



# *The* **ALPENHORN**

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***50th Anniversary of  
Bernese Mountain Dogs in America***

# 50th Anniversary of Bernese Mountain Dogs in America 1937 to 1987

It seemed to begin so simply. In the May 1, 1937, Issue of the American Kennel Gazette there was a brief notice: "New Breed Admitted to Stud Book. Bernese Mountain Dog." There followed the newly accepted "Standard of Perfection" for the breed, which was admitted to the Working Group.

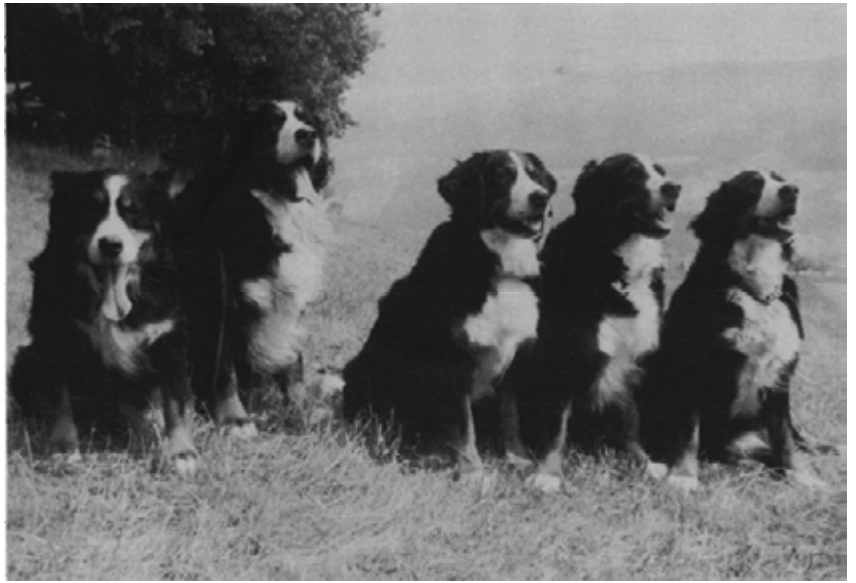
Recognition of the Bernese Mountain Dog by the American Kennel Club actually took place at the meeting of April 13, 1937. There were, we may be sure, many events, discussions, meetings, and deliberations leading up to this momentous recognition. The breed had, of course, been recognized and promoted in its Swiss homeland for many decades prior to this recognition of its status by the American Kennel Club. Active promotion of the breed by Mrs. L. Egg-Leach of England and Switzerland and by the American fancier Glen Shadow were among these events.

On the occasion of the 50th, "Golden," Anniversary of the recognition of the Bernese Mountain Dog in America, this issue of the newsletter of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America is devoted to a retrospective view of these dogs. Deciphering their history must be based on a number of sources: archaeological records give us some clues about Swiss dogs; works of art can be used to document how these farmers' dogs developed; the history of the breed since its initial promotion by Swiss dog fanciers, starting in 1892, is known from writings of Professor Albert Heim and other early fanciers. The history of these dogs in America can be told from records of the American Kennel Club and, since its founding in 1968, from those of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America.

Thanks are due to Mary Alice Eschweiler, Chairman of the Records Committee, for providing valuable information from the Club's archives; to Robert and Brenda Abrams and Dora Gruber for help with the photographs; to Esther Mueller for providing background information on the breed; to Deborah Godfrey and Elizabeth Hill for arranging the computer programs that were used in this Issue; to Bill and Mary Jo Thomson for critical reading of the manuscript; and to Roberta Vesley and the Library of the American Kennel Club for providing information from stud books and registers. Some of the information here appeared in the first (1968-1972) issue of the Yearbooks of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America. The cover features (top) Fridy v. Haslenbach (A-156,753), first Bernese to be registered by the AKC in 1937, and Ch. Taliesin Raclette d'Aldo (WF169978), a representative of the breed today.

--Mary R. Dawson

**Figure 1. A group of modern Bernese Mountain Dogs in Switzerland. Dürsrüti dogs, left to right, Quela, Wacho, Bunta, Senta, and Bunta v. Mariland.**



## **PART 1. THE FARM DOGS OF SWITZERLAND**

As for many modern purebred dogs, and especially for those stemming from association with farming, the early history of the Bernese Mountain Dog (Berner Sennenhund) is clouded in obscurity. Until purebreeding started, which in the case of our breed occurred around the end of the 19th century, utility ruled in breeding dogs. Farmers wanted dogs that were useful. Apparently our dogs stem from all purpose farmers' dogs that were versatile, being capable of serving as watchdogs around the farmstead as well as drovers, workers and companions for the alpine herdsmen (Sennen), and cart dogs.

Thus, in tracing the prehistory of our breed we must look to varied sources that may tell something in general about the development of dogs in Switzerland and in particular about "farmers' dogs."

