

# PURINA

## *Today's Breeder*

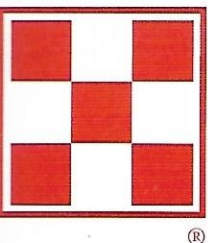
A Nestlé Purina Publication Dedicated to the Needs of Canine Enthusiasts

Issue 84

**BREEDER PROFILE**  
Wild Birds' Only Kennel

**Unexpected Joys of 2013**  
New *Pro Plan SPORT* Bars  
The AKC Museum of the Dog





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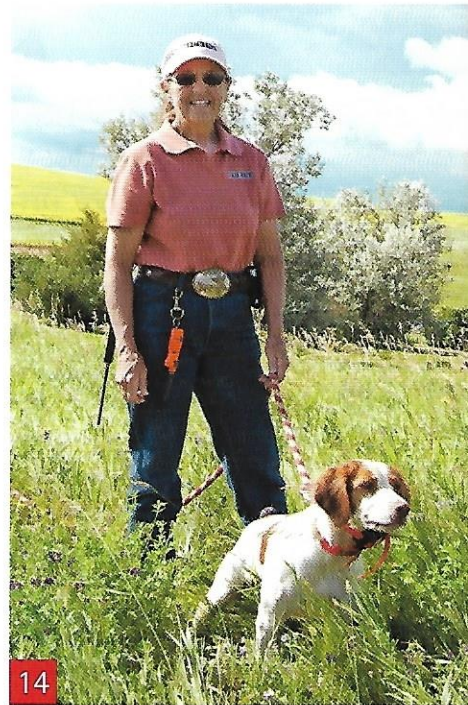
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## 4 UNEXPECTED JOYS

The great achievements of these four dogs inspire us to believe all things are possible. Here are the stories of the top-winning Great Dane in history, the first English Setter to win the National Championship in 43 years, a Labrador Retriever that became a winning show dog after being sold as a pet, and an English Coonhound that went from the whelping box to win the World Show Championship.

## 8 NEW PURINA PRO PLAN SPORT BARS

The *Purina Pro Plan SPORT* performance nutrition line is introducing two nutritional supplement bars for hardworking dogs. The *SPORT PRiME* Bar is a pre-exercise protein-rich supplement designed to help keep muscles strong during exercise, and the *SPORT ReFUEL* Bar is a post-exercise supplement that helps replenish muscle energy stores and promotes muscle rebuilding.



## 10 ART FOR DOG'S SAKE

The only museum in the world dedicated solely to dog art, the American Kennel Club Museum of the Dog in St. Louis is a gathering place for dog lovers. Frequented by the dog fancy, particularly when National Specialties are held at the Purina Event Center, the museum contains a treasure of art in its permanent collection and special exhibits.

## 14 THE HEART & SOUL OF SHERRY RAY EBERT

An icon in the sport of shooting dog horseback stakes, Sherry Ray Ebert is a dedicated professional trainer who focuses on helping dogs reach their potential. In North Dakota's pheasant country, she, with help from husband Kyle Ebert, has shaped many Continental European and English breeds into stylish, bird-finding pointing dogs.

## 20 THE BOUNTY OF BUGABOO

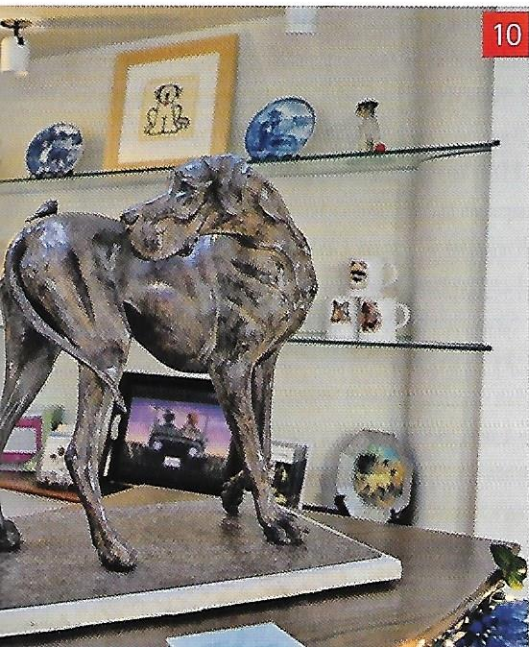
A striking, charismatic Old English Sheepdog called "Swagger" is one of many elite winners from the Bugaboo line. His owners, Colton and Heather Johnson, represent the second-generation of Johnson family Bugaboo breeders, and their children are following in their footsteps to become the third generation.

