

Rose Anderson - no longer a nobody from nowhere

John Seraphine



Rose Anderson with two of her blue merle dogs, Jing (left) and Shen, who will be competing in this year's Soldier Hollow trial

Frankly, I thought the judge's idea was more than a little mad. She thought the sheep were penning too easily, so she set the challenge for our second run of open class this way: Split off two of the four sheep, then pen just two of them. Run after run confirmed my assessment of that idea. With the exhaust very near the pen and shedding ring, and with fewer than 80 ewes and lambs nearing the end of a three day set of trials with about 150 runs already under their belt, and in a BIG HURRY to get to that exhaust gate, how were we going to get two panic-stricken sheep into that pen? We were nearing the end of the running order of 40 dogs and no one had yet penned.

Then came Rose Anderson and her speedy little blue merle bitch named Shen. They worked methodically. They worked quietly. And when the pen gate shut there was a roar of cheers and applause. They won the class of the Land of Lincoln (Illinois) Three Sisters Trial, and their completed run was not matched that day.

That was in mid August of 2011. Early the next month Rose and Shen amazed everyone again by winning the double-lift finals of the prestigious Wisconsin Working Stock Dog Association Trial in Portage, Wisconsin.

Since Rose and I started competing in sheepdog trials at about the same time, I smiled to think how far she had come...and that she had truly arrived. It has been my observation that in North America we have an abundance of great dogs and very many fine handlers who could compete on equal footing with many of the best handlers in Ireland and Great Britain...except when it comes to the big double lift trials and the International shed. But Rose had just completed a run that would have been quite competitive in an International setting. The outruns in Portage are a couple hundred yards shy of a full 800 yards, and the set outs are both within sight of keen-eyed dogs. But the sheep are ones that have been run through a number of times over a four day trial, and they can get extremely canny. The sheep that are shed off have an extreme pull toward the exhaust, and it is almost impossibly difficult to get those last plain sheep off without the collared

ones making a charge for the exhaust. It takes a powerful and disciplined dog indeed to head them off.

But Rose had now won a trial that top competitors like Alasdair MacRae and Jack and Kathy Knox had won in years past. She herself explained that her knees were beginning to buckle and her heart was bursting with pride when she shut the gate on the five collared ones. Up to now she had felt she was thought of as a "nobody from nowhere." But now she was Rose Anderson, that dangerous woman from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan with her exceptional strain of blue merle dogs.

The Upper Peninsula is a sparsely populated land best known for Nordic skiing, hunting and fishing, and harsh, cold weather. And Yoopers, as such people are called, are known to be a tough and independent sort.

True to form, Rose is a single mother who boards, trains and grooms dogs for a living in a kennel she developed by herself. To train sheepdogs in the long winters she first has to fire up her pick-up and plough a small field of the deep snow. And through it all she works overtime to learn new things for the sake of her sheepdogs, and compete with the best at the toughest of trials.

I wanted to share her story with readers of the "International Sheep Dog News," not only because Rose is now a rather outstanding "somebody," but because she is typical in many ways of the North American scene where many of our best competitors are women and have come to sheepdogs from working with horses or with agility and obedience dogs. Another inspiration is Rose's own talent for sharing the story of her colourful life which she is weaving into a book she is writing about Chi, her beloved first border collie.

JS You have been training and competing with dogs for many years, but before that it was horses, was it not?

RA I bought an Arab horse for \$50 when I was 18 years old. I trained that horse to do everything. She went from this ugly duckling to this fabulous horse. She was an all-around horse: she would do Western and English riding, gymkhana or barrels and poles, jumping. She even pulled a buggy for me. And she was awesome with little kids. She was so well trained that anyone could ride her and I gave lessons on her. She was just an awesome horse. I showed her in everything you can imagine—even endurance racing where she did quite well and got the "best conditioned" horse in the race several times.

JS You told me recently about a jumping event where you won the event with your horse, but also came close to winning in a dramatic fashion for a competitor who was injured.

RA I was riding the \$50 horse, and she was up for Grand Champion of the year for the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The usual rider of the horse who was the closest in competition for Champion was violently ill that morning and the gal who owned her asked me if I could ride that horse. So I was riding both, competing for Grand Champion. And I told the girl when I went in, "I'll ride your horse as if it were my own. If your horse wins, then it deserves it. If my horse wins then she deserves it." And that's the way it is when I train dogs as well. When I see one of the dogs I've trained beat me in a trial I'm as happy as I can be. I'd rather win, but it really makes me feel good to see a dog and handler I've helped do well and even beat me.