The area that is now Switzerland has a long claim to the association between man and dog. In the archaeological sites of the Swiss "lake dwellers" (Pfahlbauern), who inhabited part of central Switzerland in Neolithic times, around 2000 to 3000 BC, bones of small to medium sized dogs are present. Many of the bones represent old individuals. Other domestic animals

of these Neolithic farmers also tended to be small. Size indicates that selective breeding for some characters was being practiced by these early herdsmen. Later Neolithic sites contain remains of larger dogs, as do some from Celtic people in the Iron Age. Better known is the record of the Romans, who came north across the Alps during the first century BC. The Romans came intending to provision their troops and to stay, for they brought with them herds of cattle and other livestock. It is very likely that droving dogs were used in controlling these herds. The Roman site of Vindonissa, dating from the first century AD, contains bones of a dog. According to the Swiss anatomist Theodore Studer, who studied the remains around 1901, the skull is about the size of that of a Bernese farmers' dog. This evidence has been incorrectly used to show that Bernese Mountain Dogs lived at the time of the Romans, whereas what it does show is simply that large dogs were present in the Roman's state of Helvetia. Switzerland north of the Alps was an active crossroads for movement of tribes and invaders, and increasing pressures from Germanic tribes finally led to the fall of the Romans in Helvetia. Surely these invading "barbarians" had dogs for varied purposes and of varied sizes and appearances, but the archaeological record is not extensive.

Into and through the Middle Ages the written record dealing with farmers' dogs in Switzerland is poor. It is known that in the 13th century the nobles in Switzerland prized their hunting dogs - but allowed no mixing of these treasured creatures with the lowly farmers' dogs. Meanwhile, farmers continued using utility as the highest requisite for a dog. Some regional development of different strains probably occurred in relatively isolated valleys.

Both Albert Heim, an early promoter of Swiss farmers' dogs, and later Hans Räber, editor of *Hundesport*, the official publication of the Swiss Kennel Club, turned to old paintings in attempts to trace the background of these dogs. Most paintings were done of the lap dogs and hunting companions of the rich and noble, but a few clues to the background of the Sennenhunde were found. One painting dating to 1651 by the Dutch painter Paulus Potter shows a large tricolored dog that could easily be a Bernese Mountain Dog.



Figure 2. Detail from a painting by Potter (1651) showing a dog resembling the Bernese of today (from Räber, 1984)

Presence of a Swiss farm dog in Holland could be explained, for herds of cows, and probably the dogs that drove the herds, were items of commerce between the farmers of Switzerland and the Netherlands. Later (ca. 1773) paintings by the Swiss painter Freudenberg show farm scenes with large tricolored dogs, again probably related to the Bärri and Blässis of today.

Up until and through this time emphasis in dog breeding continued to be utility. It wasn't until dog fanciers entered the picture, around the middle of the 19th century, that breeding programs were developed that would preserve the qualities of the old breeds. Once kennel clubs started, stud books closed, and pedigrees remained "pure", breeds as they are recognized today made their appearance. For the Bernese Mountain Dog this event in their development can be traced to Switzerland in the 1890s.

#### PART 2. THE DÜRRBÄCHLERS

In the latter part of the 19th century many Swiss dog fanciers began importing foreign breeds. The only Swiss breed that was popular was the Saint Bernard. The local dogs, known as farmers' dogs, cheese factory dogs, Gelbbäckler ("Yellow Cheeks"), or Vieräuger ("Four Eyes", in reference to the spots over the eyes) were largely forgotten. But a few fanciers remembered the old local dogs and decided to do all they could to preserve and promote them. Notable among these was Franz Schertenleib of Burgdorf near Bern, who in 1892 went to look for a certain type of dog that his father had told about. In the Dürrbach region south of Bern he found a dog that old timers in Burgdorf recognized as a Gelbbäckler. Subsequently Schertenleib returned to the Dürrbach region and bought more dogs, and then searched for other individuals in the remote farm regions of the Canton of Bern. These are the dogs that led to the Bernese Mountain Dog.

Soon Schertenleib was joined in his efforts by other fanciers and was also assisted by Professor Albert Heim, a noted geologist as well as a dog fancier. The dogs were called Dürrbächlers, after their native area.





Figure 3. Franz Schertenleib, who searched the Dürnbach area for dogs in 1892 (photo from Herr Iseli).

