

# TWIN OAKS: THE CALIFORNIA BRANCH ON THE AUSTRALIAN SHEPHERD FAMILY TREE

**With Far More Working Trial Champions Than Any Kennel In History, Twin Oaks Has Achieved The Aussies' California Dream**  
By Sal Manna and Karen S. Russell

*"The most consistent, natural stockdogs today, trace their ancestry to a few predominate foundation bloodlines. Las Rocosa, Twin Oaks, and Woods, are the fountainhead of bloodstock that provided the base for the modern working Aussie."*

--Carol Ann Hartnagle and Ernest Hartnagle,  
The Total Australian Shepherd: Beyond the Beginning (2006)

When Audrey and Muriel Hayes saw their first Australian Shepherd in the early 1950s, the adventurous twentysomething twin sisters were preparing to ride on horseback from their parents' ranch in Lake County in Northern California to work on a dude ranch in Nevada. Thanks to Rita, however, they never made it--and the working Australian Shepherd would be forever indebted to that brown-eyed, natural bobtailed, blue merle with a white collar.

Photo—Audrey and Muriel Hayes, circa 1986.

The day before they were set to leave, they went to the Lake County Fair, where they witnessed Alton Howard Clough, known as Allie, win the Stock Horse Reining Class, though he was in his seventies. After the event, they introduced themselves and told him about their coming travels. Clough, who had been a jockey as a young man but had been operating his Clough Cattle Ranch in Los Molinos in nearby Tehama County since 1912, was fascinated by the grit and determination of the twins.

"He had two Thoroughbred twin fillies and he offered them to us for \$100 apiece," recalls Muriel. "We didn't have that kind of money. So he offered them to us for \$50 each. Then he decided he wanted us to run in some wild cattle and he'd give them to us if we would come up to help him."

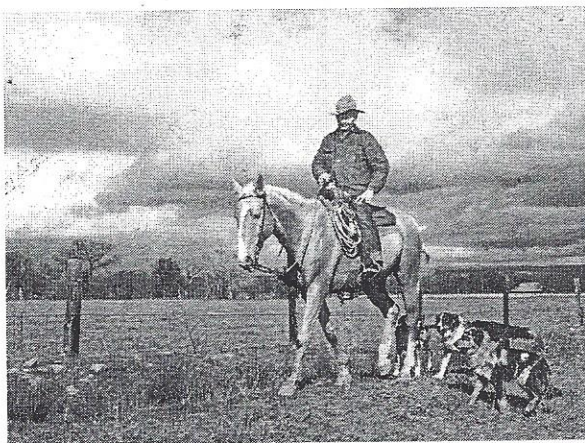
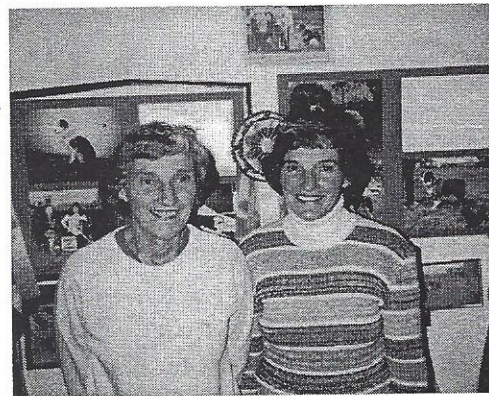


Photo-Allie Clough with unknown Australian Shepherds, circa 1940s.

A few days later, Audrey and Muriel rode into Los Molinos and discovered that Rita, who was around four years old, would be assisting them in the pre-winter round-up. Alongside her was Butch, a dark blue merle cross-bred out of Rita by a hound, and with a hound's voice. Also joining them was an older Aussie, a light blue merle named Chico, who had arrived by boat in the '40s from the renowned Parker Ranch in Hawaii as a gift to Allie in appreciation for his breaking and training polo ponies reportedly for a Mrs. Parker. Chico, who was Rita's sire, had spent most of his years working Clough's bulls and was banged up and cranky. Though Muriel and Audrey would soon win his affection and were the only ones he would allow to feed him by hand, Chico would not be part of the round-up.



Photo—Audrey with Allie at Lee Camp, early 1950s. Rita may be the Aussie sitting between them.

