

GORDON SETTER NEWS

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1st Gordon Setter AKC SAR-W Certified Search & Rescue Dog

Dougal

Raritan's Down Under Dream SAR-W CGCA TKA

Owners: Sherry Loy & Mark Bowe • Breeders: Dawn & Sam Hamilton/Peggy DeVall

Concise photos by Three Dog Photography

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Cover story...

Dougal... 1st Gordon Setter AKC SAR-W Certified Search & Rescue Dog



Raritan's Down Under Dream SAR-W CGCA TKA

(Aust Supreme CH Lochtay Dark'n Stormy x
GCH Raritan's Radiant Empress Ziva)

Breeders: Dawn & Sam Hamilton/Peggy DaValt

Owners: Sherry Loy & Mark Bowen

The Black and Tan NASCAR Driver

Training my Gordon Setter puppy through adolescent age for Search and Rescue (SAR), I would compare it to teaching a teenager how to drive, but in a NASCAR. They will push you to the brink of insanity by driving at Mach-10 speeds on the wrong side of the road and crash head-on into everything in their path while simultaneously flashing you that Gordon side-eye, wild-grin combo, you know the one I am talking about; then out of nowhere, slam on the brakes just long enough to parallel park the super-fast car with the most magnificent jaw-dropping display of veteran driving skill and precision you have ever witnessed. When the car finally comes to a complete stop, and you finish reciting the classic mantra with a twist, "I swear, Lord, if you get me out of this with no broken bones, I will go to church on Sunday," you somehow manage to loosen your death grip and peel your embedded fingers from the dashboard, gather up what little bit of dignity and composure you have left and then, out of nowhere, your black and tan power shifts the superfast car back into high gear and speeds off again.

Fasten your seatbelts, ladies and gentlemen—insight into our SAR training ride and journey thus far is about to start. Please remain seated, know where the closest emergency room is located and have your dentist on speed dial, you will need it along the way. The ability to laugh at yourself coupled with a good sense of humor is non-negotiable and be sure to have an ample supply of ice packs readily available, your body will be forever grateful. You will learn to love the pretty new shades of gray in what little hair you have left, and your bank account will be a few decimal points shorter, but when you succeed, you will never feel any greater sense of accomplishment, I PROMISE.

What a great honor for our Dougal to be featured on the *Gordon Setter News* cover! I am beyond excited to share our SAR training experience with a breed we all love, the Gordon Setter. I hope to serve as an ambassador for the breed outside of the GSCA and bring these magnificent black and tans' intelligence, capabilities, and beauty to the forefront for all to see and appreciate. Even more importantly, I aim to impart the wisdom of my successes, failures, and lessons learned and bring

awareness and respect to SAR and what it takes to train these heroic dogs. As we all know, Gordons are sturdy dogs with natural tracking instincts, have the necessary endurance for Search and Rescue, and will work until they drop if you let them. I hope this story inspires and encourages others to harness the intelligence, natural abilities, and instincts bred into these beautiful dogs to pursue training for Search and Rescue.

"A dream you dream alone is only a dream.

A dream you dream together is reality." ~ John Lennon

That lifelong dream for me has been to own, train, and handle a SAR K9. A dream so vivid and imagined in my early twenties but well-muted over time. I never would have thought my dream would be re-imagined because of an extraordinary boy, *Drifter*, a 7-year-old Gordon gift from Peggy DaValt. Indeed, he was a special boy who bridged the distance between two women from different parts of the country. We initially shared the common bond and connection of loving him, and that grew into a close friendship. As close friends, we often discussed our plans, goals, and lifelong dreams. My dream was simple; and *Drifter*, with his natural tracking ability and instincts, not only revived my dream but also gave me a new sense of purpose and determination to train a Gordon Setter for SAR.

Sadly, we said goodbye to *Drifter* on January 29, 2020. Heartbroken beyond words, I promised him that I would honor his memory and someday fulfill my SAR dream.

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe." ~ Anatole France

That dream begins with a little background from *Raritan* co-breeder Peggy DaValt... how the "Dream" litter came to fruition—spanning the course of over ten years.

*"There's no such thing as coincidence, I say.
It's synchronicity." ~ Raven Kaldera*

In 2012, I met Dawn Hamilton through a series of very synchronistic events, which in and of themselves are laden with signs. Suffice to say that those events brought us together as co-breeders and friends and helped us develop an incredible bond with our Gordon Setters. In 2013, we decided to breed under the kennel name of *Raritan*. I had previously bred Gordon Setters under the name of *Amethyst* and Dawn had chosen *D'Ember*.