### Regular Departments

22 Circle of Champions    24 Breed Snapshot

#### On Our Cover

NFC/FC Brownhaven Burning Bright ("Burnie"), an 11-year-old male Irish Setter co-owned by breeder Georgia Brown of Brownhaven Irish Setters in Canyon Lake, Texas, and handler Sherry Ray Ebert of Mott, N.D. Cover photo by Melissa Miller. See story on page 14.





Professional trainer Sherry Ray Ebert reinforces the stylish 12 o'clock tail of Oakleaf's Quite Man ("Murphy"), an Irish Setter she is training for Jim Baker of Del Valle, Texas, while her husband, Kyle Ebert, assists.





# The Heart & Soul of Sherry Ray Ebert

BY BARBARA FAWVER

PHOTOS BY MELISSA MILLER



Kyle gave Sherry a silver belt buckle engraved with her name as a gift for their first wedding anniversary in 1997.

The sweet, warm air of a North Dakota summer day and the wild game scent of pheasant filter through a row of maple and oak trees lining the edge of a dog training field. One by one, the derby-age pointing dogs cast from side to side, quartering to find birds. Just a week away from training with horses on the wide open prairie, the youngsters will soon be held accountable for the techniques they are learning now.

Holding loosely in her left hand a 30-foot check cord tethered to the collar of an eager Irish Setter, veteran trainer Sherry Ray Ebert is ready to step on the cord to hold the dog steady. Although Oakleaf's Quite Man, better known as "Murphy," has graduated from whoa training on a barrel, cording on birds helps to control him as he learns steady to wing and shot.

"Whoop, whoop," Sherry says, softly.

Finding the scent cone coming off the pheasant, Murphy creeps up stealthily, easing into a nice point on game. Sherry comes alongside the dog, gently putting one hand on the setter's back and the other on the backside of the tail to reinforce the stylish 12 o'clock position.

Kyle Ebert, Sherry's husband and right-hand assistant, shoots a blank from a training gun into the air. As the upland game bird flushes, cackling loudly and fluttering away, the setter holds steady, intent on finishing his job.

"Only two weeks ago Murphy would have bolted when a bird flies," Sherry says, smiling proudly at the pointing dog's progress. "In training, you learn if a dog doesn't make some mistakes, he isn't a good dog."

A future competitor in amateur and open stakes, Murphy reminds Sherry of another stylish setter that came through her summer training program. The setter, Murphy's dam, FC/AFC Brownhaven Steel Magnolia ("Rachel"), went on to win the Irish Setter Club of America (ISCA) National Amateur Championship in

2012 handled by owner Jim Baker of Del Valle, Texas, and was the Runner-Up Champion at the ISCA National Open in 2009 under Sherry.

Staked out not far from the training field, waiting their turns to point birds, are two French Brittany's, a Pointer, an English Setter, and three Irish Setters. "None of these dogs are completely finished," Sherry says. "By the end of summer, they almost will be."

Unmistakably an icon in the sport of shooting dog horseback stakes, Sherry is as intense about training as her dogs are about finding birds. The first 32 years of her 51-year career as a professional trainer were spent working alongside her first husband, Harold Ray, developing the legendary English Setters of Elwin and Inez Smith in Waynesboro, Ga. Three Hall of Fame bird dogs resulted from that effort: 4XCH Tomoka, 7XCH The Performer and 6XCH Destinare. Never before had a team won so much with such a small string of dogs.



