

Retrievers of the Past...

By Joule Charney

FC-AFC Candlewood's Rita Reynolds

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... she was a real
high drive dog ...
she lived to work.
”

There are very few field trial bitches with successful careers who have produced high numbers of titled progeny. We are featuring one of these dogs in this installment of *Retrievers of the Past*. This is a new category. Until now, we posthumously have included only National Open or Amateur winners, dogs on Top 30 Highest Scoring Dogs of All Times by Points list, and dogs in the Field Trial Hall of Fame. FC-AFC Candlewood's Rita Reynolds produced eleven titled offspring, which is a major accomplishment in its own right. Only one other field trial bitch has exceeded this record, according to our historical analysis.

The Right Stuff in Rita ...

Back in 1996, Sue Reynolds was watching the National Open in Texas with Mary Howley, the renowned Candlewood breeder whose first litter was whelped in 1960. Two dogs in particular caught Sue's attention: FC-AFC Fishtrap Debbie Does Ducks ('Debbie') and FC-AFC Code Blue. "Debbie was competing and running a million miles an hour," reminisces Sue. "And, she was pregnant. She'd been bred to Code Blue."

"I used to live in Oregon and I saw both those dogs as Derby dogs," I told Mary. "I loved them as Derby dogs! And, they've been bred!" Code Blue took my breath away," Sue adds. "Debbie was a stylish Derby dog." Although she was five weeks pregnant by the end of the 1996 National, she went eight series. Code Blue made it through four.

Mary was interested in the breeding because she co-owned Debbie's sire, FC-AFC Wilderness Harley to Go and had bred him to Debbie's dam, FC-AFC Fishtrap Aggie, recalls Sue. "I owned Harley and Aggie was a great bitch," says Mary. "I had her here. Four field champions came out of that breeding."



FC-AFC CANDLEWOOD'S RITA REYNOLDS

OPEN	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	TOTAL:
Starts	14	12	21	14	8	69
First	0	1	5	2	0	8
Second	0	3	1	0	1	5
Third	1	0	2	0	0	3
Fourth	0	0	0	0	0	0
Places	1	4	8	2	1	16
Jams	3	0	2	2	1	8
# Finished	4	4	10	4	2	24
% Finished	29%	33%	48%	29%	25%	35%
Open Points	1.0	14.0	30.0	10.0	3.0	58.0
Cumulative Pts	1.0	15.0	45.0	55.0	58.0	58.0
AMATEUR	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	TOTAL:
Starts	7	12	15	10	0	44
First	0	1	0	3	0	4
Second	0	1	0	0	0	1
Third	0	0	1	2	0	3
Fourth	1	0	3	0	0	4
Places	1	2	4	5	0	12
Jams	1	0	2	1	0	4
# Finished	2	2	6	6	0	16
% Finished	29%	17%	40%	60%	N/A	36%
Amateur Points	0.5	8.0	2.5	17.0	0.0	28.0
Cumulative Pts	0.5	8.5	11.0	28.0	28.0	28.0
ALL-AGE	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	TOTAL:
% Finished	29%	25%	44%	42%	25%	35%
All Age By Year	1.5	22.0	32.5	27.0	3.0	86.0
Cumulative Total	1.5	23.5	56.0	83.0	86.0	86.0

OWNERS: M. Howley & S. Reynolds
 BIRTHDATE: 12/16/96
 49 DERBY POINTS

Avg. Open Points per year: 12
 Avg. Amateur Points per year: 07
 Avg. All-Age Points per year: 17

From "Retriever Field Trial Statistics 1941-1995," by Sue Reynolds.

Mary and Sue became acquainted through field trials. "Mary wanted to use my field champion as a stud dog. I had a nice field champion, Hawkey's Major Day, who threw yellow and he was gorgeous. That's how Mary and I got together. I put Mary's name on as co-owner."

There was no pre-planning between Mary and Sue about co-owning a puppy. "Bly said Debbie was pregnant. Sue and I decided it was a good idea," Mary recalls. It was the same situation with Lottie (3x NFC-AFC Candlewoods Tanks A Lot.) "I've had real good luck with co-ownerships with good dogs. I knew Sue from Nationals, her statistics books and keeping records at Nationals" recalls Mary. "Sue had a field champion that she was going to retire. I asked Sue if she could bring him to my home to have him as a stud dog. He lived out his life here."

"We took some of the stud money and bought a puppy," Sue remembers. "Ray raised the litter, picked the puppy for us, and put her in a crate with a stuffed toy. Mary has kept it for 18 years because it was so cool, so cute, that Ray did that. I think it was very sweet that he did, and very cool that Mary has kept that stuffed toy for so many years."

