

**Inside the Ivory Tower...
a continuing series.**

Lines from Linda

BY LINDA AYERS TURNER KNORR



Plaudits for top performer Robert H. McKowen, Vice President, Performance Events

Like an idea whose time had come, Bob McKowen's background in business and dogs merged with the creation of a Performance Events Division at The American Kennel Club in 1988.

"I was judging a dog show in Cleveland when I was offered the job of Vice President of the new AKC Performance Events Division by then President Ken Marden," Bob said during our recent visit in his office at 51 Madison Avenue.

He added, "I had a good job, which I liked, with a lot of vacation time and I was having fun judging, running my dogs in Field Trials and handling them in shows. But after taking several weeks to think about it, I decided, why not? Going from peaceful Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to the wicked city of New York took some self-convincing, but I thought I would be in a wonderful position to help dogs and people who like dogs. It would be a new adventure at that time in my life when I was thinking about retirement. It was like joining the Foreign Legion in a strange city among strange

people. What a merry-go-round it has been!" And it has been the opposite of retirement, indeed: during 1994, our American Kennel Club licensed and sanctioned 5,925 Performance Events! These included Field Trials, Hunting Tests, Herding Events, Lure Coursing, Agility, Earth Dog and Coonhound competitions.

Bob's love affair with dogs began during the Great Depression of the 1930s when his family got a puppy that looked a lot like a Smooth Fox Terrier, but was commonly called a Rat Terrier. At any rate, "Pete" was an all-around family dog who had many jobs.

"Pete was the guardian of the property, except when an especially large German Shepherd crossed through the garden and then he guarded from the porch," Bob said. "He loved to go into the woods with my brothers and me when we went to pick berries. When we got old enough to hunt, he was a hunting



dog. He lived long enough to see two of us off to World War II."

When Bob was younger, his neighbors had Beagles which they used for hunting. Those were the first hunting dogs he was exposed to and it was years later before he would have any hunting dogs of his own. The Salem Beagle Club was located about six miles north of Derry Township High School where he went to school, but it was not until he was Vice President of Performance Events that he ever visited the club.

Bob really got into dogs after he moved to Lancaster to take a job with Armstrong World Industries in the new Public Relations Department. The first dog was a rescue dog from the local pound, a black Labrador which he named "Sin." Sin was a wanderer.

"If he could get a little distance between you and him, he was gone to explore," Bob said. "He would go over the fence and, after a couple of days, we'd get a phone call that someone had taken him in. We'd go and get him and then he'd stay home for a while. Once, he was sent home in a taxi."

Sin hung around for about two years before finally disappearing for good.

"A lady called one time and wouldn't tell us where he was unless we promised we wouldn't be mean to him," Bob remembered. "The lady said she fed him crab and lobster meat and he liked it just fine. But he was happy to see us. Another time, after I had an operation on my knee that had been broken in a basketball game, he was found on the other side of town in a blizzard. The physician who had operated on my knee said the dog showed up in front of his house. The doctor said, 'I was shoveling snow when this black dog passed me, stopped and turned around. He came up, sat down, and shook my hand.' The doctor said I didn't have to come for him; he would be glad to keep him until my next appointment.

"After Sin, there was "Sam" the Weimaraner and "Adam" the Shorthair, but more of them later. All of these dogs and all of the Hunting and Field Trailing and showing and judging provided me with the experience I needed to guide a new program to increase performance events at the AKC and maintain or improve the quality of existing programs. The other half of the qualification was a virtual lifetime in business with a Fortune

500 company and years in the communications field."

