specialties has been picked up by regional clubs.

Regional groups have been leading the way in a number of projects. The BMDC of Nashoba Valley (New England), for example, was the first to follow up on the BMDCA draft regulations, which were originally accepted in 1979. Their draft matches and reformulated regulations guided the way to the first BMDCA draft test, held in 1991 in Massachusetts. This led in turn to having a draft test feature in the 1992 National Specialty in Colorado. The Three Rivers BMDC emphasized the international character of our dogs by initiating European style judging at a fun match. Two regional clubs, Nashoba Valley and Watchung (New Jersey), are preparing to hold their own specialty shows in 1993,

and other clubs are aiming their focus toward holding regional specialties.

Objective c.) To urge members and breeders to accept the standard of the breed as approved by the AKC as the only standard of excellence by which Bernese Mountain Dogs shall be judged.

The accepted standard of the breed in 1968 was the original one adopted by the AKC in 1937. It was brief, and perhaps not an excellent document from which to judge a dog. It did contain, however, a beautiful description under the heading, General Appearance: 'A well balanced dog, active and alert; a combination of sagacity, fidelity, and utility.' These are the qualities that have led many fanciers over the years to this magnificent breed!

One of the early projects of the young BMDCA was establishment of a committee for study of this standard. Working with the membership, this committee (Sylvia Howison, Esther Mueller, and Mary Alice Horstick) formulated a revised standard, which was accepted by Club members and adopted by the AKC on July 8, 1980. Minor changes to the 1980 version of the standard were adopted by the AKC on March 28, 1990. In a highly successful cooperative program with the AKC, the BMDCA (Committee Chairman Esther Mueller) developed a slide show to illustrate points of the standard. Keeping step with technology, AKC and the Club (Committee Chairman Lori Jodar) have recently made a video program, which illustrates locomotion and other aspects of Bemese behavior as well as conformation. These visualizations have become critical tools in the education of fanciers and judges alike.

Recognizing the need for knowledgeable judges, the BMDCA initiated a program for judges' education. This was begun in connection with the National Specialty in 1990, with Sylvia Howison as coordinator. A written Illustrated Standard was prepared to assist with the project. The Judges' Seminar has become a regular feature of the annual specialty show. Educational materials and a newly revised Illustrated Standard are provided for the student judges. By all accounts, this series fills a real need by increasing awareness of the desired characters of the Bemese Mountain Dog.

Objective d.) To protect and advance the interests of the breed and encourage sportsmanlike competition at dog shows. This includes the encouragement of active participation in dog shows.

Communication among the widely distributed members of the BMDCA was and is vital to advancing the 'interests of the breed.' The Club strives to maintain contact among members, now numbering over 700, via its monthly publications. This began in 1968 with the first Newsletter, edited by Carol Pyle. The job of editor, that overworked and under-appreciated person, went subsequently to Julia Crawford, Sylvia Howison, Dora Gruber, Diane Petersen, Ellen Pickard, Marjorie Sellers, Martha Decker, Rachel Adams, Janice Lebeuf, Denise Dean, and currently Elizabeth Pearson. In 1985, the publications were divided into a Bulletin for current

news and The Alpenhorn for in-depth treatments of a variety of subjects. Twelve editors in twenty-five years indicates what a demanding role this is in the Club's functions!

When the BMDCA became a 'licensed' Club with the AKC, R began contributing a column to the AKC's 'Purebred Dogs.' By this means, the wider circle of dog fanciers is kept current with affairs related to our breed. Columnists were first Mary Dawson and currently Julia Crawford.

When the BMDCA became a Member Club of the AKC in 1981, the Club acquired the right to have its interests represented by a delegate at AKC meetings. In 1982 Mary Jo Thomson assumed this responsibility. Her role in protecting and advancing the interests of the breed were put to a strong test when irregularities in registration of puppies came from one Bemese kennel. Mary Jo was a leader in utilizing the still new procedure of DNA progeny testing to reach a successful resolution of this problem.

The BMDCA Code of Ethics was approved in 1972. Although the usual arguments ('not enforceable,' too strict, 'not strict enough') were heard, a majority of the members felt that this Code provided a standard against which behavior could be measured. This Code, with minor changes adopted in 1980, must be signed by all Club members. It addresses breeding practices and encourages breeders to exercise great care in producing Bemese Mountain Dogs. It specifies that good sportsmanship is required not only in competitions but in all activities related to the dogs and the Club.

