



# WORKING DOGS

By Brenda Himelfarb

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRENT BINGHAM



In September 1893, a Border Collie was born in West Woodburn, Northumberland. His owner, Adam Telfer, a rancher and dog trainer, gave him the name Old Hemp and used him as a working dog to herd sheep.

Meg, Hemp's mother, was a very strong-eyed, yet reticent, sheepdog, while his father, Roy, was a loose-eyed black, white and tan sheepdog who was very good-natured.

Hemp began following sheep at the age of six weeks and had an innate ability to herd. He was very mild-mannered and — although never trained — moved sheep very quietly; unlike other dogs of the era his instincts were innate. And within a few generations, his style was seemingly inherited by almost every Border Collie.

In fact, Hemp is considered to be the *foundation sire* or father of the Border Collie breed.

And because his stud services were so widely sought after, it is estimated that he had more than 200 offspring. Hemp's medium stature and coat are still seen in the breed today, as so many of his offspring passed on his traits. Many of his descendants became international sheepdog champions and, between 1906 and 1951, each of the twenty-nine collies that won the International Farmers Championships for sheepdogs was a descendant of Old Hemp.

Even today, you will find Old Hemp's bloodline in the Border Collie puppies born at the Eight Bar Ranch, owned by Kendra and Keith Scott. It might be just a "smidge" of this celebrated dog's lineage — but it's there.

So let's begin.

*Scott Redden holds a sheep that is used to help train herding dogs.*



At one time, the Eight Bar Ranch was part of a larger one that belonged to Kendra's great-grandfather, who came to Colorado in 1894. And it has a long history — all the way back to when Charles and Ella (Gates) Albertson homesteaded the land. Its location is a rancher's dream — an area known as Derby Mesa, where there is aspen and spruce-fir habitat and where an array of birds and animals hang out: warblers and grouse, elk and mule deer. Over the years, the land was divided between family members. Then, over 15 years ago, Kendra inherited the place from her father.

"When I was growing up, we always had working dogs," says Kendra. "They were usually an Aussie and Heeler-cross with a little bit of Border Collie or Kelpie thrown in the mix. My dad loved his dogs and they would do anything for him. He simply knew how to communicate with them and they knew exactly what he wanted them to do."

For one reason or another, people always seemed to be giving the family a dog. One time, a Red Heeler was payment for some work her father had done. Another time it was an old hound, which Kendra, then a high school junior, decided to train as a project. "Dad said he was an old dog and that I 'couldn't teach an old dog new tricks.' This made me determined to prove him wrong," Kendra recalls.

So, Kendra did just that. She began teaching the dog obedience and showmanship, went to the country fair and was awarded Grand Champion. Years later, after Keith and Kendra married, veterinarian Dr. Kirk Shiner gave the couple a registered Border Collie as a gift in return for Keith plowing heavy snow in order to retrieve cows that had been stuck in a pasture.

With that gift, Kendra's career as a dog trainer, as well as a breeder, was launched. She began



honing her skills — reading books, watching DVDs and attending a clinic by noted herding-dog trainer Jack Knox, whose training is based on "cultivating a dog's intelligence and instincts rather than tightly controlling a dog's movements."

"If I had any problems," says Kendra, "I would turn to Mark Ruark or Trina Thomas who live in the valley and are very good with dogs. There was never a question that they couldn't answer."

Border Collies are said to be the smartest breed. They learn quickly and if sent to go for help, they might ask, "What kind?" with just a cock of their head. In fact, they are so intense, so intelligent it is said that it takes a special sort of person to own them.

"The performance of Border Collies has a lot to do with motivation," says Warren Mick, a

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Border Collie trainer, who is president of the Northeast Border Collie Association.

“Their abilities have a lot to do with sensitivity,” adds Eva D. Marschark, who teaches at Temple University and trains Border Collies. “They have a high sensitivity to sight, sound, motion.”

The eyes of the dog are also a factor when it comes to herding. A dog with a *strong eye* makes continuous eye contact with the animals. At times it’s a fixed stare, which is typical of Border Collies, accompanied with a crouching stance — so much so that the dogs sometimes look like a predator stalking prey.

A *medium-eyed* dog makes good eye contact with the stock, but not constantly. Whereas dogs that are *sticky-eyed* seem to get stuck in a holding pattern with the livestock. They just want to stare down livestock and are more comfortable keeping livestock from moving, rather than moving them. And a dog that deliberately looks away from stock to reduce pressure is said to be *anti-eyed*.

On the other hand, dogs that continually survey their entire flock — not only every head, but every ear of every cow or sheep — for signs that they might bolt, are said to have a *roving eye*. These dogs zero in and essentially — with just a look — say, “Don’t even think about it!”

*No eye* dogs have no instinctual eye style at all while a *loose-eyed* dog doesn’t make eye contact on a continual basis, but rather keeps control with presence rather than pressure.

Since days gone by, Border Collies were even used to herd flocks of geese. So it’s no surprise that in 2007 New York’s Central Park Conservancy brought in the dogs to stalk and scare about 300 Canada geese that were scaring away birds, eating the grass and depositing pounds of droppings each day. Of course, the dogs had no interest in eating their prey. They just wanted to herd. And herd they did! The Geese Police, as they were called, even rode in kayaks on the park’s lakes staring geese down in the water, or jumping in after them. By the time the dogs’ work was done, only 30 geese were left. Even today, the Geese Police sometimes patrol, to the detriment of the birds who soar above, honking noisily.