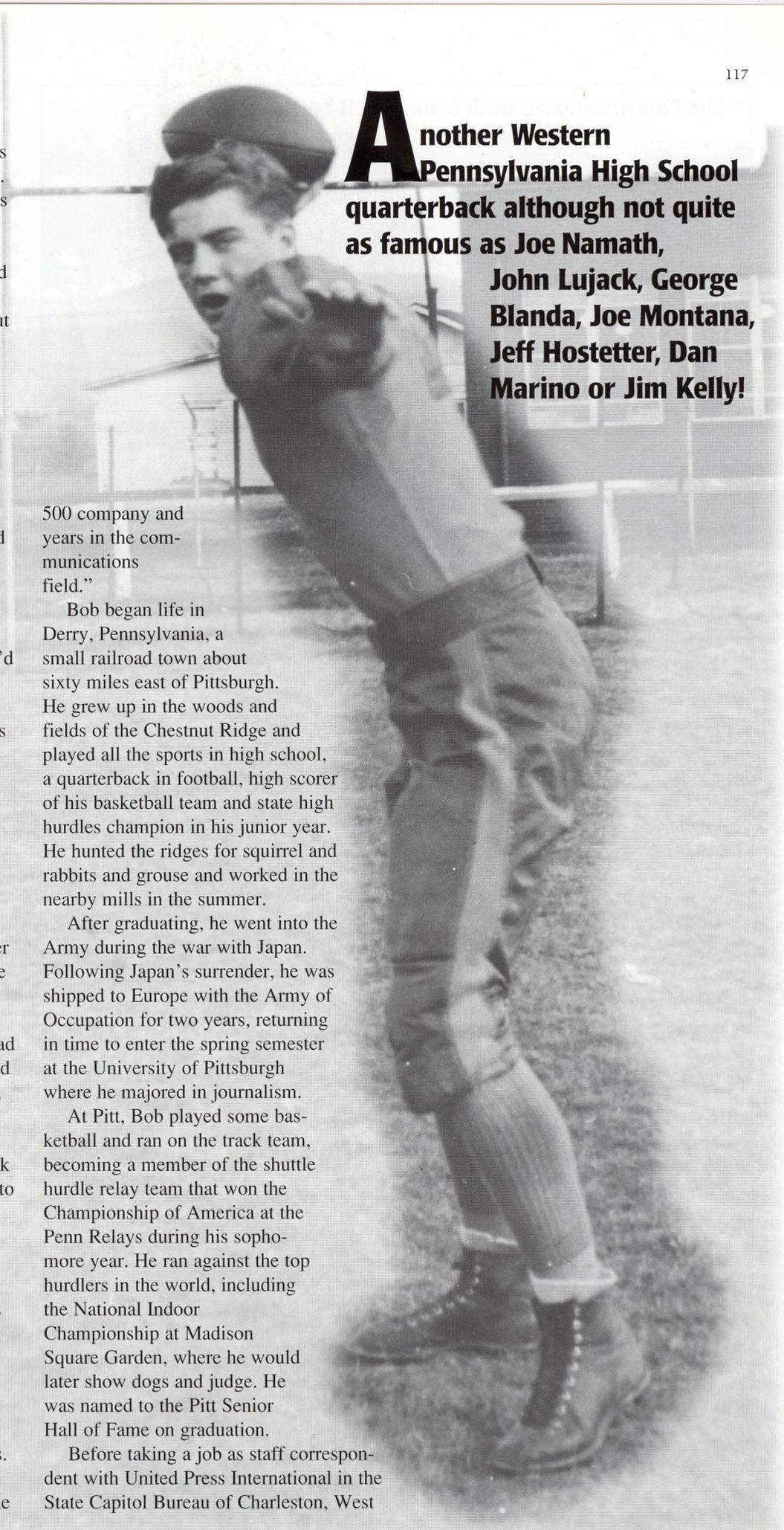
Bob began life in Derry, Pennsylvania, a small railroad town about sixty miles east of Pittsburgh. He grew up in the woods and fields of the Chestnut Ridge and played all the sports in high school, a quarterback in football, high scorer of his basketball team and state high hurdles champion in his junior year. He hunted the ridges for squirrel and rabbits and grouse and worked in the nearby mills in the summer.

After graduating, he went into the Army during the war with Japan. Following Japan's surrender, he was shipped to Europe with the Army of Occupation for two years, returning in time to enter the spring semester at the University of Pittsburgh where he majored in journalism.