In 1899 Mr. Probst drew attention to the Dürnbächlers in the publication Centralblatt. Later, in 1904, he and a photographer, Mr. Deppeler, arranged an experimental class for these dogs at the International Swiss Kennel Club show in Bern. Six dogs and one bitch were entered. Four of these seven were registered by the Swiss Kennel Club in 1905 (Phylax, no. 2698; Prinz, no. 2699; Ringgi, no. 2700; and Belline, no. 2701). Eight additional dogs were registered in 1908. For about ten years dogs of unknown parentage were accepted for registration by the Swiss Kennel Club, following their approval by one of three experts (Schertenleib, Mumenthaler, Scheidegger). Meanwhile, the fanciers formed the Schweizerischer Dürnbach-Club in 1907, with headquarters in Burgdorf. Charter members were: Messrs. Mumenthaler (president), Schafroth, Gunther, Heiniger, Schertenleib, Haldimann, Ritz, Gsteiger, Luthi, Scheidegger, Bracher. In 1908 the group changed its name at the suggestion

of Professor Heim, who proposed the name Berner Sennenhund, noting that the breed really originated in the entire Canton of Bern, whereas Dürnbach was only a small region that served as a refugium for the dogs when other breeds were becoming popular. Thus was born the Berner-Sennenhund Klub (later the Schweizerische Klub für Berner Sennenhunde). A Senn or Senner is an Alpine herdsman, so the literal translation of Berner Sennenhund would be "Bernese Alpine Herdsman's Dog."



Figure 4. The hotel at Dürnbach where early Dürnbächler fanciers gathered (photo by Erwin Munter, Longstorf).

Both the Club and the breed grew well. A Specialty Show was held in 1910 in Burgdorf, at which all with a Bernese type of dog were invited to exhibit. One hundred and seven dogs were shown to judge Professor Heim, who found that three-quarters of them were worthy representatives and good for breeding. Many of these dogs, of course, were of unknown pedigree, but they were accepted on the basis of type. There was still considerable variation in some features, and, according to one authority (Rittmeister v. Stephanitz, Der deutsche Scahäferhund, January, 1921), some early Berners even had a red or yellow-red ground color instead of black.

By 1911 the Swiss Bernese club had forty members. As these native dogs became known in their homeland, their popularity increased. By 1922 58 were entered in the Swiss Kennel Club Registry; this grew to 129 in 1939, just after the breed was recognized in America, and 336 in 1948. In that same year, 1948, although the stud book had been closed for some time, the possibility of bringing fresh blood into the breed was discussed. It is not clear whether this was done deliberately or as an accident. The Berner Sennenhund bitch Christine v. Lux had seven puppies sired by the Newfoundland Pluto v. Erlengut. All the puppies looked like Newfoundlands with small white markings on the feet. One female and three males were kept. The female was mated with the Berner Sennenhund Aldo v. Tieffurt and had a litter of eight: one male and one female resembled Berners but the male had no white on the hind feet; one male and one female were Berners but lacked a blaze; two males were black with white toes, white spots on the chin, and a white spot on the chest; two, stillborn, had irregular blazes. One of the females, Christine, was mated with the Berner Osi v. Allenluften. The five resulting puppies had all the markings of a Berner but only two, Alex and Bella, survived. Of these, the male, Alex v. Angstorf became very important as a stud dog and champion. He sired 51 litters, from which no all black dogs appeared. The experimental cross breeding was counted as a success, and indeed Alex v. Angstorf can be found in the pedigree of many of the dogs of today.

### PART 3. THE NEW AMERICANS

The question of when the first Swiss farmers' dogs came to America may never be answered to the satisfaction of keepers of records. Surely it may be speculated that Swiss farmers who emigrated to the New World might have brought with them their indispensable dogs for assistance around the farm. Old photographs in the annals of American farming give some tantalizing suggestions about the presence of such dogs in America. So far as firm records are concerned, Arthur Hesser, a noted judge in America and a Swiss native, provided the following background (letter to Dora Gruber, December 6, 1977). "In

January 1926, the farmer Isaac Schiess of Florence, Kansas, bought the bitch Donna von der Rothöhe SHSB 23314, born 5/27/25, sired by Max Pulfer 21212 ex Trix von der Rothöhe, bred by Franz Schertenleib; and the dog Poincare von Sumiswald SHSB 21565, born July 24, 1924, sired by Leo Greiner SHSB 9018 ex Netti Iseli, bred by Fr. Iseli. The importer wanted to register this pair with the American Kennel Club, but was not successful in his attempt, although Carl Wittwer, the Swiss stud book registrar (SHSB Stammbuchführer) made every effort to convince the AKC that the Berner Sennenhund was a pure bred Swiss dog. Poincare and Donna produced a litter of five, born May 29, 1926. Since the AKC had refused registration for the parents, the same applied to the litter, and the breeder Schiess therefore registered the five with the SKG under the kennel name "of the Clover Leaf SHSB 25546/25550."



Figure 5. Is this a Bernese puppy in this photo from turn-of-the-century Nebraska?

In the American Kennel Gazette of June 1, 1935, there appeared an article by Mrs. L. Egg-Leach, an English lady living in Switzerland. "The Bernese is a Loyal Dog of the Swiss Alps" was the enthusiastic title of the article, in which Mrs. Egg-Leach extolled the virtues of the breed and presented attractive photographs of adults and puppies. She described her first encounter with the Bernese in Switzerland as follows: "One day, I saw from afar, what I thought was a tricolor collie, harnessed to a small wagon, filled with milk-cans, taking the milk from house to house. I had read much about sled-dogs

and had seen many photographs of them, but I had never seen a dog in harness before; above all, one of my lifelong favorites. It was too much for me. A dog was a companion and friend to me, not something to be used as a beast of burden.