"I think there were five bitches in the litter," adds Mary. The chosen pup was flown from Washington to Wisconsin when she was seven weeks old. The stuffed toy remains a treasured memento. "It looks like

a little court jester. It's blue and white, with little dangles on its head."

"Mary wanted to include 'Reynolds' in the puppy's name. But, I didn't want to," recalls Sue. "Mary kept calling me for a month trying to find something that sounded good with 'Reynolds,' like 'Reynolds Wrap.' Mary kept coming up with suggestions and they didn't sound good. Then, she called me and said, 'I got it: Candlewood's Rita Reynolds!' I said, 'You're right. That does sound good!'"

'Candlewood's,' of course, is from Mary's kennel name. She came up with it after visiting a friend who had incorporated 'Candlewood' into his dog's name. She liked it so much she decided to use it, and the name stuck. The friend got the idea from his driveway that was lined with candlewood plants.

FC-AFC Code Blue and FC-AFC Fishtrap Debbie Does Ducks produced the right stuff with more than just Rita, who was born in December 1996. Most notably, a repeat breeding produced FC-AFC Creek Robber ('Auggie') in September 1998. Auggie's 421.5 combined points came close to surpassing the long-standing #2 position of 444 points garnered by FC-AFC Trumarc's Zip Code ('Cody'), who was born two decades earlier, in 1978. Auggie's extensive list of other accomplishments includes 5x Purina High Point Award and 5x Double Header winner. Cody is one of Rita's great-grandparents on her sire's side.

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Auggie did surpass the long-standing third position on the overall points list, previously held by All Time High Point Bitch NAFC-FC Kannonball Kate, who had 410 points.

The #1 position continues to be held by NAFC-FC-CNFC River Oaks Corky, born in 1966, who amassed 505.5 points. Auggie is the only dog in recent history who many thought might topple the 'tierany' over the all-time combined points rankings established so long ago by Corky and Cody. Auggie's 421.5 point total is the same number of points Corky had earned by the end of 1974. Corky earned 42.5 more points in 1975, ending the year with 464 points, which already was more than what Cody later would earn. Corky's career ended in 1977, the year before Cody was born.

Running Rita ...

Rita lived with Mary her entire life. "Mary ran Rita in nearly all the Derbies. I ran one and we got a 2nd. I was essentially an absentee owner. I worked sixty hours a week, sometimes more, for IBM," explains Sue, who now is retired. During Rita's career, Sue traveled the globe, managing some of the largest data centers in the world, including GE's and Rubbermaid's.

Decisions regarding Rita's trainers were made jointly by Sue and Mary, who each paid half of her bills. "Jim Van Engen at Right Start Kennel did Rita's Basics. After her Derby career, she went to Andy Attar at Autumn Run Kennels. Paul Sletten was Andy's assistant at the time. He ran Rita for her first Open placement and it was Paul's first time running an Open," Sue recalls. "Shortly before her fourth birthday, in the summer of 2000, Rita went to Mike Lardy at Handjem Retrievers and remained with him throughout the remainder of her career. Mike and Dave Smith alternated taking the truck. Both ran Rita. Dave later opened Shooting Star Kennels." Paul is the owner of Pine Edge Retrievers.

"Rita was a talented dog; but, Jim Van Engen gave her a great start," says Sue. "Most of the All-Age credit goes to Handjem. Mary got all of Rita's Amateur points and made her an Amateur Field Champion. She also ran her in some Opens."

"I did a lot of work with Rita," recalls Mary. "Tons of marks. And, that's what important with a good little dog. You can never give a dog too many marks. She went to Jim's when she was about five months old. Then to An-

dy's when he came back from his winter trip. Then Mike had an opening."

Regarding Rita ...

"Rita was high. She was pretty solid on line. She was just a real sensible dog. She was a great Derby dog. And, I ran her in the Q." Of the 27 Derbies she ran, Mary ran her in all but four, adds Sue. "Rita was handled by Mary in four Quals before the age of three, and she finished with a ribbon in all of them."

"Rita was very vocal," admits Mary; but, she describes it as an attribute, not a negative issue. "She did to me what I would call a lot of 'talking.' I'd say, 'Let's go for a walk.'" Then Mary mimics Rita's response in her version of dog talk. "There were comments when she was bred to Lean Mac. Concern was expressed. But, she was not vocal on the line at all. She'd get excited. She was a real high drive dog. She lived to work." But, adds Mary, "She was a good house dog. She was in the house, when she was not with a trainer."