A glance at Table 4 shows that as numbers of Bemese Mountain Dogs continued to grow, they did indeed participate in shows. There were 150 times more champion titles won in 1992 than in 1968! The Club's annual specialty show and frequent supported entries lead to a respectable level of participation in AKC events.

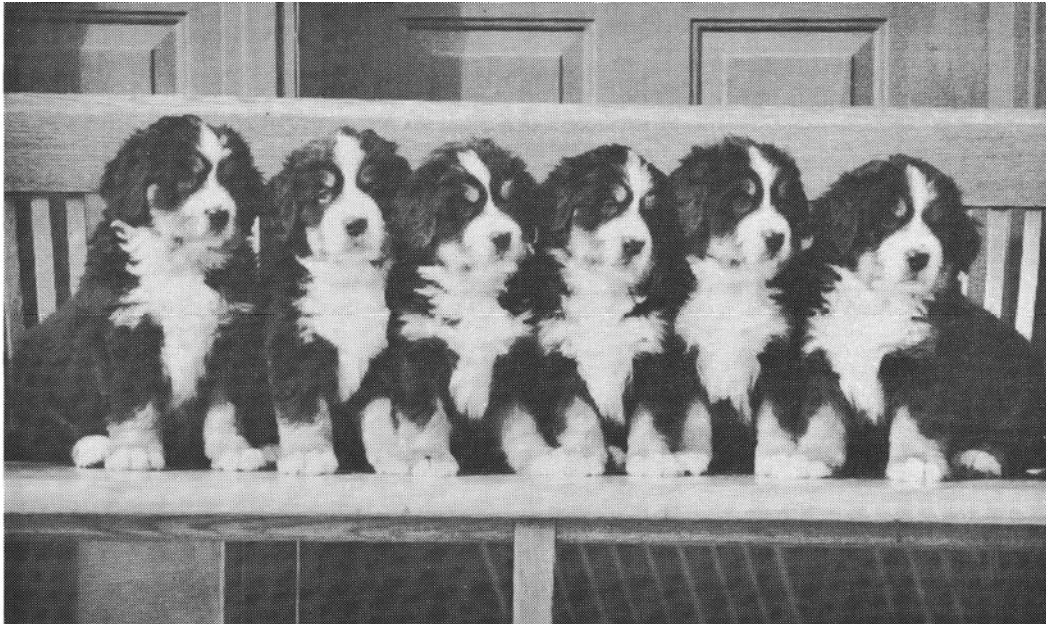
Objective e.) To conduct sanctioned matches, and specialty shows and obedience trials under the AKC rules

We began fulfilling this objective with our first official gathering, a Bernerfest Fun Match held in the summer of 1970 under the spirited guidance of Barbara Packard. Then in 1973 the Club reached 'sanctioned' status in the eyes of the AKC and held its first sanctioned B-OB match in Massachusetts. Other sanctioned B-OB matches followed, in California, Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania. Bernerfest scored another first with the first A-OA match in 1974. A second A-OA match, this one in Pennsylvania, led to elevation of the BMDCA to AKC 'licensed' status. This meant that the Club was approved to hold its own specialty shows. No time was wasted - the first National Specialty was held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1976. Following the successful completion of six national specialties (held independently since 1978), the AKC granted the BMDCA 'Member Club' status in 1981.

The National Specialty tends to be the high point of the Club year (Table 5). Its schedule reflects the expansion of activities for our dogs. Conformation, obedience, and Junior Showmanship have been standard features from the beginning. Tracking was added in 1981 (Wisconsin). The fun and excitement of an Agility Demonstration was introduced at the

1990 specialty (Wisconsin); Canine Good Citizen evaluations, in 1991 (Pennsylvania), and Futurity and a herding instinct test, in 1992 (Colorado). Carting demonstrations are always popular at specialties. This activity was formalized in 1992 with the first draft test to be held at a specialty.

Going for the Gold: The Future of the BMDCA



We are the future. Please do your best for us.

PART 2.

THE WAY IT LOOKED TO US

Recollections of the "Old Timers"

Of the 33 original members of the BMDCA in March, 1968, eight persevered through the full quarter of a century and are still going strong in the organization. These dedicated people are: Mary Dawson, Mary Alice Horstick Eschweiler, William Hall, Sylvia and Harold Howison, Marty and Carolyn Lockhart, Barbara Packard. Here Barbara, Marty and Carolyn, Sylvia and Harold, and Mary recall some events and impressions of their years devoted to Bernese Mountain Dogs.

