
LINES FROM LINDA

EXTRAORDINARY LADY AKC JUDGE GWENDOLYN M. MEANS

BY LINDA AYERS TURNER KNORR



Gwendolyn Means, a truly remarkable icon in the sport of dogs, has traveled a particularly complicated road to overcome all odds in fulfilling her dreams. In April of this year she completed serving her term as President of the Collie Club of America and enjoyed celebrating her birthday on April 27.

The story of her life was celebrated by the CCA Quarter Century Collie Group on a magical evening in the Spring of 2016. Memories flood my mind as I recall the gathering at Louisville, Kentucky's Churchill Downs when Gwen received the group's Right Stuff Award, presented to a deserving individual who has made an impact on the Collie breed. The QCCG Board unanimously agreed on Gwen as the recipient and thought it fitting to present it to her in the same city where she first exhibited her Collie 57 years before. I was blessed to be invited to sit at the table that evening with Gwen and her daughter, Teresa; James Holliday with his daughter, Meredith; Janine Walker-Keith and Butch and Robin Schulman.

Board President James Holliday introduced John Buddie who presented the Hall of Fame Award for those who have been deceased for five years or longer and a pillar in the breed to Patricia Starkweather. Following a tribute by Janine Walker-Keith, Louisville native AKC Judge Butch Schulman presented the Right Stuff Award which is typically recognized in the area where the Collie Club of America National Specialty is held. Quarter Century Collie Group 2016 Board Members included James Holliday, Leslie Jeszewski, June Morris, Pat Jung, Dr. Bill Brokken, Leslie Canavan, Carmen Leonard, Janet Hitt, Heather Newcombe and Bill Holbrook.



Gwen was all smiles in Peoria, Illinois when she was President of the Collie Club of America.



top left:
Gwen Means,
1960s, with her
foundation bitch,
Brandwyne
Destiny's Star,
from the great
Ch. Brandwyne
Pandora.

top right:
The Means Family,
Gwen's late
husband, Morris,
daughter, Teresa
and son, Marc.

LINES FROM LINDA: EXTRAORDINARY LADY



Janine Walker-Keith paying tribute to Gwen at the QCCG 2016 gala in Louisville.



Butch Schulman presenting Gwen Means with the Quarter Century Collie Group's Right Stuff Award at Churchill Downs.



Robin and Butch Schulman at Gwen's table for the Right Stuff Award.



Gwen judging San Diego Collie Club 2015. Gwen's choice for Best of Breed: GCH Kingsmark First Impression PT OA OAJ. Laurie Jeff Greer handling.

Means' story as told to the crowd that evening by her dear friend, Janine Walker-Keith, will lift you up and carry you along by Gwen's determination to show, breed and love Collies during a time of disruption and despair when her only help came by the grace of God and from three great Collie men.

Here are the words spoken by Janine to the tables of guests who filled the entire Kentucky Derby Museum floor:

"Gwen Means once said, 'On whatever day and year it was that I turned the last page of an Albert Payson Terhune book, I have loved the Collie. The wonder and storybook fame of their exciting worldly deeds is long engraved in my mind.' Gwen's 60-year devotion to the Collie cannot be matched. Her story is about perseverance, tenacity and love during a time of incomprehensible intolerance, prejudice and bigotry in our country.

But, let's go back for just a moment to a mid-1950s honeymoon trip to Niagara

Falls that gave Gwen an opportunity to visit Elisabeth Browning's Tokalon Kennels and the famous Brandwyne-Gaylord Kennels of Jim and Trudy Mangels, instilling in Gwen a powerful determination to breed and exhibit Collies in spite of face-to-face confrontation with racism during the 1950s and through the 1970s.

Sadly, during decades of civil unrest, riots and segregation taking place in the United States, Gwen often encountered situations where she was not welcome. In those days dog shows were often held in areas where hotels, transportation and restaurants discriminated against people based on the color of their skin, making it uncomfortable, difficult and life-threatening for Gwen to attend.

Gwen attended her first Collie Club of America national specialty in 1959, right here in Louisville, Kentucky. But, unfortunately, 57 years ago due to the color of her skin she was rejected by the club's host hotel where she had made a reservation by telephone well in advance.

When she attempted to check-in she was told by the hotel management to leave the premises immediately as they did not accept "colored-people," although dogs were welcome to stay as guests. So, Gwen had no choice but to sleep in a YMCA boarding house in another part of town and eat her meals alone each day at the Greyhound bus station.

You see, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had not yet said, 'I look to the day when people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.'

Such rejection was difficult for Gwen to accept, but she always held her head high, made no negative comments, continued to attend dog shows and exhibit her Collies regardless of unthinkable acts taking place based on discrimination, which was actually the law in many states at that time. It took a very special and determined person, with a strong passion for Collies, not to walk away and never look back. Most likely no other

LINES FROM LINDA: EXTRAORDINARY LADY



Janine Walker-Keith; Gwen; and her daughter, Teresa.

James Holliday, President of the Quarter Century Collie Group was thrilled to recognize Gwendolyn Means for his group's high honor.

CCA member living today has experienced such a struggle.

When asked how she survived such treatment Gwen credits three great Collie men for their vigilant support and who had the 'Right Stuff' at the right time; John Honig, Noel Denton and Chip Atkins, all of who are inductees of the Quarter Century Collie Group *Hall of Fame*. Through her strong faith, Gwen credits God for being on her side, as well.

