



The Impact of Determined Dog Enthusiasts: HISTORY OF THE MINNESOTA CHAPTER

By Pete Aplikowski
Lino Lakes, Minnesota

In early 1971, Barb and Bill Jensen from Fridley, Minnesota owned a 5-year-old Wirehaired Pointing Griffon named Gamin. They loved to hunt, and already knew the value of a good hunting dog for the production and recovery of game. Gamin was run in some retriever ‘fun’ trials, but the Jensens saw more potential in the dog. They wondered if, through proper training, there could be a way to bring out more of the dog’s versatility.

They found out about an organization called NAVHDA, and they decided to attend a trial at Oakmount Game Club in McHenry, Illinois on April 18, 1971. There was another trial the same day in Suffield, Connecticut. These were the first two NAVHDA trials held in the United States. They were called ‘Trials’ then, as the term ‘Test’ was not used for several more years.

Bill: “My wife Barbara and I had joined the Griffon breed club. Joan Bailey ran that club with support of her husband Dr. Ed Bailey, Professor at University of Guelph in Ontario. They were both active officers in NAVHDA. Joan was the Director of Promotion and Ed was Director of Judging. We had never met, but the Baileys knew us through Barb’s correspondence and knew that we were serious about dogs and bird hunting with dogs.

When I got the phone call inviting me to Judge the McHenry Trial, I declined because I was unqualified, and I had never even seen a NAVHDA trial. Salesmanship followed, convincing us of all the nice people that we would meet and that the two Judges they were sending from Canada would do all the heavy lifting. They also knew that we had traveled some distance to attend a regional event of the Griffon Club. I mention this because my feeling is that paying our own way was necessary for the budget. My sense of adventure took over and I agreed to participate. My fellow judges were Jerome Knap, Acting Secretary of NAVHDA, and Laurent Frileux, a French emigrant and son of the Secretary of the French Griffon Club.”

On the way home from that trip to Illinois they realized that for the principles of this NAVHDA organization to grow, there would need to be small groups of like-minded people all over the country dedicated to supporting one another.

On July 23, 1971, the Jensens and a small group of others met at the home of Ron and Judy Wilson in Minnetonka, Minnesota to discuss NAVHDA and forming a local group. Also in attendance were Bob and Sandy Bertrand, Con and Shirley Christianson, Jim Grady, and Noel Christenson. Armed with the Standards booklet that NAVHDA had sent and a mutual love of hunting dogs, they decided to try a ‘fun trial’ in the fall.

The ‘fun trial’ or ‘mock test’ was held at the Maple Island Hunt Club—Kelley Farms. Noel was the manager of that club and secured grounds and birds for the day. Other members were assigned the remaining tasks. The Jensens were the only people in the group who had observed a NAVHDA trial and that was the Natural Ability only event in April. Noel was in Germany while in the service and had observed some training and trialing while there.

Bill: “The outing was set for September, and we all showed up with dogs, guns, shells, lunches and clipboards. We had ordered additional copies of the rules book so that everyone had one. It was agreed in advance that we wouldn’t do any special test training, but rather measure how this test would evaluate our favorite hunting dog. There were two German Shorthairs, a German Wirehair, a Brittany and a Griffon. Of course, it rained during the field work, and the sun shone during the water work. Every person in attendance judged every event, and we talked about our scores. We spent a very long day and had a lot of fun. The one thing we agreed on was that no dog succeeded in earning a prize, but at least one dog had done excellent work in every aspect of the test. This convinced us of the legitimacy and value of the test.”



Over the winter of 1971-1972, plans were made to hold a Training Clinic the following spring on Saturday, May 6 and a Natural Ability Test on Sunday, May 7. Ed Bailey and Don Smith were the Clinic Leaders and Judges. There were several other people serving as ‘Apprentices’ in the newly started NAVHDA Judge training program. On Sunday, 14 dogs were tested. Barb handled the Jensen’s 9-month-old French imported Griffon pup named Ulrich. Scores were read after dark in the Maple Island Clubhouse. Seven dogs achieved prizes.

In the first few years the Chapter had the pleasure of having most of the founding members of NAVHDA serve as judges. This included Bodo Winterhelt, John Kegel, Ulie Adolph, Rudy Lorra and Phil DesJardine.

Barb Jensen wrote the following to John Kegel in 1988, “The glue that holds this rather loosely knit group together is the kind of friendship that grows from all of

us being die hard hunters. From September 1st, when woodcock season begins, until the end of December, when grouse ends, we have no activities except to go hunting. Many of us hunt together at times, but it is not an organized thing. At the end of the hunting season, we all get together for our annual Fable Fest and Fondue, to eat game and tell lies about our dogs and our hunts and start planning next year’s activities.”

That tradition continues today. Training and Testing is wrapped up before woodcock season and Fable Fest doubles as the Minnesota Chapter’s annual meeting with 65 members attending this year, although no one recalls the last time there was a fondue kettle present. 🐾

Special thanks to Bill Jensen for providing his and Barb’s personal letters, calendars and notes for this article. Bill Jensen retired from Judging in 2011 with a total of 2195 dogs judged over 223 testing days. He served on the International Executive Council as Treasurer in 1972-73, a Director from 1974-76, Director of Testing from 1987-1992 and Vice-President from 1993-1995. Bill is still involved in NAVHDA, attending the 50th Anniversary annual meeting last January in Minneapolis and attending occasional Minnesota Chapter events. Barb Jensen passed away in April, 2002. The Chapter’s winter obedience classes are still named the ‘Barb Jensen Obedience Class’ in her honor.