With Rita, Butch, their horses and supplies, the trio set up in the hills at Lee Camp, named for Allie's mother's family, distant relatives of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Nearly every day for the next three months, they would ride into the brush in search of cattle.

"Butch would pick up the scent of a cow in the brush and bay like a hound on a coon," remembers

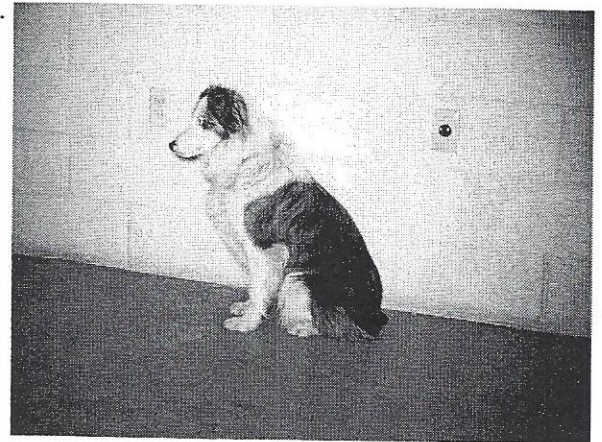
Muriel. "Then Rita would run in and chase it out into the open. They were a perfect team."

One day, their job was to locate a young bull Allie had not castrated the year before because it had been ill at the time. When Butch found him, the bull was in no mood to be trifled with and took his stand on a hillside "so steep you couldn't stand sideways," says Muriel. But Rita constantly headed him and bit him hard on the nose when necessary. At the same time, Butch heeled him. Together, they drove the bull in a tight circle until he dropped to his knees. Allie rode up beside him, slipped over his head a rope Muriel wrapped around a tree and another rope around his hind legs that Allie tied to another tree. With the bull stretched between the two trees, Allie finally castrated him. "Seeing those dogs work that bull," says Audrey, "convinced us that we had to have that breed."

In 1956, they bred Rita (later registered as Clough's Rita) to another natural bobtailed blue merle, a blue-eyed Aussie named Pepper (later registered as Springer's Pepper) who hailed from the Springer Ranch in Placerville. Of the two offspring, the sisters kept a blue merle female, which they named Poco Lena, after the world champion cutting mare of the same name. Later registered as Klarer's Poco Lena, she would mark the genesis of the Twin Oaks line.

Photo-Klarer's Poco Lena, circa 1957.

It was only when their parents, Bill and Hazel Hayes, saw Rita and Poco Lena that they told them a remarkable story. In the 1920s, when they were growing alfalfa on their ranch in Fernley, Nevada, an insect infestation prevented them from harvesting it into hay. But they found a shepherd with a large flock of sheep who had just come in through the port of San Francisco. The herdsman accompanied his stock to the Hayes ranch and the sheep ate their fill on the field. Also with him was his dog, a female blue merle Aussie. When the sheep moved out, the shepherd and his Aussie went with them. Though the sisters did not know it when they first met Rita, the Hayes family had come across the Australian Shepherd before Audrey and Muriel were even born.



Poco was raised around cattle, goats, chickens and rabbits--and worked all of them instinctively, both gathering and driving, without any training with commands or directions. Extraordinarily intelligent, she was able to size up any situation and understand where the stock was supposed to go.

"When the chickens would get loose and go into our mother's garden," says Audrey, "I'd just say, 'Get 'em, Poco,' and she'd slowly wear back and forth and bring them back into their pen." When the goats had to be caught for milking, Poco learned to bay them so Audrey could walk up and guide them to the milking shed. As for the rabbits, Poco would run down escapees and gently cover them with her paws and muzzle until someone would pick them up. "Once, one of our prize litters, just three weeks old, was loose," says Muriel. "We went looking for them and saw Poco walking through the brush with one of the little bunnies in her mouth. We scolded her and she dropped it unharmed and ran to her doghouse--where we found she had the other seven! All safe and sound. She was trying to nurse and mother them!"

The sisters, now accompanied by Poco, continued to work for Allie. Once she was driving some cattle into a meadow, headed for the corrals, when Shorty, an Aussie someone had given Allie to try out, wildly ran in barking and biting at their heels and necks. Allie and Muriel yelled but before they could catch him, the cattle had run off into the brush.