But, back to the story of the horse, when I was riding this horse for this other woman, we cleared a jump and the horse came down in a hole—a soft spot where the horses were pole bending the day before—and it threw me forward in the saddle. So when it took the next jump it threw me further up in the saddle. Then on the next jump I was all the way on the horse's neck. If I could have held on across the finish line that horse would have won. But, though I was holding on with everything I had, I fell off and



Rose Anderson and her daughter still breed, train and show horses: when she competed in the 2012 Bluegrass Classic dog trial she took this brood mare for a mating to one of the top studs in America near Lexington, Kentucky

the horse knocked my helmet off and stepped right on my head. I still have a small indentation there. And after they tended to me, I felt so bad—I went up to the girl who owned the horse and said, "I'm so sorry."

JS So, after all that success with horses, what drew you into working with dogs?

RA I got Chi, my first border collie, about 12 years ago. I trained and showed horses for many years before that, and then started working with German shorthaired pointers, first of all in obedience. One day my pointer came in the barn and was jumping over my horse jumps, and I thought there's got to be something for dogs that they can jump. And that night, on "Animal Planet" on television, they were showing the national agility trials. I thought, "There it is!" So I bought a book that pictured all of the patterns and I built all my own agility equipment, and started doing agility with my pointer. We started entering trials and did very well. She ended up with "Excellent" titles in agility. The highest she got in obedience was a "Utility" title. And for a German shorthaired that's really, really good. The judges used to say she was the nicest shorthaired pointer they had seen in obedience. She was so excited about doing her work.

Then, during an obedience trial, Ronnie Bingham and I and a number of other border collie girls who were all doing obedience were sitting at a restaurant; and they all said to me, "Rose, you need to get a border collie." And I said, "I don't need a border collie. I'm perfectly happy with my pointer." And they kept it up so much that, just to shut them up so I could eat my dinner, I said, "If you can find me a blue merle female with blue eyes, I'll buy it." And Tracey somebody, from Milwaukee, said, "Yeah, I know a lady from Milwaukee that just bought one like that from Georgia and I've got her number right here. Do you want her number?" So I was stuck, and I said, "Okay," just to shut 'em up again. So I wrote down the number on a napkin just to shut 'em up so I could eat my dinner in peace.

So, on Monday, I was washing clothes, and out of my pocket falls this napkin. So I called the number and explained to the woman that I got her number from a lady in Milwaukee and I asked if she had any puppies. She said that she had just sold a tri-colored male, but she still had a blue merle female. I asked, "What color are her eyes?" and she almost hung up, because that was the stupidest question to ask, but I was still going on this fate thing, thinking that I should have this dog. And so I told her the story about the conversation in the restaurant, and after we had a good laugh, she sold me this dog, and that was Chi.

She was about the best dog that I ever had, but I didn't know what I had till she was gone. She was such an awesome dog; but your first dog, you don't know what you've got.

JS When you say "she was gone," do you mean she was a bit

over the hill when you realised her ability?

RA Yes, she was getting older and I realised I had let her get away with too much stuff. But she did get me to my first national trials. I went to my first nationals in Oregon in 2006 with her. She qualified in open, but she had an infection at that time. It's called a neospora infection. She had been getting really sick and losing weight and all her muscles atrophied. Kate Ash from Thistledeew Farm in Lower Michigan told me, "Rose, for God's sake, take her to Michigan State University and find out once and for all what's wrong with her." And I did, and they discovered that it was neospora infection and I put her on the antibiotics that they called for and I got her back to health. I won one or two open trials after that.

And that year that I ran her in the Oregon Nationals, that was Shen's first year in nursery and we almost made it to the second round, but she had one big ewe that turned and faced her which slowed her down. But the promo video that they used the last time the National was in Oregon showed Shen backing that sheep down. And she was only about a year and a half old in that trial, so I think that's pretty cool.

JS Well it was probably about that time that Peter Hetherington stayed with us and judged the Wisconsin Working Stockdog Association (WWSDA) trial. He gave lessons, and I recall he was very impressed with Shen.

