

SCHARF...THE BEGINNING

Everyone has a special dog. Maybe it is just everyone's first dog of their breed of choice. Or maybe it is really something special about that particular dog. Scharf was both. He was my first Rottweiler and he was a very special representative of his breed. He was the perfect "first" Rottweiler for me because he taught me so much of what the breed was like.

Let me start at the very beginning. My family was totally involved in dairy farming and showing horses when I met my first Rottweiler. He was a puppy attending a 4-H horse show that my children were competing in. Such a pup! Friendly, outgoing, self-confident, and busy exploring all the strange, new sights. I decided at that moment, if and when I became less busy, I was going to own a Rottweiler.

Years went by. The children grew up. My last son at home felt there was no future in breeding registered Duroc pigs and entered the Navy's nuclear electronic program. All farm animals were sold because I had emphysema and would not be able to handle the farming alone. (My husband works in Buffalo 65 miles away and can handle only one job). So, we sold the breeding stock, splitting the monies between us. Doug bought a car with his money. I bought my Rottweiler pup.

I went to a dog show after researching three possible breeds for what was to be my new hobby. It was between a Bull Mastiff, a Giant Schnauzer, and a Rottweiler. I eliminated the Giant Schnauzer as soon as I found out what one needs to do to care for their coat. The Bull Mastiff was so dull! My favorite horses had always been those who were smart enough to keep me on my toes. Good performers most of the time but not above playing tricks once in awhile. When I went to the Rottweiler ring and saw all those smiling faces looking for treats or pets from those who made eye contact, I was hooked. The first adult Rottweiler I met personally was CH.Rangarr's Argus. I was in love.

I visited the owner of the pup I had met years before. She had just bred her bitch to CH.Rodsden's Elko Kastanienbaum, CDX, TD. After socializing with her dogs I knew this was the breed for me so I contracted for pick male pup out of her coming litter. I paid her from my share of each sow we sold. By the time the pups were ready to go, I had made my last payment.

Picking the pup was no small chore because I had no idea what to look for. I knew how to pick good hogs...long backs were very important. I took a friend to look and he said all the pups were great and it wouldn't matter which one I took. I was mainly interested in obedience competition so I picked the pup who was the most active. The breeder tried to talk me out of him because she knew I had emphysema and knew this breed. I went every week from the time the pups were two weeks old. Each time I picked from the litter it turned out to be the same pup. By the time they were 7 weeks old I was still picking the same pup so I took him home.

Housebreaking was so easy I couldn't believe it. We had had Cocker Spaniels just before and I'm sure most of you know how hard it is to house break them. I bought a crate and put him in it first thing because I knew I would never keep him in there unless I did it from the beginning. Scharf had no problem with his crate or anything else I planned for him. He was smart, friendly, bouncy, full of energy, full of cute tricks, self-confident, and beautiful.

We still had a few market hogs around and he enjoyed tormenting them until he got some semblance of play out of them. It was enough for him and he would then go to the Appaloosa Stallion I still had and play with him. He had more luck with the horse. They were very much alike in temperament.

I suppose I should explain how I came about his name. My sister-in-law is directly from Germany so I called her for some help in naming my pup. I told her about his personality. She came up with the usual names people in Germany called their dogs until I told her I wanted something different. Something that would fit him. She came to meet him and it became much easier to pick a name. Scharf means smart, witty, quick to get a joke...it seemed to fit and I liked the sound of it.

My next chore was to find an obedience class. As luck would have it, we had a trainer within 5 miles of us. I called a friend of hers that was also a friend of

mine. I was afraid to call the trainer myself because I was such a novice I didn't know what to ask. I also had another problem which was coming up with the cash to pay for it. This friend told me LeeAnne would take payments and she would arrange it for me. I also needed her to make LeeAnne aware that I had emphysema and would be handicapped in what all I could do. I planned on taking my husband to class so he could do the hard parts. I am, and have always been somewhat embarrassed by my inability to breathe. I hate to have anyone see me when I get out of breath. I hate having people think I'm in dire need of help...who knows why...I can't explain it.

So, I went to class. It was soon apparent that I would have to do the training because I have always been too critical of anyone training one of my animals. I have to do it myself. If a mistake is made I have no one to blame but me. At least, then, I know what was done and can work at fixing it. If someone else does something I am at a loss as to what it was and have only the result of the mistake. Makes it much harder to know what to do to fix the problem.

I managed to figure out ways that I could do the training using a minimum of energy. As time has gone on I have developed my own methods and am training 3 puppies, 3 Novice dogs, 1 open dog, and 2 utility dogs. At that time, though, one dog was really all I could handle. Especially since I picked the "hellion"!

My class was a pet obedience class. I attended every class that I could find. We drilled and drilled and drilled until Scharf hated the word "heel". Eventually I discovered that there were two kinds of obedience classes but I did many improper classes before discovering this so I bored my high energy, super smart puppy to tears.

