

The 29th Annual HWA Airedale Field Nationals

Dedicated to our youngest member, Isaac White,
whose serious illness prevented him from joining us.

From start to finish, the 29th Annual Airedale Field Nationals, held on Sept. 12-14, 2014, was a time to watch some memorable Airedales, enjoy friendships, and make a little Airedale history.

For starters, in a first-time ever action, all those in attendance at the HWA Annual Meeting on Friday evening approved the proposal to dedicate this special weekend to one person, namely, 13 year old Isaac White.

Isaac's plans to participate with his Airedale Lucy and his Mom were abruptly cancelled by a serious illness. Isaac was held close in the thoughts and prayers of all his friends-in-Airedales throughout the Nationals' weekend.



Isaac White with Lucy



Filson, JHV,
and Kate Ostrowski
with the Joan Shea Gordon
Memorial Trophy.

And by the end of that weekend, we had a first-time-in-12-years event when an Airedale named Filson and his owner/handler Kate Ostrowski earned an honored placement on the Joan Shea Gordon Memorial Trophy. To do this, a dog must qualify in all three HWA Hunt Tests -- Fur, Upland and Retriever – at a Nationals at a level not previously achieved. This has been accomplished only eight times since the trophy's inception in 1989, with no winners since 2002.

But let's start at the beginning.

The HWA Nationals traditionally get warmed by with a Hospitality evening on Thursday before we meet at the test site on Friday. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of Joe and Kate Ostrowski, this year we enjoyed a sandwich buffet at the Christopher Conference Center, adjacent to our hotel headquarters. While the framework of this Nationals weekend may be tests, workshops, and titles, the conversations centered on the dogs and people we'd soon be seeing in action. So to tell you what we'll remember from these Nationals, let's tell some hunting stories.

Early Friday morning we all headed out to our test site at beautiful Holly Hills Hunting Preserve in South Salem, Ohio, just about 40 minutes outside of Chillicothe. Fur Tests were up first on the schedule.

Friday's Fur Tests

Master Fur Test dog Kira, owned and handled by Michael Sites faced a challenging 300 yard track, which included some planned distractions. Kira was swift and true on the long and

winding track, and she leaped and barked mightily upon finding the caged raccoon in the tree. However, a problem happened early in her test when Kira got distracted by the “off-game,” in this case, a caged cat that stood in for the wild opossum or mink that would be more typically found in the woods. Having to be called off the cat was the disqualifying issue for Kira.

Similarly the Senior Test entry, Nauti, handled by Mike Logsdon, found and barked vigorously at the treed raccoon, but strayed off the 200 yard track before getting there. Next, five Airedales tried out the Junior Fur Test’s easier 100 yard track. Most of the dogs followed some of the track, and some of the dogs located the caged raccoon up in the tree, but only one dog --- Filson ---- put it together with a fast track to the raccoon tree, looked up to see a real raccoon up there, then crouched down for a rapid volley of barking. Filson then looked back over his shoulder to see what was taking his handler Kate Ostrowski and the judge so long to catch up to him. Filson earned a qualifying score in his first test of the weekend.

The Barkathon

Though the Fur Tests are challenging, we wrapped up Friday morning with the Barkathon, a fun event that gives all Airedales a chance to show off what they really think of that raccoon. While spectators gather around a tree with a caged raccoon that can be raised or lowered on a pulley (depending on how enthusiastically the dog works it), dogs and handlers are called up one-team-at-a-time to see how many barks the dog can bark at the raccoon in one minute. Leaping and barking at the raccoon is great fun for the dogs, and its usually entertaining for the owners.

Bruce, owned and handled by Chris Halvorson, had earned his Master Hunter Fur title through years of building up animosity towards these critters. Bruce set the bar high early by barking 80 barks in one minute.

However, Filson followed. Pumped up by his earlier Fur Test, Filson did an amazing 90 barks per minute.