Bill Jensen was a guest on The Hunting Dog Podcast’s March 21, 2019 episode Bill Jensen 40 Years of Judging Dogs.



The Minnesota Chapter Today

- The Minnesota Chapter has grown to over 200 paid annual members.
- An eight-person Board of Directors meets monthly.
- For training and testing the chapter currently uses a combination of public and private grounds and facilities:
 - Four Brooks State WMA near Milaca, MN
 - Major Ave Hunt Club in Glencoe, MN
 - Kelley Land & Cattle Company in Hugo, MN (same site as Maple Island Hunt Club where the first Chapter Mock Trial was held in 1971)
 - Iron Range Retriever Club in Virginia, MN
 - Two indoor venues in the Twin Cities are used for winter obedience classes.
- The Chapter sources birds from nine different vendors. They are transported to storage locations and then training and test sites by a team of chapter volunteers. In 2018 the chapter provided 433 ducks, 1935 chukar, 198 pheasants, 1640 pigeons and 3930 quail.
- For 2019, there are 102 official Minnesota Chapter training days at six different venues. (Many small groups of members also get together to train and source birds on their own).
- The chapter has held a test every year since inception in 1972.
- In 2018, the chapter held 16 testing days, the most of any NAVHDA chapter.
- A total of 3,273 dogs have run in chapter tests over a total of 396 testing days—2,039 Natural Ability, 136 Utility Preparatory, 761 Utility, and 337 Invitational.
- The Chapter has hosted the Invitational five times. (1990, 1998, 2000, 2005, 2008).



WE RECENTLY LOST MITCH LINDBERG (CENTER) - A WELL-LOVED, LONGTIME MINNESOTA CHAPTER MEMBER, TRAINER AND GUNNER.

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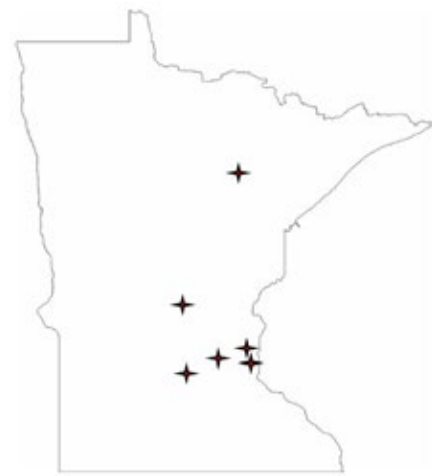
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MASON SCHULTZ, THE 2018 RECIPIENT OF THE JOE DOLEJSI ANNUAL YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP AND HIS PUDELPOINTER COMET TRAINING WITH LONGTIME CHAPTER MEMBER BRYCE ADAMS.

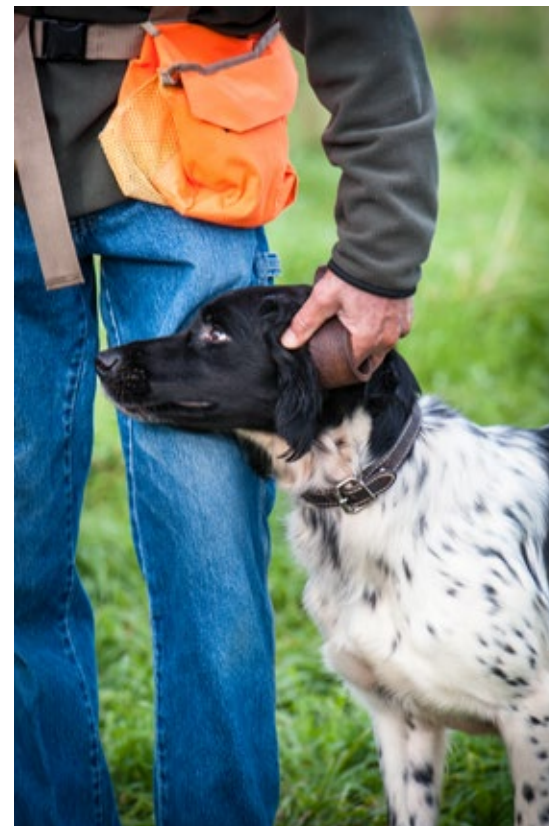


DIRECTOR OF TRAINING MARK JACOBS, WORKING HARD, AS ALWAYS.

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TRAINING & TESTING LOCATIONS.



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- As a fundraiser in the early days of the chapter, the annual Minnesota NAVHDA Pheasant Championship was started in 1978. It was held for the 41st Consecutive Year in 2018.
- Historically, the chapter held Handler Clinics every two-three years. Member growth and interest in testing has supported an annual Clinic in 2017, 2018 and 2019.
- Chapter members and Senior Judges Frank Spaeth, Joe Raia and Terry Petro are all qualified Clinic Leaders.
- The Chapter has held an annual MOCK Natural Ability test for many years in the spring, and due to growing interest in Utility testing, will hold a July MOCK UPT/UT test for the third consecutive year in 2019.
- In 2018 the Joe Dolejsi Youth Scholarship Fund was formed in honor of one of the Chapter's most influential members. This scholarship is awarded to one youth handler per year and covers the cost of all training events and grounds fees for that year.
- Chapter members and Senior Judges Kurt Sundquist (retired) & Frank Spaeth were guests on The Hunting Dog Podcast's February 19th, 2019 episode *Old Friends & Dogs*.

You can find out more about the Minnesota Chapter at www.mnavhda.org.