

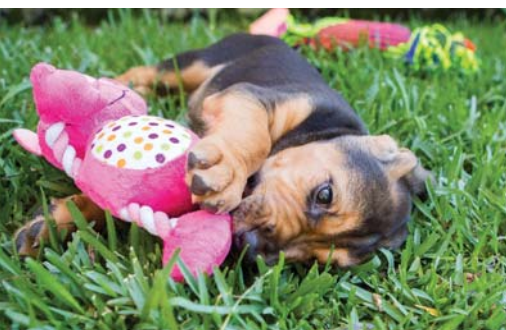
# QUIET CREEK BLOODHOUNDS A LIFETIME OF CROWNING ACHIEVEMENTS

About an hour and half from Hollywood, tucked in the San Joaquin Hills of Laguna Canyon in California, is a kennel called Quiet Creek Bloodhounds. Many blue-ribbon hounds track their beginning to Quiet Creek and breeder Susan LaCroix Hamil. A famous movie star Bloodhound, “Rocky” (CH Quiet Creek’s Stand By Me), who was “Hubert” in the 2000 comedy “Best in Show,” came from Quiet Creek.

In a hilarious scene, Christopher Guest as owner Harlan Pepper takes Hubert on a walk in the woods before a dog show. “Bloodhounds have a great nose, and they can also talk,” says Pepper, scrunching the loose skin on Hubert’s forehead as the hound smooches his cheek. “His mind is like telepathy telling the judge, ‘Hey, judge, I know what you’re thinking. I am the best dog in the whole ring.’”

“I heard about auditions for Best in Show and took Rocky and several Bloodhounds for Christopher Guest to see, and when we took Rocky out, Mr. Guest went right to him,” says Susan, the 2006 American Kennel Club (AKC) Hound Group Breeder of the Year. “Rocky was a dog who could walk in a room and capture everyone’s attention. He acted like a star.”

Rocky was sired by a real Best in Show winner, CH Badger Creek Druid. Serendipitously, Susan brought the young male to her kennel in 1991 after a visit to Switzerland to go to dog shows with her friend, Badger Creek breeder Dr. Marlene Zähler. “‘Druid’ was a life-changing dog whose temperament and conformation took us to a whole new level,” Susan says, of the pup who sat beside her the entire visit and prompted



A puppy enjoys a toy in the play yard.



Quiet Creek Bloodhound breeder Susan LaCroix Hamil cuddles a 7-week-old puppy.

a call home to husband Dr. John Hamil to alert him she was bringing back a puppy.

A people pleaser with affectionate ways, Druid was a No. 1 Bloodhound and Best of Breed winner at the 1995 and 1996 American Bloodhound Club (ABC) National Specialties. He placed fourth in the Hound Group at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in 1996.

A 1967 movie, “Cool Hand Luke,” starring Paul Newman as Luke Jackson, a prison escapee who is trailed by Bloodhounds, inspired Susan, then a teenager growing up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, who adored showing American Quarter Horses, to want a Bloodhound. “I was first attracted to their long ears





Bloodhound puppies are born with a keen sense of smell and natural tracking ability.

and expressions, and then it was their personality that kept me involved with this breed," she says.

Her uncle, a physician at the Angola State Penitentiary, helped Susan get a "Bloodhound" puppy from a litter bred there. Describing her hound "Luke," Susan says, "He was a long-eared black-and-tan dog of some description, but not Bloodhound, more like a Catahoula leopard dog, which is Louisiana's state dog."

"I wanted a real AKC Bloodhound," she says.

## A REAL BLOODHOUND

The pursuit for a "real Bloodhound" took Susan to California where her father lived and the opportunity to get a female puppy sired by a male from the acclaimed Rectory Kennels of Jackie Sinkinson out of a dam from the Marx Bloodhounds of Dick and Mitsy Hiatt. Marx's Matilda, whom she called "Sunshine," did not finish but placed in the Open class back when Bloodhounds were so rare that the Open class combined dogs and bitches.





With mentoring from breeder-judge Jerry Watson of Savannah, Tennessee, Susan got her next Bloodhound, also out of the Rectory bloodline. Ali Pasha of Wrinkle Moor is the first show Champion Susan finished. Watson also urged her to get involved

Susan is shown with Hound Group winner and Champion Tracker “Honey” (GCH CT Quiet Creek’s Tupelo Honey BN RN TDU MX MXJ MXB CGCA TKN MT MTI), whom she co-owns with Evelyn Jones. One of Quiet Creek’s most accomplished hounds, the 7-year-old is a member of the American Bloodhound Club (ABC) Working Dog Hall of Fame and Performance Hall of Fame. Her sire is CH Badger Creek Druid, an ABC Sire of Merit and member of the ABC Stud Dog Hall of Fame, and the dam is GCH Badger Hill Lady at Quiet Creek, an ABC Dam of Merit.