Scharf went every where with me. We went to graduation parties, birthday parties, wedding receptions...you name it. People began to know that, if they invited me anywhere my dog would be with me. No one seemed to mind. I certainly didn't lack for parties to go to (which I hate).

We visited friends at their homes. Scharf would enter the house and be greeted by the occupants. Which ever person greeted him first would end up with a part of their clothing handed to them within minutes of my sitting down to a cup of coffee. Panties, socks, slippers, shoes...whatever they had left within his reach. I think everyone got used to this; at least they didn't complain to my face. Maybe they didn't want to hurt my feelings. I do know they were all aghast at the price I paid for him. Who ever heard of paying more than \$100 for any dog! Maybe, since he cost so much, they accepted him as one of them.

I was barn superintendent of the hog barn at our county fair and a 4-H leader of some 20 years. Scharf went to the Fair every year with me. He loved everyone and everything. People responded to him the same way he responded to them. Many times I was asked if he was a good watch dog. I felt he was good simply because people were afraid of Rottweilers until they met him so, he would scare a stranger off just by his presence.

To my surprise, he proved to be a watch dog. When he was 1 1/2 years old we were at the Fair one night waiting until it was late enough to close up and go home. A drunk staggered into the barns and started to become a bit obnoxious. Scharf stood up and faced the man with a stiff bodied stare and low growl. We watched him leave in short order. Another time I was running him with the All Terrain Cycle my son had bought so that I would be able to exercise Scharf. It was deer season and our land is posted because of the city hunters who come here from Buffalo. As we were heading down the dead end road abutting our land a hunter came out of the woods with gun in hand. Scharf stiffened and froze in front of the guy. I told him to put his gun down which he did. The moment the gun was on the ground Scharf became the friendly dog he always was.

He loved babies with a passion but was a bit too rough. The younger the baby the more excited he became. His tongue was very active so I generally warned parents that, if they or their baby had objections to dog licks they should keep the baby out of reach.

Scharf's memory was unbelievable. He never forgot anyone he met and he never forgot his breeder. She would come to the shows in disguise but he spotted her every time. Scharf never learned not to jump on people so she would always leave the show with paw prints on her some where. We went to a specialty in Canada one year. A

friend of mine had Samoyeds. She had been invited to stay with a samoyed breeder in Canada and I was to go along. We spent the night and Scharf socialized with the samoyeds and their owners. Two years later I was standing at ring side waiting to go in the ring when Scharf pulled me backwards toward some strangers at the ring behind us. It was these people. I didn't recognize them but Scharf did. The samoyed people recognized Scharf because he had made such an impression on them when we had stayed there.

I took Scharf on my paper route with me every day. One day an ad came on the radio for McDonalds. It was a skit called Chicken Man and was introduced by a song which seemed to strike Scharf funny. He howled...it was the funniest sound I had ever heard the first time he tried it. He didn't know how to howl so it started out with squeaks and squalls before it became a full blown howl. I laughed so hard every time he did it I wanted others to hear it but could never get him to do it in front of anyone else.

Scharf loved to retrieve a ball. My nephew wanted to play with him and I agreed. Soon Scharf had taught my nephew to chase him. He remembered this forever which didn't make his CDX work as easy as it had been. He would pick up something and run a short ways until someone would chase him. It was great fun for all. Running around a tree and changing directions so that he ended up doing the chasing was also a favorite game.

When Scharf was 7 months old he was allowed to sleep in bed with me when my husband was working nights. Two nights a week my husband had off so he wanted his half of the bed. One night Scharf went to the door and hit it with his foot. I told Gordie to let Scharf out to go potty. Gordie got up and opened the door and then went to the kitchen. By the time he got back Scharf had NOT gone outside. He had gotten into Gordie's side of the bed instead. This game lasted for Scharf's lifetime but Gordie got smarter so Scharf ended up having to share the bed with both of us.

Scharf could open doors. He could open them away from him or towards him. He could open door handles of any kind. I found this out the night I went to baby-sit my grandson and brought Scharf into the house and closed the door. I went into the bedroom to get Jason and heard the door open. Scharf had decided he needed to go out and let himself out the door. This was the first door of this kind that he had ever seen.

One winter our wood stove overheated. Scharf woke us up barking until we got out of bed.

Eventually it became time to go into obedience competition with Scharf. Although we had ruined him for any fancy heeling, he got his CD with an average score of 188 in Canada and 184 in the U.S. I found a competition obedience trainer for us to learn CDX work under. Lucky for me he was a motivational trainer with lots of knowledge in how to correct a myriad of mistakes. Scharf hated to down because of the way I had been told to teach him. He just couldn't stand still for the obedience stand or the breed stand. He growled for both exercises because we made them a control issue. Because of this, I was the only one who could show him in breed which was a definite drawback. (We did manage to get 6 points in the States and 8 points in Canada before he hurt his shoulder permanently).