Twenty-Nine Years of the Packard/Bernese Mountain Dog Relationship by Barbara Packard

1964

It all started for us, in Switzerland, on Washington's birthday, 1964, 29 years ago! (There have been 27 more yearly visits to Switzerland keeping close track of the Berner scene since then.)

Lucki v Chorrichertiof (pronounced Louki) was born that day in Krailigen, Switzerland, with plans already under way that one of the litter would be shipped to Martin and Barbara Packard. At four months old, he stumbled out of his crate at the San Francisco airport, shook himself, and took over.

At that time, our family consisted of a 15-year-old son, a 12-year-old daughter and a 15+-year-old blind and deaf black cocker, the remainder of a litter of cockers that we had bred. There was also a BeeBee parrot and black cochen bantams that stayed outside if the door was shut, and were soon to teach us some of the wonderful things to expect of even a puppy Berner. The cocker had a wonderful last four months using Lucki as his guide dog in the yard. Shortly, the age approached when we realized that we did not have control of this dog whose body was full size but whose behavior was that of a reckless teenager. After the time he lay as a limp body at curbside, having ignored the commands to stop when he spotted a dog on the other side of the street, and ran headlong into the side of a passing pickup truck, we sought professional training.

1965-1969

The now 13-year-old Jane and I were the ones who met the challenge in class for a year! After experiencing several trainers, we recognized that we had what was described as an alpha male which we had not patterned adequately at an early stage but we were seeing remarkable improvement. During this process, Jane became interested in OB competition (with me as backup when that interest waned) and from that position we agreed for her to enter the conformation ring at those shows where she entered trials to help make points for the few people who were now showing. Though Lucki was the kind of an obedience dog that would give a tail-wagging performance the audience loved, and perhaps choose to do some single act 'his way' each time (such as lift his leg on a ring post!),

Jane felt she had good control of him and was devastated at their first entry in the breed ring. When the judge reached to palpate the testicles, Lucki went straight up in the air - and backwards - in a remarkable maneuver.

We were prepared to have this signal the end of his conformation career, but a popular handler from the SF bay area had seen him and approached us to say "You have a Group winner there, but you will have to get him trained." Jane and Lucki went to Charlie Wunderling's classes for two months, then entered for the first of a four year long string of blue ribbons, including Group for this pair. They had become known in judges circles as the 'dog in the West, handled by the young girl.' At first there were handlers who were arguing with judges to say 'she* gaits that dog too fast, but then realized she was always placing ahead of them, so started copying her free lead style. They would ask her what she used on his coat and had trouble believing her "nothing." She never told them that sometimes, he had only been rubbed with a damp cloth rather than bathed. They were appalled when they found that his vibrissae were intact.

The show career of this pair ended in 1969 when Jane went off to Swarthmore at age 17. (It was while visiting her that I saw the first fly-snapping* BMD.) During their public career, Martin was occupying his time by being chauffeur to every fairground in California, because you had to travel to find a major (earliest shows even had to combine sexes), and by taking movies. He developed his own betting game at group ringside, because he knew who the perennial participants in most working breeds were and would recognize a new actor on the stage.

It was inevitable that this exposure to the dog world would bring us to importing of more dogs and into the breeder's world. We had never heard of dysplasia until we reached the show grounds. We were soon in touch with Hans Stadtman in Switzerland to start our first international talks about hereditary disease in the Berner. Lucki was four years old in 1968 when the BMDCA was formed by Carol Pyle and I was to start my career in understanding the intricacies of communicating on a national level amongst the owners of dogs and club officers who cannot ever be in a room together. I was also to experience the language and posturing that was expected of me when I entered the "fellowship of the breeder."

When he was five we had heard enough about the three-year-old registry called OFA, from people like Sylvia Howison who had OFA BMD #1 & #2, to motivate us to get a radiograph and submit it; he certified normal with OFA #3. At this time we knew every Berner owner in the USA, and made an effort to travel so as to meet them in their homes, also. This early contact made it possible to have those first

several hundred confidential OFA normals in our files today. (In retrospect, it is such a pity that we did not understand that it was important to be also recording those that were abnormal; we were all sharing at that stage.)

1970-1973

By now I was working actively as one of OFA's first "Breed Reps", under their founder Vem Bower. At the same time period, our local group held the first Berner matches in the USA and succeeded in getting Sanction B and then A for the BMDCA. They all occurred during 4th of July holidays and we called them Bernerfests, making a strong effort to have them be fun and games' as our Newt friends described and begged us to preserve. We are proud to see preservation of that concept in the numerous matches being held at other regional sites with an effort to maintain the Bernerfest spirit. Martin and I attended a course at UC Santa Cruz to learn how to use the SPSS program to computerize our dog data, starting with their vital statistics, their people connection and their OFA number.