Allie assumed the cattle would eventually return to the road, the Old Lassen Trail, which they had traveled many times before. But when he and the sisters followed that path, there were no cattle to be found. Deer season had begun, and the commotion caused by hunters and Jeeps had apparently kept the cattle off the road.

"But Poco would go into the brush and give a yip," remembers Muriel. "I didn't pay much attention at first but Allie finally told me to follow her. Poco would wait for me and as soon as I reached her she would yip and take off again. She did this several times and then all of sudden she yipped and dashed off to one side and there were four cows coming at me with Poco right at their heels! She drove them right out to the road!" For several hours, Poco patiently plucked cattle out of the heavy brush--all but one. Finally, she disappeared amid the timber without a yip. They stopped for a rest while Allie rolled a cigarette. "Well, I guess Poco failed us this time," he said as he turned his horse around.

With the movement, they heard a "Yip!" and saw Poco run to the other side of the brush. Out came the wild cow like she was shot from a cannon. Poco had been eyeing her all along. She was rewarded with a Jeep ride back to Lee Camp with Audrey and her new husband, Roger Klarer.

The Hayes sisters were determined to become breeders of this working stockdog. At a time when the Australian Shepherd Club of America (ASCA) was in its infancy after forming in 1957, the same year as the International English Shepherd Registry (IESR), which opened a separate stud book for the Australian Shepherd, the Hayes sisters through Poco set the ideal inner characteristics for the working characteristics of the breed--direct and forceful when necessary but gentle otherwise; intelligent and independent but also quick to learn and willing to please. Says Audrey: "We only kept dogs that were keen and outgoing but not aggressive. We weeded out any Aussie that wasn't willing to come up to you." Adds Sherry Klarer Baker, her daughter: "Mother has no patience for a dog that cannot learn quickly. In a way, they reflect her character. If they could survive the test of getting along with her, they were kept."

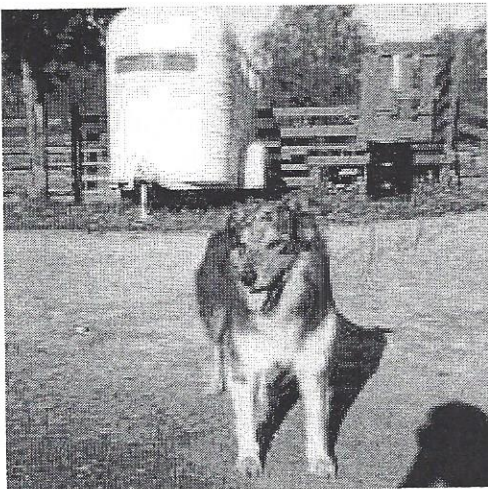


Photo- Cain's Jock, early 1960s. Courtesy Hazel Cain.

One of Poco's first outstanding crosses was in the early '60s to Cain's Jock, owned by Phillip and Hazel Cain of Burson in Calaveras County. The Cains had bought their first Aussie, Patches, around 1946 when they lived in Livermore, where numerous Portuguese immigrants were ranching cattle and farming hay and had fallen in love with the little blue dogs. So too did the Cains, who now also had a few cattle amid their Calaveras horse ranch.

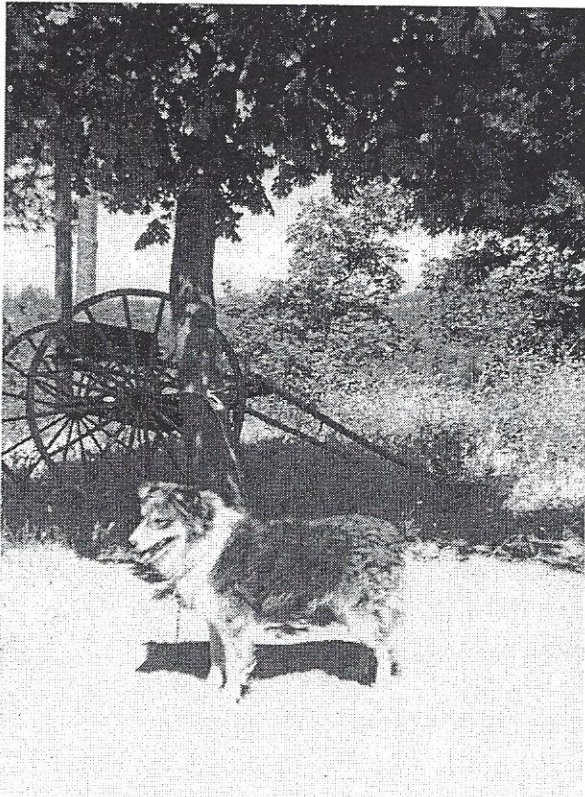
They purchased Jock, a solidly built, 21-inch tall, dark blue merle with copper trim and natural bobtail, around 1958 from a nearby sheep and cattle ranch owned by the Ospital Family. Descendants of Basque shepherds, the Ospitals retained a Basque herdsman named Dominic, who was in charge of an Aussie female named Rosie who he would work in his native language. Every now and then the Ospitals would raise a litter. As for Jock, "he was a tremendous dog," says Hazel. "Nothing mean in him. A real working dog."

