

REMEMBERING AKC FIELD REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAM HAROLD HOLBROOK

1924 - 2019

REMINISCING WITH JANINE WALKER-KEITH

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One of the blessings of spending time at home during the pandemic shutdown has been having time to reminisce with friends. Recently, California dog fancier Janine Walker-Keith of Incandescent Collies and I shared many old stories about one of our mutual favorites, AKC Field Rep. William “Bill” Holbrook, who passed away in 2019.

During the 1992 American Kennel Club Judges Institute in Ontario, California, I was shaken from my bed by my first earthquake experience. Having seen the movies about the great San Francisco quake too many times, I was totally terrified!!! I called my parents, Roy and Hazel Ayers, in Atlanta and they told me to find our close family friend, Bill Holbrook, and go stay with him. My husband, Jim, agreed. They knew Bill would take care of me.

I ran from my room to find the male leaders of the Institute gathered for breakfast. They realized I was shocked with fear, but when I told them my parents told me to “stay” with Bill Holbrook, you can just imagine the kidding that took place. I will always remember the hysterical stories Jack Ward, Harry Smith, Dr. James Edwards, and Ted Kjellstrom continually repeated about that incident.



This close knit group of Holbrook’s Collie friends surround him at the 1992 California AKC Judges Institute. Back row L/R: Dr. Ted Kjellstrom, Helene Forthal, Mary Wells, and Al Forthal. Front row L/R: Linda Ayers Turner Knorr, Bill Holbrook, and Helga Kane.



Counting on Bill Holbrook to protect me in the event of a catastrophe. I survived the earthquake during the 1992 AKC Judges Institute in Ontario, California!

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(left to right) Bill Holbrook, Glen Twiford, and Dr. William Brokken. 2001 - This historic photo was taken at the San Diego Collie Club of longtime AKC Field Representative, Bill Holbrook, acknowledging and awarding icon Glen Twiford of Wind-Call Collies for 50 years of AKC judging, with a speech from his heart, and an AKC plaque. Collie Club of America past president, Dr. William Brokken, also honored Mr. Twiford on behalf of CCA.



1965 - Koani's Little Bo Peep. Santa Ana Valley KC, Judge Ed Myers. Handler: Bill Holbrook. Owner: Doris Koani.



1966 - Ch. Long Ridge Dark Moment. Bill piloted the tri dog under Walter Lee at Orange. Empire KC and soon finished him under Steve Field at Arz. Collie Clan show. Owner: Henry Oyama.

With my insisting that she do so, Janine Walker-Keith shared a farewell salute that she'd penned with the history of Bill's involvement in the world of dogs.

The Sport of Dogs celebrates the life of a very dedicated AKC Field Representative of twenty-nine years, Bill Holbrook of Buffington Collies. The kennel name was established in 1939 in Lincoln, Nebraska, by his future bride, Janet (known as Jidge). Jidge used the prefix in her first Collie's name, Count of Buffington (Buff), the dog that sired Steve Field's first litter of Collies in 1940. Mr. Field later developed the great and well-known Parader Collies located in Omaha, Nebraska.

Teen-age Bill Holbrook met Jidge in a high school play in his hometown of Lincoln when he played a handsome young male star. According to Bill, he knew he had made the conquest when he finally succeeded in kissing Jidge goodnight without Buff trying to stand guard between them. Bill courted Jidge for seven years before marrying her in 1947 after becoming a member of The Greatest Generation by serving his country with honor, bravery, and valor from 1942 to 1946 during World War II. In 1951, Bill entered the "World of AKC" by volunteering to be the show chairman for Cornhusker Kennel Club.

In 1954, the Holbrooks moved from Nebraska to sunny Long Beach, California, but soon settled in Granada Hills, just east of Los Angeles where dog shows were very competitive and Collie specialty shows drew entries of over 100 dogs with 40-50 puppies entered in futurity stakes.

Bill and Jidge sincerely enjoyed, and never forgot, the longtime friendships they made with many California Collie fanciers. Bill soon became a Collie Club of America District Director, CCA First Vice President, and a successful, well-known professional handler.

Twenty years later, the Holbrooks moved north to the beautiful state of Washington, mainly to the town of Sequim. Without a doubt, Bill Holbrook wore many hats as he spent his entire adult life as a guardian of the Sport of Dogs, and along the way was a Collie breeder, exhibitor, professional handler, AKC approved judge in 1969, mentor, true friend who always did so much for others, devoted husband, loving father of Nancy and Mike, and Jenny's adoring grandfather. In 1980, Bill became an AKC Field Representative who always worked with a fair and level playing field for the good of all. He was known for his soft-spoken guidance and opinion, patience and generosity, honesty and fairness, along with being a good listener who was filled with common sense and had a wonderful sense of humor. Gentlemen respected Bill and ladies adored him.

Bill retired from being an AKC Rep in 2007 at the age of 82 and started judging once again. In 2013, he was nominated an AKC Lifetime Achievement Award Finalist.