We became experienced and knowledgeable about the problems of getting a pair of Berners "tied", and the subsequent problems of getting live puppies on the ground.

I was having trouble accepting the fact that the officers of our new dub could not agree that we should radiograph every dog and submit it to OFA before breeding it. (I have similar troubles now accepting the fact that the officers of our 25-year-old club appear to be as slow to rally to the 1990s call for breeders to recognize the genotype of their stock through use of the GDC as they were to rally to the 1960s call to find out what was the phenotype of their stock through OFA.)

On Lucki's birthday, February 22, 1973, we started a series of nine monthly gatherings to celebrate his nine years. Those nine gatherings built the camaraderie that culminated the next year in the formation of the first regional club, called the San Francisco Bay Berners. One of these gatherings spawned the first all-Berner training class of 15 dogs, aged four months to five years. This provided a source for data regarding growth rates and size/weight variations. At another, we listened to the words of Dr. Jack Switzer who told us it was not enough to breed only normal OFA without doing progeny testing (looking at offspring). He described the work in Sweden which was showing more rapid improvement in hips. The sixth of these gatherings was the July 1973 Sanction B-OB match which qualified us for Sanction A. Lucki attended the seventh and eighth...but only his memory was there for the final, ninth. He died of "bloat." He did not torsion' but lost his battle for life, after we spent the night on a mattress with him at the hospital and a remarkable rally in the morning. When the sudden lapse occurred at 11 AM, I made a promise as I hugged his comatose body: I promised to work as hard and as long as I was able, to improve the health and longevity of his kind.

I then went home to shed my tears on his seven-

month-old daughter, Onalee, for whom I had not found an adequate buyer, and told her that now I understood what her destiny was, thinking it was to be our companion, not knowing that her puppies would be the ones to jar me to the realities of the cancer in her breed.

1974

Onalee was the one who watched for six years while we operated an all-breed boarding kennel and training classes to the standards we felt were needed for a Bernese Mountain Dog. This was the ideal environment for learning the personalities of different breeds and gave me insight to what I call the special needs of shepherd breeds (dogs like ours that have been selected for traits that fit well around people who work with animals). The kennel was also the start of my experience working with organizations placing unwanted pets.

This year the July Bernerfest V, Sanction A-OA Match, met the qualifications for the ARC to authorize a specialty show for the BMDCA.

In October of this year we formalized the SFBB with a group of people who by now were receiving increasing numbers of public requests for carting and later, for square-dancing. Our Berner square dancers entertained hundreds of people for more than a decade. We used the musical routine to practice the formalities of obedience exercises which had the same movement patterns as selected square dance routines. We understand that one of our taped performances on TV has even recently been seen by Bernerfolk in the east.

1979

By now, enough of the SFBB were concerned about our hip dysplasia incidence that they voted (not quite unanimously) to adopt a breeding code restricting the members to use only normal stock (by OFA) and agreeing to share all evaluations through their growing database which Martin had computerized.

1984

The tenth anniversary of the SFBB saw a membership of approximately 80 families openly sharing information as a way-of-life. It was revealing some disturbing facts. We were cooperating with Dr. Wind at University of California (Davis) to study elbow joint problems and were finding that very few of the puppies which our members received, from all over the USA and Switzerland, were without joint or some other important health problem. The situation did not encourage the use of these dogs for breeding. We found that less than half of the pups from 'double OFA' breedings showed normal hips at adulthood. After the repair of Onalee's first cruciate ligament rupture, I had to abort our quest for the CDX and switched to tracking. She sailed through, although six years old, and I was addicted to a new sport.

It was at this time that I realized my focus was shifting strongly toward health problems. I realized how our "fun and games" were being severely diminished by emotional roller-coasters from the costs of veterinary visits which included chronic diseases, surgical interventions and too many deaths before ten years of age.

1986

The Bay Berners hosted the Specialty in San Francisco. That was the year I traumatized some of our Bernerfolk with the first formal planning booklet...it had a theme, 'Bare Knees'...and one of the pictures had not only Bernese and bare knees, but the lovely lady was sun bathing nude in the park in Geneva! It was the year we had our first overseas judge; Eva Walliser came from Switzerland to judge the Puppy Sweepstakes.

