

AnatShepJan2021

In the beginning ...

The beginning for the Anatolian Shepherd Dog Club of America is 1970, in California. The club was started by Robert 'Bob' Ballard and his wife Dorothy, after Bob returned to the US from a Naval posting to Turkey. Bob and Dorothy brought two dogs back from Turkey when they returned home. Those two dogs, Zorba (male), and Peki (female), while not the first of their kind in the US (that is for the next column), were instrumental to the successful founding of the breed (and the parent club) in the United States.

Earlier this year I was fortunate enough to be working at a straight racing event where I ran into someone I've known far longer than either one of us would like to admit. She told me that she was cleaning out some old bookshelves and had come across two ASDCA newsletters from the early 1980s, sent to her when she had written and asked for information on the breed. Did I want these two club newsletters from the early 1980s? Does a dog bark when a doorbell rings in a TV commercial? Silly, silly question indeed.

I eagerly tore into the envelope when the package from my friend arrived and found a trifold pamphlet on the Anatolian and two newsletters, complete with a coffee cup stain and an old phone number written on the margin of one. I spent the next hour or two poring over every single word on each yellowed sheet of paper. I looked for names that I recognized, pedigrees that I could follow. I wallowed in the words as if they were a bubble bath after a long day at a dog show.

Those items showed me a club that was going strong in its first decade of existence. The ASDCA was already holding their own specialty shows for the breed, which included a handling class prior to the actual show for owners who were newcomers to the dog show scene, and potluck opportunities after the show for building community. While we no longer offer a handling class pre-show, the club instructions for holding a regional or national specialty include instructions to prepare either a potluck or catered luncheon. Forty years later and people are still happier with food in one hand and a dog in the other.

There were litter listings with enough information to come up with a three generation pedigree, and evidence that the club was actively encouraging members to get their dogs' hips xrayed and post the results in the OFA database. Fast forward to the present and the club has now taken steps to have the breed included in the OFA CHIC program, in the hopes that diligent testing will allow breeders to produce healthier dogs.

There was evidence that the club was actively attempting to help people place dogs in working homes where they would be kept with livestock and the working traits that are so very important to the breed would not be lost. The club now has a working dog committee that attempts to help owners, whether they are members or not, with working questions about the breed.

In one of the newsletters I found a report of a club function that met with Dr. Raymond Coppinger where he presented information to those present about the livestock guarding dog program at the New England Farm Center associated with Hampshire College. This is hugely important because the club and its founding members donated dogs and money to the LGD program. They also paid to send Dr. Coppinger and Dr. Susan Goldhor to Turkey to observe shepherding practices in the country of origin,

and bring dogs back to the US. These dogs would take part in the LGD research program at the Farm Center, and then later they would join the gene pool of the breed in the US. The research done at the LGD project would go on to influence the use of dogs as LGD for years to come, and was instrumental in introducing the practice of using LGD to guard livestock to meat and wool producers in this country. The club's participation in this cannot be understated. Anatolians are first and foremost a working LGD breed and should always be bred as such.

One thing that is apparent from these old newsletters is the love that the club founders had for the breed and their desire to see the breed successful in this country. That has not changed in the ensuing 50 years.

Unfortunately for us, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the club landed smack dab in the middle of 2020. Our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary national specialty that was planned for Purina Farm in September of this year was cancelled, but I have been told that 51 is the new 50, so join us for our slightly delayed Golden Anniversary celebration of the ASDCA at Purina Farm in September 2021! It may be 51 years, but it will still be our 50<sup>th</sup> specialty and we will celebrate the breed with all the Anatolians and their people who show up.

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