Left: Honey enthusiastically tracks a scent trail.

with the American Bloodhound Club. A member since 1970, Susan has served the parent club as president, AKC delegate and member of the board of directors.

Moving to California after college at Louisiana State, Susan drove her sports car hatchback cross-country and her 100-pound “Ali Pasha” rode in the back, as they traveled at night when it was cooler. Recalling the thrill of titling her first dog, she says, “It was 1972. We were at the Silver Bay Kennel Club, and Garland Bell was judging.”

Ali Pasha ignited a lot of fun, though it would be 10 years before Susan bred a Bloodhound litter. Her Quiet Creek kennel



prefix is named for a small creek behind her and John's home. A male from her first litter, CH Quiet Creek's Excalibur, called "Cal," was a Hound Group and Specialty winner. Importantly, he was an ABC Sire of Merit, having produced more than 25 Champion offspring. Similarly, Druid, whom Susan brought back from Switzerland, is an ABC Sire of Merit. They weave in and out of Quiet Creek's bloodlines.

Since Ali Pasha in 1972, Susan has finished more than 100 show Champion Bloodhounds and is 10 titles away from being an American Kennel Club Platinum Breeder of Merit, a status reserved for those who produce 100 dogs earning titles, 60 of which are prefix titles. Quiet Creek has had eight Best in Show winners and multiple Top 100 dogs and No. 1 Bloodhounds. In 2018, Quiet Creek won the Hound Group at the Santa Barbara Kennel Club Breeder's Showcase with "Bob"

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(GCH Quiet Creek's Limited Edition) and "Piper" (GCH Quiet Creek's Dance With Me) representing the breeding program.

Quiet Creek has produced seven American Bloodhound Club National Specialty Best of Breed winners, and many others that have won Winners Dog, Winners Bitch, Top Twenty, Best Stud Dog, Best Brood Bitch, and Puppy Sweepstakes. At the 2019 ABC National Specialty in Mesquite, Texas, the Best of Opposite Sex and Top Twenty winner was Piper, a 4-year-old bitch handled by pro Tara Schultz of Bonita, California.

A Best in Show winner and and No. 1 Bloodhound in all-breed points, Piper also won Best of Breed at the South Central Regional Specialty the day after the National.

The Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show Hound Group winner in 2001 was a Quiet Creek hound. "Fanny" (CH Ridge Runner Unforgettable), bred by Bill and Elaine Woodson and



Susan and her husband, Dr. John Hamil, are pictured with three generations of Quiet Creek Bloodhounds. From left are: CH Loamy Lane's Qalamity Jane of Quiet Creek ("Jane"), 2 years old, bred by Linda van der Sichel of Belgium; her sire, Multi-BIS/Multi-BISS GCH Quiet Creek's Limited Edition ("Bob"), 7 ½ years old; and his dam, CH Quiet Creek's Classic Rock ("Blondie"), 11 years old, sired by CH Quiet Creek's Stand By Me, or "Rocky," who was in the movie "Best in Show."



owned by Susan, is the top-winning Bloodhound bitch of all time. The No. 2 top-winning bitch is "Kiss" (GCH Quiet Creek's Kiss And Tell), whose paternal grandsire is Druid and whose maternal line is laced with the prominent Heather's Bloodhounds bred by Heather Whitcomb of Quebec, Canada.

"Our bitches have won over strong typey male dogs, though they've been smaller in stature and had less furnishings," John says. "To do so well with bitches speaks volumes for Susan's breeding program."

The challenges of breeding standout Bloodhounds for all-breed competition is part of the fun. "It's not just a beauty contest. They have to be sound physically and mentally," she says.

"Bloodhounds, though very intelligent, are not as easily trainable in ways that we consider other breeds to be. They are not inclined to cheerfully obey commands to sit, down and stay. They are scent hounds and are always motivated to use their nose, being out in front and leading you. You have to find ways to motivate them to enjoy being in the show ring."