On May 13, 2013, a litter was whelped that Pat Larson (*Breacan*) and I co-bred by CH Gaelwynd Amethyst Rayne For Breacan JH (*Rayne*) and GCH Breacan's Perfect Scotch Martini JH CGC (*Chmy*). A very special puppy bitch from this combined pedigree, Enya (CH Amethyst & D'Ember To Infinity & Beyond O' Breacan CGC), represented almost 20 years of my Amethyst breeding program in one fell swoop. At the time, I asked Dawn and Sam if they'd like to co-own Enya with me and the rest is history as they say. Enya will celebrate her 11th birthday on May 13, 2024.

In August of 2016, Dawn and I bred Enya to *Nike*, Am/Aust CH Brodruggan Black Knight. That litter produced 4 beautiful bitches. Two of them have become foundations for Raritan's most current dogs. *Fergi* (GCH Her Royal Highness Fearghus O' Raritan CGC) stayed with Dawn and Sam and produced lovely puppies for us, and *Ziva* (GCH Raritan's Radiant Empress Ziva) went to Sally Frones of Duluth, Minnesota. Ziva was the girl we bred to an Australian boy named *Bramble*, owned by Kerry and Robert Bell, breeding under the kennel name of *Lochtay*.

Dawn's and my dream was to breed Enya to *Bramble*. In doing research on *Bramble*, I followed my intuition and knowledge that I had gleaned over the years through contacts with friends who had known of his success in Australia. As I studied more, I found an amazing synchronicity—*Bramble* and Enya shared the exact

same birthday. Bramble, Aust MBIS MBISS Australian Supreme CH Lochtay Dark'n Stormy, had 66 Bests in Show in Australia, making him the greatest winning setter in Australia's history (at the time of breeding our "Dream" litter).

In 2016, I reached out to Kerry Bell of Lochtay and an immediate friendship ensued. Kerry loved the synchronicity and connection as much as Dawn and I did and off we were on a journey that would take almost 7 years to bring us the Raritan "Dream" litter.

There was SO much to learn about bringing in semen from a foreign country, let alone praying that your bitch is ready to be bred on time and all the "puppy gods" align. I have a folder dedicated to all the things Dawn and I did to work on this. I would be remiss not to say that this would not have happened without the work done by Kerry and Bob Bell to help push things along on their side. In the end, I believe the semen got to California from Australia faster than it did from California to Wisconsin. In March of 2021, there was a huge ice storm that shut down power in Texas and that wreaked havoc with FedEx and the semen ALMOST didn't get to Wisconsin. Fortunately, for us it did. Ziva's due date was May 20, 2021. This also happened to be Dawn's birthday—yet another synchronicity?

I took off work beginning the week of May 17 to help prep for the puppies. Imagine my surprise that morning, while getting things ready at my house for my dog sitter, Nicki, when Dawn called me and told me Ziva's mucous plug had come out. Dawn was on her way to our reproductive vet clinic (as we had a planned C-section later that week as the x-ray showed 8 puppies). I left at the same time as Dawn, and we arrived within minutes of each other. I knew that Ziva was in active labor and about 40 minutes later "Purple Girl" made her entrance and Ziva was not too quiet about the whole thing. Since we were still on some COVID protocols, I got to stay in the clinic and Dawn waited outside for me. I have to say that this was an interesting litter to whelp as I could just say "puppy" and the techs would come and take that puppy, check it over and off to the incubator it went. After 8 hours, Ziva was tired, and Dr. Greer had to do a C-section to get the two remaining pups out. "Orange Boy" was puppy number 6 that I whelped, and he became known as *Dougal*. Puppies 7 and 8 were "Yellow Boy" and "Silver Girl" (*Stormy* and *Bindi*, respectively). All in all, Ziva and Bramble produced a perfect split of 4 boys and 4 girls. And... the puppies' birthdate of the 17th coincided with Sherry's boy, *Drifter's* January 17 birthday. Gotta love those synchronicities with numbers.

The "Dream" litter was here, and the rest of this story belongs to Sherry and Dougal. Their accomplishments and achievements are nothing short of extraordinary. Dawn and I just provided the puppy and off they went. This truly exemplifies one puppy buyer fulfilling her dream of training and developing a Search and Rescue K9. Ironically and synchronistically, this was the epitome of the "Dream Team."

