

Anatolian Shepherd Dogs July 2018 column

Standing On The Shoulders Of Giants

The Anatolian Shepherd Dog is an old landrace of dog. In contrast, the Anatolian Shepherd Dog Club of America is a young club. It was founded in 1970 by a group of people passionate about the dogs they brought back from Turkey. They had a wonderful breed on their hands and they wanted to promote and protect it in a new land.

The club has been around for nearly 50 years now, and like all dog clubs we have had our growing pains. Like many middle aged individuals, we find ourselves in the unenviable position of bearing witness to the deaths of some of the club's founders.

April 2017 saw the passing of Skip Harned, the founding secretary of the club. Skip and his wife, Marilyn, bred Anatolians under the Sakarya kennel name. Skip and Marilyn were both extremely active in the push to get Anatolians recognized by the AKC, and were the breeders of the first AKC champions once the breed entered the Working group. Skip was diligent in working his dogs in obedience, something most Anatolian people rarely do as it can be quite a challenge.

February 2018 saw the passing of Bob Ballard, the founder of the club and the man who brought the two dogs who became the foundation of the breed studbook in the US to this country. Bob was in the Navy and stationed in Turkey when he and his wife, Dorothy, met their first Anatolians. Bob and Dorothy brought back a male, Zorba, and a female, Peki, when they returned to the US. Skip met Bob one day as Bob was unloading his two Anatolians from the back of his car. Skip struck up a conversation about the dogs that led to the Harneds involvement in the breed and the club. A fortuitous event if ever there were one.

March 2018 brought the sudden death of Louise Emanuel. Louise bred Anatolians under the Birinci affix, a name that goes back to her days spent in Turkey where she lived on Birinci Cadde, or First Street. Louise was a character, a force of nature, and larger than life. She was extremely active in showing Anatolians in conformation and was instrumental in writing the breed standard during the process of AKC recognition. Louise was someone with an eye for a dog and a wealth of knowledge about the breed.

The thing all of these people had in common was the dogs. They loved the breed. They wanted to see the dogs protected and thriving in their new country. They also wanted to see the breed preserved and given the opportunity to do what it had always done in its Turkish homeland – guard livestock – and to that end they donated dogs and money toward projects undertaken by the US government to evaluate the effectiveness of Anatolians as livestock guarding dogs here in the United States.

In their efforts to get the Anatolian accepted by the AKC these early members of the ASDCA put in years of hard work. The breed and the club were often the focus of their lives. But this is what dog people do. It's what parent clubs do. It's what the ultimate focus of parent clubs should be – the preservation of the breed and its welfare.

We are dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants and our job is to build on their foundation and see the horizons that they only imagined. Whichever we may be, dwarves or giants, I am certain that if we look down at our feet or out in our pastures, there is an Anatolian doing its job of guarding its charges.

The breed is our common ground. We need to work to be worthy of the task entrusted to us by the founders of our parent club.

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