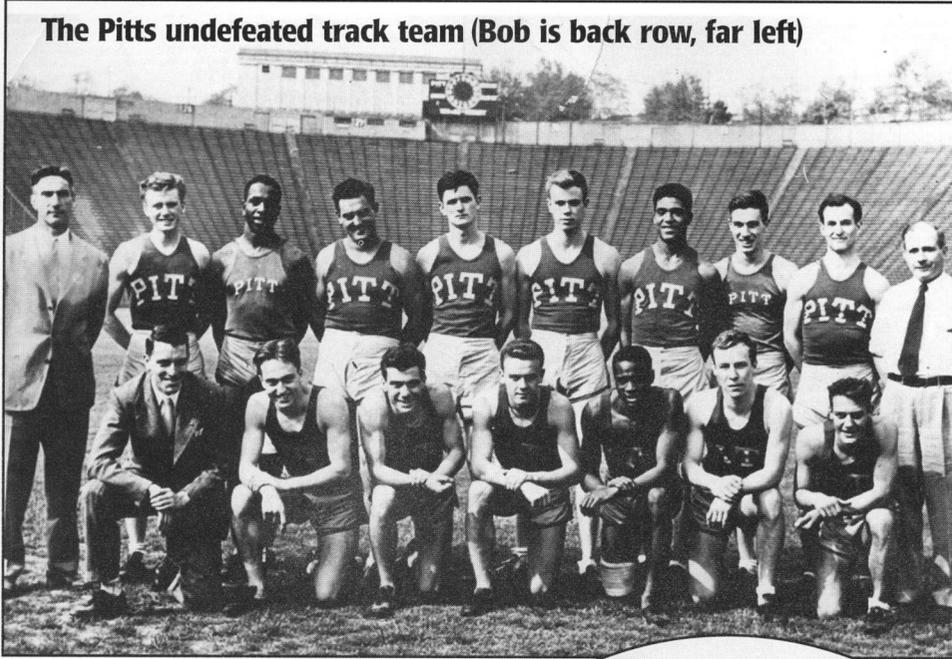
At Pitt, Bob played some basketball and ran on the track team, becoming a member of the shuttle hurdle relay team that won the Championship of America at the Penn Relays during his sophomore year. He ran against the top hurdlers in the world, including the National Indoor Championship at Madison Square Garden, where he would later show dogs and judge. He was named to the Pitt Senior Hall of Fame on graduation.

Before taking a job as staff correspondent with United Press International in the State Capitol Bureau of Charleston, West

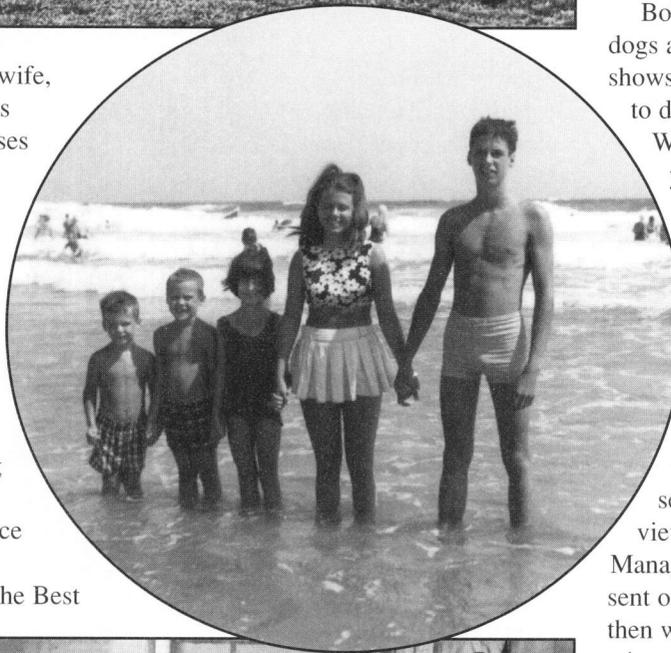
Another Western Pennsylvania High School quarterback although not quite as famous as Joe Namath, John Lujack, George Blanda, Joe Montana, Jeff Hostetter, Dan Marino or Jim Kelly!



The Pitts undefeated track team (Bob is back row, far left)



Virginia, Bob met and married his wife, Lee. He spent a summer at the races where Lee was driving harness horses in her father's stable. She was the seventh-leading harness horse driver in the United States. In addition to government, the Statehouse and sports news, Bob was also the Bureau's sports writer. He covered many stories carried in newspapers around the world and some of the top sports events in the nation. Before leaving United Press, he was elected Vice President of the Southern Conference Sports Writers and Sportscaster Association and Vice President of the Best



Virginia Sportswriter and Sportscasters Association.