Congratulations, Sherry Loy and Dougal! We at Raritan salute you, Sherry, for accomplishing a dream you dared to believe.

"A puppy is the most loving gift in the world." ~ Kevin J. Nierman

On May 17, 2021, Raritan's "Dream" litter was whelped. After weeks of watching these beautiful babies grow and observing each puppy's personality develop, it was decided that "Orange Boy," *Dougal*, would be ours. It had been many years since my husband, Mark, and I owned and raised a Gordon puppy. As new puppy parents full of excitement and anticipation, we prepared our home for Dougal's arrival.

Feeling our house was in order, I set out on a mission to find a local trainer to start obedience classes as soon as we brought him home. I had scoured the Internet for many years to find a trainer and relevant information on how to get involved with SAR, and I always came up

empty. Over the years, the closest training facility I found was located 2-hours south of where we lived. Given the distance, training a dog for SAR would not have been conducive.

My first Google search listed several dog trainers in our area. I reviewed the list and read each trainer's credentials and the classes offered. One particular trainer, Marty Warchola, Best Paws Forward Dog Training in Medina, Ohio, really stood out. Marty's credentials were impeccable; he was very active and involved in our community and was the president of our local SPCA. His training methodology, philosophy, and years of professional training experience impressed me. He offered the standard classes, starting with AKC Puppy Star through AKC Community Canine, Therapy Dog training and certification, and Search and Rescue training. Wait, what? I almost fell out of my chair. How could this be? Over the years, how was it possible I never found his information? Not only did he offer Search and Rescue training, but he was the founder of a regional search and rescue team, North Central Ohio K9 Search and Rescue (NCOK9), located only 10 minutes away. Without delay, I contacted Marty and registered Dougal to start Puppy Star class as soon as possible.

"Your home and adventure all at once." ~ Unknown

We brought Dougal home at 9 weeks old, and nothing, I mean nothing, could have prepared us for what he had in store for us. He dominated our household from the minute we walked through the door. Little orange boy hit the ground like a Tasmanian Devil spinning out of control, overturning everything in his path. I should have known he would be a handful; after all, he was the first to escape the whelping box at 2-weeks old in hot pursuit of his mom Ziva, the milk truck.

He rarely slept, his energy level was off the charts, and he had no interest in playing with any puppy toys we gave him. Things he did show interest in, he conquered and tossed aside after a few hours. The only true thing he had any genuine interest in doing was staying outside and keeping his nose to the ground to track. If you dare tried to stop him, you suffered the wrath of interfering with a Gordon with a mouth full of shark teeth on a mission. Well, I had a trick up my sleeve; puppy class was starting in a few days, and this headstrong, incorrigible fur-covered bundle of cuteness would learn obedience and manners. I am the alpha, I am the boss of our universe. *I will show him...*

We walked into the training facility for our first Puppy Star class, and he was a perfect angel. In retrospect, he was just sizing up Marty, his trainer, and other puppies and figuring out how to take charge of the entire class. After about two weeks, he mastered every possible task, and the same goes for basic and advanced obedience. He learned so quickly that we struggled to introduce more challenging exercises that kept him engaged long enough to keep him from exuding the over-the-top Gordon shenanigans and out of trouble in class and at home. This was when we surmised, he was far more intelligent than any of us thought and determined he needed a job. A real job, not his current self-employed position he took so seriously. In fact, he even wrote his own job description and took great pride in performing his daily duties of eating our couch, helping himself to our ice maker, turning the wall switches on and off so he could inspect the ceiling fan to make sure it was spinning at the correct speed and opening our interior doors to test the integrity of the hinges. Apparently, I am not the boss of our universe. *I will show him...*

During one advanced obedience class, Marty stored the cadaver scent tubes and training box underneath an agility ramp. Dougal was drawn to that box and was not shy about showing off his natural attraction. I had a tough time keeping him focused and away from it, and that is when I knew we had a dog destined for a future in Search and Rescue.