RA Yes, I had a half-hour lesson that ran on to 45 minutes and I told Peter, "My lesson is over." But he said, "No, I want to see what this little dog has! Come on, Rose, let's go over here and let's try this and let's try that." Everything we threw at her she just took it, and he said, "Ah, she's a good one." And when we were walking back up he told me, "Rose, she's every bit as good as the best I've ever worked with." And my knees went like rubber to hear that, but that was Shen. He really liked her.

JS When did you start with your kennel where you board and train for a living? Did that come when you were working with pointers or with the border collies?

RA Now I live on the river in the house where I grew up. When we first moved back there my mother was getting older and needed someone to help her take care of the place. She was going to sell it, so we sold our farm and moved back there and started over. We built a new house and barns and everything. My uncle gave me land and I built my kennels there years after he had passed away. It was probably sixteen years ago. Before that I groomed and boarded some dogs in my basement.

JS So, what have been your major accomplishments with border collies so far?

RA I qualified for the nationals in 2006, and missed out in 2007, but was back in 2008 and every year since then. So it's been five national finals. Last year Shen was eight years old and she ended up 19th out of the 153 dogs. We missed by one dog getting into the double lift final. Just like missing out in the finals her nursery year. I'm sure it was the handling—blame it on me.

I've been a nobody from nowhere and good handlers have told me I should have been placed higher, for example when the National was in North Dakota and Shen was in open and took the sheep off of the hill so beautifully. But now I'm getting out of that nobody stage. So I have to pinch myself sometimes, like the first year I got into the double lift finals at the 2006 WWSDA Trial in Portage. It was with Chi and we came in 6th out of the 12 or 15 dogs, and I was pretty proud of that, because she was my first border collie and she was still sick from her infection. And then this past year, in 2011, Shen and I won the double lift and I was so excited. And then, because of that we got invited to Soldier Hollow this year, which is probably my biggest accomplishment so far. I'm a little worried because Shen had a surprise mating and had to have her pups by Caesarian, and I had her neutered. But I plan to run both Shen (ABCA 318153) and Jing (ABCA 321583) at Soldier Hollow this summer. And we will be competing at Meeker for the first time this year as well.

JS What do you think has helped you adapt to the world of herding trials from horses and dog agility?

RA I've trained horses since I was 17, so I think having stock



Shen and Rose Anderson working on the shed as they lay down a winning run at the 2011 Wisconsin Working Stock Dog Association Trial in Portage, Wisconsin

sense is a help. Also, being open minded about learning is a big thing. If you think you know everything you're done learning. For instance, at the Bobby Dalziel clinic, I take it as another tool in my toolbox. [Rose helped me put on a clinic with Bobby for 8 days this spring by holding sheep for other handlers, and she took lessons with several of her dogs also.] The more tools I have in there the better trainer, handler and competitor I'm going to be. I'm always open for new thoughts and tools.

JS One of the other interesting things about you, from my perspective, is that you got great dogs in your life almost by accident. The woman in Georgia you bought Chi from wasn't involved in sheepdogs was she?

RA Yes, she is involved in training and competition with sheepdogs. And she had an idea about breeding. She absolutely adored Fortune's Glen, and she insisted that if you bred a dog you bought from her, that you looked for lines that went back to Fortune's Glen as well.

JS What is her name?

RA Sandra Lindenmuth, from Georgia. But she registered her dogs with...I even hate to say the words...AKC (American Kennel Club) registered. So I was competing in a world that hates the AKC; so every time someone would ask, "Is Shen registered" and I would say, "Yes," and then add that she was AKC registered, they wouldn't even look at her again. So I decided to figure a way to get Shen registered with the American Border Collie Association (ABCA). [Chi remained AKC registered only.] So I asked Chuck O'Reilly and others, and Chuck would say he didn't think I would get anywhere. "She's a blue merle and AKC registered, and they are going to look down on both of those." But I thought, "What do I have to lose," and I decided I would do all I could do to get her registered. They wouldn't acknowledge any of her pedigree through AKC, even though it was only the first two generations that were AKC. All the rest, all the way back, were ISDS dogs.

JS So, this was Shen, what about Chi?