"I think I lost my head at the time. I forgot, for the moment that I was in a strange land, and that strange lands had strange customs, I had still much to learn. Not only was my interest awakened, but my indignation was aroused at such a sight. When the dog came nearer, I saw that it was a totally different breed. But to me it was a four-footed friend. I had never read nor heard of this breed before, and my interest soon developed into admiration.

"The dog was well cared for, and his master seemed kind to him. Certainly the master did not deserve the bitter reproaches I gave him. I am thankful to this day that he could not understand the few words I could-or thought I could-speak of his language, for they were not complimentary at all. I have since learned much about the draught-dogs, and am fully convinced that they are happier at work than when idle."

#### **PART 4. RECOGNITION BY THE AKC**

Mrs. Egg-Leach's enthusiastic article stirred the interest of at least one reader, one who was to become very important for the Bernese in America. The reader was Glen L. Shadow of Ruston, Louisiana. In an article in the January, 1938, issue of Western Kennel World Mr. Shadow wrote about the effect of the article on him and the results of his interest. His own words tell it best: "In June, 1935, while recovering from an attack of influenza, I read an article published in the American Kennel Gazette, written by Mrs. L. Egg-Leach of Winterthur, Switzerland, about the Bernese Mountain Dogs of the Swiss Alps. I read this article some two or three times as this was the dog that I so much admired from the pictures showing the dogs drawing the milk carts in my first grade reader when I was a child.

"The childish desire to own some of these dogs was not completely abandoned, and while I was in France in 1918 and 1919, I had the opportunity of seeing some of these dogs which rekindled this childhood fancy.

Because the financial circumstance did not permit me to buy or import these dogs at that time it was necessary for me to abandon the idea as there were none to be had in the United States and no one had thought enough of this particular breed to import them.

"After reading Mrs. Egg-Leach's article, I took the liberty to write her and ask for further information regarding them as well as some assistance in making a purchase. After some months of correspondence and untiring efforts on the part of Mrs. Egg-Leach, she succeeded in buying for me on August 30, 1936, Fridy v Haslenbach from Mr. Fritz Stalder, breeder. This was the best female dog of her breed in all Europe and it is useless to say that a very fancy price was required to purchase this bitch. Fridy was awarded first prize in the 1935 dog show at Basle; also Excellent and C.A.C.I.B., which is the highest champion certificate on the continent of Europe, called the International Beauty Championship Certificate, and all who have seen her since her arrival in the United States agree that it would be difficult to produce a more perfect or more beautiful dog.

"On September 28, 1936, I forwarded draft to Mrs. Egg-Leach to purchase Quell v Tiergarten (Felix, kennel name) from Mr. G. Haiti. He was not the best to be had as the owner of the best male refused to sell him at any price."

Mr. Shadow's admiration for these dogs is clearly shown later in the article where he wrote, "Anyone looking into these dogs' deep brown eyes, can see that they have a wonderful understanding and a kind, loving disposition. They are most affectionate toward children and are quite courageous in defending their rights. As a working dog I have never seen one that I think equals the Bernese Dog and if the homes that have suffered the loss of children from vicious kidnappers had had one of these dogs as a pet and pal for their child, no one would have been able to molest them without first killing the dog."

Clearly the influence of Mr. Shadow and his enthusiasm for the breed was vital to the recognition of these dogs by the American Kennel Club. Mr. Shadow was

modest about this achievement, writing simply: "On April 21, 1937, I had a letter from Mr. Perry B. Rice, Secretary of the American Kennel Club, stating that the Board of Directors held a meeting on Tuesday, April 13, 1937, and it was officially decided to recognize the Bernese Mountain Dog as a new breed in the Working Class. These are the first and only dogs of this breed to ever be registered with the American Kennel Club or the Secretary of Agriculture."

The June 1, 1937 issue of American Kennel Club Registrations carried the listings of the first two Bernese Mountain Dogs ever registered in this country, Mr. Shadow's Fridy and Felix. They are:

FRIDY V HASLENBACH (B)(A-156,753)-Glen L. Shadow. (Br) Frank Stalder, Switzerland. (Wh) Mar. 9, 1931. Blk, tn & wh mkgs. By Alex v Lotzwil out of Cornelia v Haslenbach by Ajax v Bucheggberg out of Belline v Binsberg by Nero v Burrigut out of Badli v Tiergarten; Ajax v Bucheggberg by Ringgel (Sonne) out of Miss (Soharrer), Alex v Lotzwil by Bruno v d Rotifluh out of Belline v Lotzwil by Blass v Lehn out of Netti v Lotzwil; Bruno v d Rotifluh by Nestor v Bifang out of Belline (Dennler). QUELL V TIERGARTEN (D)(A-156,752)-Glen L. Shadow. (Br) A. Sohoch, Switzerland. (Wh) June 14, 1935. Blk, tn i wh mkgs. By Galant v Tiergarten out of Sylvia v d Rothohe by Olaf v d Rothohe out of Lora v d Rothohe by Bello v d Rothifluh out of Afra v d Rothohe; Olaf v d Rothohe by Lord v d Rothohe out of Belline v d Rothohe. Galant v Tiergarten by Lord v d Rothohe out of Carola v d Rothohe by Max (Pulfer) out of Bella-Sonne; Lord v d Rothohe by Bello v d Rothifluh out of Afra v d Rothohe.