"One of the most interesting stories was the release of Tokyo Rose from prison in Alderson, West Virginia," Bob said. "I was on top of that one all the way, against some of the leading newsmen of the day, including Jimmy Kilgallen. It was a cold February morning when she came through the gates in a black limousine. It was like something from the movies. Later, I had a big breakfast at the nearby Greenbrier Hotel with the Washington correspondent from the *Detroit News*, which used the United Press wire service. He told me my story had cleared the wire and was being printed while the other reporters were still dictating on the phone."

Bob never covered a story involving dogs and was only vaguely aware of shows and Field Trials. There was enough to do covering the volatile events at the West Virginia statehouse where the youngest governor in history had just taken office and then-State Senator Robert C. Byrd was announcing his bid for Congress. "He came into the office one day when I was on the day shift and said he was thinking of running for Congress, but didn't want to formally announce it until he was sure the incumbent was not seeking re-election. While I interviewed him, Al Hoffman, the Bureau Manager, slipped into the other room and sent out a bulletin on the radio wire. We then wrote a release to put on the news wire and gave Byrd carbons to pass out to the other news media in the city."

Center photo: The McKowen kids, Cape May, New Jersey, many years ago. From right: Bob Jr., now a cardiovascular thoracic surgeon in Houston; Mitzi, executive with a women's fashion store chain; Jackie, Director of the York, Pennsylvania Chapter of Junior Achievement; John, Vice President of Saint Francis Hospital, Pittsburgh – and the little fellow with his pants falling down is Patrick, a Marine Reserve Captain whose platoon was the first assault troop to invade Kuwait during the Gulf War.

Left: Bob interviewing 1936 Olympics 800-Meter winner Johnny Woodruff for United Press. Interestingly, Bob grew up about 25 miles from Woodruff's hometown and also ran on the Pitt track team where Woodruff starred.



After the McKowens had two children, Bob was restless to return to Pennsylvania and have weekends to spend with his kids.

He said he wanted more children and wanted them born in Pennsylvania. He heard about a new department opening at then-Armstrong Cork Company (now Armstrong World Industries) in Lancaster, and got an interview.

"When I flew up to Lancaster, I saw two cock pheasants roosting on the airport fence. I knew that was the place for me; like Brigham Young said when he saw the great salt lake, 'This is the place.' I was hired that same day after being interviewed by the News Department Manager and the Executive Vice President. At the time, I didn't know Armstrong was the largest resilient flooring manufacturer in the world."

Bob stayed thirty one years at Armstrong and retired early to join the AKC. He served as Senior Supervisor of Press Services for eight business operations, all of the commercial and industrial business. "Most of the major buildings in the United States and most all of the airports have acoustical

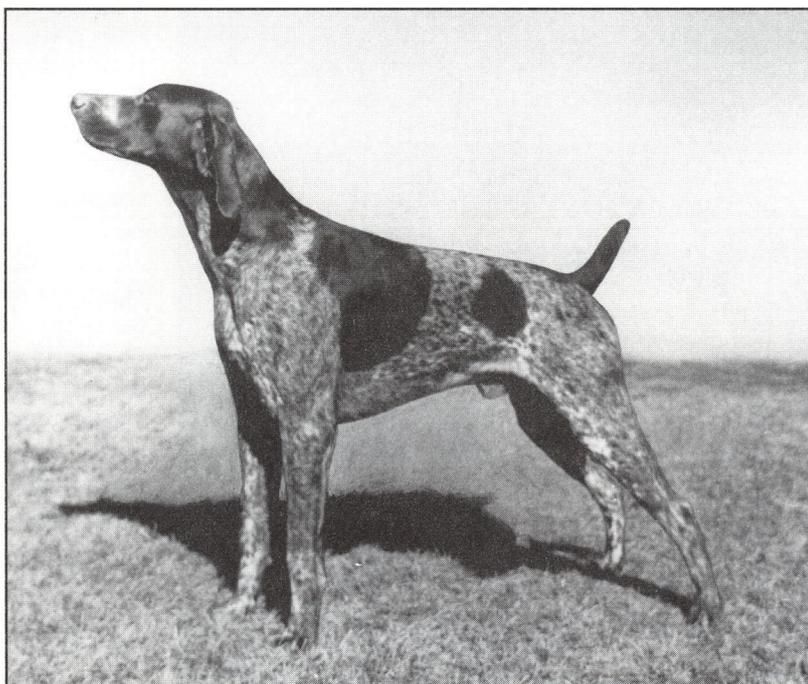
ceilings I promoted," Bob said. "My job covered everything from adhesives and gaskets to architectural ceilings and secu-

