
This note was received in 2002, along with a copy of Carolyn's article published in the January 1958 AKC Gazette.

I had nearly finished the letter
when I remembered this article -
blocked out, no doubt, by my
disappointment with the picture.
You can see what tracking meant
to the AKC at the time,

C. S. J.

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TRACKING ADDS REAL FUN TO OBEDIENCE

BY
CAROLYN
S.
LANGDON

“**Y**ou can’t teach your dog to track. He already knows how.” This the expert told us years ago. Yet experiences while trying to convince our dogs (and their judges) that they could track have sometimes momentarily shaken our faith in his philosophy. Occasionally we have even doubted whether it was worthwhile to assure the animal of an ability which he definitely preferred to deny. (Yet we hear it said “all breeds love to track.”) For tracking is the most frustrating and the most fascinating part of obedience training. Discouragement can at times overwhelm the handler. Yet when he and his dog are eagerly working together in the field there is a sense of exhilaration never experienced in a show ring.

We have heard of dogs that are invariably dependable on the track. We have never seen one. A Scottie can be the most earnest of trackers conscientiously waddling step after tiresome step, stiff little tail alert; or he can be a solid lump of immovable black balkiness. A Poodle may skip along light as a ballet dancer; or may dawdle, annoying as a mischievous child. An experienced Dachsie may completely ignore a track of visibly flattened damp grass. And a Sheltie literally driven over every track for days may pass his first test like a veteran.

Our own dogs were equally inconsistent. Out to obtain the needed entry signature, one deserted to a more tempting animal scent. He lead me, never questioning, through tangled brush and actually under an abandoned house before I was convinced that he had for

*Tracking is a natural with many breeds,
but it's not quite as easy as that*

once defaulted. Indeed the track layer himself had so trusted the dog that, lacking a better object, he had left his glasses’ case and glasses. (We can certainly vouch for that judge as a tracker. He found his glasses.) Nevertheless, really put to the test a few weeks later, and despite sudden gusts of wind, our

dog worked in his first real trial as though he knew every inch of the ground by heart. He scampered over the track with a sureness that left me both breathless and ecstatic.

Our other pup, a natural tracker so sensational that he was proclaimed “ter-
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The Bloodhound is the peer of all trackers, but it has been proven that many other breeds can qualify in this most interesting, and sometimes amusing, forms of activity.

Tracking Adds Real Fun To Obedience

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rific" by his preliminary tester, in the crucial event first promptly followed a cross track directly to the people who had made it; then, allowed a second chance at the end of the day, meandered happily about the field with no apparent concern for his reputation or my embarrassment. Yet he was on the very next try to completely redeem himself, becoming the first champion U.D.T. of his breed.

However neither the frustration nor the fascination of tracking are confined to the trials. There was the time when finishing the track became a race with a farmer's manure spreader to see which would reach the article first. There was the unappreciative bite of a resentful small dog who did not fancy my taking a hand in his training, although his mistress did. There was the serious determination of one handler that I must be completely "odorless" since her dog would not follow my track.

Once I was forced into a headlong rush to crowd my frantically yapping little dog under the barbed wire, and to tumble under myself, as strange cows came charging at us from the pasture gate. And we often recall those interminable unsettled debates such as "Whose scent is carried on shoes owned by one person and worn by another in hopes of obtaining a stranger's track?"

There was the fun of working with other trackers and their dogs, of condolences and encouragement exchanged, of firm friends made in the small fraternity of tracking. There was the "oneness" of dog and handler impossible to explain. There was the exhilaration of the track in crisp fall weather, in the freshness of the springtime, or even across the crunch of winter's snows. For we saw every field a potential track!

Yesterday I laid track for another Sheltie. Danny can track, and well. Already his master senses the thrill of the trial. But whether Danny will track on test day perhaps even he does not know. Certainly not until those fateful moments after he leaves the second stake will Danny tell.—END.