"Suddenly you know it's time to start something new and trust the magic of new beginnings." ~ Unknown

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A dog's personality, temperament, and behavior play a big part in training and certifying a SAR dog. They must be taught to behave well from a young age and socialize with others. High prey drive and energy are all essential. However, you must ensure they react well in large groups, be friendly, listen to commands, and stay focused before considering Search and Rescue training. To ensure this, the AKC Community Canine (CGCA), the advanced level of the AKC's Canine Good Citizen Program, class is mandatory before you can move on. Dougal was confident and effortlessly passed all his other obedience classes. I took him everywhere; he was well-socialized, confident, and determined. What could go wrong?

Our first CGCA class took place at our local historic town square. Many buildings were built in the mid to late 1800s, and a few memorial boulders are scattered throughout. Our task for this class was to walk the dogs around the square, following the CGC protocol when approaching crosswalks and people. Dougal started out rock solid and confident until we encountered one of those memorial boulders. He had a complete meltdown. He just froze, threw himself down on the ground in the middle of the square, rolled over on his back, and refused to move, screeching, and yelping so loud I think every person within a 1-block radius heard him and had PETA on speed dial, thinking we were beating our dog. After 15 minutes of trying everything in our arsenal to calm him down and get him up to walk, defeated, we picked him up, carried him back to our car, and excused ourselves from that evening's class. What a complete disaster. He had never demonstrated this behavior in any environment, and I knew we were doomed if I could not figure out how to overcome this flip-the-switch fear and reaction. This was a must-pass core class to start Tracking 1, scheduled to start two months later.

After a lengthy conversation with Marty later that evening, we decided to move forward and bring him to class the following week. For this class, we had to walk the dogs around a local home improvement store, and he did great, with no issues whatsoever. Ultimately, it took me weeks of walking Dougal around that square to get him confident and comfortable. We passed the class and earned his AKC CGCA title and moved on to Tracking 1. Note to self: I am not the boss; he is a Gordon—meltdowns and tantrums will come on without warning for any given reason. *I will show him...*

"A dream does not become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work." ~ Colin Powell

The Best Paws Forward Dog Training methodology and training program for SAR is based on completing all core obedience classes before you can move onto the fundamental training, starting with Tracking 1, 2, and then onto the actual Search and Rescue training program. Reading and understanding the process on paper is straight forward and seems simple enough. However, completing the actual physical training and passing each class, especially with a young, intact male Gordon Setter, is challenging beyond comprehension. Adding to the pressure, if you fail one class, you must wait one year before retaking it and hope you pass to move forward. *I will show him...*

Based on AKC tracking regulations, Tracking 1 is taught over open terrain. You learn human tracking, scent theory and how to work with your dog to optimize their instinctual tracking abilities and the most crucial commandment in SAR, the holy grail of anything you will ever learn, "TRUST YOUR DOG." To trust your dog, you must know how to read your dog's signs during each track and effectively learn their language. The only way to learn is to practice, practice, practice, and when you think you have it all figured out, go out and practice even more. If you visit our home, we have a standing rule: you must come wearing your most comfortable shoes, be prepared to give up a piece of your clothing as a scent article and go for a nice long hike in the



woods. Our friends love it, and several are addicted to playing hide and seek with him.

Dougal started Tracking 1 in April 2022 when he was 11 months old. He was a growing puppy, full of energy, and his boy berries were beginning to wake up and ripen. This is when I learned early on that those hormones, particularly sex hormones, can impact a dog's sense of smell. During the breeding season, female dogs in heat release pheromones that can dramatically affect male dogs' behavior. These powerful chemical signals can cause a male dog's sense of smell to become hyper-focused on finding the source of the pheromones, sometimes to the detriment of other scents or tasks. Because Dougal is intact, I generally do not run SAR practices with him during Ohio's coyote mating season.

His first SAR harness was too big, but the next size down was too small. A problem I faced early on in Dougal's training was his speed and prey drive. Although accurate in his tracks and lightning-fast, an ill-fitting harness made the situation more challenging. He was still a manageable size and weight, and I could reasonably control him using an Easy Walker under his SAR harness. Given the harness problem, we did not start under ideal circumstances. He mastered this class; we passed and advanced to the next class in the series, Tracking 2.

In Tracking 2, we worked in tandem with our dogs and built on the skills we previously learned. We used those skills to successfully track up to 600 yards over hard-paved terrain in an urban or simulated urban environment. We learned the differences between ground and air scenting and how to read our dog in either situation.