RA Both of the dogs I got from Lindenmuth were AKC registered. But to register on merit she had to place in open trials in the top 20% or whatever, and we had to get video tape of her competing in a trial, and all kinds of other hoops. In the end we were in a trial in Kentucky and there were four directors of the ABCA there and Kate Ash and another one or two video-taping my run. This was early March and at that time of year, where I live, we have three feet of snow. There was no place where I could have practised with that dog, so I worked in a little 100 by 300 foot place that I plow. So I prayed that we would do well enough. And she was a fire cracker. My dogs work fast—anyone will tell you that—but she brought the sheep right on line and she did everything I asked. We made all the panels, and we got the shed, and penned with 30 seconds left. But my knees were buckling under me because I knew everything depended on doing well there, and she did. She may not have placed in that trial, but since she did it all nice she was voted in unanimously by the ABCA directors after watching that video. [Shen is ABCA #318153]

JS You had already won and placed well in opens, but that was the only run that was recorded and watched by all the directors?



Rose and Shen watch nervously to see if anyone can beat their run at the 2011 WWSDA trial - they wound up on top and so were invited to compete in the September 2012 Soldier Hollow trial

RA Yes. But it took quite a lot to get her registered on her merit. I just couldn't see why papers aren't accepted just because they are on an AKC registration, when they are mostly ISDS dogs. When I got Chi as a pup I took her to a Jack Knox clinic. Jack saw she never took her eyes off of the sheep and during lunch he asked me about the breeding. I said, "I don't know, but I have papers." When I showed him he knew every single one of those ISDS dogs and said all of them are good, and said "If this little dog doesn't herd, something's wrong."

I started Chi on ducks and she absolutely hated them. And she would get them to the fence and grab one by the neck and I would scream for her to let go. So I bought sheep and the first year she won all the novice awards she could win at the WWSDA Trial.

JS What's your ambition for yourself now?

RA I really enjoy teaching people. And I love the challenge of training dogs. Every year I've worked with one rescue dog. If they were good enough I competed with them and then I would sell them. There was only one that was outstanding and that was Marty—Sharon Woolman's Marty. I trained him and sold him to her. I've had several others that didn't turn out and sold them as pets. They didn't have the keenness.

I've trained dogs for about eight or nine other people. Some have just been for a month or so to be farm dogs. And several have been for a number of months and then I've competed—sometimes beating my dogs with theirs, which is just great.

JS So do you have goals in mind?

RA Everybody wants to win the National. But, of course, if I ever beat Alasdair or Tommy Wilson, or any of those big hats, its because they messed up. They are masters at what they do. Maybe some day, when I grow up, I'll be Master, but right now I have way too much to learn. The trials I go to now I use as learning experiences to get me to be able to compete on the level I want to be on. I want to be a contender—in the double lifts.

JS How about the World Trial?

RA I would love it, but I don't know if I could ever afford it.

JS Have you ever been over to Britain or Ireland just to visit?

RA No, but I would love to.

JS What do you think about providing for the welfare of your animals, such as your sheep and your dogs? What do they deserve?

RA When I train horses, I look at what the animal is bred for. And for horses or dogs, I think of what that animal is bred to do

to work with me and not just for itself.

As far as the sheep go, I wish I knew more and were a better shepherd. I think that's what makes the masters the masters—they can look at a group of sheep and know which is the leader and which is the naughty one you have to look out for. And I'm starting to learn that, but I think understanding and being able to read your sheep is the key to this whole thing. Most of us go to the shed and just start thinking about which sheep to take, when the masters make those decisions on the cross drive or even on the fetch. And the way their own inner energy comes out has its effect on the sheep as well. They can tell the sheep what to do just by letting that inner energy come out of them. I haven't gotten that far, but I'm working on it. I think it takes decades to learn how to read your sheep. Meanwhile it's cool to watch the masters.

JS You can tell more at a clinic watching how the clinician uses voice and body language than you can by just watching the dog or listening to the clinician's advice. Some things can't be adequately put into words.

RA Yes. At the Bobby Dalziel clinic, while most people were watching the dog, I was watching Bobby and what he was doing with the line and the whip. Watching his hands was amazing. It was just the same sort of things I do with my hands when I'm riding a horse. You are talking through the line and at times you're just giving little wiggles—but you are doing it through repetition. Doing it every day you can get good at it. I think that's why his work with the long line is something I can relate to and pick up on.

But watching the masters and what they do is always the most important thing.

Letters to the editor

Future Breeding

Dear ISN,

It is with great concern that I write these few lines in response to Roy Goulté's article Future Breeding in the May/June edition of ISN. I have an ISDS registered dog affected by severe Hip Displasia. He is obviously a working dog, not the best in the world, but a decent one and proceeded up to the Open class here in Italy. When reaching 8 years of age he was no longer capable of running as fast as sheep and so he was retired although he still used to carry on some yard work until last year.