Sherry practices whoa training with "Joe," an English Setter owned by Jim Butler of Kolomoki Plantation in Bluffton, Ga.



Young dogs ready to be introduced to birds and started dogs needing a gentle touch make up the bulk of Sherry's work today. "A quarter of the dogs I get are already started," she says. "They've had a 10-day crash course, picked up bad habits and then were sent to me to fix. It takes me about a month to figure out what happened. I have to get into their heart and soul to know how to help them."

Already a couple of months into summer camp, the clock is ticking. "I have to work a dog until I accomplish something," explains Sherry. "I need for them to get better every day. Training requires persistence. It is not a job that ends at 5 or 6 p.m. Sometimes Kyle can't talk to me because I am trying to figure out what to do with a dog."

### Teaming Up with Amateurs

The lush prairies of central Manitoba, Canada, loaded with Hungarian partridge and prairie chickens, are where Sherry and Harold Ray took the Smith setters for 27 years to summer camp. Wanting to find a closer location with native game birds, Sherry recalls flying into Bismarck, N.D., in a raging blizzard in 1990 to check out a place in Hettinger County.



Sherry stands beside the portrait of 7XCH The Performer ("Tony") at the Field Trial Hall of Fame in Grand Junction, Tenn. Sherry handled the dog to his last championship title at the Region 7 Shooting Dog Championship. She and her first husband, Harold Ray, trained the famous setter for Elwin and Inez Smith of Waynesboro, Ga.



Sherry and Kyle are shown at home in Mott, N.D., with, from left, "Billy," an Irish Setter Sherry co-owns with Georgia Brown of Canyon Lake, Texas; "Joe," an English Setter owned by Jim Butler of Bluffton, Ga.; "Bull," a Pointer owned by Jim Brusseau of Mattawan, Mich.; and "Cruiser," their pointing Labrador Retriever who helps Kyle on guided hunts.

The government's Conservation Reserve Program gave North Dakota about 3.5 million acres of land cover well-suited for the habitat of ring-necked pheasant, sharp-tailed grouse and Hungarian partridge. Sherry and Harold bought 40 acres in Mott, N.D., a bird dog trainer's paradise.

When the marriage ended in 1994, Sherry moved to the North Dakota homestead with a Smith setter brood bitch called "Sassy" and a Missouri Fox Trotter gaited horse named "Charlie." Her son, Doug Ray, a young adult with a family, stayed in Georgia to work with his father as a professional handler.

"People started calling me, so I began working dogs," says Sherry. "I was getting clients from everywhere, and I never once advertised."

Kyle Ebert, whose parents had allowed Sherry and Harold to train on their 1,600 acres of nearby land, began coming around to help Sherry work dogs. Kyle is a dog lover, too, who guides hunters during pheasant season with his pointing Labrador Retrievers. Two years after Sherry moved to North Dakota, she and Kyle were married.

The first 10 years in North Dakota most of Sherry's clients wanted help sharpening their dogs for all-age and shooting dog stakes. That began to change in 2003 when the Irish Setter Club of Houston hired Sherry to lead a seminar on training dogs for field trials. Georgia Brown of Brownhaven Irish Setters in Canyon



## The Amateur's Trainer

Some of the country's top-winning shooting dogs and their owner-handlers have trained under Sherry Ray Ebert. Here is why they reserve a spot for their dogs nearly a year in advance of her summer training camp in Mott, N.D.

English Setter owner-handler Ora Beth McMullen of Fort Worth, Texas, competes in American Kennel Club (AKC) shooting dog stakes: "Sherry helped me find my current dog, McMullen's Ruby June, and has trained her over several summers. She understands well the importance of teaching the owners to successfully handle their dogs. I've never met anyone as committed and hardworking as Sherry."

Jim Butler, owner of Kolomoki Plantation in Bluffton, Ga.: "Sherry is a dog whisperer. Her voice and touch are like magic to dogs and to horses, too. She takes her time with them. When my dogs come back to me, their hunting style is superb. They love to hunt and are trained to handle."

