

Lines from Linda

LINDA AYERS TURNER KNORR



CUPID SPARKS LAS VEGAS LOVE AFFAIR

Dogs for Disabled is close to the hearts of Brian & Connie Cleveland

Don't be surprised if you start hearing more about the ambitious undertakings of Connie and Brian Cleveland. The marriage of these two dog personalities of such exceptional character has sparked a creative impulse which has developed and flourished into changing lives.

Cupid brought the pair together at the Gaines/Cycle Dog Obedience Championships in Las Vegas in 1988.

BRIAN CERTAINLY HIT THE JACKPOT WHEN HE FOUND CONNIE! Her love affair with dogs began in her home state of Michigan where Connie entered the show ring for the first time at the early age of eight years. Her parents Betty and Stan Drobac, enjoyed participating in the sport as a hobby. They are still active in conformation, tracking events, field trials, obedience and rescue work. For Connie it would grow into much more. Betty and Stan Drobac have always been supportive of Connie's interest in dogs.

In the early 50's Betty launched the family's dog life with a Champion Puli. In the 60's their interest switched to Golden Retrievers. Throughout her teenage years Connie became active in all areas of AKC competition with her Golden Retriever Ch. Amarons Dusty Down UDTDX.

As a straight shooting coed at the University of Michigan her interest centered primarily on obedience. For spend-

ing money she taught classes in obedience. Time and budget constraints pulled the young engineering student away from her participation in conformation and field trials.

An unruly Doberman sparked Brian Cleveland's interest in obedience in 1981. Brian is from Minneapolis, Minnesota so it was easy for him to find the "Animal Inn" in St. Paul, owned by Sharon and Chuck Anderson. Sharon is currently our AKC Agility Representative and Chuck is a well respected obedience judge.

With this association Brian embarked on an adventure that would eventually make a big difference in his life. The mischievous Dobe became OTCH Kendra of Castlerock the top obedience Dobe in the country. Kendra won the Doberman Pinscher Club of America Top Twenty Obedience Trophy in 1989.

Natural law dictates that everyone who starts out like Brian gets hooked. After finishing numerous champions in both obedience and conformation he is now an AKC obedience judge himself.

An opportunity to train service dogs brought Connie to South Carolina in the 80's.

The attraction between Connie and Brian began in Las Vegas in 1988. The Clevelands married in 1991 joining forces to begin a whole new chapter in

their lives. Together blending a lot of spirit with their tremendous hearts, they own Dog Trainers Workshop. Just recently relocated into a new location which included their home, a pond, and a deluxe training facility on acreage with growing room, the possibilities for their future are endless.

As their life continues to go to the dogs...the most rewarding phase now comes from their involvement in **Dogs for Disabled**.

Concerned civic leaders in Greenville joined Connie to found this organization which is truly changing lives.

Dogs for Disabled was chartered in 1990 to train assistance dogs. Their goal is to offer disabled individuals increased independence through the use of a trained dog. The group currently trains service dogs for the physically challenged, hearing dogs for the hearing impaired and companion dogs for disabled children and in-home use.

Dogs for Disabled accepts canines from a number of sources including humane societies, all-breed rescues, and breeders. The animals must have an initial health check including a favorable hip x-ray. Service dogs are expected to have a natural retrieving instinct as well as a calm, easy going temperament. They are trained to retrieve dropped items, pull wheelchairs, turn on light switches

*Rena Burnside
waits while
"Gabe" opens a
heavy door*



and open and close doors. Most of the service dogs are of Retriever descent. Hearing dogs respond to sounds their owners cannot hear such as smoke alarms, doorbells, telephones and alarm clocks. Most hearing dogs are independent, smaller dogs of herding origin.