Top: ADAM'S VINDICATOR takes Winners at the GSPCA National under judge Tom Bradley

Bottom: CH. ADAM V. FEUHRERHEIM, the greatest sire in the history of the breed with 128 Show, Field & Dual Champions, including some of the top winners in the country. Acquired by Bob at four months of age, ADAM established a record in both show and field

rity cards with a special coding device."

While at Armstrong, Bob received three national awards for excellence in



advertising and public relations and the highest award given at Armstrong for excellence.

Bob and Lee had three more children in Lancaster after the births of Bob, Jr. and Mitzi in West Virginia. They were followed by Jackie, John and Patrick.

About this time, Bob resumed his interest in hunting. It wasn't long before he realized he needed a dog to handle the many pheasants abounding on the Amish farms in Lancaster County. A year after arriving, he saw an ad in a company newspaper offering a trained Weimaraner for sale. He bought the four year old from a man who had injured his back and couldn't hunt anymore. He hunted over "Sam" for five years. Bloat killed Sam before many veterinarians even knew what it was, much less how to treat it.

"Losing Sam just about broke me up," Bob said. "He was more than a hunting dog, Sam was a full member of our family. He was the best pheasant dog I had ever seen. Thanks to him I learned a great deal about this elusive bird, and what a dog is capable of accomplishing."

Bob had his heart set on another Weimaraner and had also gotten interested in German Shorthaired Pointers, even though he knew virtually nothing about them.

"I drove all over the country looking at Shorthairs and Weimaraners and I got lucky," he said. "I found a Shorthaired puppy we named Adam, bred by an international dual champion from Sweden out of a dam from a long line of Fueherheim dogs that had both good conformation and excellent field ability. I also got lucky with a Weimaraner pup of similar lineage to Sam, but he was killed while chasing a rabbit across the road. I was left with Adam, a dog who changed my whole life. Not only was he a fantastic family dog, but an excellent hunter and an outstanding show dog. I had to learn all about Field Trials and shows."

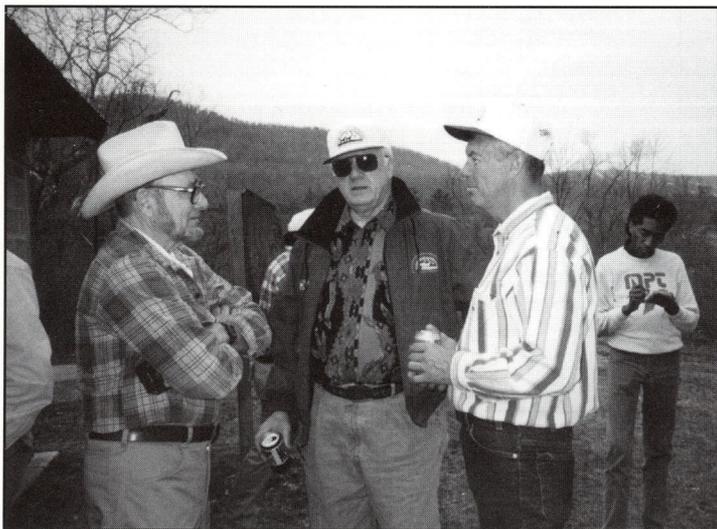
Bob added, "I knew there was an AKC in New York and that was about all.

But I learned in a big way. Adam went on to win twelve Specialty shows, including the National, and had fifty-four Field Trial wins. He turned out to be the all-time top sire of champions with one hundred twenty

eight show, field and dual champions, and we did almost nothing to promote him or finish champions. He was the leading sire of all breeds one year and top sire of Sporting breeds for two years in a row.