While living in Southern California from 1954 to the mid-1970s, Bill and Jidge made Collies and the Sport of Dogs a true family affair by including their pretty young daughter, Nancy Jan Holbrook. With guidance from both parents, eight-year-old Nancy began obedience training her own beautiful winning Collie of that era, Ch. Blazer of Buffington CDX, bred by Bill and Jidge in 1957 and still remembered by many. To quote Jidge, "Perhaps the greatest Collie we will ever house here, both in conformation and character, is Blazer. Nancy picked Blazer from a litter of seven puppies when she was six years old and the litter was two hours old. It was a simple selection based on the white blaze on his face, like Lassie. Blazer had a bout with distemper following a live virus vaccine that prevented him from gaining enough weight until 1960 when he was finally shown in conformation, winning Best of Breed over five specials at the San Fernando KC. He finished his championship eight months later and went on to win the 1963 Southern California Collie Tournament with eleven-year old Nancy handling him, resulting in a trip to Chicago for the Holbrook family to attend the CCA National show. Nancy was the only child handler in a ring of 35

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specials. I must admit that my eyes were tearful when, as her turn came to gait Blazer, I saw not only ringside spectators applauding for them, but also the exhibitors inside the ring. Like father, like daughter. Bill's outstanding handling skills were obviously passed down to Nancy.

Other Collies associated with the Holbrooks and their Buffington prefix were Lady Dewbrook of Buffington, dam of Blazer (1957), Ch. Sir Ree Bob of Buffington (1958), Ch. Buffington Gambler O' Walita (1963) and Ch. Buffington's Lady Nutmeg (1960). In 1967, Holbrook's Koani Kaper was bred to Ch. Parader's Reflection, producing Helga Kane's breathtaking Ch. Kanebriar Holbrook Halloo, dam of Ch. Kanebriar Keynote (1970), an outstanding winner of his era as well.

Mentoring is the transfer of knowledge. Often it results in lasting friendship.

Little did Doris Koani (Koani Collies) know in 1964 when she bred Koani Mokahana Button, a daughter of Ch. Blazer of Buffington CDX, to Ch. Linbairn Autumn of Clelland (a breeding based on Ted Kattell's dog, Borco's Roger Bright) that the sale of a handsome sable male puppy from the litter would have a profound effect on the entire Collie community for the next 50 years and form a close friendship based on mentoring.

It was Al and Helene Forthal who purchased the pretty sable male puppy in 1964, naming him Shane McDuff of Koani. The couple set in motion Shoreham Collies, one of the most consistent and successful Collie breeding programs based on a small scale that this country has ever witnessed, which produced the top specialty-winning Collie of all time. Fortunately, along with Al's purchase of Shane came a knowledgeable mentor and future longtime friend, Bill Holbrook, who guided Al early on into the Sport of Dogs.

The charming vintage photograph of "Button" with three of her puppies has true historical value. It pictorially takes us back to Al Forthal's introduction to exhibiting Collies thanks to Bill Holbrook's friendship and mentoring.

At the 2005 San Diego Collie Club specialty show, club members, spectators, friends, and exhibitors threw a huge surprise party for Al and Helene Forthal to thank them for nearly six decades of priceless contribution to the Collie. When Bill Holbrook heard about the party-to-be, he sent the following letter to be published in the SDCC catalog, followed by a shorter version that fit nicely on a catalog page.

Ah, yes: Four-thal

In the decade of the '60s in California there were a number of couples showing and enjoying their Collies: Al and Helene Forthal (Shoreham), Svend and Joyce Jensen (Valley-Hi), Jim and Pat Martin (Wonderland), The Holbrooks (Buffington), Lynn and Pete Peterson (Highland), Milt and LaVerne Walker (San Lori), Hal and Paula Dickinson of the popular singing group, The Modernaires (Three Trees), Hal and Lunnette Goodrich (Lunnette's), and Joyce and Marshal Appel.

At the beginning, Al kept landing in 4th place...and we all teased him for being "Mr. Four-thal." As his handling skills progressed, he became Mr. Third-al, Mr. Second-al and Mr. First-al.

About this time, Al's astute Collie, Shane McDuff of Koani, a grandson of our beloved Ch. Blazer of Buffington CDX, helped him polish his handling skills all the way to the Winners markers. This enabled us to celebrate the Forthal's first champion by changing Al's name to "Mr. Win-all."

I remember being at Doris Koani's home sorting through the lovely litter in which the dam, Button, was sired by our Blazer, and it contained Al's first champion, Shane...So many great memories of those golden years. The Collie ringside was one of the happier places to be in the 1960s, and Al helped make it so.

We cherish our fun time with you, Al and Helene.

Love, Bill and Jidge Holbrook



1965 - Bill with Ch. Buffington Gambler O'Walita. Jidge with Ch. Blazer of Buffington CDX.



1962 - Blazer winning SoCal Collie Club w/Jidge handling. Nancy holds trophy with Lew Carpenter of Lewellen Collies. Judge Van Dyck (left) and Ted Kattell of Borco Collies (right).