David Quijano of Wimberley, Texas, and his wife, Carla, compete in AKC stakes with their German Shorthaired Pointers: "Sherry has an ability to understand each dog and to customize the training for that dog. I've been

to Sherry's place three times to train with her. This past summer was the first time I sent dogs to her. She definitely took them to the next level."

Irish Setter breeder-owner-handler Nina Johnson of Houston, is working toward a Dual Champion title on her derby-age setter "Ryan" (Flights of Fancy Prince Charming): "Sherry has the soft touch that setters need to do well. Ryan came back to me started on birds. He holds his point all the time. I wouldn't have expected him to do so well so quickly."

Kathy Slobom of Middleton, Idaho, enjoys hunting with stylish English Setters: "I made every mistake with 'Dee'. She was almost ruined when she went to Sherry. When I called Sherry about sending Dee a second summer for training, she said, 'I've thought about your dog all winter. I might have an idea if you want to bring her.' Dee became the best dog I've ever had because Sherry was committed to fixing her."



David Quijano and his German Shorthaired Pointer, Quijano's Little Buddy ("Chacho").

Lake, Texas, recalls Sherry "lining up our hulky show dogs and working them like they were field champions. I was impressed. I asked her if she would train my dogs, and she said she would put me on her list."

When Sherry judged the ISCA National Field Championship in 2003 and 2004 in Booneville, Ark., she realized that "people were not bringing out the best in their dogs," she says. Her transition to training amateur-owned and -handled dogs was about to begin.

Tension ("Ten"), a male Irish Setter pup bred and owned by Brown, was one of the first Irish Setters Sherry took to North Dakota to train. Although Ten won a trial and placed in another, he would develop hip dysplasia and be retired from field trials. Brown had a couple of littermates that went next.

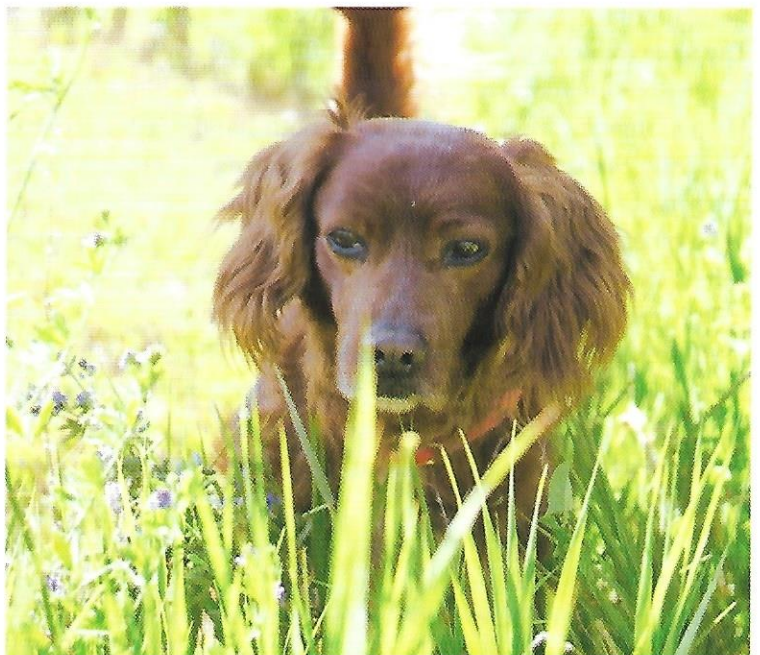
Brownhaven Shining Symmetry ("Emily") earned 9 points toward her Field Championship title but just couldn't finish, says Brown. "We lovingly call Emily 'Blondie,'" she says. "I think she gave Sherry some gray hairs."

Meanwhile, Emily's brother, NFC/FC Brownhaven Burning Bright ("Burnie"), won the ISCA Futurity in 2005, when Emily placed second and Ten placed fourth. Sherry handled Burnie to Runner-Up Champion at the 2007 ISCA National Championship. The next year, he was the Runner-Up Champion at the Southeast Continental Championship, and the following year he won the ISCA National Championship.