The name selected for these dogs in America, Bernese Mountain Dog, reflects a precedent set in England. It is not a literal translation of Berner Sennenhund but is perhaps a little more euphonious than the literal "Bernese Alpine Herdsman 's Dog."

#### **PART 5. 1937 TO 1967**

For more than ten years, until 1949, Glen Shadow was the only owner-breeder of AKC registered Bernese

Mountain Dogs. In 1938 his Fridy produced one puppy, Shadow's Man Friday of America, sired by Felix. Later in that year the same pair produced a litter of eight. No dogs were registered during World War II, when all importing stopped. In 1915 Felix was bred to one of his daughters to produce Leo of Shadow Glen. Mr. Shadow imported another male, Cedrico v Allenluften, who sired two litters in 1947. During 1949, 1950, and 1951 three individuals, Robert M. Youngs, Stewart G. Mayse, and Yvonne Auer imported dogs from Switzerland.



Figure 6. Ajax vom Bucheggberg, a well known dog featured in the 1947 edition of the AKC's "Complete Dog Book."

Some public attention was also being given to these dogs. Fridy was pictured in the December, 1941, issue of National Geographic Magazine. In the February 1951 issue of the American Kennel Gazette there appeared a very appealing article on the breed by Arthur Frederick Jones. The breed was also favorably mentioned in other publications. The 1947 edition of the AKC's "Complete Dog Book" featured a photograph of the handsome Ajax vom Bucheggberg. (This photograph led at least one budding fancier, the writer of these lines, to a life-long dedication to the breed!) For Harry Miller's book, "Gallery of American Dogs" (1950), the photographers Arthur and Katherine Mawhinney traveled to Louisiana to photograph Mr. Shadow's Fred. An attractive photograph in "The Book of the Dog", edited by Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald, shows a Swiss girl with her faithful





Figure 7. Shadow Glen Fred, AKC no. W-67991, born June 17, 1947, by Cedrico v. Allenluften out of Frances of Shadow Glen; owned by Glen Shadow (from a photo by Mawhinney in Miller, 1950).

Bernese companion. Not all published information on the breed was so accurate, however. In "The Treasury of Dogs" by A.F. Jones and John Rendel (1964), for example, the photograph illustrating the Bernese Mountain Dog appears to be some sort of collie mixture. The National Geographic's book of dogs, "Man's Best Friend" (1966), has a striking painting of a Bernese (lacking russet on the cheeks) but in the text the dog is compared in size to a collie.

After 1954 numbers of Bernese Mountain Dogs in America increased somewhat. Miss Nelly Frey, a Swiss woman living in Vermont, bred a pair in 1959. In the 1960s it was difficult to obtain information on the breed in this country, although by 1962 nine owners in distinct parts of the country were listed with the AKC. Geographic distribution was wide, from the south where Dr. C. Walter Mattingly in Louisiana and Dr. Judge M. Lyle in Texas had Bernese, to the upper midwest with the dogs of Bishop W.W. Horstick and his daughter Mary Alice, to the Pacific northwest, where Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hutchins, Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Harberts, Bea Knight, and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Thompson were Bernese enthusiasts. Bea Knight, a well known breeder of Saint Bernards, established her breeding program at Sanctuary Woods using her imported bitch Gretel v. Langmoose and the Horstick's Ultra v. Oberfeld (Freddy). The Thompsons imported Bella v. Moosboden and, mating her to the Hutchins' Bobi v. Bauernheim, began the well known "Bella" line.

As the number of Bernese in the country increased, exhibiting in conformation shows became more feasible. After the group judging at a sizeable show in 1965, Ultra v. Oberfeld and his owner were approached by the judge, who said, "This is a beautiful dog and I was very tempted to place him in the group. But I have never seen one before and don't know what it should look like." This illustrates well the frustrations of exhibiting a rare breed. Bernese owners were encouraged when Sanctuary Woods' Black Knight, owned by Roberta Subin, received a fourth place in the Working Group at the Riverside Kennel Club show on November 6, 1966. Thus, Black Knight won the first 3 point

major in the breed, was the first Bernese to place in the Group, and later went on to become the first Bernese conformation champion in the United States.