In 1961, Hazel received a letter from ASCA president Gwen Stevenson: "I understand you have raised Australian Shepherds for several years and have kept them pure bred. Also have trained them as 'turn back' dogs when working with cattle. Would you like to register your dogs?" However, many Aussie owners then, including the Cains, declined to register their dogs, including with the IESR, which was a division of the National Stock Dog Registry and accepted registration upon approval by ASCA. The application fee that year was just \$1.50 (ASCA membership was \$5 per year, including the quarterly National Stock Dog Magazine which featured a column about Aussies).

But Audrey insisted on registration for Jock as well as for her own dogs, even if, in those earliest days, pedigrees often began with dogs identified simply as "Paso Robles Ranch Dog" or "Redding Ranch Bitch" or "Unknown." Before Aussies, she had raised and registered horses, rabbits and goats as well as Pointers, Cocker Spaniels and Brittanys. Thus she began registering her Aussies with IESR in 1963, while living in Placerville. In 1970, the Hayes-Klarer clan moved to Galt in San Joaquin County. Standing at the entrance to their new ranch was a set of giant oaks. In honor of those trees and for the twin sisters they represented, they named their kennel Twin Oaks. In a historical coincidence, that was also the year Allie Clough passed away.

What Audrey learned about genetics, particularly with rabbits, would serve her in good stead with breeding Aussies. While some were sold for pets, the best were sold as working dogs. "People wanted them for a reason," Audrey points out, "not just because they liked the looks of them or to pet their pretty heads."

At first, Swaps, a blue merle offspring of Poco and Boxel's Fellow, failed to show an interest in working. Then, while at the Pleasanton race track where Muriel was galloping racehorses, a two-year-old stallion took a swipe at him as he cut through the stud corral and chased him out. "Swaps got real mad," says Muriel, "and he ran back in and started working that stallion." That was the beginning of his working career.



Photo—Klarer's (later Martin's) Shadrack, circa 1967.

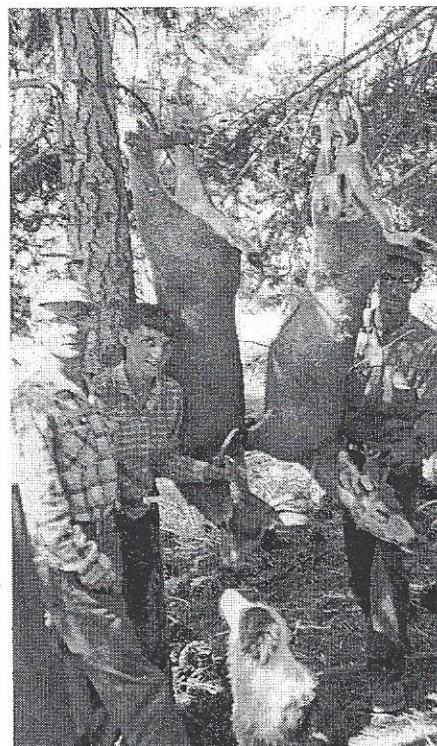
Poco was also bred to a very blocky, sturdy blue merle named Rebel, owned by quarter horse trainer Tony Diaz from Fame Farms in Clements. Diaz would hold Rebel up in the air to show him a bull or cow half-a-mile away in a field, then set him down, and he'd take off to bring the stock into the catch pen. He'd use Rebel in the same way to bring a horse out of a stall or shelter so a prospective buyer could view the horse. At one point, Diaz traded Rebel to the sisters for Quillo, a blue merle female born of Poco and Rebel. With Rebel in house, he was bred a second time to Poco, producing Klarer's (later Martin's) Shadrack, a beautiful blue merle male.

