

2020

Gary Ahlgren



Gary Ahlgren has long been the “go-to guy” on the West Coast. He has judged, shot, marshaled, threw birds, did grounds work, hosted judges, loaned the club his cars, trucks and quad runners, has cooked dinners and provided transportation. Gary literally can and has done it all.

“Service to the Sport” is what Gary does. He started out in North Dakota serving as President for the North Dakota Retriever Club. He was a founding member of the “Minnesota Mafia.” He was President, Vice President and served on the boards almost continually for the past 30 years for several Retriever Clubs in California. If something needs to be done, Gary is always willing to step up and help. Gary has judged at least 100 weekend trials starting in 1968.

The National Clubs have benefitted from his generosity as well. He has judged three Nationals: the 1990 National Open Championship in St. Louis, Missouri, the 2014 National Open in Vicksburg, Mississippi and the 2001 National Amateur Championship in Virginia, Minnesota. He has gone through the chairs of the National Retriever Club twice, and once for the National Amateur Club. He has served as the chairman, head marshal and chair of the many committees for the West Coast Nationals.

Gary is from Minnesota. He graduated from North Dakota State University with a Bachelor of Arts and a Masters Degree in Social Science. He played football for North Dakota State as a tailback and was All-Conference as well as High Scorer. He went on to be a school teacher, and coached wrestling and football. He taught and coached for 19 years at Dilworth High School. He retired from coaching and teaching to become a professional dog trainer. He was a professional dog trainer for three years. He moved to California, gave up his professional status and married Mary Williams. He also owned and operated his own very successful business.

Gary is a fierce competitor and has a true love of our dog sport and his dogs. The Ahlgrens have titled over 15 dogs. Gary won a Double Header in 2006 and took a nice cool swim in the Truckee River. The Ahlgrens have qualified for and run numerous Nationals. Gary is a dedicated amateur trainer. He has always been the first one out in the field and the last one to come in. He is willing to offer his assistance any time it is needed. His passion and dedication to the retriever sport is overwhelming.

A big personality, a quick and easy laugh, and words of wisdom surround Gary. He is outspoken and can capture any party or get-together with his stories. We are fortunate to have him and his induction to the Retriever Hall of Fame is well-deserved!