1988

Our foreign connections with the Berner world were convincing Martin and me that it was time to get informed about the use of open registries in various other countries. The database that had been developing over the previous decade was deemed adequate to fill the needs for the open-type registry that Dr. George Padgett, Michigan State, was promoting as necessary for genetic disease control by breed groups. Dr. Bruce Madewell helped while we used it to catch the attention of the BMDCA regarding the need for a cancer study. The database was also adapted to enable the incorporation of the Institute for Genetic Disease Control in Animals which serves the needs of any breed to set up professionally managed open registries for keeping the diagnoses of dogs with inherited diseases that the clubs have targeted for control.

1993

Twenty years have passed since my promise to Lucki. It was renewed to his daughter Onalee when she almost made her tenth birthday with a death that defied diagnosis, and again to her successor, Kuni, the night before I euthanized him with cancer at eight years old. How much time do I have left?

I hope there is enough time for me to see the incorporation of the BERNER-GARDE Foundation which will maintain the BMD International Database in perpetuity and without partisan politics. And, I wonder...is there time to see the day when the BMDCA membership assumes that each person who keeps their whereabouts updated in that database, will keep their dog records current and will submit the same information on any litter their dog might produce? With those developments, I could finally say to Lucki...and all of those other Berners whose owners have shared with me from across this country..."I am comfortable that I have contributed as long and as much as I am able."



Barbara Packard and friend

MEMORIES
(Taken at random from a crowded mind)
by Sylvia & Harold Howison

Twenty-five years - it went so fast, Seems like only yesterday that the first litter whelped in the midwest graced our whelping box; the same box that now contains the three pups that compose the Sablemate "R" litter.

It was November of 1968 when that first litter arrived. There were nine pups. Nobody had ever heard of a Bernese Mountain Dog. In March of 1969, the last of them finally found a home. Three of those homes still are inhabited by BMDs. When the litter had not yet been born, we saw, in our daily newspaper, a Believe It Or Not article that said that carved over the main arch of the cathedral in Berne are the words "Machs Na", which translates in English to "Try to copy it". Therefore, our first dogs were named starting with 'M'. The next litter had a cute pup that we kept referring to as 'Freddie'; so the next litter was the "F" litter and then reason prevailed and we started over with the traditional A.B.C plan. When Machs Na and Frederick the Great were lost to heartworm infestation in 1970, Julia & Elizabeth Crawford lent us Maria for a litter so we could start over. In 1984 Martha Reisinger gave us Tradition so that, once more, we could begin again. Martha Decker lent us Clara for a litter in 1973; Lilian Ostermiller made it possible for us to acquire the dam of the "FT litter in 1989. All through the years are memories of such friends and devoted Bernese fanciers.

Other memories - the wild excitement when Sanctuary Woods Black Knight became the first Champion ever; then the thrill of getting to know him when he was acquired by the Alpstein kennels of Hilda Deidrich in Oberlin, Ohio. The speed with which the news of Ch Grand Yodler of Teton Valley's Group First traveled across the country. The long, long drives cross country to attend shows where there might be other Berners entered. The equally long drives to look at litters -- not necessarily to buy a pup, but just to see what each and every one looked like. The benched shows where the crowd was so thick at the bench that the Fire Marshall insisted that the aisle be cleared.

The gatherings - matches, shows, club meetings; but mostly just Berner folk getting together to meet and look at each others dogs. The Packards' first visit to our home on the day our first litter was celebrating their first birthday: the first majors in Michigan, won by Mary Dawson's dogs all the way from Pittsburgh; the get-togethers when a distinguished Swiss judge visited; the thrill of an entry of 40 at the first large mid-western match; getting to see Ch. Fairplay's Hannibal at a match in Pennsylvania (he had arrived in a Volkswagen Bug, driven from near Denver, and in the company of one adult and two small boys); the gourmet meals at Marty Reisinger's where there was often a group of ten or so and LOTS of dogs to look at; the year our vacation consisted of visiting Marty, the Crawfords, a fancier on Long Island whose name escapes me, and

the Gagnons in New Jersey -- all in five days time.