There were and remain many preferences about choosing an Aussie, from wanting only those with black-roofed mouths to believing that pups who suckle at the rear teats become heelers and those at the front become headers. Sherry says "ranchers still come in and demand, 'I don't want no damn headin' dog!'" Fortunately, one belief no longer exists-

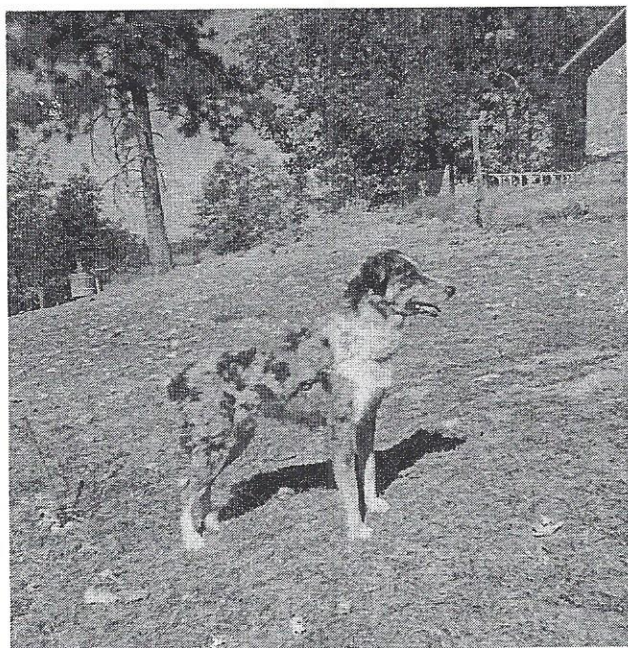
-that only blue merles would work and were worth keeping. In the '50s and '60s, many of the others were culled.

Photo-Roger Klarer, Audrey, Ralph Klarer, with Poco Lena on deer hunting trip around Markleeville, 1957.

In 1963, Audrey purchased a blue merle bitch from Betty White of Arizona, who had placed an ad in Western Horseman magazine. Klarer's Bug Brush, 22 inches tall, with a bright blue coat and half-blue eyes, was a strong heeling dog, never going to head unless a cow charged her. She had a habit of driving her stock along the fence and then making a wide swing to put them through a gate. Bug was a great granddaughter of Crane's Eli, a large blue merle male found running loose in Scottsdale, Arizona in the early '50s. About a year old and completely wild, Crane's Eli was caught by a horseshoer and eventually ended up with Ted Crane. Beth Griffith of Almostheaven Farm noted that "Eli had such a reputation for working and being a good watchdog, etc., farmers, ranchers and the like brought their bitches to him to be bred. He produced tough working dogs that were extremely protective and mainly one-man dogs."



Bug's first litter produced seven blue merles. Muriel kept a male registered as Hayes's Cloudburst, remembered for his unusual way of relating to horses. He would lie just outside a fence and let a horse try to bite him. Then, patiently, he would creep under the fence until the horse wanted to make friends. Pretty soon, Cloudy would be able to stand under the horse's front legs while the horse nuzzled his back without biting him. Then Cloudy would reach up and lick its nose! "He even did this with the horse that ran Swaps out of the corral," says Muriel. "It was something to see."



Photo—Hayes's Cloudburst, 1967.

None of these Aussies had any formal stock training. Hand signals might be used to send them but, once out of reach, the dogs would work on their own. For example, Little Echo, who arrived in 1967 from Tamra Henry of Sebastopol, was a bright blue merle about 21½ inches and with a powerful eye and strong fetching and gathering instincts. "There were many times we would come home late at night to find Echo holding stock backed up in a corner in the yard," says Muriel. "We were never quite sure whether they got loose on their own or if she got them out. She seemed to just want to keep them in a corner."