Dougal started Tracking 2 in June 2022 when he was 13 months old. Early on, you are taught never to put your dog's SAR harness on them unless you are going to "work;" in turn, you are training your dog to associate their search harness with the "work" command. This process helps them understand that playtime is over and that they are going to "work" and find a lost person. Dougal quickly learned and understood what "work" meant, and when I brought his tracking harness out, it was, and is, "game on." He knew we were going to do something he really loved, and that was to find people in the woods, and he was not reserved with his excitement and over-the-top enthusiasm.

To this day, and for some unknown reason, Marty always puts Dougal in the last group out of three to deploy for a track. Dougal was now 15 pounds heavier, and trying to keep a high-energy Gordon Setter who acted like an over-caffeinated, out-of-control wombat patient, calm while tethered to a 20-foot piece of orange shoestring and avoid injury was and is no easy feat. This was quite frustrating, but I am sure it was entertaining for most onlookers. *I will show him...*

At this point, he tracked with even greater speed and was solid muscle. As his handler, I struggled to slow him down and maintain control. Dougal figured out that if he was not tethered to me, he could go much faster, and I would have no control. For his newest trick, he would try and shake me off lead by any means necessary. This is how his little trick worked: he would try and work his way up to a full-speed run, stop dead 20 feet out, then back up 3 feet and lunge forward using all his strength. I



soon found out this was not a problem going uphill, but silly me, I did not factor into the equation what goes up must come down. I wish tuck and roll was a sport and event in the Olympics because I would have scored perfect 10s across the board for technique and style; the endorsements from *Bio-Freeze* and *Motrin* would have been impressive. In fact, *Sherwin Williams* could have created an entirely new designer black and blue color line just from the buffet of bruises on my body. He needs to slow down. *I will show him...*

It was cold and raining the morning of our Tracking 2 test. I was not feeling well, lost my voice, and could not give commands. Our test was over variable surfaces, and as usual, Dougal was last to deploy, and true to form, acting like his overly stimulated, impatient, crazy self. As I mentioned, fail one segment in the series, and you must wait a year to retrain and test before moving forward. I was sick at heart; without a voice to give him commands or the strength to slow him down, I was convinced we would fail. But then something happened; a certain calmness and acceptance came over me. All the pressure of passing went away, and I reconciled myself to accept whatever the outcome.

Finally, we were given permission to deploy. Dougal was scented to start his track and all his training and instincts just took over. We started out on wet black asphalt, which he tracked solid, nose to the ground for about 100 yards. The wind picked up and was blowing at us from our right; he stopped dead, lifted his head, looked to his right, and then took off across a grass field like a bolt of lightning with me hanging on for dear life. Once we passed through the field, we came to a concrete surface and a small building; he went nose to the ground again, circled the building, and tracked our volunteer victim for another 75 yards to a gravel area, sitting on a slide at a playground. I never gave him a command; he just took over and did his job. We passed and moved on to the highly coveted SAR training. I was so proud of him. This talented, brilliant boy came through. *He showed me...*

"Dogs do speak, but only to those who know how to listen." - Orhan Pamuk

Search and Rescue Training was the third and final in the series of classes. This training combined all the skills we learned in the first two tracking classes but on steroids. New training scenarios were introduced such as "night" and "blind" building searches and understanding how the environment can influence a dog's ability to detect and track scents and read them. Humidity levels, air quality, and even wind patterns can affect the dispersal and concentration of odor molecules, making it easier or more challenging for a dog to follow a scent trail.

Handling a high-drive dog, you must have lightning-fast observation skills and be well-versed in reading your dog's alerts at this level in the training process. As the handler, the two of

you should be well-bonded and work seamlessly as a unit. Your dog should now consistently show "intelligent disobedience." This means that when they are on the missing person's scent, and you fail to trust them, they should alert you by displaying disobedience, such as barking, sitting, or even jumping on you. In other words, they should exhibit unusual disobedient behavior to draw your attention to the victim. This is their way of speaking to you in their language and saying you are wrong. I am right, you need to trust me. Allowing Dougal to show "intelligent disobedience" was his dream come true! However, he has always been accurate and found the victim when he has displayed this behavior.