Kasbah, a small, high-drive female owned by Ed Weiss, originally wasn’t entered because Ed knows she’s a silent hunter. At the last minute, Ed decided to see what Kasbah would do in the Barkathon. Kasbah made a dash for the raccoon cage that was reminiscent of a sled-dog team launching itself into the Iditarod. Ed held on to the leash, but lost his footing, resulting in a nasty tumble blocked by his left wrist. While Ed was assisted up, Kasbah missed only a beat before launching herself into spectacular and silent air-leaps at the now highly-hanging raccoon. Subsequently, Ed’s well-iced and bandaged wrist was a topic of concerned “How’s that wrist?” conversation throughout the weekend as he soldiered on through his tests.

And then, in the first of her demonstrations of Airedale determination, Roxie, owned and handled by Chris Cullen, stepped up to the raccoon cage. Roxie has lived her entire life as a tripod (three-legged) dog due to a birth defect. Her owners know she’s a plucky dog who can’t do AKC competitions due to her handicap, but they thought Roxie might enjoy having some sport in her life. As Roxie confronted a live raccoon up close, her hackles came up. During the Barkathon,



Nauti in the Barkathon

Roxie watched, thought, then threw herself into working the raccoon better than most first-timer dogs can manage. This was the first message Roxie sent to our group: a handicap is not impediment to working drive and desire in an Airedale.

After such an exciting morning, it was a pleasure to settle down to the hearty lunch prepared for us by Marsha Hatfield. The hospitality of Holly Hills, coming through to us through owners Dean and Marsha Hatfield, is one of the essential “people” elements that make this time and place so special.



Cole, owned by Stuart Eavenson, practices a retrieve in the Brent LeMaster Workshop.

The LeMaster Workshop

By Friday afternoon, Brent LeMaster reconvened his Workshop participants to hone their handling and training skills. This year Brent had a smaller group, all of whom had some training experience. This meant that the Friday and Saturday workshop sessions could have a greater focus on individual dogs. Feedback included one participant who said he learned more in the LeMaster workshops than he has in a pricy series of lessons with his private trainer.

The Hunting Instinct Test

Friday afternoon also included the Hunting Instinct Test for pups and naïve (untrained) dogs, as well as for spectators who enjoy looking for the future stars of our program. The Hunting Instinct Test is a series of exercises in which dogs are scored on responses showing hunting aptitude. Dogs earning a score of 70 out of 100 receive a qualifying certificate, but as our test evaluator Ed Weiss pointed out, “It’s interesting, in that they all show some talent for some of these exercises, and a few show it for all of these things.”

This year six Airedales took the Hunting Instinct Test, and four qualified with a score of 70 or above. Scores aside, there were a couple of dogs we’ll talk about and remember.....

Roxie, the three-legged girl owned and handled by Chris Cullen, ripped through these exercises as if she was having the time of her life. Working through tall, tangling grass, Roxie tracked and found a planted bird, retrieved a bumper, and found and tried to flush a caged live chukar. Afterwards, test evaluator Ed Weiss declared Roxie was “the best three-legged dog I’ve ever seen,” but by that time, we’d forgotten the leg count and were all just admiring her abilities.

Five-month old Winnie, owned/handled and bred by Sherri Glass was another stand-out in the Hunting Instinct Test. Winnie had the joyous-puppy “let me at it” drive, but she used it in all the right ways, completing her tracking, retrieving and flushing exercises as if they were



Winnie, owned/handled and bred by Sherri Glass, was a stand-out puppy in the Hunting Instinct Test.

programmed in her. Winnie's littermate Bella, owned/handled by Kellie Thompson, also qualified with style, furthering the point that pups going through the Hunting Instinct Test program are a credit to a breeding program.

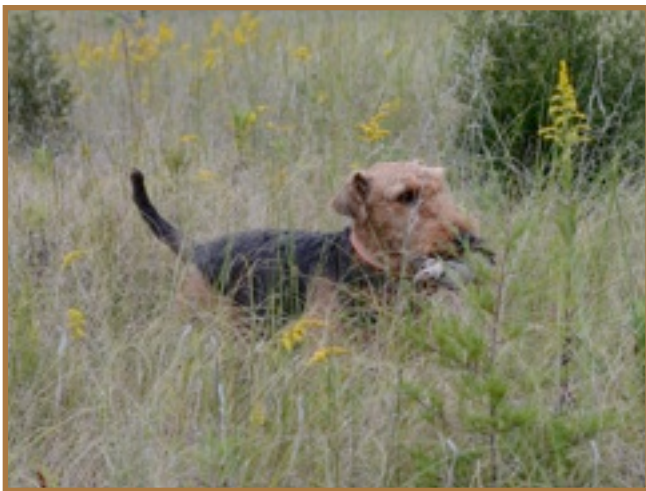
After a well-attended Annual Meeting on Friday evening, all gathered at Holly Hills on Saturday morning ready for more adventure. Weather was slightly damp and cool, but certainly decent for the scheduled land series of the Upland (Flushing) Test in the morning and the Retriever Test land series in the afternoon.