The dogs - Impossible Dream, who looked cross-eyed down the end of her nose when she was really intent, and whose descendants do so to this day; Wendy, the second bitch Champion in the country, whose temperament was the most flawless encountered yet; Hannibal, whose registration papers had become entangled somehow - what a waste it would have been if we had not been able to straighten them out (he finished his Ch. and got his OFA clearance at nine years of age - and would be competitive yet); Basko, the Townsends pride who never had the time of day for me, but remembered Harold his entire life; Fancy, who founded a long line of champions for Diane Russ and lived to be a ripe old age, still sound of mind and body; Zyta, Mary Dawson's bitch, who won the first National Specialty - a perfect lady Bernese; Martha Decker's Teddy Bear, who didn't really like people but showed well enough to be BOS at a National; Lori Jodar's Ajax, one glimpse of whom from three rings away was the beginning of a long and dear friendship with dogs and people; the BIS winners - Copyright, Pace, Louie - all brought shivers up my spine with their beauty; the dearly beloved pets, Joe-Dog, Bunny, Friendly - each with something unique to contribute to the lives of their owners.

The people - most of all the people -- nowhere are there better people than those who own Berners. Ready to help with whatever the need of the moment is, devoted to the breed, supporters of the Club, friends worth having. From "way back" - Dutch and Esther Mueller, Bill and Mary Jo Thomson, Mary Dawson, Mary Alice Eschweiler, Debbie Mulvey, Julia & Elizabeth Crawford, Walt & Mary Townsend, Sam & Martha Decker, Jim & Martha Reisinger, Jim Brooks, Martin & Barbara Packard - each brings a special memory of a time long gone. The more recent additions to the 'memory bank' include: John & Ann Belknap, Loyal & Lori Jodar, Laurie LeBeau, Jon & Carol Evert, Den & Lilian Ostermiller, all ongoing tried and true friends in addition to the 'old timers.' A growing company of newcomers to the breed promises more long term friendships for all. This is somewhat unique to BMDs. In most other breeds, jealousy and the competitive spirit prohibit close, long-term ties. Perhaps it is because of the multitude of problems we must all face together.

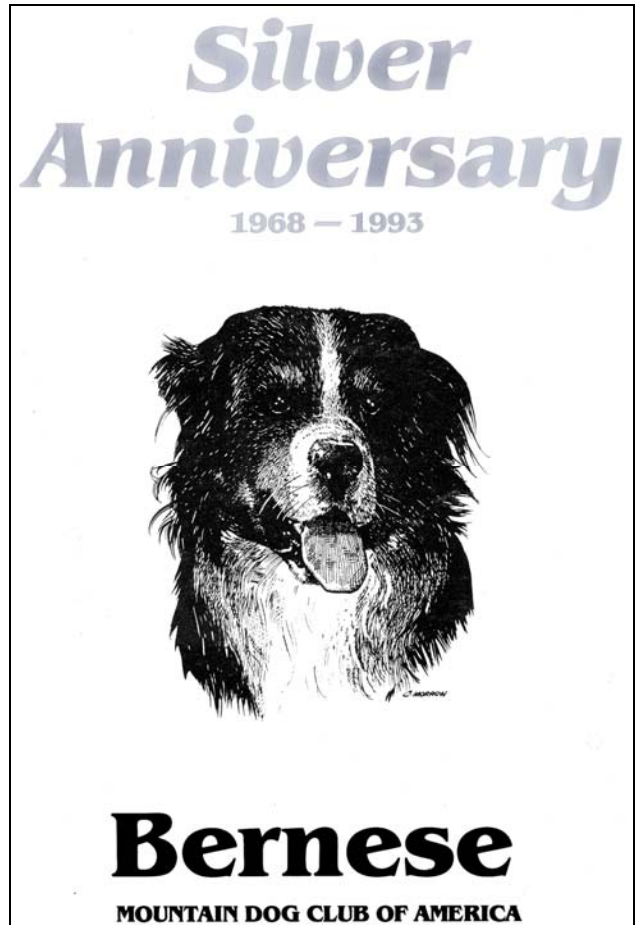
The problems - in the beginning dysplasia, dysplasia, dysplasia - an incidence of 95%. Then reproductive problems -- dogs that would not breed, bitches that did not conceive, bitches that would not whelp -- probably an incidence of 75%. How much better off we are today in these areas - only to discover that the work that bettered the breed seems also to have created a new specter in our cancer problem. Those early dogs often lived to 12 or 13 years. Where did we go wrong? Temperament was often not very good to begin with - many painfully shy bitches. What a pleasure it is to watch as 200 or so go through their paces at National time and all seem to be genuinely enjoying themselves.

Type - in the early days was very diverse; some looked like St. Bernards, some like hounds, some almost like Shelties. Long, hard work on the part of the breeders has resulted in dogs that look like Berners should. Color and markings have improved, coat is correct, sound movement is the rule, rather than the exception.