There were only a few 'minorities' showing dogs in those days so most exhibitors, in Gwen's own words, 'Didn't know what Gwen was,' as if it should make any difference, but unfortunately, in those days it did. As mentors, John, Noel and Chip watched over Gwen and became her close friends when friends for her were scarce at dog shows. These brilliant men included her in their dog show tasks, instructed her in the finer details of grooming and showing Collies and mentored her on the Collie standard. From a distance, other Collie exhibitors

watched these four good friends interact which slowly helped break down racial barriers allowing Gwen to eventually become a fellow Collie fancier. In the early years when Gwen and her husband, Morris, would attend the Collie Club of Georgia they happily stayed at Noel and Helen Denton's home (Deep South Collies) where they were always treated kindly. Skin color was not an issue with the Dentons, nor the Means. A mutual love for Collies was the issue.

Gwen met her first mentor, Walter Enquist, in the early 1950s. As a member of the Collie Club of Indiana he watched Gwen show her first Collie, prick-eared "King." Walter was a very kind man who took Gwen under his wing for a time and advised her to buy the best bitch she could afford. So, when the time was right, and being no fool, that's just what Gwen did. Her foundation bitch, Brandwyne Destiny's Star, dam of the great Ch. Brandwyne Pandora, was a very fortunate beginning for Gwen.

In the 1960s, during the height of racial unrest, whenever Gwen would return to Louisville, she always had a safe haven in the home of Dorothy and Howard Schulman. Dorothy and Gwen became close friends. Gwen would often spend the night at the Schulman household until the early '90s when Dorothy's champion Doberman Pinscher stared Gwen down and kept her awake all night long. Due to that long stare-down, and the recent passing of Dorothy Schulman, Gwen now stays during visits in Louisville with Butch and Robin Schulman, Dorothy's son and daughter-in-law.

During the last 57 years, as a CCA member, Gwen has bred and owned numerous Collie champions, but believes the addition of champion title to many Gwyn-Marc Collies has not been overwhelming, which she credits to 'the times,' as well as to the fact that the exchange of information, a limited breeding program and the opportunity for education in the sport of dogs was very limited. Gwen has stated that correct mentoring, becoming a member of Collie Club of America and several all-breed clubs, in addition to visiting such shows as Westminster Kennel Club enhanced her understanding of the Collie standard...verbally, visually and written.

In 1971, the American Kennel Club granted her a license to judge Collies.

Gwen was born in Texarkana, Texas, to parents who each held PhD degrees. Her father supported his family and put himself through college on a janitor's salary while living in the Pittsburgh area. Gwen has a Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology and a Master's Degree in

LINES FROM LINDA: EXTRAORDINARY LADY



Gwen Means judging her second CCA National Specialty Show at Virginia Beach in 2018, the same year she was elected 1st Vice President

Personnel Management. She was married 60 years to retired aeronautical engineer, the late Morris Means, and they have two wonderful children. Their son, Marc, is a computer engineer and the person Gwyn-Marc Collies is named after. Their daughter, Teresa, is a licensed veterinarian from Michigan State University. We welcome Teresa as she is here with her mother this evening.

Gwen is a former CCA District Director and 50+ year lifetime member of the Collie Club of America. For over 20 years she held together the Miami Valley Collie Club on a shoestring budget, wearing multiple hats in doing so. And, she is this year's CCA trophy chair in which she single-handily raised over \$8,000 in trophy pledges and donations *the old fashion way*, reaching out to members, person to person, over the telephone!

In 1993, a dream came true for Gwen that seemed unattainable in 1959 when she attended her first CCA. She was chosen by her peers to judge Inter-sex, Best

of Variety and Best of Breed at the Collie Club of America in Kansas City. She set high goals for herself prior to judging the CCA as a trust she felt she owed those individuals who helped her come to that day and to those who made a difference and enhanced her knowledge, and most of all, the Collie, that brings her much joy, and in their own way made such an occasion a reality.

Gwen Means is a survivor of 'the times.' Her story is one of a Collie breeder, owner, exhibitor and judge...but most of all a proud American. Her story also has great historical significance relating to the sport of dogs, and to our nation."

As Janine concluded her beautiful tribute, teary-eyed guests rose to their feet exploding in applause as Butch Schulman escorted Gwen to the stage to present her with roses and the Right Stuff Award.

Schulman also arranged to have the entire Gospel Choir from the Forest Baptist Church of Louisville surround Gwen on the stage to sing her favorite hymns, *His Eye Is On The Sparrow* and *Oh,*



Taking a serious look at Champion Azalea Hills Keowee Sand Storm, RE; owned by Bobbie Fairbanks and Nancy Reid, Taylor Williams handling.

Happy Day topping off the evening with *Amazing Grace.*

Butch Schulman later related to me his feelings about Gwen.

"Gwen is like a second mother to me. Like my own mom (may she rest in peace), she has given me invaluable knowledge about our beloved Collie breed, she taught me the correct way to do a proper Collie head exam, and continues to give me guidance through the ups and downs of life. When others attempt to influence my thoughts or question my judgement and integrity, I can still hear Gwen say, 'Butchie, don't let nobody pick any damn shade trees for you to sit under.' Gwen is truly my heart song. She is an inspiration, one of my Guardian Angels on earth. She gives me the strength to believe in myself, shares her love and devotion with my wife and children."

The Quarter Century Collie Group's President, Jim Holliday, summed up the dog world's feelings today for Gwendolyn M. Means in what he sensed about her 34 years ago when he was a young competitor, "I had the pleasure of showing in the lineup of specials for Best of Variety competition with Gwen at the 1986 Collie Club of America in Chicago for the 100th Anniversary Show. I remember her fondly with a beautiful tri-rough male special and she was dressed in a stunning white pants suit. There was something special about her and although a fiery competitive person, she was very gracious to me a very young boy at the time. Gwen is a true testament to perseverance and overcoming unnecessary obstacles in her life to flourish. She is highly respected and admired in the dog world especially in Collies. This extraordinary lady is The Right Stuff!" ■