The Upland Test land series

Saturday morning's Upland Test situation was a sloping hillside with high grass in parts, which brought moments of suspense when it came to retrieving possibilities. AKC judge Brent LeMaster and Chris Halvorson (standing in for judge John Dudash) started with Junior Test dogs. Filson was the dog to watch, as he handily completed his test requirements and earned the right to advance to complete his test with water work tomorrow.

Milo, owned/handled by Lawrence Alexander, typically does well with long retrieves, but on this day Milo had the bad luck of having his winged bird land in the pond adjacent to the test field. Milo marked and followed the chukar to the pond. As good as Milo is on land retrieves, he's a reluctant swimmer. We all watched as Milo overcame his reluctance to swim in order to capture his bird. He gave us a demonstration of Airedale perseverance, and he earned the right to advance to the water series on Sunday.

Emmitt, owned and handled by Kim Burrier, is a 7-year old Airedale who was trained in field work as a young dog, but took years off to earn his AKC conformation championship and several obedience titles. Kim brought Emmitt back to the field, nervously remarking, "I haven't done this for years." Emmitt, however, flushed and retrieved his birds as if he'd been doing this on a weekly basis.



Pete, owned/handled by Joyce Contofalsky, won the Gunners' Choice Award by his notable work in his Senior Upland Test.

Pete, owned and handled by Joyce Contofalsky in the Senior Upland Test, lived up to his reputation as being an excellent retriever under tough conditions. As one of Pete's birds sailed into a long drop almost outside the field's fence line, all hidden by tall grasses, Pete disappeared into the thicket, only to emerge a few minutes later with his bird in his mouth. Pete's proud and straight-on difficult retrieves helped earn him the Gunners' Choice Award this year for being the dog the gunners would most like to hunt over again.

So few Airedales are trained to the level required in a Master Upland Test that the gallery watched with particular interest as Kasbah came into the field with owner/handler Ed Weiss for her Master Upland Test. Though hampered by his non-functioning wrist that had been damaged by that fall in the Barkathon, Ed and Kasbah made it through the difficult requirements in order to advance to Sunday's water work.

The Retriever Test land series

Saturday afternoon brought a change of pace along with sunnier, milder weather. In the morning's Upland Tests, our Airedales hunt by quartering, or moving through a field from side-to-side to find their birds. In the afternoon's Retriever Tests, Airedales and handlers are stationary on the line (starting point) until one, two, or three birds are flung or thrown into different sections of the field. Dogs must watch and remember where the birds fall and retrieve them, ideally in a direct line retrieve with minimal side-to-side hunting. As our AKC-licensed Retriever judges Leslie Phillips and Ed Zawodny noted, switching back and forth between the two styles of hunting can lead to some confusion.

And so the Retriever Tests progressed with some textbook-perfect retrieves followed by retrieves that could kindly be called problematic—at times by the same dog. Once again, Filson and Kate Ostrowski were the Junior Test team to watch to see they could continue the performance that just might win them a spot on the coveted Joan Shea Gordon Trophy. That is, if nothing went wrong, as it so easily can. As all watched in suspense, Filson brought in his two single retrieves, followed by the applause of the gallery.

As the land series of the Retriever test wrapped up, there was still a good part of the afternoon for the LeMaster workshop to continue, along with time to relax with dogs and friends. Saturday evening's Banquet and Auction back at our headquarters hotel was a perfect ending to the day. Bidding was steady on many of the auction items, the food was good, and dog stories were told. Pam McKusick, a member of the Airedale Terrier Club of Metro Washington DC was the winner of this year's Limited Raffle item, a set of soft-sculpture Airedales, but everyone left feeling well-tired and well-satisfied (aided by cheesecake for dessert).