Jim Van Engen remembers that Rita came to him earlier than most young dogs. She was only four-and-a-half or five months old, versus the typical six. "That was a long time ago, but I remember her as very intelligent. You could see it right from the beginning. Rita was a terrific little athlete who went through the yard(work) easily. She was a special little dog. When you see those little super stars, they just stand out right away. She stood out from everybody else really early. She was a neat dog, a *very* neat dog."

"Rita marked really well; but, she had problems hunting because she ran so straight and found the bird so quick. It was difficult for her because she was used to going straight to the bird. She had some really crazy hunts." Mimicking what Rita seemed to be thinking when she didn't pin a bird, "It isn't here. Now what? That can't be! I'll just run around some." When she grew up, that went away." Jim's fix: "Throwing birds and pulling back in and making her stay out there and hunt, then tossing them back there."

"I typically have about 25 young dogs here all the time. Some just happen to jump out of you. It's hard to say good-bye to those. It's hard when things really start to get good, and you have to start over with someone else." Jim says he has been in the game 37 years and that his defense against the inevitable partings when dogs move on for advanced training is to not get too attached. He admits that doesn't always work as well as he intends.

"What you do when they're little is huge. Like doing the right things. Then when you

have that one that's a super star, it multiplies. When that great one comes along – *wow!* I know we don't get recognized much for it." The glory may not go to trainers there in the beginning; but, Jim's stated "you've gotta walk before you can run" attitude puts his work into an undeniable long-term perspective. He adds that he gets a lot of satisfaction later hearing and reading about how the dogs he has started are succeeding.

Rita's exceptional intelligence is what sticks out most in her next trainer's mind as well. "I had Rita nearly two years," recalls Andy Attar. "Rita was a rare kind of dog because she was so intelligent for how much energy she had. If you would catch her at the wrong time, to the casual observer, you would say she was what people criticize field trial dogs to be – over-exuberant and hyper. But, actually, it didn't take her long to use all that energy productively."

"She was intelligent and aware beyond her years. But, it took a little while for her to catch up to herself. She could do things without knowing how she did them pretty young. One example would be a real difficult set of water marks. She ran Opens really early. At her first Open, one of Mary Howley's buddies was judging, she gets to the last bird, the long retired gun. The judge said, 'How old did you say she was again? She has a really great chance of winning.' This is when competitors think, 'Please don't tell us that.' Rita got within eyesight of the bird and she popped. I have no idea why she did that. But, she wasn't really capable of going that far in an Open, given the amount of training that she had."

"A lot of times you didn't see her coming. There never was a dull moment. She was a crazy lunatic; but, she was a stable dog. Very few dogs in my career have had that drive, that intensity, and were that smart. If you would watch her get out of the truck, or go to the holding blind, you'd think she was going to break or have bad line manners. I was certainly a part of it. A lot of other trainers would have put more energy into it and she would have ended up with bad line manners. Dogs like that, in general, trainers spend a lot of time with, trying to make their line manners good, and don't do so. Truly, dogs with that much energy have line manners problems. She was just too smart of a dog to have bad line manners. There was something about her."

"Rita wasn't a goody two-shoes though," Andy continues. "She was a big cheater when she was young because she wanted to be there faster than anybody. But, she was way too

good of a dog to have that be a problem. She was too classy. She was an absolute pistol and she was also very sensitive. If got on her because she cheated, she would pop. You had to drill her, and appeal to her intelligence, and wear her down a little. It was a lot of work; but, she was a fun student because you could tell she got better with work. Repetition drills – she was up for that challenge. She had a lot of T-R-Y in her. She was frustrating at times because she went so fast.”

“Debbie’s litter had a reputation for having a lot of energy. I could say the same kind of things about her mother. When Rita was around, there weren’t a lot of bitches running, let alone pregnant. They were ‘Can’t Blow the Whistle Fast Enough’ type dogs. Very much the product of what Ray Bly liked the most about dogs.”

“Mary was actually run by Rita. It’s hard to coach clients like that. It always presents a challenge to a trainer to watch a dog like Rita be run by her ‘mother.’ Or to watch Rita running her ‘mother.’ She was fast. *Holy mackerel!* But, she was worth the work. You can’t say that about every dog like her.”

“There are many dogs who are stylish,” reflects Sue. But, Rita *flew!* Further, says Sue, she was a happy dog. Always. She was happy at home, training, running trials. She didn’t care about food. She just cared about competing. One weekend, the last time she ate was a Thursday night and she wouldn’t eat again until after the field trial. She finished both the Amateur and the Open that weekend!”

