



Carole Presberg of The Border Collie Museum

Carole, you obviously have a huge love and respect for the working sheepdog. Can you tell us a bit about your connection with these dogs; how long you have been interested in them and whether you come from a farming background?

Ha-ha! I was born and grew up in an apartment building in Brooklyn, New York, which is a borough of New York City. So no farming background. But my oldest aunt was married to an egg farmer and we used to visit in the summers. They had four children who could do everything, including driving a truck when they were little, on the farm. So I envied them.



Willy (1978-1994)

My love for sheepdogs actually began with folk music and a love affair with Scotland. When I was 20-years-old, two friends and I went on a trip to Scotland. One of them and I had been singing Scottish folk songs at nursing homes and such, and we desperately wanted to see the country. Thereafter, thirteen years passed, before I was able to visit Scotland again.

I have a degree in art, and when we moved to Massachusetts, I decided to learn to spin and weave, a way, I thought, of using my art abilities. We moved several times during that period, and each time we were further into the "country". I became interested in raising my own sheep for the fleece, so one summer I went to the New Hampshire Sheep and Wool Festival to see what breeds were available in the area. They had a sheepdog trial and we went to watch, and I became hooked on the dogs.

That summer we went to Scotland for the second time, and having had my consciousness raised, I saw sheepdogs everywhere. When we got home, I bought my first Border Collie pup, Willy. Cart before the horse! Then I really needed sheep. So we moved again, to a place where we could have sheep, began a small flock, and I took Willy to train (us both) with the man from whom I bought him. Never one



to do things halfway, I became deeply involved with the breed, and was one of the founders of New England Border Collie Association, and eventually of New England Border Collie Rescue.



Willy (Highland's Willy Scott) was bred by Maurice MacGregor (Highland Kennels), then of Bow, New Hampshire



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Your website the Border Collie Museum is very informative and has clearly involved a lot of research. When did this website come into being and what inspired you to embark on it? How did you go about getting the impressive volume of information on it?

One of my projects with Border Collies was /The Shepherd's Dogge/ magazine, which you may remember. Both Marjorie Quarton and Barbara Carpenter wrote articles for me. It ran for 15 years. My husband worked for a software company in Massachusetts that, when it was bought by another company, shut down, and he lost his job. He got another one at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, a very rural area, and we bought a farm south of Ithaca. I loved it there because farming was my dream, but I felt rather isolated, so, besides continuing the magazine, I started the website. It was very primitive in those days. Also at that time, Marjorie Quarton asked me to "write a chapter on the American Border Collie" for her new book, which I did. For that book, the Internet was not yet established, so all my research was done by snail mail! Things Border Collie were what kept me busy when my small flock wasn't lambing, or being shorn, or needing vet care.



The website, you might say, grew piece by piece. When we moved back to Massachusetts it became as you see it today, but much smaller. I added things from the articles in /The Shepherd's Dogge/ that I and other people wrote. When I began writing the articles for Andrew, Hall that's when I began to do the major research. The website brought people out of the woodwork, who I could, in turn, contact for information. I have to say the most fun I had with that was contacting people for the articles on other sheepdog breeds, because they were all around the world. Subsequently, those articles became part of the website as well.



Do you have working dogs and, if so, are they border collies or do you sometimes use other breeds?

I had working dogs, when I had sheep. Eight of my dogs came from working lines. I farmed sheep for twenty years with the help of working dogs. But once I retired, and started doing Border Collie rescue, all my dogs were rescue dogs. Still, both Chance, who died three years ago, and Sage, who died last month, came from working lines, although by then they had nothing to work. I have two Border Collies now who were rescue dogs and do not come from working lines. Kate comes from British show lines (Corinlea), and I had another dog a few years ago, Clyde, who came from the same show lines. And Jack, whose background I know little about, but I do know he's at least half Border Collie. I've only ever had Border Collies.



Westwood Fenn, bred by Suzanne West 1997-2011

Do you keep your own sheep for training?

I did have sheep , for producing wool, but not for training dogs. I raised sheep for wool for twenty years. Early on I realized I was not trialling material. With Willy, my first Border Collie, I did some local trials. But I didn't like it. I don't like competition.

Have you plans for more publishing? I know books on the working sheepdog are always well received.

I have plans. I have a book in the works, perhaps two-thirds finished, but at the moment I am not in a position to work on it, though I do hope to do so in the near future.



Watermelon Jute, 1982-1996, bred by Dennis Moonan then of Maine



Is the border collie the principle breed used in the States? Are there well-established bloodlines there and have these come from British exports?

I really don't know if the Border Collie is the principle breed used in the States. When I was going to sheepdog trials, I would have said yes, but I would have been misled in that, because Border Collies were the only dogs I saw. However, the Australian Shepherd is used extensively out West, as is the McNab. And although the English Shepherd is not used as extensively, many farming people, particularly in the Midwest, do use that breed. All three of these are American breeds. (I do have a way of finding out the numbers, and will do so if you like.)

Is there anything else you would like to say now you are in print?

I started doing BC rescue while we were living in New York State. At the time, there was no BC rescue, there were a few individuals scattered across the USA who rescued Border Collies, but, because I was publishing the magazine, I was in contact with them. One of them, in Texas, was called to rescue about 50 dogs in a pretty horrible situation. That's when I realized the need, and I started North American Border Collie Rescue Network (NABCRN). We incorporated as a tax exempt organization (you would say "charity") but it was difficult working over the whole USA, so when I moved back to Massachusetts I got some people together and we started New England Border Collie Rescue. By then, there were a few other local organizations starting up, and then many more, so there was no need for NABCRN, and we closed down.

Currently, there are still many BC rescue organisations around the country and in Canada. In New England, we get mostly pet owner relinquishments, strays picked up by local shelters, and so forth. Most of these dogs are from puppy mills or backyard breeders, and meant for the pet trade. Occasionally, a dog from a working background comes in. And sometimes whole puppy mills are shut down by local authorities and rescue gets the lot. Almost all the dogs that we place are placed in pet homes. Again, occasionally, we get working homes and working dogs that can be placed together.

In other parts of the country, there may be more working homes, and more working dogs. My Sage came from Maine, from a working farm, and although I no longer had sheep when I got her (she was 11-weeks-old --long story) I knew her needs. The thing about Border Collie rescue is they can't be placed in just any home, as I'm sure you know, and therefore anyone who does BC rescue needs to take that into consideration when placing them. I no longer do rescue, but I think I instilled that into the organization, and it makes me proud.



*This is Bess 1993-2008 (bred by Francis Raley of Crawford, Texas).
It's actually a double photo, you have to look hard to see Bess in the first photo.*