The Club - the BMDCA -- without the contact made with each other through the formation of the parent club, most of the benefits of experience would have been lost to other breed fanciers. Through the dedicated work of a lot of people, a breed has been developed and goals have been set. The next 25 years should bring the benefits of seeing regional clubs recognized and regional specialties held. There is no better forum than a specialty to share experience and ideas. As more local groups become viable, quality should improve at an even greater pace. Problems that today seem overwhelming will be resolved and new challenges met. The bonds of new friendships will be forged.

Would we do it again? You bet! Can we still do what we did then, we old-timers? Probably not -- but the tasks ahead fall to willing hands. As Club membership has grown, so has the diversity of talents dedicated to the challenges of the future. Together, young and old, we will not fail. The Bernese Mountain Dog forever -- Hip, Hip, Hooray!!!



Marty Lockhart with Ch. Car-Mars A-Miss v. Copyright, C.D., winning BOS at 1977 National Specialty



PERSPECTIVES by Mary Dawson

Life would not be complete without them! "They" started here in 1966, with Olaf v. Oberscheidegg, called Bläss. Next came Fina v. Nesselacker, the original Hächli, little witch. This nickname was bestowed by her breeders. Ami and Klari Krauchi, because she started all the spats and then sat back to watch the other puppies scuffle. Her nickname was incorporated in the name for our place, Hexliheim, home of the little witch. Klaus v. Kiesenthal, Hektor v. Nesselacker, Zyta v. Nesselacker, Aldo v. Kleinholz, Kati v. Sturbühl, Wacho v. Sturbühl, and the Hexliheimers who stayed here -Dani, Elsa, Fina and Frobisher, Imme and Ingrid. There have been a few liners, nine in twenty-seven years, which does not qualify us for the "puppy mill" list, especially as two of the litters had one puppy each.

So while the dogs come first here, the BMDCA has received its share of attention from Hexliheim too. Take a look at the BMDCA Yearbooks. After about five years of Club existence, it became clear that we needed some printed matter in addition to our monthly Newsletters. So Margaret Wilson and I undertook the new project. The forerunner of our current Yearbooks was produced to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the founding of the Club. It covered 1968 to 1973, and featured pictures and pedigrees of Bernese title holders belonging to members. Then the Yearbooks began their annual cycle, still continuing. Numbers of dogs belonging to members continued to rise, until now (1992) around 150 new title holders are featured each year. The total number of dogs featured by now must be into the thousands.

Yearbook production during the early years was quite original. The first one was printed on a friend's home printing outfit, using a fancy sort of mimeograph process. Collation was done by a group of friends. Round and round the table we went Thank goodness the book was smaller than current editions! The 1974 Yearbook, again printed by amateurs, was collated in the living room of my old farmhouse just before one of our early B-matches. In on the fun was a hearty crew including Mary Alice Horstick, Jane McGovern, Martha Decker, Dora and Max Gruber. We put boards on saw horses, spread out the pages, and circled around and around to put the book together. Antiquated, sure. Memorable, even more! It was a far cry from the computer-generated, professionally-printed yearbook of today, but I cannot help thinking that what we have gained in technology, we have lost in camaraderie.

Putting Bernese and their people together always leads me to the story of Aldo, which I wrote for the BMDCA column in American Kennel Gazette in 1976, shortly after he arrived. Here it is.

This story has a sad beginning but works its way through to a happy ending.

"Early in December, one of our members was greatly saddened by the unexpected death of her eight and one-half year old female. This dog has been in splendid condition, only a few months earlier having been the winning veteran in a match and a few months before that, the winning veteran at the National Specialty. She was not only a handsome dog but also was bright and original in personality. Some members may remember her in obedience at a match several years ago: on the long down

command this dog rolled over on her back and then, slowly but definitely, wiggled her way, still on her back toward her owner, who nearly collapsed with laughter. That episode ended her obedience career, as the dog probably planned it would! Although there were other Berners in the household and the owner would seldom admit to such partiality, this female was the favorite.

"The loss of such an original friend and companion was deeply felt by her owner. This was quickly noticed by a few friends, who got together and formed what can be called a "Puppy Committee." They decided first to contact the Swiss breeder of the dog that died and ask him to find a puppy that would help fill the void. One of the Committee members, Swiss herself, was soon on the overseas phone to the breeder. He had nothing available himself but he would scour the country to find just the right puppy, as long as the Committee did not rush him. Meanwhile, other members of the Committee contacted still others, raising funds for the venture. Before long the Committee included members from the East Coast to Colorado. All were anxiously awaiting word from Switzerland. During all this the owner was totally unaware of any scheme at all.

