



# The Quiet ONES

By Sue M. Copeland



## **Passionate. Kind. Generous. Tireless.**

Those are just a few of the words used by dog-show people to describe Dr. Duane Butherus and his wife, Connie.

"Duane and Connie are the epitome of what dog people should be," says Ann Viklund, Director of Conformation for the Breeder-Enthusiast Group at Nestle Purina PetCare. "They're breeders and exhibitors.

They give generously of their time and experience. They bring new people to the sport."

That a couple who grew up with no show-dog background could earn such respect in the fancy is a tribute to their character. That they continue to work tirelessly after devoting 50-plus years to dogs and dog shows—despite having had full-time careers—is a tribute to their passion.



Meet A. Duane Butherus, PhD and his wife, Connie, who work behind the dog-show scenes to better not only their Afghan Hounds, but also the health of *all* dogs.

## THE START

“Neither of us had a dog-show background,” says Duane. “We got a couple of pet dogs when we were in grad school, just after we were married. They were ‘farm collies;’ my father’s family were farmers in Western Kansas. The first collie came from there. The second was supposed to be a Sheltie, but it wasn’t. We didn’t care—we loved them.”

The couple graduated, Duane with a PhD in chemistry, and Connie with a master’s degree in nursing, then moved to New Jersey, not far from New York City. Duane started his career with Bell Laboratories, and Connie continued hers teaching at a nursing school. On weekends, they savored the “Big Apple.”



**Duane and Rajah proved a formidable pair in the Afghan ring. “I got to know Duane’s rear end, and Rajah’s rear end very well,” says Dr. Jerry Klein, “because for a long time, I was going second to them!”**

“We decided we were going to take advantage of the fun the city had to offer,” says Connie. Adds Duane, “We went to cat shows. We went to horse shows. We went to art galleries and museums.”

Fate stepped in when the young couple heard about the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. The year was 1967.

“That’s the first dog show we’d ever gone to,” says Connie. “We were spellbound.”

They returned the following year and learned about the benching area, where the public could meet the breeds. Connie had a childhood friend who bred Afghan Hounds, so they were aware of—and drawn to—the breed. “We knew we wanted to get an Afghan or a Sheltie,” explains Duane. “But it was the Afghan people who made our choice for us. They were very friendly. They welcomed us into their benching area and gave us wine. They were having fun! We said to ourselves, ‘This is a crowd we could join.’”

## AFGHANS AT A GLANCE

Here are some insider insights about Duane and Connie’s beloved breed.

### *From Duane and Connie:*

- “They’re beguiling. Like potato chips, you can’t just have one.”
- “They’re independent but can be very loyal. They’re also intelligent. Some people think they aren’t, but an Afghan’s drive is to hunt and survive, which is what they were bred for—not to please you. They are functional hounds.”
- “Many of them have a sense of humor. There’s a gaiety about them. They are also impetuous, and a lot of fun.”
- “They’re sight hounds, so they have a very strong prey drive. You need six-foot fencing to contain them—they won’t hesitate to jump a fence to pursue prey.”
- “We’ve had both low- and high-energy Afghans. But they’re still hounds, some are lower key than many working or herding breeds.”
- “They’re a high-maintenance breed that requires regular grooming, socialization, and exercise. But they’re worth it. They surround us with beauty.”
- “Breed-number wise, Afghans peaked in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s. They currently rank 111 out of 193 AKC-recognized breeds.”

### *From Jerry Klein, DVM:*

- “Our breed has been around for thousands of years. It was developed in the remote villages in Afghanistan, before there were veterinarians. There truly was ‘survival of the fittest’ going on.”
- “As a result, they are blessed as a breed not to be plagued with many of the conditions or diseases that some more recent breeds have acquired.”
- “Afghans aren’t known for problems like epilepsy, or significant allergies. They don’t have a lot of metabolic issues. When older, they may develop tooth problems, or an occasional cancer. But rarely do they have conditions young in life.”
- “We test for hips, juvenile cataracts, and hypothyroid. We have learned that normal thyroid ranges may vary in different breeds of dogs, most notably sight hounds.”
- “Hip morphology can vary in Afghans, due to the ratio of height (dogs can reach 27 inches) to weight (dogs can reach 60 pounds); they are tall and lean, compared to many other large breeds. Rarely do you see a crippled Afghan Hound at 3 years of age due to hip dysplasia. That’s what’s so fascinating about ancient breeds from the Middle East—natural selection worked to the point that they had to be healthy enough to survive on their own. They were treated as livestock, not pets.”
- “The average lifespan is typically 12 to 14 years. I’ve had one live to 15; the youngest I’ve had to euthanize was 11 years old, and that was due to an accident.”