One Echo breeding was to Heard's Cactus of Flint-ridge from Colorado. Audrey kept Twin Oaks Cholla and Muriel kept Twin Oaks Cactus Bud, whom she calls "the greatest dog I ever owned, barring none." Cactus could work fighting bulls but nevertheless was gentle with children and puppies. While he was in training for conformation and obedience, a litter of puppies ran into a corral to bark at some horses. The puppies were about to be trampled when 9-month-old Cactus ran in, growled and snapped at the pups and then heeled the horses away from them. In the process, he was kicked and suffered a broken leg, but the pups were safe and there was no doubt about his intentions.



Cactus was taught a “get behind” and that command made him invaluable when moving new foals and mares into stalls. When a foal would start to break away, he’d give it a gentle bump on their legs with his muzzle, never a bite. As the colts grew older and would run off to play, he would run past them, get in front and stop them, never making any contact.

Photo—Klarer’s Little Echo, circa 1968.

But when it came to bulls or rank cattle, Cactus was tough. One day a neighbor’s cow hit the ranch’s electric fence, which made her fighting mad.

She exploded into the dog area. Audrey ran out to chase her down the road but the cow charged. Audrey ducked in behind a doghouse but was clipped when the cow jumped over the doghouse. Muriel, needing help, let out Impish (a daughter of Cactus and Swaps) and called for Cactus.

“I told those dogs to take that cow out of there,” recalls Muriel. “They started heading and heeling her, and she was charging and kicking at them, but those two dogs worked like a team. When she had enough, they drove her down the road.”

Photo—A nine-year-old Sherry Baker shows Bug Brush in Concord, May 1968.

In 1969, breeding Bug to Martin’s Shadrack produced Klarer’s Little Concha, a dark blue merle with a white collar and lots of dark copper, which Sherry kept. Concha could bring in the sheep by herself, on a drive or a fetch. The crankiest old ewe respected her persuasive ways and in her later years she became quite handy at moving the most stubborn of bulls. But Sherry’s fondest memories are of her incredible loyalty and the many hours of companionship she and Concha shared.

When left behind by Sherry, Concha would pine away the days, even weeks, at the end of the driveway. Audrey would coax the little dog back to the house, scolding her for her foolish behavior, only to later find her even farther down the dirt road, patiently waiting for Sherry’s return. She also had a little grin she could deliver at just the right moment, with an accompanying purr, “Awurr...” She would thus carry on a conversation, skipping along from the barn to the house, knowing full well she was just one grin and a purr away from a treat and a place by Sherry’s feet at dinner.



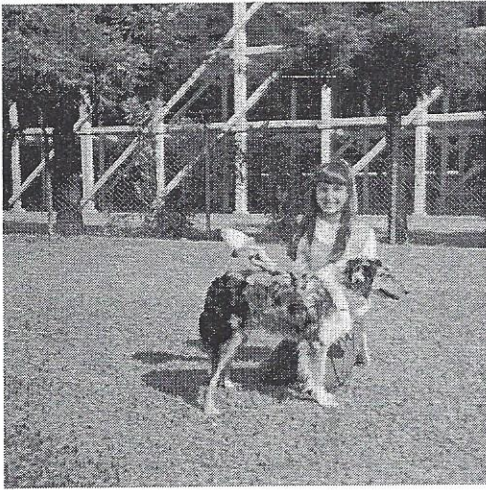


Photo-Sherry Baker and Concha taking First Place in Novice Obedience, 1970.

A nine-year-old Sherry first competed with Bug in 1968, in conformation. Concha became her first true competition dog in 1970, in obedience trials. Then later with Spinner, a daughter of Concha and Cactus Bud, she showed in conformation and, for the first time, stockdog trials just as they were getting organized. Named for her spinning in circles, challenging other dogs to catch her, Spinner inherited many traits from both her sire and dam but had a characteristic of her own still seen in her offspring. A blue merle with heavy black markings, down the center of her face was a perfect straight line separating black on one side and blue merle on the other.

Photo-Twin Oaks Windsong, handled by Kathy Hoyt Warren, 1970.

While she performed very well in the breed ring, Spinner's heart was in being a cattle dog. Also importantly, she was the sort of stockdog who was always trying to figure out how to get the job done. As it turned out, part of her job was helping to teach Sherry about stockdogs. In the late '70s, when Spinner was about three years old and Sherry was in her teens, they decided to train for herding trials, which were then judged Most Promising Young Dog and Open. Thankfully, Spinner also had another teacher--her mother Concha.