In September 2022, on a rare 90-degree, humid day, he passed his field test and was regionally SAR certified. For this test, we were given one hour to find a staged volunteer victim hiding in a wooded public park. To pass, we had to stay focused, ignore all distractions and people who were not the victims, and return to the command post within an hour of deployment. We were one of three teams testing that day, and each team was given a staggered start time. As usual, we were the last team out. The first two teams were deployed, and 45 minutes into their search hour, those teams had not found the victim. Finally, after 45 minutes of waiting, two other team members and I were given the go-ahead to deploy with our dogs. We found the victim about a mile into the park and returned to the incident command post before the other two teams. This was a tremendous accomplishment, considering the other dogs and human foot traffic moved the scent track around, the age of the track, and then factor in the air temperature and humidity levels. I was so proud of Dougal and elated we passed! We could now apply for active *North Central Ohio K9 Search and Rescue* (NCOK9) Team membership. I was on cloud nine. I could not believe we actually did it.

Unfortunately, our excitement would be short-lived. What most people do not know is four days after Dougal passed his field test and received his regional SAR certification, he became very ill, and we almost lost him. Without warning, he went lame on his left front leg, cellulitis set into his paw, and in a matter of 12 hours, he turned septic and went into shock. After 24 hours, Dougal had not responded to the standard treatment protocol, and his veterinarian prepared us for the worst. He was only 15 months old and healthy; there was no explanation for this. He had no puncture wounds, cuts, fractures, or insect bites that could be ascertained or associated with the cellulitis.

The pain in my heart, and the raw emotional devastation I felt, I simply can't put into words. How do you go from being on top of the world four days earlier to total devastation, not knowing if he would survive? I remember sobbing inconsolably and asking, why, why is this happening? On the second day of his hospitalization, the vet called us early that morning and suggested she may perform surgery to relieve the pressure and take a sample of the fluid to type the bacteria. Still, before this happened, she wanted to add another antibiotic and medication to the cocktail he was already getting. Within a few hours, he started to respond to this treatment, and although his condition was guarded, there was hope he would recover. The vet contacted us late that evening, told us he was up, alert, and energetic, and then asked if we would be comfortable bringing him home? She went on to further explain he was on several medications and she would generally keep him hospitalized but thought it would be best if he came home. Apparently, he was trying to scale their 6-foot walls, and she was concerned he would actually do it. That's my boy! My tough, wild child made a full recovery. Ultimately, the cause was never determined; he had to take a 2-month medical leave from team drills but fully recovered and is back doing what he loves, Search and Rescue.

"One trained dog equals 60 search and rescue workers." - Charles Stoehr

After passing our field test and SAR certification, I was able to apply for team membership with North Central Ohio K9 Search and Rescue (NCOK9). NCOK9 is an all-volunteer Canine Search and Rescue team consisting of over two dozen dogs and handlers, and we were accepted as 1-year probationary status members.

As probationary members, you are expected to attend training drills with your K9 or serve the team in a supporting role for practice drills or live-find callouts. Because Dougal was out on medical leave, I was allowed to serve the team in a support role. This option may have proved beneficial because it afforded me the freedom to start my handler coursework and prepare to obtain my required certifications.

The National Association of Search and Rescue (NASAR) Academy oversees the educational part of the process and administers the SARTECH III exam. The course is designed to combine written information and the fieldwork you have completed. The goal is to ensure you are well-versed in SAR's legal and ethical aspects and better prepare you to apply this information in a live working situation or environment.

Coursework covers hazmat situations and how to identify hazmat classifications and charting. You also learn to handle evidence, compass, map/coordinate reading skills, essentials in your field pack, and basic survival skills. You know how to appropriately interact with law enforcement and the media. When you finish your coursework, you clearly understand the different types of searches and their importance. The FEMA portion covers incident command and the roles of each person within the command framework.

I completed all my requirements and secured my certifications in CPR, K9 CPR First Aid and Trauma Care, SAR TECH III, and FEMA ICS-100, all within the first 8 months, earning full team status with NCOK9 four months early. Most recently, I completed my FEMA ICS-200 certification.

"You see but you do not detect them." ~ Sherlock Holmes

As I stated at the beginning of our story, one of my goals is to raise awareness of Search and Rescue. The primary purpose of SAR dogs is to locate a subject using their unique scent profile. This subject could be alive and lost, trapped and injured or even deceased. These valiant canines embody bravery, their noses and paws tirelessly navigate rugged terrain and the chaos of disaster zones. To them, every rescue mission is an unwavering commitment to hope, a testament to their training, handlers, and an unyielding dedication to saving lives. Interestingly, during World War II, dogs, mainly setters and pointers, were used as casualty or ambulance dogs; the *United States Army Medical Corps* used these K9s to find wounded soldiers.