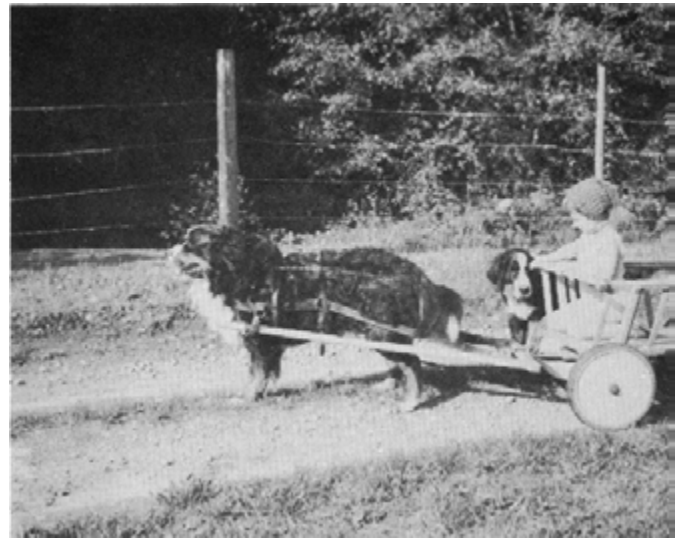


Figure 8. At Harold and Jane Thompson's in Washington during the late 1960's.

The Bernese began also to show their intelligence in the show ring. Aya of Veralp, owned by W.W. and M.A. Horstick, became the first obedience title holding Bernese, attaining the C.D. in June, 1962.



Figure 9. Unidentified ?Bernese Mountain Dog in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, 1960.

The following registration figures give an indication of the development of the breed in America during its first thirty years of recognition.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number registered</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number registered</u>
1937	2	1952	0
1938	1	1953	2
1939	0	1954	5
1940	0	1955	3
1941	0	1956	3
1942	0	1957	6
1943	0	1958	0
1944	0	1959	7
1945	0	1960	10
1946	1	1961	7
1947	1	1962	4
1948	7	1963	6
1949	2	1964	11
1950	1	1965	17
1951	2	1966	31
		1967	22

By 1966 the breed had made enough headway that owners and breeders were communicating more and more. The next step came in 1968, when fanciers in California led the way in forming the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America.

#### **PART 6. 1968 TO PRESENT, THE BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG CLUB OF AMERICA**

Origin of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America can be traced to the leadership and organizational skills of Carol Pyle of California. Carol, who was introduced to Bernese Mountain Dogs by Bea Knight of Sanctuary Woods Kennel, foresaw the need to bring the scattered and still sparse owners, breeders, and dogs together across the country. In Newsletter Volume I, Number 1, March 1968, of the new club, Carol wrote how it all began. "Since the first letter about the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America was sent out January 28, 1968, a great deal has happened! We now have 33 members, many of whom sent additional names along with their applications, and these people have also been contacted, so we should be getting more members as we go along.

"The 33 members own approximately 50 Bernese Mountain Dogs - most owning a single dog or bitch. Several are active in other breed clubs and discovered and fell in love with the Bernese through this interest. Others have spent a great deal of time

trying to locate the Bernese Mountain Dogs, and/or making arrangements to import them.

"All in all, it would appear that the club is off to an excellent and enthusiastic beginning, and we are delighted with the help and response so far."

It was indeed a good beginning. Progress can be measured to some extent in considering activities relative to the Club's objectives as stated in Article I, Section II, of the Constitution.

Objective a). To do all possible to bring the natural qualities of the Bernese Mountain Dog (Berner Sennenhund) to perfection. This important objective is in the hands of all members of the Club. It involves not only breeding programs that are aimed toward such perfection but also raising and training the dogs in a manner consistent with their character. The "perfection" that is sought in appearance can be measured against the standard at conformation matches and shows; "perfection" in temperament is examined at obedience trials and in tracking and carting exercises. Another measure of perfection, that of perfection in soundness and health, also has been a concern of the Club since its beginning. Although all aspects of health are considered, the Club has put a good deal of emphasis on the problem of hip dysplasia, a condition that plagues many breeds, especially those of large size. Members are encouraged to know the condition of their dogs' hip structure and to take this structure into consideration in planning breeding programs. Members have been quite conscientious about this, and by end of 1985 there were 677 Bernese Mountain Dogs that had been registered with the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals as having no sign of hip dysplasia. Nevertheless, hip dysplasia remains a serious concern. In the OFA records between 1974 and 1984 (see E.A. Corley and P.M. Hogan, Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, vol. 187, no. 8, pages 805-809), it is reported that between 1974 and 1981 there were 792 evaluations done of hip radiographs of Bernese Mountain Dogs. Of these, 30.3% were rated dysplastic, 68.1% were normal, and 1.5% were borderline. This placed the breed seventh from the highest in

incidence of the condition (following the Saint Bernard, Newfoundland, Kuvasz, American Staffordshire Terrier, Welsh Springer Spaniel, and Bullmastiff). It must also be remembered that radiographs of some dogs that have been diagnosed by their veterinarian as being clearly dysplastic have probably not been sent to the OFA, which would raise the incidence still higher. There is indication in the figures, however, that owners of Bernese Mountain Dogs are conscientious, for records from 24.6% of the "eligible population" (that is, the number of evaluations divided by the number of AKC registrations) have been submitted to the OFA (only Rottweilers and Flat-coated Retrievers have a better record in this regard). There is room for a good deal of progress here, but clearly many Bernese breeders are trying to follow current veterinary recommendations in alleviating this condition.