Spinner wasn't too fond of heading a bull or a fighting cow but she still worked right beside Concha. Concha could bite a bull so hard on the head that it would drop to its knees. Spinner would wait until Concha had turned him and then heel him in perfect rhythm, stride for stride, hitting hard each time a leg stretched back. During one of their working sessions, Concha hung on a little too long and too hard and broke the top of her jaw. But she finished the day's work without complaint and Sherry, after realizing what had happened, had her jaw wired back in place before nightfall.

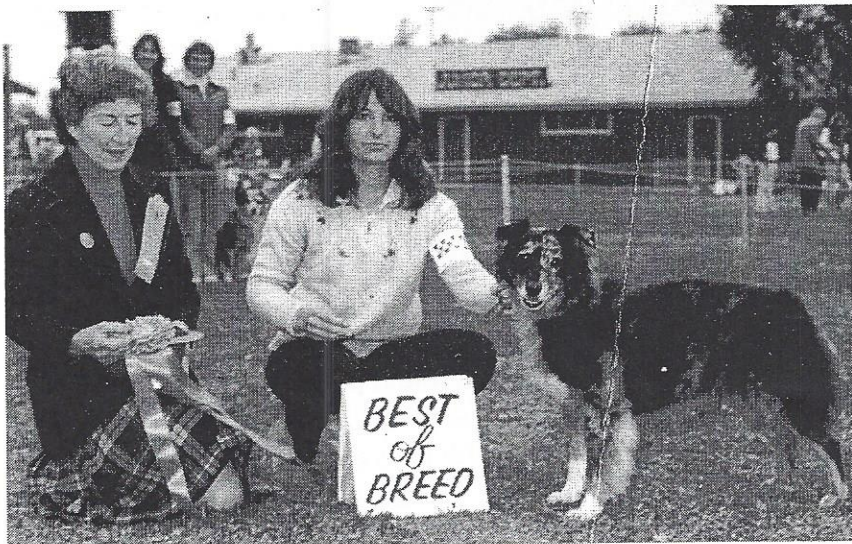


Photo-Sherry and Spinner winning Best of Breed at show in Placer Co., 1980.

Photo—Concha heading and Spinner heeling, 1980s.

Finally, Sherry entered a trial. She used a wave of her arm to send Spinner in the proper direction. Exactly what else transpired during their run is unclear. Sherry can't remember whether or not it was a traumatizing experience, but the result was good enough to bring home a ribbon. When they returned to the ranch, however, she realized she needed to teach Spinner verbal directions.

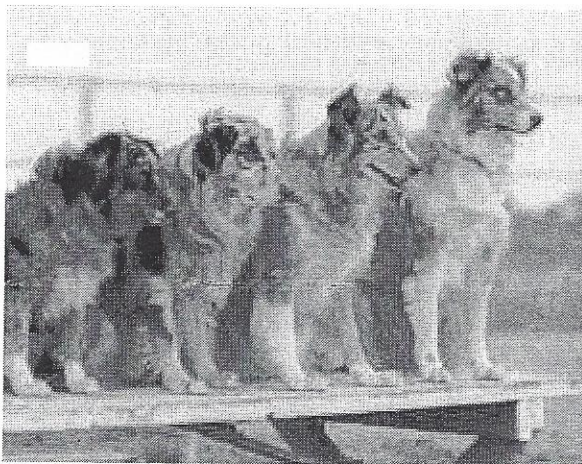
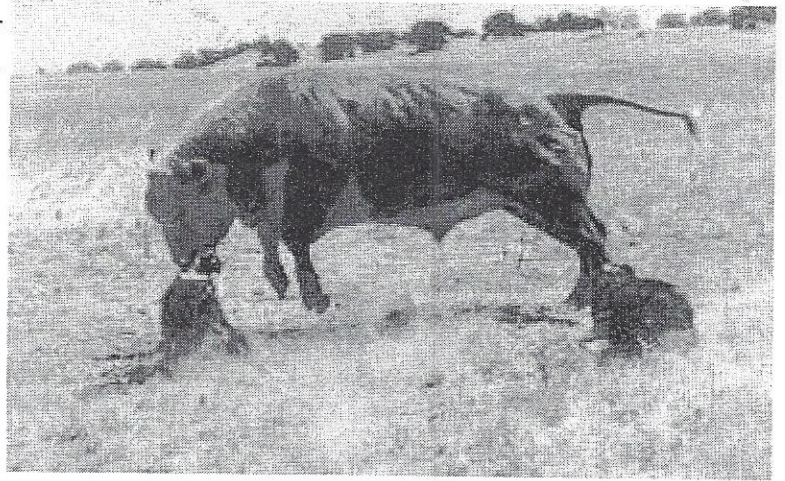