The Pocket Quail contest

After two full days, Sunday morning always comes too fast to the Nationals, but this year we had a good gathering for our first Sunday event, the Pocket Quail contest. This fun event for pups and non-test dogs originated in our early years at Buckeye Game club where the chukars used in prior tests were hidden in a field, and handlers were instructed to pick up and stash in a pocket any birds found by their pup. In our updated version, we use only wings from chukars and handlers are given a plastic bag to stash all the wings their leashed pup can find in 15 minutes. Someone once said this was like an Easter egg hunt for the Airedale nose, and in the same lighthearted mood, owners encouraged their pups to "hunt 'em up!" This year, the ten dogs entered found 31 of the 32 hidden wings. Libby, owned and handled by John Bell, was the winner by finding six wings.



Bruce, owned/handled by Chris Halvorson, in his Senior Retriever Test.



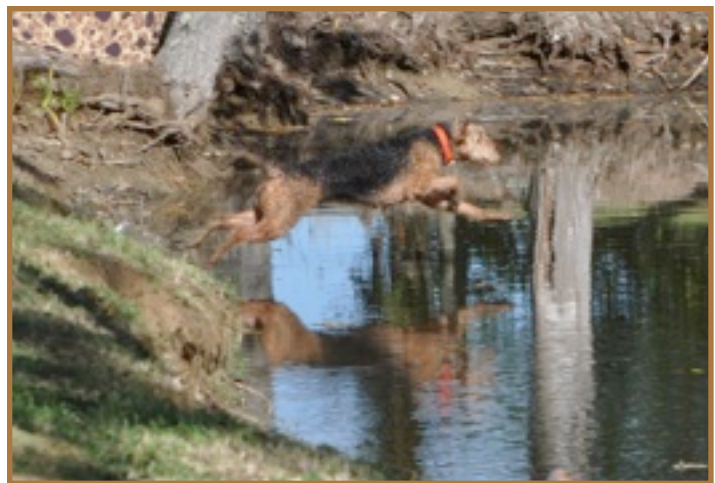
Having fun in the Pocket Quail Contest.

The Upland and Retriever Test water series

Then for the Airedales and handlers who had qualified in the land portions of the Upland Test and/or the Retriever test, the mood got a bit more serious as we headed to the pond for the water portions of both tests. Sunshine lent some sparkle to the water and warmth for the gallery, and in this bucolic setting it was time to see who would earn some titles this weekend.

In consideration of two handlers who needed to leave early due to their long drives home, the running order slightly was modified so that Ed Weiss and Lawrence Alexander could take both their Upland and Retriever water retrieves first.

As Kasbah approached the bank of the pond with owner/handler Ed Weiss for their Upland Test, Ed knew that if she could do a difficult double retrieve they could qualify for their Master Hunter Flushing (MHF). Kasbah's big-air water entry and double retrieves did, in fact, earn them that title.



Kasbah, owned/handled by Ed Weiss, in her Master Upland Test.

Milo and Lawrence Alexander next came to the pond for their Junior Upland Test, knowing that Milo had shown he could swim for a retrieve that morning when his chukar had landed in the pond. Would he do it again? Unfortunately, Milo did not complete his water retrieves in either his Upland or Retriever test. Kasbah also ran into problems with her difficult Master Retriever Test's set of three marks. And so that gallery was reminded that no matter how good the dog, anything can happen when it's all on the line.

After the opening drama, dogs moved quickly through their turns. To a proud owner, there are few things as pretty as a glistening wet Airedale emerging from the water with a bird in his mouth. This year the judges and timing allowed for the dogs who had qualified in their land tests to complete their tests with their water retrieves, to be followed by some practice water retrieves for dogs that did not qualify on land. So all had a turn in the water, but there were some notables.



Emmitt, owned/handled by Kim Burrier, earned his high-scoring Junior Upland title with enthusiastic retrieves on water and land.