Objective b). To encourage the organization of independent local Bernese Mountain Dog Specialty Clubs where sufficient fanciers of the breed exist to meet AKC requirements. As membership grew, local concentrations led to the establishment of a number of local groups. These groups conduct educational events and meetings, have matches, and serve as sponsoring groups for national specialty shows. Groups now formed include Bernese Mountain Dog Clubs of 1) the Finger Lakes, 2) Greater Seattle, 3) Nashoba Valley, 4) Southeastern Wisconsin, and 5) Watchung, and the San Francisco Bay Berners. Several other local groups are in the process of being organized.

Objective c). To urge members and breeders to accept the standard of the breed as approved by the AKC as the only standard of excellence by which Bernese Mountain Dogs shall be Judged. The original standard of the breed was accepted in 1937. One of the early projects of the Club was establishment of a committee for the study of the standard. This led to a revision of the standard, which was voted upon favorably by Club members and accepted by the AKC on July 8, 1980. Later the Club was asked to participate in an AKC sponsored program to produce a slide (later video) show to illustrate the standard. This program is being used for the education of judges and fanciers alike.

Objective d). To protect and advance the interests of the breed and encourage sportsmanlike competition at dog shows. This includes the encouragement of active participation in dog shows. One of the first projects of the Club after its formation was to write a Code of Ethics that must be signed by all wishing to enter the Club. The Code addresses breeding practices and encourages breeders to exercise great care in all aspects of this important activity. It specifies that good sportsmanship is required not only in competitions but in all activities related to the dogs and the Club.



Figure 10. Junior showmanship class at a club sponsored match in 1975.

Objective e). To conduct sanctioned matches, and specialty shows and obedience trials under the AKC rules. Between 1970, when the Club's first Fun Match was held in California, and 1975, the Club sponsored a series of fun matches, B-OB matches, and then A-OA matches. These were highly successful, serving to train members in the process of running dog events, and educational, for members saw increasing numbers of dogs and were able to compare them with the standard. They also provided a great deal of fun and comradeship for the participants. Members often had to travel long distances for these matches, but all considered the experiences to be worth the time. In 1975 the successful completion of

matches led the AKC to grant the Club "licensed" status, which meant that specialty shows could be held. Since the first National Specialty in 1976, these annual events have played an important part in the activities of the Club.



Figure 11. A group outside the ring at a supported entry in Pennsylvania, 1974.

Highlights of the history of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America are listed below by year. This is a rather dry enumeration, but any members who took part in the work and the fun will be able to fill in the details from their own memories of an eventful nineteen years.

#### CLUB HISTORY AT A GLANCE, 1968 to 1987.

**1968.** Organization of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America, first in California, then nationwide. Newsletter started. Membership reached 62 by end of year; AKC registration of Bernese Mountain Dogs, 43.

**1969.** First election of officers and board members. Membership reached over 70 by end of year; AKC registration of Bernese, 59.

**1970.** First Club Fun Match, Bernerfest I, in California. Membership reached 97 by end of year; AKC registration of Bernese, 103.

**1971.** First "in person" meeting of the Club, with 20 regular and 3 junior members present following the supported entry at the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, show,

in March. Fun matches, Bernerfest II in California during July and Oktoberfest in Michigan. Membership over 100; AKC registration of Bernese, 152.

**1972.** Club Constitution and Code of Ethics approved. Fun matches, Bernerfest III in California and Septemberfest in Pennsylvania. AKC registration of Bernese, 185.

**1973.** Reached "sanctioned" status in view of AKC, with first sanctioned B-OB match in Massachusetts during April. Two more sanctioned B-OB matches followed, at Bernerfest IV in California and Septemberfest in Pennsylvania. Anniversary Book produced (with annual suppoements or yearbooks thereafter). AKC registration of Bernese, 214.

**1974.** Sanctioned B-OB matches in Ohio and New York were followed by permission from AKC to hold first A-OA match, held at Bernerfest V in California. Membership topped 200; AKC registration of Bernese, 198.

**1975.** Second sanctioned A-OA match, held in Pennsylvania, followed by elevation to licensed status with AKC; thus the Club was approved to hold specialty shows. AKC registration of Bernese, 181.

**1976.** First National Specialty, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in March with 71 in competition. Membership topped 300; AKC registration of Bernese, 292.