LEARNING TOGETHER

In 1991, Duane and Connie placed an ad in their local paper, seeking part-time grooming and kennel help. A young mother of two named Claire Stephenson, who had no show-dog (nor dog-show) experience, applied for the job. Over 30 years later, Claire is still grooming Afghans for them.

"I'm an animal lover," says Claire. "But I'd never had any professional experience in the dog world when I applied for the job. I had two small children and a husband. I needed a job that enabled me to stay home if one of my kids got sick. Duane and Connie needed a groomer. We clicked. It's worked out well."

"We all learned about show dogs together," says Connie. "Claire would not only groom the dogs, but on weekends, when we'd be away at shows, she'd stay at our place to take care of the ones that stayed behind. She'd move in with her kids and her husband. Claire became family."

"I learned to groom through trial and error," says Claire. "I also watched a lot of videos, and always asked for advice. Rosemary Sutton, a handler in San Diego, CA, was a big help to me. I used to call and ask her a lot of questions! She probably doesn't even know how much she helped me."

Claire had to learn fast. "At one point, she was maintaining

almost double-digit show coats on our Afghans. We'd have between six and 10 dogs actively showing," says Duane. Adds Connie, "She's known to our dog-show friends as St. Claire!"

"There were 18 dogs there when I first started, including 11 puppies," recalls Claire. "I'd take care of the kennel and groom two to three dogs a day. It takes between two-and-a-half and four-and-a-half hours per dog, depending on how much coat the dog has, and whether you're show-dog grooming, or not. Maintenance grooming is on the shorter end, time-wise."

"Now I only groom one dog a day," she says. "That's all my back will allow!"

For Claire, working with the dogs is a labor of love. "I've never seen a more beautiful breed than the Afghan. I love the dogs—I'm like a mama bear with them." Working for Duane and Connie is also a labor of love. "They are the most wonderful people to everyone around them. They're so obliging. They're always willing to help with anything—they work hard. You couldn't ask for better people to work for. They love the dogs and the sport."

Her secret to success in the kennel? "You treat the dogs like kids. They each have their own personality. You feed them. You give them medication when they need it. You hug them. You love them. Then you give them a bath."

Says Connie, "The Sheltie people were nice, too. We just felt at home with the Afghan crowd. Plus, Afghans were very popular back then. It's the breed of the aging flower child! That was our generation."

Adds Duane, "We were learning that the dogs are very important. But so are the people."

Their first Afghan was a rescue bitch named Taj. "We just loved her" says Connie. Taj cemented their attraction to the breed.

HOOKED!

After Taj had passed away, Connie called her breeder friend and learned she had a dog available. "Rajah" (Nickolej Royal Rajah) soon joined the Butherus household. To learn more about their new breed and meet other Afghan aficionados, the couple took Rajah to some local matches. Says Duane, "We just kind of showed up. We certainly didn't distinguish ourselves."

That soon changed. "The third one we took Rajah to was a specialty match," recalls Duane. "When we walked up to enter, the volunteer asked what class we wanted to go in. We had no idea. Then we saw the word 'novice' by one of the classes, and said, 'that one!'"

There were 120 Afghans entered in the match. "We ended up winning the novice class," says Duane. "We didn't know anyone there. The match was at a county fairground. We'd borrowed a grooming table from a friend and were set up behind a big tractor.

After we won, some people came over and introduced themselves. One of them was Afghan breeder Glorvina Schwartz. We'd seen her show at Westminster and had read about her in the *New York Times*. She asked, 'Who is this dog?'"

Duane and Connie quickly pulled out Rajah's pedigree. "Glorvina studied it and said, 'This is not part of my line, but I know someone here who has similar lines,'" says Duane. "She brought over well-known breeders Dr. Edna Martin and the late Roy Horn. We learned more about bloodlines from Roy, and as much about Afghan grooming and handling as we could before I had to take Rajah back in the ring for Best in Specialty Match."

That crash course paid off: Rajah and Duane won. Laughs Duane, "We were hooked!"

Dog shows became the couple's weekend activity. Duane road worked Rajah at night when he got home from work. As for grooming a show-coat, he recalls, "We learned by reading books."

