
Meet the Breeder! Karen Edwards

Please participate in the Meet The Breeder – “Getting to Know You” by completing the “interview” @ [Breeder Interview Form](#) introduce yourself and share your story. Your interview may be selected to publish in an upcoming newsletter or in a Meet the Breeder section of the Breeder of Merit pages.

- **Introduce yourself, who are you, where do you call home, how long have you been "in dogs", and what is your breed(s)?**

My name is Karen Edwards and along with my husband Jim Pearce we compete with Golden Retrievers, breed as Fern Hill Golden Retrievers, and live on a farm near Oak Ridge, Tennessee. I have had dogs continuously since I was 3 years old -- mutts, dachshunds (3), Aussie Shepherds (2), and Goldens since December 1993 (9 so far and 5 currently).

- **If you weren't brought up in a dog sport home, what initially got you involved with AKC sports/breeding?**

After we started competing in 2002 in obedience, rally, agility and then hunt testing, we started breeding because there were so few working line Goldens in our area and a big demand for them.

- **What would you like everyone to know about you?**

While we primarily breed for health, disposition, retriever talent and trainability, and longevity, we also try to breed Goldens that still look like the standard. We have had 14 litters since 2005 and take our breeding program and the resulting puppies very seriously. We have made so many wonderful friends in the dog world!

- **What are some of your most memorable moments (good or bad) in dog breeding or sports?**

******Seeing some of our puppies compete successfully to MAH and MN and HDHF titles with their new owners.

****Remembering our first Junior Hunter dog Penny, who earned her title mostly on raw talent and her obedience training, with very little field preparation. She passed her first three tests with flying colors; on the fourth one (title run) she had a live flyer who was only winged and very much alive. He objected to being picked up, and she ran around hunting for one that was DEAD -- never laughed so hard in my life even though she didn't pass. Priceless expressions on her face! She titled on the next test, and we learned to take our training responsibilities a little more seriously.**

****The sadness and despair when one of our puppies, who had been healthy and spunky, suddenly fell ill and was diagnosed with a heart birth defect and had to be euthanized at 5 weeks. VERY HARD.**

- **How do you ensure that your puppies get registered?**

We include the registration application in a notebook with other info so it is less likely to get lost by the new owner. Our contract specifies that if a puppy hasn't been registered before 11 months and 25 days, I will register it in my name and send them a copy of the papers. They can change the ownership if they want to. I have only had to do this once I keep track on the AKC dog lookup on the registration status of every puppy, and send reminders periodically to those that still aren't registered. My contract also requires that owners keep in touch throughout the life of the dog, and I make sure this is understood and agreed upon before deciding which people get puppies. Have only 'lost' one puppy, and that was one I sold to a Seeing Eye program.

- **Do you have a legacy plan for your breeding program when you retire? Are you mentoring new breeders to continue your bloodlines or breeding principles?**

I sell puppies on limited registration, with contractual guarantees that if they get required GRCA hips, elbows, heart and eye clearances I will lift the limitation. A number of our puppies have bred on, both male and female. I assist with stud selection, screening prospective bitches, and have lengthy discussions on the importance of reasonably low COIs, breeding principles, breeding mechanics, pregnancy care, whelping, and puppy raising. I also do the same for people who ask about breeding, whether or not they are breeding puppies that we have raised. We will probably retire from breeding in the next several years; I am 75 and not sure how much longer we can keep going and do the job we want to do with the puppies. I do

not have any plans to pass on our kennel name or our breeding program. The dogs are our pets first, competition and breeding dogs second.

- **What is your advice to engage new people into participation in AKC events? While we often say that juniors are our future, we can't lay it all on the shoulders of junior participants.**

For people who come to us for hunting retrievers, I point out to them that hunting is only a couple of months a year -- and hunt testing is a year round sport. Also, there are many social and other benefits to participating in dog sports -- both for the dog and the owner. We are very active in our local retriever club -- my husband is on the Board of Directors and I have been Secretary since 2011 and Secretary / Treasurer since 2015. Many great friendships, training advice, cheering sections, good exercise for both us and the dogs, and also possible buyers of our puppies. Unfortunately, field training at the higher levels is much more demanding of time and resources (and access to appropriate training grounds) than obedience, rally, agility and other dog sports we have participated in -- we find that young single people or couples get interested, but when the kids come and careers get more demanding, it's too much to keep up with. On the other side, every year we get a few more empty nesters and retirees coming back into the sport!

- **Who would you consider your greatest influence?**

Joan and Ken Kogut, who partnered for a number of years with Carol Lantiegne of Adirondac Kennels in Carol's breeding program. We got our foundation bitch from Joan and Ken and they have been wonderful in providing support and advice in the 20 years since we first bought from them. Also, Jackie Mertens of Topbrass Kennels, Renee Schulte of Wynwood Kennels. and various books on breeding, and the advice of several of our veterinarians.

- **What is the best advice you've received from a mentor, or even a competitor? And do you have any advice for someone starting out?**

Don't follow breeding fads. Health and disposition are jointly #1 priority in breeding. Know the dogs you are breeding and research the dogs in their background. Don't do any particular breeding unless you would love to keep one of the puppies yourself. Be completely honest and upfront, stay in touch after the sale is complete

throughout the life of the dog, and always be completely ethical in everything you do with dogs. And don't breed unless you are passionate about doing it right!

- **Feel free to add anything else you'd like to share**

So grateful that I have been able to spend my life with dogs. Can't imagine life without them!