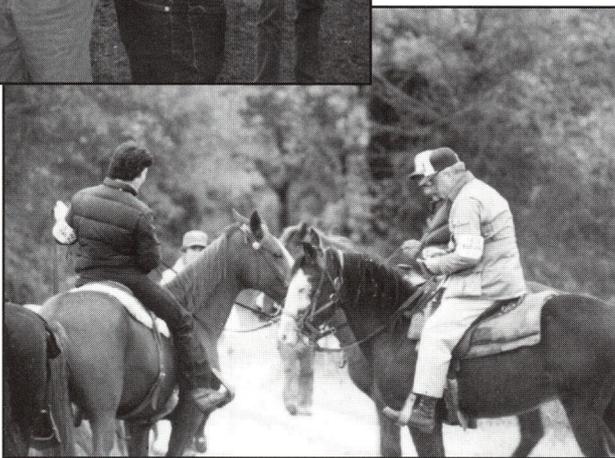
His son was the leading sire in the United Kingdom and his grandson is the second leading sire in the United States. The all-time top winning Shorthair, DC Britania, has Adam on both sides in her pedigree."

While all the dog activity was going on, Bob traveled a

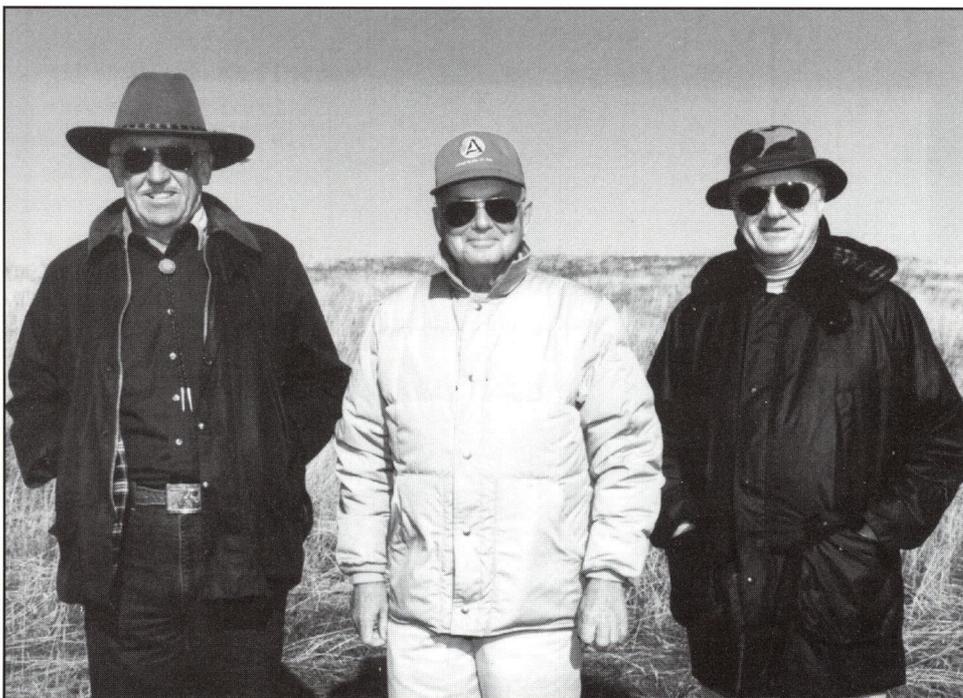


ABOVE: At the first AKC National Bird Dog Championship in Indian Springs, Maryland, with Larry Mueller, dog editor for *Outdoor Life*, at left, and Lt. Col. Al Lucas, Chairman of the Field Trial, at right.

RIGHT: Marshaling the 1984 GSPCA National Championship



BELOW: At the National Open Retriever Championship in Modesto, California, November 1991. Left to right: Keith Riemen, AKC Field Rep., Nelson Sills, AKC Director and President of the Labrador Retriever Club, and McKowen



great deal for his company, spending weekends at shows and trials. His children were growing up. The boys were out for sports in school, Midgets, junior high school and high school. The girls were involved with many school activities. Bob was now judging and doing club work. Something had to take a back seat, as his children needed more attention. He cut back on participating and judging, but continued to work in various club offices, finally serving a five-year term as President of the German Shorthaired Pointer Club of America. When he took over as President, the club was almost out of money and membership was about five hundred. When he stepped down as President, the club was well on its way to two-thousand-five-hundred members with an operating budget of \$100,000 per year. He was also doing the *AKC Gazette* breed column and helping start two regional GSP clubs.