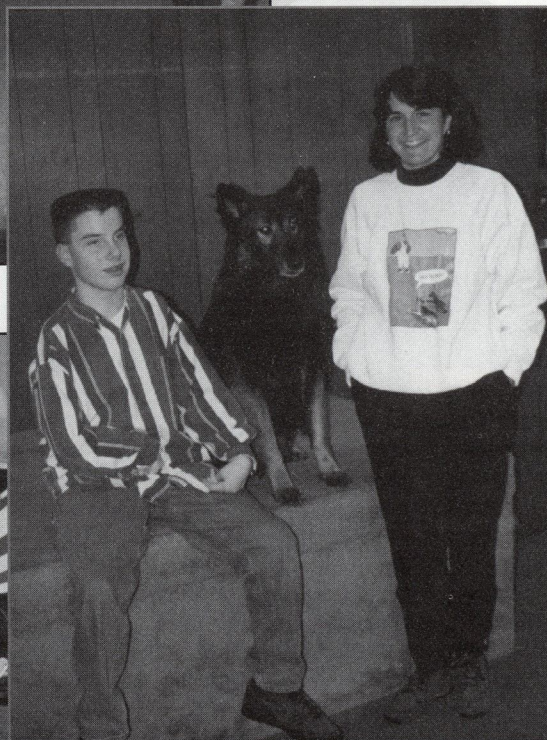
Dogs are accepted into the program and placed in a trainer's home for four months of initial training. When it can effectively work for his trainer as an assistance dog, it is placed with its new owner, and weekly training sessions are established. During the next four months the disabled owner is shown how to care for and handle his new dog. These training sessions begin in the owner's home and end as the trainer and client take outings out in public together.

When the new owner can demonstrate that he and his new partner can work together as a team, they are given a one year certification and under the Americans With Disabilities Act are allowed access to all public places. Each year a representative form **Dogs for Disabled** re-certifies each team to

insure that they are maintaining their smooth working relationship.

Dogs for Disabled is a nonprofit organization that raises funds through foundations, civic groups, and other donations. Each client is expected to pay what they can afford toward their own dog's training. The organization raises \$3200.00 for each dog.

February is an



There's more to life than being a champion in the show ring for Ch. Lost Cedar Party Shaker - this Belgian Tervuren is now attending high school with Ben Kelly. Pictured at left with Brian and judge J. Council Parker; above with Ben & Connie



important month for **SHOWSIGHT** readers....first and foremost we have to decide what elegant evening finery to wear to the various parties during Westminster week. And what about something red to wear to the Fido Awards Luncheon on Valentine's Day?

Decisions must be made about what neighbor back home will tape the show on Monday and Tuesday evenings. We will need to watch it as soon as we return home.

Many things about the show itself are missed because we are visiting with our friends from all around the world who travel so far for this very special event. Personally, I do more visiting and less watching, making the tape extremely important.

The weekend following Westminster I can devote to watching. In the Carolinas we will host three of the year's great shows. Entries should reach about three thousand per day for the Hendersonville, Spartanburg, and Greenville Kennel Clubs.

The gifts of these three kennel clubs are what the spirit of love is all about. During this past year **Dogs for Disabled** was one of the recipients of donations from all three of these groups.

Shaker, a Belgian Tervuren joined the Cleveland household in the summer of 1993. He was a two and one half year old whose most recent owner had attended quite a few obedience classes with him when she decided she could no longer keep him. Brian and Connie became his fourth home.

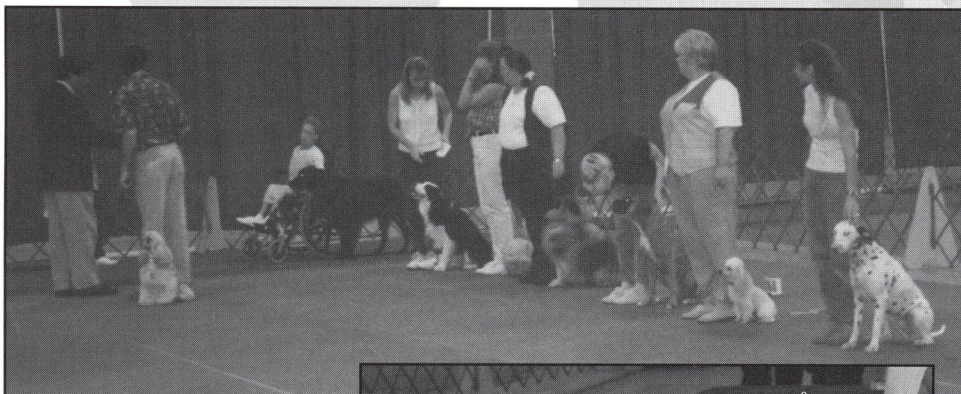
"Originally my intent was to show him in conformation and obedience," Brian exclaimed. "I finished his championship fairly quickly, but could never sell my soul to him as a competition obedience dog. I guess my heart was really waiting on another Doberman."

Connie took over Shaker's training for a short period, but soon met Ben Kelly, a fourteen year old high school freshman with Arthrogryposis, a disease that effects the long bones in Ben's body rendering his arms practically useless. She felt

strongly that the two of them would make a perfect team. Connie had confidence that this would be a successful project and Brian was most doubtful.