Adds Connie, "We also learned by watching other people. Good people. We only 'plagiarized' from the best!" As the busy couple added breeding to their program, they hired a part-time helper for their growing kennel. (See "Learning Together" above.)

In the meantime, Duane and Rajah continued their winning ways. "I got to meet Duane in the show ring in the early '70s," recalls Jerry Klein, DVM, AKC Chief Veterinary Officer. "He was showing his beautiful dog, Rajah. I was handling dogs for other people at the time. I got to know Duane's rear end, and Rajah's rear end very well, because



Duane and Connie's "Gabe" (Ch. Kurabi Gibril), co-owned by Elizabeth Bryant, appeared in CHF's 2017 Champions for Canine Health Calendar. Gabe was handled by Anna Stromberg and Morgan Mattioli.

## THE QUIET ONES



Duane and fellow Afghan breeder, Dr. Jerry Klein, serve on CHF's Scientific Review Committee together. Says Jerry, "He always comes at the research from an intelligent, practical background. Duane wants science that helps dogs not only today, but also in the future."

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"Duane was always very polite and kind," he recalls. "When I got my own Afghans, the dogs I started with were from the same lineage as Rajah; they all were from a kennel named Mecca. So there was a kinship, due to the lineage connection. Afghan entries were huge back then, so we spent a lot of time together in the ring chasing majors. Duane and Connie were always the consummate breeder/owner/handlers. They were incredibly good sports. They weren't showy about their wins. They were both very helpful and respectful of what we all in the breed were doing."

Rajah proved to be an important sire, as well as show dog, launching Duane and Connie's Ararat kennel name. "His daughter, Ararat Aperitif Of Chanhu, was our foundation bitch," says Connie. "She produced multiple specialty and group-winning dogs." Their program has also produced a top-producing dam and sire in the breed, several International Champions, and over 45 AKC Champions, some with additional earned titles.

"Duane and Connie never bred a lot of dogs," says Jerry. "They breed selectively, trying to bring their bloodline along. Their dogs always have a similar look and type."

Afghans are a breed of preservation, not innovation, says Duane. Adds Connie, "We didn't make breeding decisions based on show records. We used the breed standard to

assess the bitch, her littermates, and the sires. We looked at genotype, phenotype, temperament, and health. Correct movement was—and is—essential. It reflects function, timing, and attitude."

And, since they're both devoted to dogs and have science backgrounds, the aspect of breed health—indeed, canine health—grew into another passion.

### BEYOND THEIR BREED

"I met Duane and Connie through the Delaware Water Gap Kennel Club of western New Jersey," says Wayne Ferguson, president of the Kennel Club of Philadelphia (KCP) and Morris & Essex Kennel Club. "With their hard work and generosity, they quickly became key parts of the club. We soon were close friends."

"When AKC founded the Canine Health Foundation (CHF; akcchf.org) in 1995 to fund top humane research into canine health problems," he continues, "I was invited to join its Board of Directors. I knew with Duane's attention to detail, his dog and science background, and his skill for evaluating complex issues, he'd be invaluable in the future for helping CHF review requests for research grants."

Duane joined CHF's Grants Committee (now the Scientific Review Committee, or SRC) in 2001. "I was fascinated by the science of it all," he says. He was asked to join CHF's Board of Directors a year later and served as Board Chairman from 2013 to 2015. CHF celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 2020; Duane has been part of the Foundation for 20 of those years, so has seen its positive impact on canine health.

"For instance, we've put \$4.1 million toward studying hemangiosarcoma, a fatal canine cancer," he says. "We're now starting to see a bit of progress in detection and treatment. But these big health issues, such as hemangiosarcoma and epilepsy, will continue to take time and money to solve."

Much of CHF's donations come from individuals, plus breed and all-breed clubs. The Kennel Club of Philadelphia donated \$100,000 to CHF in 2019; Duane is a member and officer of that club. Says Ann, who's also on the Boards of CHF and KCP, "Duane's involvement in other clubs has benefitted not only those clubs, but also CHF." (For more information on Duane and Connie's breed and all-breed club involvement, see "Perfect Partners" on the next page.)

Though she isn't on CHF's Board, Connie works tirelessly to help promote the Foundation.