"I also spent lots of time with my kids," Bob said. "Bob, Jr. was achieving a lot in sports and the other two boys were coming along in sports also. Bob, Jr. went on to win the state high hurdle championship, against a kid who finished second in the Olympics, and made the All State Football Team as quarterback as well as becoming co-captain of the league champion basketball team. Bob, Jr. went to the University of Richmond on a football scholarship and is now a cardiovascular thoracic surgeon in Houston. John made All-League in football and is Vice President of St. Francis Hospital in Pittsburgh. Mitzi, who was more interested in plays, is an executive with a chain of fashion stores. Jackie, who was active in sports, is a manager of the Central Pennsylvania Junior Achievement. Pat, a reserve captain in the Marine Corps, led one of the first Marine assault teams into Kuwait in the Gulf War.

"My wife and I had a hard time dividing up our time among the various activities of the children when they were young. There was girl's hockey in high school, one boy playing junior high football, one playing in high school and one playing in college. In the meantime, I still did a little show and Field Trial judging."

As the children grew up and began moving away from home, Bob became more active in judging. By then he had learned a great deal more about the AKC and how it worked, but he exclaimed, "It



LEFT: Presenting the 90th Anniversary Plaque to Robert Slike, editor of *Hounds & Hunting Magazine* at right; Field Director of Hound Events, R.W. Webster, is at left.

CENTER: A young Bob McKowen taking a story from a stringer in the United Press Capital Bureau, Charleston, West Virginia

BOTTOM: Bob and wife Lee at left, and friends, at the AKC World Coonhunt Championship at Crittenden, Kentucky

was quite a revelation to find out how things really worked once I started to work for the AKC." He also said, "Entries were down in Field Trials and judging was all over the lot with the new

Hunting Test program. We had a new Coonhound Registry and not many people knew what was actually involved. In addition, we wanted to develop new programs so most of our dogs would have a performance event in which to demonstrate that they could perform the function for which they were bred. To top it all off, we had a very small in-house and field staff. Looking back, I'm not sure I would have the same fire and drive as I had then. But we had support from then-President Ken Marden and Bob Maxwell and a majority of Board Members. Quite



frankly, the job was a challenge, to say the least.

"One of the first things we had to do was develop a Judges' Guide and a seminar program for the three types of hunting tests," Bob said. "The problem

was that judging was inconsistent and we needed to provide official interpretations for the regulations. We also needed to make some corrections in the programs."

Because entries were down in Field Trials for Pointing breeds and Beagles, several programs were developed to make it easier for competitors to enter and participate without compromising the performance of the dog. Since that time, walking stakes have been added to the Pointing Breed Field Trials and National Championships have been developed for

both the Pointing Breeds and the Beagles.

Judging seminars and a newsletter were developed for Pointing Breed Field Trials and a seminar was created for Retriever Field Trials. Videos were prepared for all three types of Hunting Tests and for Pointing Breed and English Springer Spaniel Field Trials.

Creating a Herding event was especially challenging because it started from scratch without any previous experience at AKC, and little elsewhere. "We got a good group together and managed to get started," Bob said. "After two more advisory meetings with more experienced people, we felt we had what the people wanted and what was best for the dogs."

After herding came Lure Coursing, Earth Dogs and Agility, which was received with great enthusiasm. The first Agility Trial kicked off in 1994 at the Houston Cluster shows with a tremendous entry of one hundred ninety two.

"We offered many, many changes and innovations to keep the events interesting and meaningful," Bob said. "Each new day is a challenge to keep ahead of what tomorrow's needs will be. We like to think we are anticipating any problems that may lie ahead and are making plans to address them now."

Bob added that the Performance Events Division is an integral part of the AKC and its constitutional objective of preserving and advancing the pure bred dog.

"It has been a tremendous amount of work getting to where we are today, and it has been a team effort with a lot of help and support from not only AKC staff and Board Members, but volunteers from dog clubs throughout the country." Bob concluded. "The satisfaction in accomplishing so many of our objectives has been tremendously gratifying and well worth the effort."

Performance at its finest is exemplified in the achievements of Robert H. McKowen!

Encore! Encore!

Linda Ayeers Turner Knorr