**1977.** Second National Specialty, Fresno, California, in April with 57 in competition. AKC registration of Bernese, 324.

**1978.** Third National Specialty, Pontiac, Michigan, in May (first specialty to be independently held), 104 entered in competition (including obedience). AKC registration of Bernese, 238.

**1979.** Fourth National Specialty, Macungie, Pennsylvania. AKC registration of Bernese, 318.

**1980.** Fifth National Specialty, Santa Rosa, California, with 87 in competition. New standard approved by the AKC. AKC registration of Bernese, 380.

**1981.** Sixth National Specialty, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, with 102 in



competition. Granted status as Member Club by the AKC. AKC registration of Bernese, 450.

- 1982. Seventh National Specialty, Owego, New York. AKC registration of Bernese, 424.
- 1983. Eighth National Specialty in Issaquah, Washington, with 103 dogs in competition. AKC registration of Bernese, 482.
- 1984. Ninth National Specialty in Romulus, Michigan, with 161 dogs in competition. AKC registration of Bernese, 595.
- 1985. Tenth National Specialty in Parsippany, New Jersey, with 222 dogs in competition. Completion of the AKC sponsored slide and video show illustrating Bernese. AKC registration of Bernese, 683.
- 1986. Eleventh National Specialty in San Francisco, California, with 146 dogs in competition.
- 1987. CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTIETH YEAR OF THE RECOGNITION OF THE BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG BY THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB.



Figure 12. That was an interesting 50 years. Now on to the future.

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Figure 13. Drawing by Paul Brown, done around 1950 (from Miller).

## OFFICIAL STANDARD FOR THE BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG

### BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG

**GENERAL APPEARANCE** - A sturdy, balanced, large, strong-boned dog. Intelligent and having an appearance of strength and agility suiting it to draft and droving work in mountainous regions. Dogs appear masculine, while bitches are distinctly feminine.

**HEAD** - **Skull**-flat and broad with a slight furrow and a well-defined, but not exaggerated stop. **Muzzle**-strong and straight. Dry mouthed. **Teeth** - strong; scissors bite; complete dentition. Serious fault: overshot or undershot bite. **Ears** - medium sized, triangular in shape, gently rounded at the tip, hanging close to the head when in repose, brought forward and raised at the base when alert. Eyes-dark brown, slightly oval in shape with close-fitting eyelids; expression intelligent, animated and gentle. **Serious faults:** inverted or everted eyelids. **Disqualification:** Blue eye.

**NECK AND BODY** - **Neck**-strong and muscular and of medium length. **Back**-broad and firm. Topline level from withers to croup. Chest-deep and capacious with well-sprung ribs and brisket reaching at least to the elbows. **Body**-nearly square with over-all body length measuring slightly greater than height at the withers. **Loin**-strong. **Croup**-broad and smoothly rounded to tail insertion.

**FOREQUARTERS** - **Shoulders**-moderately laid back, flatlying, well muscled, never loose. **Forelegs**-straight and strong with the elbows well under the shoulders. Pasterns slightly sloping without weakness. Feet round and compact with well-arched toes. Declaws may be removed from front legs.

**HINDQUARTERS** - **Thighs**-broad, strong and muscular. **Stifles**-moderately bent, tapering smoothly into hocks. **Hocks**-well let down and straight as viewed from the rear. Dewclaws should be removed from rear legs. **Tail**-Bushy. Bone reaching to the hock joint or below. When in repose, tail should be carried low, upward swirl permissible when alert. May be carried gaily, but may never curl or be carried over the back. **Fault:** Kink in tail. **Coat** - Thick, moderately long, slight wavy or straight, with a bright natural sheen.

**COLOR AND MARKINGS** - **Tri-color:** jet black ground color with rich rust and clear white markings. Nose always black. **Markings** (symmetry desired): **Rust:** over each eye; on cheeks, preferably reaching at least to the corner of the mouth; on each side of chest; on all four legs; under tail. **White:** blaze and muzzle-band; chest marking, typically forming an inverted cross; feet; tip of tail. **Faults:** Markings other than as described to be faulted in direct relationship to the extent of the deviation. **Serious faults:** White legs; white collars. **Disqualifications:** any ground color other than black.

**GAIT** - Natural working gait is slow trot, but capable of speed and agility in keeping with use in draft and droving work. Good reach in front. Powerful drive from the rear transmitted through a level back. No wasted action. Front and hind legs on each side follow through in the same plane. At increased speed, legs tend to converge toward the center line.

**HEIGHT** - Dogs: 24<sup>1/2</sup>" to 27<sup>1/2</sup>" at the withers. Bitches: 22<sup>1/2</sup>" to 25<sup>1/2</sup>" at the withers.

**TEMPERAMENT** - Self-confident, alert and good-natured. Never sharp or shy. A dog which will not stand for examination shall be dismissed from the ring.

### DISQUALIFICATIONS

Blue eye color.

Any ground color other than black.

Approved July 8, 1980