Photo-Spinner, Cactus, Swaps and Twin Oaks Poco Lena (second Poco Lena), 1980.

my right. Poor Spinner, she would bring the cattle right to me, in spite of the tongue-lashing.

“I used a bale of hay and I would pull her around it on a lead. ‘Go-around’ for one way and ‘get-around’ for the other way. As intelligent as Spin was, she probably would have figured these two commands out, even though they did sound identical! I would then send her down to the end of a field around some cattle, just out of voice range, and she would bring them back just fine. When she got them in closer, I felt obligated to tell her these new commands. I’d be telling her ‘get-around’ and ‘go-around’ and mixing them all up. My problem was I kept thinking that if I sent her from my left and she went around the cattle, that her left would then be



Photo-Burgundy, Brandy, Twister, Spinner, Bear and Swaps with Audrey, Muriel and Sherry at show in Placer Co., 1981.

instinct. That’s when the concepts of always using stock and to start in a round pen came about.” After many months of training, the then 10-year-old Spinner and her handler were ready for an ASCA trial in Oregon in around 1984. They entered Started Ducks, took first place both days and earned a title.

“I later figured out that a dog works like the face of a clock. I started to use a round cage about eight feet in diameter with no stock. I’d jerk her around the pen until she would ‘go-by’ and ‘way-to-me.’ It took a while longer before I understood that when these dogs work stock that they balance on



Photo-Muriel with Cactus Bud, Sherry Baker with Spinner, Maureen Hayes with Paiute and Audrey with Cholla, in Grass Valley, April 1984.



Some 30 years earlier, Rita had inspired a pair of twin sisters to breed Australian Shepherds. A great deal had happened since and much more would happen in the years to come, including Sherry becoming the winningest handler in Stockdog Finals history. The rest of the story, telling the tale of the breeding and training that has elevated working Aussies and trialing Aussies to new heights of achievement, deserves an article of greater length than available here. This statistical summary will have to suffice:

Of the first 96 Aussie WTCHs, eight were bred by Twin Oaks. Of the first seven Aussie WTCHs, #5 Twin Oaks Windsong (granddaughter of Cactus Bud and Bug Brush) was the dam or grand dam of three (#1 Windsong's Shenanigan, #2 Windsong's Raisin' Cain and #7 Windsong's City Rhythm). Of the first 75, she was the dam or grand dam of 13. A dozen more boasted her further back in their lines.

To date, Twin Oaks has been the breeder of two ASCA Supreme Champion Stockdogs (The Bull of Twin Oaks and Kit Carson) of the three in history, one Supreme Versatility Champion, 25 Hall of Fame sires and dams, 26 Stockdog Finals Championships, and 52 Working Trial Champions (more than the next two kennels combined). Twin Oaks was honored as ASCA's Hall of Fame Kennel #6 in 1991. When

Muriel moved to Washington in the late '80s, she started Twin Oaks II and it has since become Hall of Fame Kennel #60.

Just as the twin oaks at the ranch in Galt are firmly rooted in the fertile soil of California, so too is the Twin Oaks kennel firmly rooted in the foundation of the modern working Australian Shepherd. That heritage, which continues today, began with Audrey and Muriel Hayes. Says Audrey simply: "When you have an Aussie, you become tied to the breed. They are so devoted to you and you become just as devoted to them. They become part of your life."

Thanks to the adventurousness of these twin sisters in the early '50s, the Australian Shepherd has become part of the lives of many of us.

Copyright 2010 Salvatore John Manna and Karen S. Russell

Pat,

This is my last copy

Please copy a few more for me

Muriel  
Muriel