Conceding that Bloodhounds are not for everyone, Susan says, "They slobber a lot and love to sit in your lap though they weigh 100 pounds or more. When you've got a Bloodhound, there's a lot of dog hair everywhere. They are scent hounds, so they must smell everything."

### RAISING LIFETIME COMPANIONS

All the things that others may not fully appreciate about Bloodhounds attract Susan to the breed. John, the veterinarian in the family, agrees. "Bloodhounds are personable but independent," he says. "I like a dog that is independent in his decision making and in daily life."

The Quiet Creek Kennel is built into the canyon behind the house where the Hamils live. It is about 26 steps up a hill, reminiscent of the treehouse in Disney's movie "Swiss Family Robinson," especially since an 80-foot eucalyptus tree grows right next to the deck of the small maternity suite building. Adjacent to this building is the the adult dog kennel with individual dog houses and ample space for the large-breed hounds.

Seven-week-old puppies sired by Bob out of Legend's Dubbel Althea were residing in the suite in late August, soon to



Quiet Creek puppies learn to eat from individual food bowls.



Dr. John Hamil, a retired veterinarian, is shown in the kennel with adult Bloodhounds.

transition to their puppy homes at 9 weeks of age. The puppies go back to Druid through Bob's granddam CH Vodessa du Hameau Jouas. Hands-on attention and socialization is underway.

Right on schedule, the puppies have had their first vaccinations. They are growing rapidly and are eager to devour their meals of *Purina Pro Plan FOCUS Puppy Large Breed Chicken & Rice Formula* that Susan mixes with warm water.

"The nutrition our Bloodhound puppies get from *Purina Pro Plan* is optimal for supporting their growth, and they love the food," she says. "We feed our adult dogs *Purina Pro Plan SPORT ACTIVE 26/16 Formula* and have had tremendous success feeding *Purina Pro Plan BRIGHT MIND Adult 7+ Large Breed Formula* to older dogs."

Picking up two puppies and cuddling them close, Susan says, "We want to engender calmness in them. When they are 7 weeks, we start teaching them to sit before any barrier. Even before they learn to walk on a leash, they are taught to sit and down and to accept a belly rub. We touch their feet and look in their eyes. We want to instill in them behaviors that are conducive for being lifetime companions. Being patient is the most important thing."

Choosing puppies for owners based on whether it is a potential show or training home is part of the ongoing temperament assessment. "We have some people who are on their third dog from us," John says.



Shown with "Seven" (CH Quiet Creek's All In At Heathers), Susan keeps a slobber towel handy, as Bloodhounds drool because of their deep hanging flews.





Taking in the sunset over Laguna Beach near their home in California, Susan and John relax with “Bob.” The 7 ½-year-old retired show dog lives with Bruce and Tara Schultz, as Tara fell in love with Bob while campaigning him. Bruce, and now his wife, Tara, has handled the Quiet Creek Bloodhounds for over 30 years.

“They come back because they like our dogs’ temperaments and good health. Breeding a lifetime companion is a real achievement.”

Health and health testing are paramount at Quiet Creek. Susan, who for many years worked as a registered veterinary technician, realizes the importance of using health tests as tools to help her breeding program. She is an AKC delegate representing the all-breed Shoreline Dog Fanciers Club and has been chair of the AKC Delegates’ Committee on Canine Health for 20 years. She also is a member of the board of directors of the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA). Through these roles, she encouraged and supported the development of the Canine Health Information Center (CHIC) public database for an individual dog’s health tests.

She also is a member of the board of directors of the AKC Canine Health Foundation. Recently, Susan was appointed by the AKC to an ad hoc DNA Committee that is working to educate

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Susan LaCroix Hamil  
Quiet Creek Bloodhounds

breeders about genetic testing and terminology such as co-efficient of inbreeding and how it impacts their breeding program.

Susan’s deep love for Bloodhounds, which began 50 years ago, is inspirational. Along with her many commitments in the U.S., she has established Quiet Creek co-breeding relationships around the world, including with breeders in Italy, South Africa, Canada, and Brazil. She has judged the American Bloodhound Club National Specialty, as well as shows in England, Italy, Finland, and France. Quiet Creek Bloodhounds are known globally.

As John says, “The dogs have done so much for us. We’ve gotten to meet people and go places that we would not have otherwise.”

Much like her beloved breed, Susan is independent, determined and relentless when she believes in a cause. The Bloodhound breed without a doubt is better today, thanks to Susan Hamil and her Quiet Creek hounds. ■