"The wait for the Swiss breeder to find the correct puppy seemed interminable to the Committee. It took the greatest restraint also for those of the Committee who saw the owner frequently not to spill the beans. Finally the word came, just the right puppy, a male, had been found. The Committee could stand the suspense no longer, and they revealed the entire plan to the owner, who was, understandably, overwhelmed! Now there was one more person anxiously awaiting the time when the puppy would arrive.

"Even the arrival was handled by Committee. The Committee's Swiss representative was at Kennedy Airport for the puppy's arrival and welcome, and another Committee member prolonged a stay on the East Coast to be part of the greeting. The Committee could not keep the new owner away and she was there, as excited by the arrival as were Committee members. At this point the owner wouldn't have cared if that puppy had four heads and one leg. He would be most welcome. The puppy, equipped as usual with one head and four legs, was an instant success.

"I cannot vouch for the absolute authenticity of the above account of the Committee's action and feelings, as I have pieced this story together from what I have been told. However, I can vouch for the absolute success of the Committee's venture, because as I write this I am also watching little "Committee Puppy" across the room from me, trying rather effectively to eat a chair. I can also vouch for the fact that each and every one of those Committee members has a solid gold heart!"

That puppy was Aldo, who graced Hexliheim for twelve and one-half rich years. The card that was presented to me along with the puppy contained the names of colleagues and family, as well as golden hearted Club members: Martha Decker, Dora and Max Gruber, Mary Alice Horstick, Esther Mueller, Mary Jo and Bill Thomson, Mary and Walt Townsend.

Any who know me have heard me grumble: about the woeful state of our glorious breed; about cutting off the glorious coats for the show ring; about overproduction of puppies; about the leadership, or lack thereof, in the BMDCA; about the latest absurdity from the AKC. Usually the grousing session ends with my usual, "Too bad the people aren't as nice as the dogs." But then I think about Aldo and his committee, about the later committee that made Wacho a possibility, and decide that, yes, that is what the organization represents to me!



The Beginning by Carolyn and Marty Lockhart

As in most writings of the past, thoughts come harder than writing about events to come in the future. So let's go back to that time 25 years ago when Carol Pyle, my wife Carolyn, and I were sitting on the bench at the Golden Gate dog show, in the winter of 1968, with the large entry of two Bernese bitches. The spectators flowed by the bench, stopped, then discussing among themselves as to what breed are these dogs? Are they some kind of mix, someone would say. Then they began glancing through their catalogs to find that this breed was the Bernese Mountain Dog. Beautiful, wonderful, how content they are, came the remark from someone in the rear to the crowd, and for the two days we were benched, the two litter bitches from Bea Knight's Sanctuary Woods Kennel, put on a great show for their audience. We all had a great time, that winter day, so long ago.

Yes, it has been a long time, and as with time, everything changes. The animals have changed, entry size has changed, and, of course, the entry fee has changed. To the eight original members that are still with the Club, remember when you would go to the dog shows, hoping that the other one or two Bernese would show up as to make points for someone? Long way from then till now, hoping now that some would stay home so one might have a better than even chance of at least a placement. Well, anyway, to get back to what I'm supposed to write about.

It was quite a chore at first to do much about trying to get some kind of club started. The basis to why Carol Pyle wanted to organize some kind of club was to be in contact, nationwide, with persons who owned Bernese, plus that at sometime down the road, agree on some point where we could meet and show off the dogs. This was tough to do also, due to the vast areas between, and the small amount of Bernese in the country at that time.

The first thing to do was to make up a kind of newsletter to inform other owners that there were other Bernese Mountain Dog people out there. This was the start of the beginning. From then to now, we all know that the Club's newsletter has grown from a sheet or two into a large publication, and the membership from a handful into hundreds. As for my wife, Carolyn and myself, we have had a number of years working with our beloved dogs, in showing, obedience, and carting. From the days of business meetings being conducted in the newsletter, or in the homes of members, to what we have today of meetings being held in large halls to accommodate our large membership.

As for the dogs, they seem to have come a long way over the years. Breeders show more concern for the breed today, as one can see by the OFA numbers that are recorded each year. The old male I have, 11 years, has OFA #575; today the breed is into the four-digit numbers!

I will always remember what Carol Pyle said back in 1968 at the Cow Palace that the purpose of a dog club should be "to promote the betterment of the breed." I believe it has.