When Connie approached Brian about the idea she expected immediate opposition and got it. They were both committed to the dog and didn't want to see him passed on to more homes. Meanwhile Brian had gotten his new Dobe and Connie was competing with her Golden Retriever. It was clear that Shaker would never be first string for either of them.

Ben started coming to the dog trainers workshop to work with Shaker and they became a team very quickly. Shaker is a sensitive dog who easily responds to verbal commands, and Ben's limited use of his arms made that a requirement. Soon Ben and Shaker were taking practice outings to local malls and parks. Success came so quickly, soon it was time to tackle a day of public high school. Overall, the project has not been difficult. The biggest problem being teaching



Brandi Medford and "Strut"

For additional information
about service dogs, contact:

Dogs for Disabled

Training and Information
Center

P.O. Box 25628

Greenville, SC 29616-0628

or call

Brian and Connie Cleveland
at (864)862-8626.





Top left: OTCH Heron Acres Alecsander MH wins Highest Scoring Dog, Atlanta KC, October 1992

Top right: OTCH Kendra of Castlerock, Doberman Pinscher Club of America National Specialty Top Twenty winner

Left: OTCH Heron Acres Sand Dollar TDJH - High in Trial, Golden Retriever Club of America National Specialty under judge William Huffman

Below left: Spartanburg KC Show Chair Clark Williams and Brian Cleveland congratulate Brandi Medford & "Strut"

Below right: "Gabe pulls Rena Burnside's wheelchair into her car



Shaker to lie quietly at the side of P.E. class while Ben plays Nerf football. (Shaker believes all out of bounds and incomplete passes are his) and a chewed book bag. (Shaker thought class was long and dull.)

Currently Ben is half way through the 10th grade and is toying with the idea of competing with Shaker for his AKC obedience titles.

Members of the Greenville Kennel Club sponsored Ben and his Ch. Lost Cedar Party Shaker.

Rena Burnside a thirty-one year old native of Rochester, New York was born with Spina Bifida. This crippling birth defect did not stop her from receiving a



bachelor's degree in education as well as a Masters in vocational evaluation.

She was crowned Mrs. Wheelchair South Carolina in 1991, and has been married for five years. Rena works with the South Carolina Protection and Advocacy System for the Handicapped, Inc., assisting people with disabilities who have been discriminated against or have been denied services because of their disability.

Rena Burnside is an exceptional young woman who has accomplished so much on her own. Just imagine what a tremendous thrill it was to the members of the Hendersonville Kennel Club to sponsor Gabe, a Golden Retriever as a dog for her.

When I asked Rena how this "gift of

love" has changed her life, she responded, "Gabe has made a huge difference in my life. He is able to do things for me such as opening heavy doors, retrieving objects that I cannot reach, pulling my chair into my car, and pulling me over long distances or rough terrain. Physically, this means that I can do more, because he is doing the things that I have difficulty doing.

"In addition, it is very well known that people will respond to someone more often and in a positive manner when they have an animal with them. Since I've had Gabe, I have noticed a huge difference in the way that I am responded to out in public. He is a great conversation starter and since very few people have heard of service dogs they are naturally curious. Gabe has opened numerous doors for me, both literally and figuratively."

Throughout our three day affair, surprises and rushes of excitement are commonplace. At the last Spartanburg Kennel Club show there was a hush over the large crowd gathered to watch the obedience ring.

Spartanburg Show Chairman Clark Williams and I fought back tears as Brandi Medford and Strut completed a CD title in Novice at their first weekend in the ring. Through the gifts of the Spartanburg Kennel Club, this amazing accomplishment for an 8th grade girl with Spina Bifida was made possible.

Brandi's father is delighted with the difference Strut has made in her life. Prior to owning Strut, Brandi, paralyzed from the waist down, stayed to herself. She was quiet and shy. Now Strut gives her the self confidence she needed to be more outgoing, assertive and independent.

Strut and Brandi blend into society and high school life. Now Brandi can do for herself instead of relying on others to do for her. **WOW** - again, what a change!



More clubs, organizations and individuals are discovering the joy they experience by electing to supplement programs like **Dogs for Disabled**.

For additional information contact the **Dogs for Disabled**, Training and Information Center, P.O. Box 25628, Greenville, South Carolina 29616-0628 or call Brian and Connie Cleveland at (864)862-8626.

Giving is a positive experience! Weigh your options. What type of gift are you giving this Valentine's Day?

Roses are nice, but soon they wither. Cupid sparked the love affair that started all this, and Cupid gives the gift of love. Now your gift of love can change a life!

Linda Ayers Turner Knorr