Brown, who had won the National Amateur Championship in 1980 and 1981 with 2XNAFC/FC Kopper Key Boni of Brownhaven

credits Sherry for the nearly 100 placements her setters have earned in American Field and American Kennel Club sanctioned trials since 2004. "Sherry is so focused," she says. "She puts her heart and soul into every dog like it's her only child."

Another top bird-finding male Irish Setter trained and handled by Sherry is owned by Mary Ann Gustafson of Del Valle, Texas. NFC/FC Flame'n Red Legacy ("E.J.") won the ISCA National

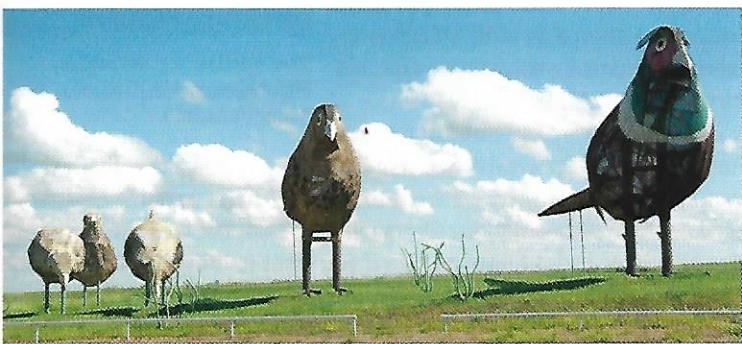


NFC/FC Brownhaven Burning Bright ("Burnie"), 11 years old, is one of the top-winning Irish Setters trained by Sherry. She co-owns the dog with Georgia Brown.



## The Enchanted Highway

A trip to southwest North Dakota to pheasant hunt would be remiss if you did not take time to travel The Enchanted Highway, a 32-mile stretch off Interstate 94 from Regent to Gladstone. A favorite tourist attraction of Sherry and Kyle Ebert's, the scenic route features seven of the world's largest scrap metal sculptures. Designed by local artist Gary Greff, the 3-D wire-mesh sculptures include Pheasants on the Prairie, pictured below. To learn more, visit [realnd.com/enchantedhighwayindex.htm](http://realnd.com/enchantedhighwayindex.htm).



Championship in 2012 and was Runner-Up Champion in 2011 and 2013.

For 10 years, Sherry has taught her training seminar in March at Bush Ranch in West Point, Texas. Amateurs come from across the country to learn fundamentals, such as how to go from yard work to the field, and proper handling techniques. Sherry uses participants' dogs to help make the teaching more meaningful. The slots for 40 people and 25 dogs fill quickly.

One-on-one seminars are offered back home in North Dakota for people wanting to learn more about handling their dogs. Typically, Sherry has trained the dogs during the summer, and the private classes teach owners how to reinforce the training.

Another training tool is a 90-minute video titled "Training English Setters and Continental Breeds with Sherry Ebert" that is available online ([gundogsonline.com](http://gundogsonline.com)). Jim Butler of Kolomoki Plantation in Bluffton, Ga., bought the video and then started sending his bird dogs to Sherry. That was 12 years ago. This summer, Butler sent a Pointer, a Brittany, two adult English Setters and five 9-month-old English Setter littermates, the fourth generation started on birds and trained by Sherry.

### 'Welcome to Our Roost'

Walking down Sherry and Kyle's kennel, one is greeted by Continental European and English pointing breeds, plus Kyle's pointing Labrador Retrievers. And then there is 'Denali,' a wolf-



Alaskan Malamute who Sherry describes as the "dog boss" of the kennel.

A huge wooden barn built in the 1920s — concrete floors were added in 1961 — has been converted to the kennel. Thirty-two dogs — eight are Sherry and Kyle's — are settled into spacious quarters for summer camp. Two large fans keep cool air moving through the kennel.

"Welcome to Our Roost" says a colorful sign decorated with a ring-necked pheasant hanging on the entrance to the rust red barn. On the wall inside the barn's double doors are signs with idioms that "jog something and make you think," Sherry explains. They read: "Good morning, let the stress begin." "My dog is not spoiled, I'm just well-trained." "There will be a \$5 charge for whining." "A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself."

