
The following letter from Carolyn Langdon to Alicia Keegan was written when Alicia was preparing the article on tracking Shelties for the 2001 ASSA Handbook

May 17, 2002

Dear Alicia,

Although I am annoyed by people who use age as an excuse, I must remind you that I will be 90 in August; the little boy (8) in the picture has just retired from Park [?] G; I haven't thought tracking in forty-some years. Tracking was great fun! Problems or successes, I scarcely remember. Odd things, I do.

Why track—because at Hartford Obedience (then 10 years old) only big dogs were considered really worth the training. No trainer had a tracking degree.

How—Jim Sharkey's most valuable bit of advice—"You can't train your dog to track. He already knows how. Just don't get in his way." The most important thing that we weren't taught—to lay cross tracks so that the dog would not be distracted when he encountered them. (a problem, by the way.)

There were four in our one session course near Boston after a retriever failed to show up. Trainer, "Sharkey"—tough ex-marine, recently handler of WWII dogs. Class—gentle female tri-color collie, saucy Pomeranian, stubborn Scotch terrier, Tinker. Sworn to secrecy (it was then his livelihood), I nevertheless later worked with Peg Harvey and her Sheltie, Sandy, and Nelson Sterling, with his Sheltie Danny. The Scottie and Tinker qualified at their first trial. So did Sandy and Danny.

Women wore skirts when we started. Once, when Tinker was in Novice, Chief Schendell (Prussian Officer type Chief of Police in Manchester, Ct.), standing beside me on the sidelines muttered that women would never heel dogs as well as men with those skirts flapping in the dogs' faces. That week I bought my first slacks, then hard to find. Often the only woman in pants, even at shows, I never trained in a skirt again. "Cap" never commented. For the dogs slacks signalled pure joy.

I can't better the photo you have. We didn't take snaps. One day the photographer, a quiet little man devoted to his work with children (these were his first trained dogs) called me. All bubbly, he said he had been at a photographers' convention in Chicago where the speaker showed the photo from a newspaper as an excellent example of child photography. He was so excited he jumped up and announced it was his picture—a real moment of glory when he was asked about taking it.

Use anything you like—all mentioned but Nelson Sterling have long gone. You've been reading obedience history.

I envy you!

Sincerely—Carolyn Langdon

P.S. I put my typewriter away when I finished doing genealogy. Better a composition pad than stationery for readability.



Ch. Sea Isle Wee Bairn, UDT, Howard Langdon, Jr.,
Sea Isle Little Tinker, UDT

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