Emmitt, whose owner/handler Kim Burrier claimed he didn't do this very often, gave us a special show with his dramatic-splash water entries. Those big water retrieves combined with his good work in the land part of his Upland Test earned Emmitt and Kim the Sandhill Hill Brown Bess Memorial Award for the highest scoring dog in the Upland Tests.

And of course, Filson had his Junior Upland and Retriever titles on the line, as well as a spot of the club's most prestigious trophy. Filson and owner/handler Kate Ostrowski completed their Junior Upland Test water work with no problems, so when they came to the line for the Retriever Test's water retrieves,

many were crossing their fingers that nothing would go wrong.

Filson completed the first of his two single Retriever Test retrieves without a problem. Then for the final retrieve, the winger (bird catapult) malfunctioned, and the throw was a dud. Concentration broke and tension mounted as the winger was fixed and re-set. The next bird launch went fine, but Filson was now distracted and did a little bank-trotting and sniffing before Kate got him redirected into the water to complete his final and crucial retrieve. And so the gallery exhaled before breaking out in applause.

The Awards Ceremony at Holly Hills

One last good lunch at the clubhouse was followed by the Awards ceremony. All first-time participants received a certificate, while all Airedales who qualified in a Hunt Test received a ribbon and an etched glass. In addition to trophies mentioned previously, Filson had earned the Priscilla Cree Memorial Award for the highest scoring dog in a Fur Test. This year's Road Dog Trophy for the dog/handler team that earned the most passes at AKC or HRC tests since the last Nationals went to Bruce and handler Chris Halvorson. Photo sessions that followed were

particularly shiny this year due the presence of the Joan Shea Gordon Memorial Trophy held proudly in Kate Ostrowski's hands.

No ending to this weekend would be complete without answering the questions "What about next year?" and "Can you come?" Help us make that happen by **saving these dates** for our 2015 events to be held at Holly Hills Hunting Preserve:

HWA Fun in the Field, April 11-12, 2015

HWA 30th Airedale Field Nationals, Sept. 11-13, 2015.

Hunt Test Qualifiers, 2014

Junior Fur Test

Hilltop's Filson of Little Sandy River, JHV, owned by Kate and Joe Ostrowski, West Wyoming, PA, and bred by Lawrence Alexander

Upland Tests

Master Upland Test

Kasbah von Treffenwald, JHR, MHF, owned by Edward Weiss, St. Louis, MO, and bred by Petra Schendeck

Senior Upland Test

Tartan Scottshire Wolfcreek Pistol Pete, JH (AKC), CDX, GO, BN, RG, JHR, SHF, owned by Joyce and Craig Contofalsky, Wadsworth, OH, and bred by Carol Scott and E. Forbes Gordon

Aircraft Kira Stella Sites, SH (AKC), SHV, owned by Michael and Elise Sites, Eureka, MO, and bred by Dale and Kim Burrier and Corally Burmaster

Junior Upland Test

Hilltop's Filson of Little Sandy River, JHV, owned by Kate and Joe Ostrowski, West Wyoming, PA, and bred by Lawrence Alexander

Ch. Aircraft Catapult Launch, JHF, CD, BN, GN, RAE, owned and bred by Kim and Dale Burrier, Newton Falls, OH

Retriever Test

Senior Retriever Test

Coldstream Born in the USA, SH (AKC), SHV, MHFur, RA, BN, owned and handled by Chris Halvorson, Lockport, NY, and bred by Corally Burmaster and Margo Dupre

Junior Retriever Test

Hilltop's Filson of Little Sandy River, JHV, owned by Kate and Joe Ostrowski, West Wyoming, PA, and bred by Lawrence Alexander

Hunting Instinct Test Qualifiers, 2014

Stillwaters Bella Anna, owned and handled by Kellie Thompson, Lucasville, OH, and bred by Sherri Glass

Trevorwood Crystal Ball's Brewster, owned and handled by Cindy Johnstonbaugh, Spring Grove, PA, and bred by Carol Coalson

Scoshire Aires Selkie, owned and handled by Chris Cullen, Chambersburg, PA, and bred by Dwayne Early and David Borders

Stillwater's Days of My Life Winnie, owned, handled and bred by Sherri Glass, Clyde, OH