SAR K9s are champion trackers and scent work detectives, all wrapped up into one dog. They are trained at the highest levels in scent discrimination and tracking. These elite K9s are expected to perform expertly in all weather conditions, hazardous urban environments, and extreme wooded areas. They often encounter ticks, wasp ground nests, logs, ground depressions, glass buried under leaves, slippery trails with steep drop-offs, wet bridges without rails, thorns, and more recently drugs and associated paraphernalia in park systems.

SAR is difficult work, requires long hours, and is physically demanding. Remember, behind every heroic dog is a human counterpart, patiently guiding, nurturing, and shaping these incredible dogs into the superheroes they become. Handlers must be prepared to deploy year-round, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and work in all weather conditions. We are not paid and make substantial financial sacrifices for training, equipment, and educational requirements. Understand that a SAR handler needs to prepare physically and mentally to effectively work in unison with their K9. A SAR mission is always dynamic and fluid, with several moving parts. You must be prepared to make lightning-fast decisions during a search mission. Trust your dog, and hope and pray you make the right call because a person's life is at stake.

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Sadly, most people are unaware that very few municipalities or states have laws to protect SAR K9s and will not transport a K9 for treatment should they be injured while working. These same local municipalities often call out regional and state-level K9 search teams to assist in SAR efforts, saving those towns and counties a ton of money. Police K9s can track but are trained for apprehension and detection and do not have the endurance or training to do urban or wilderness search missions like SAR K9s. There are universal federal laws in place to protect them. Still, they are only activated when a federal disaster has been declared. SAR K9s deserve the same rights and protections as any service animal or police K9; why do they deserve any less?

If you are fortunate enough to know a SAR handler and they ask you for help by being a victim, please do. It will cost you nothing, have fun and get some exercise. A word of caution, there is a high probability that you will become addicted to playing hide and seek with the dogs.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

~ Helen Keller

Over these past few years, collaboration has proven to be the cornerstone of conquering the arduous and challenging task of training Dougal and played a pivotal role in his accomplishments. All the love, support, dedication, and knowledge created a synergy that propelled us through our journey and proved vital in making my dream come true! With heartfelt thanks and recognition to my support team...

Mark, my husband, for his patience, understanding, and commitment to supporting my dream by working countless hours of overtime to pay for Dougal's training that allows me to stay home and train him.

Sue Swan, my close friend, and owner of Dougal's brother, Raritan's Dream Came By Storm CGC (*Stormy Bell*), has vicariously been through this journey with me. She had listened to the ups and downs, encouraged me to keep going when I almost gave up, and certainly has been the voice of reason when it came to raising a Gordon puppy overall.

Dawn Hamilton, *Raritan Gordon Setters*, is one of Dougal's breeders. Her passion and love for the breed and unwavering commitment to enhancing canine cognition and elevating their mental faculties with every litter whelped ensured I started with the best possible foundation. Given Dougal's rigorous training regime, I struggled to keep weight on him, and she always made herself available and offered guidance with his diet and health. She has been our biggest cheerleader and supporter; her encouragement and positive words of support have carried us a long way.

Scott Shields, I am beyond grateful to have as my friend and mentor. His guidance, wisdom, and advice has proven to be an invaluable resource for me and helped me learn and become a better handler. Along with K9 Bear, Scott was one of the first SAR responders to the World Trade Center after the 9/11 attacks and rescue efforts for Hurricane Katrina. *Bear, Heart of a Hero: The Story of a Man and His Ground Zero Search and Rescue Dog* was published in Bear's memory. I thank you both for your service!

Cass Rocha, *Three Dog Photography*, you ROCK! It was no small feat to keep up with Dougal while carrying heavy camera equipment and capturing his beautiful photos.

Heather Weidig, Show Offs – K9 Exclusive Salon. You have been grooming Dougal since he was 12 weeks old and have spent countless hours keeping our boy clean and handsome! Caring for his coat after many jaunts through the woods and after one of his self-administered coat cuts has undoubtedly been a challenge. I thank you and your family for volunteering as victims and for assisting the NCOK9 team!

Peggy DaValt, I am beyond grateful for your support and encouragement over the years. I will never be able to fully express how deep my gratitude runs for all the AMAZING and CARING things you've done to help me, going all the way back

to trusting us to love Drifter. Dougal and I will always carry a piece of you with us on every SAR mission. For every lost person he may ever find, we DEDICATE TO YOU! Without you, your knowledge, and the sacrifices you have made over the many years of breeding, none of this would be possible!