Jerry showed me how to teach and still have a happy dog. Scharf ended up loving CDX and utility work. Scharf was in a particularly "cute" mood at one match we went to. I had entered open. On the drop on recall Scharf dropped quickly but he ended up with his back to me instead of the standard way. Everyone always wanted me to "do it again" but Scharf wouldn't cooperate and I certainly didn't want to teach him to do it again.

We entered a 4 trial Canadian show for our first time in the open ring. My husband hates dog shows but, since many people were going, there are fantastic places to eat near the show grounds, and it was in conjunction with a Rottweiler specialty, he agreed to go. I was a nervous wreck. We had to enter Open B because I had entered Linde in obedience also (someday I will write an article about Linde but not this time). Open B is for those working towards top obedience dog of the year so I was really out of my element. I was awful. I made so many handler errors I had the judges in stitches. I didn't check out the audience...watching the judge laugh was bad enough. I nearly knocked over one of the ring stewards on the figure eight (a

problem I am still working on trying to solve). Scharf, on the other hand, qualified all four times and we **had our Canadian CDX!!!** We went to the States and qualified 2 more times before Scharf decided he needed to cock his hip on the long sit out of sight. He couldn't just roll it. He had to raise his butt up just a tad and then cock it. Of course this was an NQ. We solved that problem and got his American CDX after 2 more tries. Scharf's scores averaged 187. Considering all the points I lost in handler errors, I was really proud of him.

We tried often to get his CH. Finally, with 8 points in Canada, I decided to hire a handler and hope he could show him without him growling. I made the entries. Three days before the show Scharf and Linde were out romping in the yard and Scharf ran into the corner of the barn wall. He was lame!

Xrays galore couldn't pin point the problem. We tried everything we could think of but it never got good enough for him to go in the ring. This also meant no utility title. We still were able to go to the nursing homes and Gowanda psychiatric center and he preferred them to showing I am sure.

When Scharf was 6 a friend of mine got a Belgian Tervuren. She also became interested in herding since she had the dog for it. We set up a herding instinct test with the American Herding Breeds Association. I entered Scharf and the rest of my dogs. We ended up with a total of 60 entries which we did over a period of two days. The first 8 dogs in the ring did not pass their instinct test..and now it was Scharf's turn. Until you have experienced a dog working on instinct you are depriving yourself of a marvelous thrill. Scharf started working the sheep! He worked them in figure eights and he worked them back up and down the field. I was trying to be where the tester told me to be and tripping over my feet so she took over and I watched. He downed when told (this was the dog who hated downing); he amazed me and I cried and cried. I can't describe the thrill. Linda passed him! By the time the test was over we had 6 herding instinct titles out of the 10 Rottweilers entered. Out of the 50 herding breeds entered only 10 passed. This was the beginning of my desire to get Rottweilers into the herding program with the AKC even though I would be physically unable to participate. Certainly it was obvious the breed had the instinct in a big way.

Our dog club purchased two fly ball machines in hopes of starting a fly ball team to compete locally. Scharf learned how to work the apparatus in less than ten minutes. He always learned every thing I taught him so quickly I generally stood with my mouth open. Problem is, he always had his own version of the exercise and would have it down pat to run past me for my approval the next time we did the exercise. He loved to entertain. Laugh at him and it was a guarantee he would repeat what ever gave pleasure at some time in the future. One never knew when!

When I get home from work I usually have my arms full. Opening the door is a problem so I taught him to open the door on command. This was a great idea. I decided I would teach him and Linde to help me take my coat off. This was a **bad** idea. They loved it but it ended up in a tug of war with me in the middle and them on each sleeve.

Scharf hated getting his toe nails done. He would stand there and let me do them but he snarled and growled at each nail. We visited our daughter and her family in Utah. They fell in love with the dogs and decided they wanted a Rottweiler. I knew that this particular daughter would not be a wise home for a Rottweiler so I did Scharf's nails one evening before we left for home. Quite a scene for someone who had never witnessed a Rottweiler complaining. Becky sent the kids to their bedrooms. She was sure I was going to be eaten in front of them.

What did Scharf teach me? So many things I couldn't begin to enumerate them. He taught me how to "read" a Rottweiler. He taught me how to teach a Rottweiler and still end up with a happy worker. He showed me what a sense of humor the breed has. He gave me a solution to nearly every problem one encounters when training Rottweilers. He was the beginning of every thing that has made my life worthwhile the past 12 years.

Scharf died May 14, 1994 at the age of 12 years and 14 days. During his 12 years I amassed a total of 10 dogs to fill his place when he died. I can tell you right now it didn't work. The hole is large!

Scharf is **A/C Ptd.Scharf Elko von Regenbogen,A/C CDX,B,HC,TT,CGC,TDI, MRC Honor Roll, CRC Bronze Achievement.**

Norma Dikeman resides in Westfield, NY. She is the Editor of the Colonial Rottweiler Club Newsletter. Her kennel name is Nordike. She is the breeder of BISS A/C CH.Nordike Aluger Lindenwood,TT and Scharf is his sire. She has earned 12 CDs, 10 CDXs, and 5 Bs to date.