Then there’s a story about psychologist John W. Pilley who, after retiring from



*Border Collies are intuitive and quick responders.*



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*Though they are trained on sheep, the dogs at Eight Bar Ranch graduate to herding cattle.*





*Each dog has a different and personalized herding style.*

Wofford College and reading about a Border Collie whose owners had taught him to recognize 200 items — mostly toys and balls — developed a technique to teach dogs language. He bought Chaser, a puppy, and began training her four to five hours a day, teaching her to recognize two objects a day, repeating its name up to 40 times, then hiding it and asking her to find it, constantly repeating the name as she searched. By the end of his experiment,

Chaser knew 1,022 nouns, a record “that displays unexpected depth of the canine mind.”

It’s stories like that which inspire Kendra with such joy for her training. And, of course, over the years, she’s had a few favorites dogs. Patty, a registered Border Collie, imported from Ireland, was one of them. “She would keep her distance and stay in her comfort zone,” recalls Kendra. “When a cow would stop, she would stop and look the other way. She moved stock

with just her bold presence and there was never a confrontation. The cows loved and respected her and she could walk into the herd, never stirring them up.”

Another favorite was Glenabo Patty, another registered Collie, also imported from Ireland. Kendra called him Skylar — a special dog and the impetus for Kendra wanting to learn even more about training.

“He was probably the smartest dog I ever had. I was always losing my hat, while riding, so

I thought I would teach Skylar to pick it up and give it to me while I was on my horse,” Kendra recalls, with a smile. “He would pick up my hat and put his front paws on the horse’s shoulders, and give me the hat. But one day, I was riding a colt that I had only ridden two times when I went under a tree limb that knocked my hat off. Skylar saw it on the ground, picked it up and came running up, with the hat flapping in his mouth, to give it to me. My colt saw it coming and took off

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Keith and Kendra Scott live at the ranch with their daughter and son-in-law, Kensie and Scott Redden, the couple's children and a plethora of dogs.



running, and the faster the colt ran, the faster Skylar ran to catch up to give me my hat. After that experience, I stopped teaching my dogs to retrieve my hat.”

Kendra, who has now taken her son-in-law Scott Redden under her wing, begins training her dogs at birth. If it doesn't stress the mother, she picks up the dog,

touching the ears, feet and mouth. And when their eyes and ears open up, begins to get the puppy used to different noises. Soon they are socialized with other dogs and taught to “come” when called. Then they're taught to “sit” and “lie down,” for short periods of time. Soon the pups are introduced to a small group of sheep — and

the lessons on herding begin.

And Kendra makes sure a dog understands everything before they can begin to stalk. She explains, “As a trainer, my goal is to give a dog the benefit of the doubt. I always presume he's doing the best he can. I'm consistent, firm — and yet I'm fair. And, if he isn't listening, I don't yell,

but rather, I give him a moment to think about it. Hearing is not the problem, obeying is.”

In addition to training the dogs, Redden, married to Kendra's daughter, Kensie, began breeding Border Collies. In fact, last year, his company Flying E Border Collies sent puppies all over the United States:

Washington, Florida, Arizona, Montana. “And they went out to all kinds of places and for all types of jobs,” says Redden. “Ranches to work; small homes as pets. Some became search and rescue dogs, others began working with seizure victims.”

Redden breeds three females that go back to Skylar. “Those pups would go well anywhere,” Redden says enthusiastically. “They’d be great with marathon runners or kids or for herding. We have to know our dogs. Some are like professional athletes and have amazing energy. Others do well with an active family.”

Redden says that it takes about eight weeks or so to figure out a dog’s personality. “Even when they’re that young, you can tell,” explains Redden. “Do they stand back or meet you quickly? Or if you step on their toes, how quickly do they forgive you and come back to you?”

Redden waits about a year before beginning a dog’s training — lightly at first — to see if it has natural ability. Their minds are still frail, he says, and they’re still developing.

“To put it into ‘people terms,’ it’s like telling your preschooler to go out and drive your car to another town to see your grandma. Good luck!” he says with a laugh. “I’m not going to tell my puppy to go get 350 cows that are three miles out there and bring them back. Instead, I start them on small tasks. When they’re a little older, say, a teenager, I might ask him to push two sheep into a pen for me.”

And, before you know it, the puppy gets to play with the big boys — the herd itself.

“We have used our dogs for many disciplines,” says Kendra. “We’ve taken them to jails for therapy and to rest homes and let people love on them. We’ve done herding demonstrations at schools, we’ve used them for tracking. The list is endless. It’s very exciting for me to see my kids, grandkids and in-laws having an interest in what I’ve spent 50 years developing. I’m still learning and hope that I never stop.”

It’s the Border Collie’s intelligence that makes it so loyal, so trainable, and what attracted Kendra’s family to the breed whose work ethic is so natural: gathering a flock in any weather condition, keeping it safe and pleasing his master — all thanks to Old Hemp.

In 2012 a memorial was installed in Woodburn, Northumberland, Old Hemp’s birthplace to honor him and Telfer.

A perfect way to pay tribute to the *foundation sire*, or “father,” of the Border Collie breed. **vvm**

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