Mike Lardy’s memories of Rita focus on times they were not training nor competing. “I pheasant hunted with Rita. We used to jump on the dog truck and go on big pheasant hunting trips after the National. Rita was part of that.”



Mike Lardy and Mary Howley with Rita. Used with permission from Today’s Breeder, Nestle Purina PetCare..

Record-setting Rita ...

“Rita was a fireball from the start, and remained that way her entire life. She earned 49 Derby points, and throughout her Derby and Qualifying career, she finished all but one trial. Rita was dropped only once in 31 starts,” points out amateur field trailer Ann Heise, while nominating her for the Field Trial Hall of Fame in 2012.

Rita was ranked 5th on the Derby List. She earned her FC in 2000 with Mike Lardy and her AFC in 2002 with Mary.

“She ran a limited All-Age trial schedule, and was High Point Open Dog at four years old – the only year she ran more than 14 Opens,” Ann continues. Rita had 30 points. “She won over 15% of the trials in her life –

and did it with style. Rita would launch herself into the air on water marks, going out and coming back in. She accumulated 58 Open and 28 Amateur points, and competed in three consecutive National Opens, qualifying every year she competed. She also qualified for one National Amateur.”

“Although she was a great field trial competitor, Rita basically had one great year – the year she was High Point Open dog with only 21 starts,” states Sue. “Rita ran only 14 or fewer trials a year, except in 2001, the year she was High Point Open Dog. I researched all the High Point Open dogs as far back as I could find ‘number of starts.’ There were other High Point Open dogs who also had 21 starts. But, I found only one High Point Open

Dog with few starts than Rita’s. FC-AFC Nick of Time Lone Ranger had 18 starts, in 2005.

“Rita was at Handjem the year that she became High Point Open Dog. Dave Smith, who worked at Handjem at the time, handled Rita to the five Open Wins that she earned in 2001. Mike Lardy also ran Rita that year, and he got placements with her as well; but, Dave got all the Wins that year. Mike won with Rita in other years. Mike and Dave alternated weekends going to field trials.”

Only ten of the past 68 High Point Open dogs were females, according to records researched by Sue. She went back as far as she could find, which was to 1946. Thus, in the last 68 years, only 15% of the High Point Open dogs were female.

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Only seven dogs besides Rita were High Point Open Dog at age 4, according to Sue's research.

"Rita produced eleven titled dogs from five different sires – meaning, it wasn't just the sire who was passing on the genes. *She* passed on great field trial ability," Sue emphasizes. And, she did so while proving her own worth as a female field trial competitor." Rita had her first litter before she retired, after she became High Point Open Dog. Rita was forced into retirement at age 6 due to two cruciate injuries.

"Rita was a PRODUCER. She did not have a litter until after she was five. I just want to point out how great Rita's accomplishment of 11 titled dogs is. One of today's top sires is NAFC-FC Cody Cut a Lean Grade. 'Grady' has been bred well over 100 times. Actually, I counted over 130 breedings a few months ago, and many breedings to good titled bitches. And, he has only 10 or 11 titled offspring out of probably 600. Compare that to Rita, who has 11 titled offspring from a total of 38 puppies! In no way am I trying to criticize Grady, either as a performer or as a stud – I have two Grady pups, my field trial dog Blue, and one of my house pets, Jackson."

Only one titled bitch has produced more titled offspring, per Sue's review of available data. Lottie (NAFC-FC Candlewood's Super Tanker x Candlewoods Tiz Too) holds the record with 22. [*Lottie was featured in our October 2009 Retrievers of the Past.*] FC-AFC Tequila Sunrise IX (NAFC-FC-AFC Ebonstar Lean Mac and HRCH Dust Devil's Desert Duk, MH) is in third place, with 10.

Rita had five offspring, from three sires, in

the 2010 National Open. Tequila also had five. Lottie is the only titled bitch who had more offspring in a National, a whopping eleven.

Co-owner Sue Reynolds ...

"I only watched Rita run in a couple of field trials a year, and the Nationals," says Sue. "It was wonderful being Rita's co-owner her whole life. It was different than running her; but, it was a thrill for me. Mary or Mike would call and say that Rita had run and how she did."

With the passage of time though, "I wish I had been more active," Mary laments. "We all make choices in life and I worked. I'd call myself an 'occasional' field trailer. I trained a few days at Lardy's. That's it. Mary was up there all the time training."

Sue is widely known throughout the retriever community as an exceptional records-keeper. She compiled an enormous amount of data into her book, *1941-1995 Retriever Field Trial Statistics*. "Ten years ago, I started compiling this data with no intention of writing a book," Sue states on the Acknowledgements page. I just wanted to know the answer to one question: 'What dog qualified for more Nationals than any other dog in history?' This ultimately led to research on many other aspects of field trial performances."