Marty Warchola, What can I say? Your "wild child" sends you big, wet, sloppy licks and lots of love! Through all of the ups and downs and challenges, I can't thank you enough for all you have done to train and support Dougal and me in pursuit of our SAR DREAM! NONE of this, and I do mean NONE of this, would even be possible without you, your dedication, your love for the dogs, and your training programs and countless hours of guidance!

"In learning you will teach; in teaching you will learn."
~ Phil Collins

Dougal is naturally gifted in search and rescue and lives to work. Training him came down to refining his natural instincts and becoming a fluid unit; understanding each other, figuring out a cohesive language, and tweaking that communication was vital. Every day is a new learning experience and I always pay attention to what he sees or trying to tell me. There is no greater feeling than knowing when you are on to something. Dougal's focus is razor sharp, and the energy transmission that comes from him and works its way down the lead to me, as his handler, makes me feel as though we are melded together as one unit and I know that bond is unbreakable.

Several months ago, Marty said to me, "I can't believe you stuck it out; anyone else would have walked away." At the time, I responded, "The harder you push me, the harder I will work." Since then, I have often reflected on that conversation, and although there is truth in my initial answer, the simple answer is: I had a DREAM, I made a PROMISE, and I have DOUGAL.

As the old saying goes, hindsight is 20/20, and looking back, there are things I would do differently. First, I would have waited to train Dougal for SAR until he was two years old. With the amount of time we spent together training, I essentially took this breed's strong loyalty characteristic, threw gasoline on it, and lit the match. Although we are supposed to have a strong bond, ours is extreme and I believe giving him time to mature and let him be a goofy Gordon would have encouraged him to gain a true independence and confidence away from me. This may have self-corrected many of the issues I contended with over the 15-month course of our training.

Secondly, I would have taken longer breaks between practices or training him for new things. Dougal tends to get over-stimulated and longer breaks may have helped reduce his over-anxiousness and most certainly afforded me time to rest. Truth

be told, we had been training since he was 9 weeks old. Physically, I was exhausted and needed time to enjoy Dougal and allow him to just be a dog.

"Dedication is not what others expect of you, it is what you can give to others." ~ Unknown

Although Dougal and I are the first Gordon Setter SAR team to be recognized and awarded the AKC SAR-W title, I am not the first to train a Gordon Setter for Search and Rescue. That distinction goes to Cil (Cecile) Chenevert and *Speedy*. For her hard work and perseverance, I dedicate our SAR-W title and AKC recognition to her and *Speedy's* memory. I will continue to honor and carry on their legacy, building on what they achieved. To carry on their legacy, Dougal and I recently started Land Cadaver training and hope to move on to Water Cadaver training later this year and certify in this discipline; through personal research, this is a discipline area Cil and *Speedy* excelled in at the state level.

Somewhere behind the dog handler I have become are the hours of training we have put in. The trainers that pushed us and all the money spent. All the miles I have driven and walked, the blood, sweat, tears, blisters, cuts, and bruises, the natural dog, the crazy dog, and everything in between. I am the person who started with a dream and fell in love with the work, my dog, the lifestyle, and the people, and I will never look back.



In the end, I showed him, he showed me, and, together, we showed each other...

—Sherry Loy (OH)



Cecile (Cil) Chenevert and her Gordon Setter *Speedy* worked with the Massachusetts State Police and were members of the National Association for Search and Rescue as well as Dog B.O.N.E.S. Therapy Dog team members.

Cil died unexpectedly June 8, 2012 in Lee, New Hampshire. She had a great love for animals and for many years worked as a vet tech and pet groomer.

To the left, Cil (center in the boat) is pictured with *Speedy* either during a water cadaver training exercise or rescue mission. GSCA member Kristin Majercik (AL) knew Cil and shared this post on Facebook alongside this picture: "*Speedy* was an S&R dog who specialized in water finds of cadavers. They rowed him back and forth over an area where a suspected drowning had occurred in order to locate the body. Cil said that he would get so depressed over his findings that she had to arrange for volunteers to be 'lost' so *Speedy* could find them and be joyful at 'saving' a live person." After Cil's passing, Kristin wrote, "I know *Speedy* was waiting at The Bridge for Cil, and when she arrived, was overjoyed that he had finally 'found' her."