A splash of fluorescent blue and orange radiates from two casts mounted on the wall. Both are from accidents in which Sherry was thrown from horses. She broke her right wrist in 2012 and her left arm in 2008. The worst accident was in 2011 when Sherry was thrown from a young Missouri Fox Trotter. Kyle drove her to the nearest hospital 35 miles away in Hettinger. Sherry had eight fractured ribs and a punctured lung, and her shoulder blade was busted in two places. As she lay in the hospital while fluid was drained from her lung, the doctor feared a broken rib could rip through her heart or lung.

After a week in the hospital, Sherry went home to recover. One week later, Kyle reluctantly lifted her with a towel wrapped around her midsection onto one of the older Fox Trotters. Although Sherry vows that 2013 will be the last year she will break any colts, her love for horses and reputation as an expert horse-woman may prevail.

Although Sherry is considering slowing down a bit, she stands committed to helping grow the sport. This was a goal when she and Harold Ray began the Ga-Lina Amateur Shooting Dog Classic at Smith Plantation in Georgia in 1990. "We started Ga-Lina to be a family event," she says.

Sherry judged the 10th anniversary Ga-Lina Amateur Classic in 2000. She has judged almost every pointing breed's National



At their Wild Birds Only Kennel, Sherry and Kyle exclusively feed Purina Pro Plan SPORT Performance 30/20 Formula. "You have to feed a really good high-fat, high-protein dog food for energy and to help dogs stay in peak condition so they can give you a peak performance," Sherry says.





Sherry releases dogs from their kennels to air out. The immaculate kennel consists of 4-by-4-foot indoor runs that open to 4-by-12-foot outdoor runs. "It's all about companionship," Sherry says. "Many of these dogs are house dogs. They all have wonderful personalities and temperament."

Championship in the American Kennel Club. She judged the Continental Championship twice at Dixie Plantation and went to Japan in 1979 and 1980 to judge trials and present dog training seminars and exhibitions on gaited horses.

"I've accomplished way more than I was allowed to do in this world," says Sherry. "I really feel this is what I was born to do."

The results of summer training have begun to come in. Owners call to report winning and placing in shooting dog stakes or their dogs' stylish performances and keen bird-finding abilities while hunting. Every phone call, text message and email is a reward to this hardworking trainer who has poured her heart and soul into every dog. ■

## Denali, The Dog Boss

Visitors to Sherry and Kyle Ebert's bird dog kennel usually gape when they see the odd-looking dog in the first run.

"That's 'Denali,'" Sherry explains. "He is a wolf, well mostly wolf and a little bit Alaskan Malamute."

Denali came from an accidental litter sired by a male that was 50-percent wolf and 50-percent Alaskan Malamute out of a wolf dam. "The mother was found in the Florida Everglades. She was hurt and was taken to a man who had the sire. While she was there, the breeding happened," Sherry says.

Not her first wolf, Sherry absolutely adored "Hazard," a 50-percent wolf and 50-percent German Shepherd Dog who broke her heart when he died in 2004 of spinal meningitis. Hazard came to live with Sherry and Kyle when he was 5 weeks old.

In contrast, Denali was 3 months old and already had bonded with his pack. Until she could build trust with her wolf pup, Sherry put a 25-foot rope on Denali, which he wore for months. "It took a year to really develop a bond with him," she says.

"She was about to give up on Denali," Kyle recalls. "She would say, 'He may put up with me, but he will never love me.'"

One day while working with two setter pups, Sherry accidentally dropped Denali's rope. Then, she realized she had let Denali go.

"When I got back, there he was sitting at door of the house," she says. "I started toward him to get the rope. Instead, he came to me. I knew he was my friend and that he trusted me."

Sherry credits Denali and Hazard for helping her learn about animal nature. "You accomplish more when you figure out the best way to work together," she says. "It's like the saying, 'You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar!'"



Sherry poses with "Denali."