"The statistics in the book is information not readily available from other sources. This book does not duplicate information contained in the RFTN Performance books, rather it complements it by providing a different presentation of performance statistics and compares the dogs of today with the dogs of the 40's and 50's." Sue is working on a sequel. "I am updating my book, in my spare time."

Sue says she has known Mary more than twenty years and admires her greatly. Since becoming partners with Mary, she has lived in many different states, due to her work for IBM. She currently lives in North Carolina.

Co-owner Mary Howley ...

Still whelping about six or seven litters a year, Mary Howley always has geared her business toward selling pups as hunting dogs, family pets, and companions as well as for field performance.

"I've always felt it's very important that titled bitches get bred," Mary says. "The 'secret,' regarding Rita's success and that of her progeny, 'is that the puppies have to go to someone who's willing to put the time and the money into them. Rita's puppies went to field trial people and were popular litters. She was bred to good dogs and she was a good dog with a good pedigree. Then, it's a question if that person has the right puppy. Trainers can ruin puppies. They must go to a good young dog trainer and then a good All-Age trainer. It takes all the right people. Another trick is finding a good trainer who has room."

Mike Lardy and Andy Attar shared their thoughts on Mary's legendary success as a breeder in 'Something About Mary,' an article originally published by Purina Pro Plan. The highly circulated article currently is posted on the on the Candlewood website and in multiple other places.

"Andy Attar credits Mary for helping bring two important components to the retriever field trial game. 'She put a lot of stock into the quality of the bitches being bred. Years ago, the sire was always mentioned; whereas, Mary also focused attention on well-bred, hard-going, talented bitches. There's no ques-



The Right Stuff Out of Rita ...

Litter # & DOB	Name of Sire	Titled Offspring
#1 – 04/28/2002	NAFC-FC Ebonstar Lean Mac	AFC Candlewood's Brother Aaron, UD, OTCH FC-AFC Candlewood's High Roller Real Deal FC-AFC Longleaf Candlewoody
#2 – 11/14/2003	FC-AFC Candlewood's Autumn Run Vince	FC Candlewood's Man In Black FC-AFC Candlewood Justin Time Xinga FC Candlewood's Miss Emilee FC-AFC Candlewood Goldendaze Maggie
#3 – 09/03/2004	NFC-AFC Five Star General Patton	FC-AFC Candlewood's Goldendaze Louie FC-AFC Candlewood's Right On Ruby Reynolds
#4 – 04/25/2005	FC-AFC Watermark's the Boss	FC Watermark's Mister Candlewood
#5 – 02/04/2006	FC-AFC Fargo II	AFC Candlewood's Commander And Chief
Totals: 5 litters	5 Different Sires	11 Titled Offspring

tion the sire is important; but, momma's got a lot to do with what happens with the litter."

"I've always thought that Mary has an effective and relatively simple philosophy when it comes to breeding,' Mike says. 'Get two nice dogs. Know the pedigree. Know the dogs. She breeds dogs that look good, move well and have enough pedigree that they have a good chance of throwing a good dog.'"

Rita's offspring are among an abundance of more than 'good' dogs bred at Candlewood, which is located in Portage, Wisconsin. The five featured on Candlewood's homepage (*in*

chronological order) are: 1990 NAFC, 1992 NFC Candlewood's Super Tanker; 1990, 1991, 1993 NFC AFC Candlewoods Tanks A Lot; 1996, 1999 NAFC FC Candlewood's Bit O Bunny; 2001, 2002 NAFC FC Candlewood's Ramblin Man and 2007 NFC AFC Candlewood's Something Royal. Four of these, plus other Candlewood dogs, have been inducted into the Field Trial Hall of Fame.

Additional Hall of Fame dogs mentioned in this article (*in alphabetical order*) are: FC-AFC Code Blue, FC-AFC Creek Robber, NAFC-FC-AFC Ebonstar Lean Mac, NAFC-

FC Kannonball Kate, NAFC-FC-CNFC River Oaks Corky, NAFC-FC Trumarc's Zip Code and FC-AFC Wilderness Harley to Go. Hall of Fame people mentioned herein are Rita's breeder, Ray Bly, and one of her trainers, Mike Lardy ■

Tenacular Dogs – Joule Charney

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L to R: Sue holding two pups from Rita's Litter #1 (NAFC-FC Ebonstar Lean Mac), Mary working with at at age four months, Mike Lardy and Rita, Sue with Rita's Litter #5 (FC-AFC Fargo II) and Rita wraps it up!