1957 - Six-year-old Nancy Holbrook with her puppy, Blazer, whelped February 19, 1957. Blazer won his first ribbon at a So. Cal. CC match, August 18, 1957.

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1959 - Eight-year-old Nancy Holbrook with mature and beautiful Blazer.



1963 - Eleven-year-old Nancy with Blazer. She was the only child handler in the 1963 CCA specials ring.



Bill's Collie love affair began in 1958 with Ch. Sir Ree Bob of Buffington.



Feb. 1969 - Al Forthal wins the Arz. Collie Clan Futurity Stakes with future great Ch. Shoreham Desdemona under Bill Holbrook. "Dede" opened doors for future Collie bitches to win BOV and BOB over male specials. Al and "DeDe" were a phenomenon thanks to Bill Holbrook's guidance and mentoring. Later in 1969, Bill was AKC licensed to judge.



2010 Collie Club of America - Judge Bill Holbrook awarding WD to Arrowhill Swords Held High handled by Laurie Jeff Greer. Trophy presented by CCA former President Robert Futh.



1978 - At his first Collie Club of America National judging assignment, Holbrook's choice for BOB over an entry 938 Collies was Ch. Tartanside the Gladiator, co-owned, handled, and bred by John Buddie - Tartanside Collies.

Janine recalled to me, "I met Bill Holbrook for the first time in the late '60s, during my teen years. He was handling and won with a rough-coated Sable and white Collie puppy bitch at Silver Bay KC, held at the corner of 6th Avenue and Laurel Street in Balboa Park near the San Diego Zoo, which is the same beautiful location where the San Diego Collie Club held their first puppy match in 1949.

I attended the Silver Bay KC show that summer without an entry as it was a time in my life that I preferred to watch and study some of the best handlers on the West Coast such as Frank Sabella, Lina Basquette, Terrie McCullough Parker, Roz Durham, Patricia Craig, Tony Gwinner, Fon Johnson, Barbara Humphries, and Bill Holbrook. Bill was very gracious when I stopped him outside the ring after judging to ask him a few questions. I told him I thought his handling was "precise and very smooth" and would he please give me some pointers? With a smile he told me to always show well-trained Collies and don't "fidget around" with the dog in the ring because judges don't like to see "fidgety handlers." I will never forget that day; Bill's smile, his good advice, and our laughter. What a treat it was, later on, to correspond with Bill and Judge and visit with Bill as the AKC Rep at dog shows held in the Northwest and at various CCA nationals where he was "our" AKC Representative.

A few years previously, I watched Bill handle Blazer, with Nancy assisting, while I sat in a bleacher seat at a February Silver Bay Kennel Club show held in the old San Diego Convention Center. I was awestruck watching such a calm, stable, and glamorous Collie come ringside with his head held high. To impress me more, Blazer won Best of Breed that day."

Bill's first Collie Club of America assignment at Louisville, Kentucky, in 1978, is historic on two levels; his Best of Breed winner and the total size of the entry. Bill judged a portion of the dog classes and all intersex, awarding Best of Breed to Ch. Tartanside the Gladiator from the Veteran Class, making it "Buster's" *third*

CCA Best of Breed win! The total entry was 938 Collies, which was unheard of during the 1970s.

Certainly no one can tell Bill's story better than he did in the 2010 Collie Club of America catalog upon his second CCA assignment, held in his "old stomping grounds," Southern California.

William Holbrook, 2010 CCA—Dog Classes:

"I met my first purebred show Collie, Count of Buffington, when I was a junior in high school in Lincoln, Nebraska. His mistress, Janet (call-name "Jidge") began a long-standing love affair (that included the Collie breed). Together we owned and showed some wonderful dogs, with our first co-owned Collie being Pleasant Hill D' Ebon Rhapsody from Billy Aschenbrener. A longtime friendship developed with Steve Field who used "Buff" to sire his first litter of Collie pups (born in 1940). I received my all-breed handler's license from AKC in 1964. I would like to extend a big THANK YOU to all the Collie people who let me show and finish their dogs—they made me a good handler! When I stopped handling, I obtained my license to judge Collies and Shelties in 1969. I was the District Director for Southern California as well as First Vice President of the CCA. Then, in 1980, I was invited to be an Executive Field Representative by the American Kennel Club. I then had to resign as an AKC judge. I spent the next 29 years as an AKC Rep. When I retired in 2007, I again began judging. I am now approved for Collies, Shelties, Malamutes, Samoyeds, Siberians, and the Toy Group and Best in Show. My prior highlight in judging was the 1978 CCA where I judged dogs and intersex in Louisville, Kentucky."

He calmed my fears from a California earthquake. It seems the only thing Bill Holbrook didn't do during his life was wear a red cape and leap tall buildings in a single bound. Instead, for nearly 70 years, he crossed our paths, touched our lives, and left a lasting impression. He is absent from our world, but will remain in our memories. ■