"Connie stays behind the scenes. And the amount of



As Chairman of the CHF Board of Directors in 2016, Duane joined then-CHF CEO Dr. Diane Brown (right) to accept a Purina donation presented by CHF Board Member and Purina Director of Conformation, Breeder-Enthusiast Group, Ann Viklund (center) at the Westminster Kennel Club dog show.



PERFECT PARTNERS

They finish each other's sentences. They do everything together. They are "Duane-and-Connie." Not Duane. And Connie.

"I can't think of one without the other," says Jerry Klein, DVM. "They are the yin and yang to each other. They're definitely a *couple*, not only in dogs, but also in their personal lives. It's been one of life's blessings to meet them. If we'd not been involved in dogs, we'd probably never have crossed paths."

Duane and Connie's decades of devotion to their breed include both having served as president of the Afghan Hound Club of America (AHCA), as well as delegates and on multiple boards and committees for the club. Duane also was honored with the assignment of judging the AHCA National Specialty Show in 2005; he's judged specialty shows in Europe, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. As their involvement in showing and breeding expanded, they also became involved in numerous hound and all-breed clubs. Here are some highlights.

**DUANE**

- Board member and Scientific Review Committee, AKC Canine Health Foundation (akcchf.org); Chairman of the Board 2013 to 2015
- Member, Afghan Hound Club of America, over 30 years (past President and Board member)
- AKC Delegate
- Member, Afghan Hound Club of Northern New Jersey
- Member, Board of Directors, Tuxedo Park Kennel Club
- Secretary, Kennel Club of Philadelphia
- Member, Morris & Essex Kennel Club
- Founding member, Central New Jersey Hound Association
- Delegate and Corresponding Secretary, Delaware Water Gap Kennel Club

**CONNIE**

- Member, Afghan Hound Club of America, over 30 years (past President and Board member)
- AKC Delegate and Board member
- Member, Afghan Hound Club of Northern New Jersey (past President)
- Executive Committee, Board of Directors, Show Secretary, Morris & Essex Kennel Club
- Trophy Chairman, Kennel Club of Philadelphia
- Corresponding Secretary, Afghan Hound Club of Northern New Jersey
- Member and Chief Steward, Tuxedo Park Kennel Club
- Founding member, past President, current Vice President, Central New Jersey Hound Association
- Treasurer, Delaware Water Gap Kennel Club

Well-known AKC judge and former CHF Board member Cindy Vogels sums up their contributions: "Duane and Connie's devotion to CHF, to the sport, to their dogs, and to each other is inspiring."

work she gets done is amazing," says Diane Brown, DVM, PhD, Dipl. ACVP, and former Chief Executive Officer of CHF. "She would come on her own dime to the CHF office in Raleigh, NC, and stay for a week to help put together logistics for the CHF National Parent Club Canine Health Conference. By the time she'd leave, she'd have the details wrapped up. She and Duane will haul CHF materials to their breed and all-breed events, too. They'll set up a table and educate visitors on canine health. They've been tireless champions of CHF, and of dogs, for decades."



Though not a CHF Board member, Connie works behind the scenes to help with such events as the CHF National Parent Club Canine Health Conference. Says Dr. Diane Brown of Duane and Connie, "They've been tireless champions of CHF, and of dogs, for decades."

"They're the quiet ones," she continues. "They work hard, to very high standards, without seeking recognition. For CHF, they've not only contributed to health and science, but have also contributed to volunteerism with the Foundation, and outreach to other clubs in which they serve."

Wayne sums it up: "They're the Energizer Bunnies of the dog world."

Duane has retired from Bell Laboratories, and now teaches chemistry at a local university. His teaching skills are seen as an added benefit to the Foundation. "He brings a lifetime of scientific experience, and that of an educator, to CHF," says Mary Smith, BVM&S, PhD, DACVIM, a CHF Board Member, SRC committee member, and former SRC Chairman. "And he isn't only interested in Afghan- or hound-related research. He's

interested in the welfare of all dogs. Because of his longtime involvement with them, he has a great perspective about what are the most important issues."

Says Jerry, "When we have our SRC conference calls, I'll hear Duane asking, 'How is this research going to help this particular breed, or dogs in general? How will it help their owners?' He always comes at the research from an intelligent, practical background. Duane wants science that helps dogs not only today, but also in the future."

"There are remarkable people in the dog world," says Diane. "Many of them affiliate themselves with CHF. Duane and Connie are an integral part of that."

Adds Ann, "They are an amazing couple. I tell people that they're who I truly want to be when I grow up."

