



Lara
Avery

and Cowboy

By Vanessa Kinsey Evans

This Conversation with Champions interview is with Lara Avery of Somers, Connecticut and her border collie AKC/UKC CH OTCH Marada Showdown UDX2 OM3 RE NAJ AX – “Cowboy.” Lara is the owner of Avery Storage and owner/dog trainer of Horsepower Hill Farm. Her website is www.horsepowerhillfarm.com.



Q: How did you acquire your first Border Collie?

I fell in love with Border Collies when I went to a herding trial. I watched in awe at how they worked the sheep like little cutting horses. I knew I had to have one of these amazing dogs. I went to a local breeder here in Connecticut. I brought an experienced friend along, who helped pick Sierra out. Sierra went on to become V OTCH Horsepower Hill Sierra UDX3 PT AXP AJP ASCA CD TDI. Sierra was my first dog I showed in AKC. She was the #1 Border Collie, the #1 Herding breed, and # 3 All Breed for AKC Novice A in 2001. She was ranked top three in UKC obedience with minimal trialing and went on to become my first OTCH dog. She also won the Utility Championship in 2006 at the All Star Championships. Sierra has titles in herding and agility as well. At almost 13 years young she continues to play in agility and herding.

Q: What do you like most about the breed?

I love the intelligence, the speed, the willingness to work and interact with you. All of this wrapped in a beautiful package doesn't hurt either.

Q: Is there anything you dislike?

As with all dogs, I just wish they could live a lot longer. The bond you get working with these dogs is phenomenal.

Q: What kind of evaluation methods do you use when choosing a Border Collie?

I look closely at the pedigree. Are the parents health tested? Do they have performance backgrounds? It's a good indicator of what they will produce, although there are always exceptions. When it comes to the puppies, above all I look for willingness to interact with

you. I also want good conformation, not just for show but I expect my dogs to perform and they need the structure to do that safely. It's important to have a breeder who is educated and you can trust. The breeder's input is important in my decision making. They are with the puppy on a daily basis and can offer a lot of insight on a puppy's temperament. Working with a breeder who is willing to put a lot of time in socializing a litter and exposing them to different experiences is beneficial as well.

Q: How did you get involved in obedience?

I have a background in horse training and showing. When my husband and I got our first dog Casey, a golden mix breed, it was natural to jump into dog training. I took her to classes and

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entered her in our first obedience match. After that I was hooked! Obedience is like a dance with your dog. The relationship you need in order to have a great performance is like nothing else.

Q: What was the first title you received?

Cowboy's first title was his breed championship. He was my first conformation dog so I had to learn how to handle for breed. It was a challenge at first but he ended up finishing his championship with a five-point major at the supported entry show in Greenwich, Connecticut. I showed Cowboy for a little while after he finished and he won several Best of Breeds, and even a group placement. It was then time to focus on his obedience career. He started that with a bang, winning High in Trial his first time out.

Q: What is your training schedule like?

I would call it opportunistic; I train every day but in small bits and pieces. I may be walking with the dogs to the barn to feed horses and decide that this would be a good time to work signals or heeling. I might bring a dog to the office with me and do articles there. When I am actively competing with a dog, my training is a bit more structured. I try to train a session in the morning and evening if I am campaigning.

Q: What was your greatest training obstacle with Cowboy? How did you overcome it?

Cowboy had a hard time generalizing go-outs at new locations. In order to overcome this, I had to do go-outs everywhere and to everything. I literally put



bologna on fences, trees, dumpsters, and sides of buildings. He finally understood when he got the command to go-out to keep running until you hear sit or find a piece of meat.

Q: When did you know Cowboy would be special?

I was lucky enough to be able to see Cowboy at just a few days old and it was love at first sight. I have to say at about five weeks old is when I knew he had to be mine. He was such a pistol! He had such a spark in his eye, how could he not be fun? I knew he had the potential to be my first CH OTCH.

Q: What is one of your favorite memories about working with Cowboy?

I went to my first BCSA National and he won Novice B to finish his title. It was an exciting time.

Q: What has been the highlight of Cowboy's career?

There have been many but I would say that being my first CH OTCH dog was the biggest.

Q: What has given you the greatest pleasure working with Cowboy?

He LOVES to train and would do it all day. He has this zest to him that is just irresistible. One of Cowboy's favorite exercises is the drop on recall. He runs and drops with so much speed he leaves claw marks on the rubber mats. The harder he slides the bigger the smile on his face. He finds it very entertaining.

Q: Do you follow a certain person's handling style?

Yes, I have been training with Celeste Meade for about six years. She has shown me how to make obedience fun and entertaining for my dogs. Celeste has shown me how much a person's handling can affect the dog, whether for the good or the bad.

Q: Do you have a mentor?

It would be Celeste Meade. She is a brilliant dog trainer and instructor. Her determination and dedication to obedience is admirable.

Q: Do you have future plans for Cowboy?

We started competing in AKC agility this year. He absolutely loves it! I am not sure how far we will go but we are having fun. I also plan on finishing his Open title in UKC obedience and we may appear in the obedience ring in AKC someday again.

Q: Do you have any other upcoming stars?

I have a 2-year-old Border Collie, CH Holther's Racin' Bye Ewe NA NAJ – "Ten." I am very excited about him. He's wonderfully talented, honest and very athletic. He takes great pride in everything he does. Ten has already proven himself in the breed ring and in agility. I am hoping that he will be making his obedience debut soon.

Q: Is there anyone you would like to thank?

First, I would like to thank my husband Dan. I could not accomplish what I have without his support. Next, I would like to thank Mary Wasielewski for Cowboy; he is truly one of a kind and such a special dog. I would also like to thank Holley Grooms and Heather Brewer



from Holther Border Collies for Ten, such a talented, beautiful dog who has an exciting future in obedience in front of him. Thanks to Celeste, for all her patience, knowledge and support. Last but not least, I want to thank my dogs, for without them I would not be where I am today.

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A Legend to Cowboy's Titles

OTCH	Obedience titled Champion	NAJ	Novice Jumpers
CH	Breed Championship	NA	Novice Agility
CD	Companion Dog	V	Versatility
U-CD	UKC Companion Dog	AXP	Agility Excellent Preferred
UDX2	Utility Dog Excellent x 2	AJP	Agility Jumpers Preferred
OM3	Obedience Master x 3	AX	Agility Excellent
RE	Rally Excellent	PT	Pre-trial tested (herding)
		TDI	Therapy Dog International
		ASCA CD	ASCA Companion Dog



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Vanessa Evans has been involved with Border Collies since 2000 and is an AKC Breeder of Merit. She currently competes in rally, obedience, tracking and occasionally conformation.