Why am I worried? Well I wish to buy a pup and I'd like to have an ISDS UK bred one, but it seems quite hard to find a pup from tested parents. By tested I don't just mean a CEA and PRA eye test but from dogs that have been tested for Hips and the likes of TNS and CL also as a minimum. After my previous experience I want to be sure before buying and not taking unnecessary risks.

I know that "the hill will tell apart the lesser dogs and the sick ones" but...not too many dogs now actually run the hills, as less and less are actually used in the shepherding job and as some dogs can be asymptomatic...you can miss the point until after it's too late.

Too many diseases have not been recognized in the past, but now we can take advantage of the newly available tests. At the end of the day we live in the 21st century and I do think everybody can see the advantage of this...although we all agree this century is not bringing just advantages but problems also.

Firstly we need to get our beloved breed as healthy as possible, but to manage this we do need the health data to be collected so yes, make the check compulsory and without throwing the baby out with the dirty bath water, get the best from the information gathered. And I think everybody is sharing this worry here in Italy as well as elsewhere.

Do we need two different figures as ISDS CEO and Stud Book keeper? I don't know but for sure I think we all should think about it and decide what is best.

This is just my two cents.

Carla Bassani, Italy

Dear Editor

I'm writing to provide further discussion of some points raised by Roy Goulté in the last International Sheep Dog News ('Future Breeding – genetics must decide our future' May/June 2012: pp15-18).

First, I will need to assure you that I am not a geneticist but that I am a veterinarian with some foundation knowledge about genetics and statistics and a general interest in this topic based on my interests in breeding of dogs and livestock. I hope that I can contribute to the discussion at a basic level with regard to the article presented by Mr Goulté.

Here are some of the points upon which I would like to add further discussion:

1. Control of breeding by a governing body

The development of the Border Collie has never depended on control by a governing body and, in my opinion, never should.

Your letters are welcome on any sheepdog subject. Send to the address on page 3.

Who is better prepared to know the qualities of a bitch or dog than the person currently working her/him? Who is better prepared to consider the characteristics in a sire that would complement her strengths and help resolve any weaknesses in the bitch's working style and ability than the person currently working her?

The selection for working ability, temperament and biddability should be considered FIRST.

If there are known or suspected genetic problems, then genetic analyses(if available) can be used to help determine the mode of inheritance and if affected, carrier or clear status is present and to make an informed decision regarding breeding.

Soon there will be hundreds of genetic tests available for problems in dogs and specifically in the Border Collie. It is not economically feasible to test for all possible conditions for which genetic tests exist. But, it is important to know the conditions that are likely to have a genetic basis or have been proven to have a genetic basis and the clinical signs that result from these conditions. If a problem is detected or suspected based on such clinical signs, then several options exist:

- a. You may elect not to breed from such an animal
- b. You may not repeat the breeding with the mate that produced the affected or suspected individuals
- c. You may elect to investigate by genetic or other testing (if available) whether the suspected condition is present
- d. If the genetic basis for the condition is known (dominant or recessive trait, whether or not sex-linked, whether or not due to a single gene or multiple gene effects), then it may be possible to eliminate or minimize the risk of producing other affected or carrier individuals choosing mates based on the results of genetic testing of the male and female that you wish to breed

2. Inbreeding, linebreeding and outbreeding

First I'll present some definitions from geneticists.

In-breeding is the mating of closely related individuals: brother x sister, mother x son, father x daughter whilst linebreeding is the mating of dogs in the same blood-line but not so closely related. Outbreeding is mating of individuals are not closely related.

Inbreeding, linebreeding and outbreeding are not inherently bad or inherently good in and of themselves. Inbreeding and linebreeding have traditionally been used to 'fix' certain genetic traits (increase the presence of individuals homozygous for a particular gene influencing a favourable trait). It is said that there has never been an individual that didn't contain at least one undesirable (disease-producing) gene! Along with breeding practices to promote the inheritance of genes for 'good traits', there also was inadvertent selection for disease-producing traits, as well. When a disease or condition is recognized or suspected in a dog breed, pedigree analysis is one of the first steps in helping to determine the mode of inheritance that is involved and whether the condition is likely to be due to a single set of genes or may be due to the effects of multiple genes.

The inbreeding coefficient is an estimate of the percentage of all the variable gene pairs that are homozygous(one inherited from each parent) due to inheritance from common ancestors.