



Helene Whitehouse Walker and Ch. Nymphaea Jason

The Poodle Club of America
honors the memory of

Helene Whitehouse Walker
Carillon Kennels
1900 —1986

The 86-year history of the Poodle Club of America is inextricably intertwined with two of its founding members, socialite- sportsman Mr. Henry J. Whitehouse and his intrepid daughter, Mrs. Helene Whitehouse Walker; a brown standard Poodle called Jason; the Carillon Kennels; the importation of Obedience from the U.K., and Blanche Saunders, a talented young woman from Maine. This story began at Mt. Kisco, N.Y., in 1930.

Mrs. Walker and her father jointly tackled the happy task of finding a birthday gift for one of Mrs. Walker's younger sisters, who had expressed a wish for a puppy. Mr. Whitehouse, who had been educated in England and whose wife was English, was familiar

with English Poodles and thought one would make the perfect present. It was natural, then, that the puppy search took father and daughter from the Whitehouse estate at Mt. Kisco to nearby Bedford and the Misty Isles Kennels of Alice Lang Rogers, herself a transplant from England.

Mrs. Rogers was then known as a breeder of Cairn terriers, but had lately become interested in Poodles. That summer she had visited the English Nymphaea Kennels, and had taken several photos while there. As Mr. Whitehouse and his daughter pored over these, one dog in particular captured their attention, and father and daughter agreed they had found the Poodle they were looking for.

And so it was that in January of 1931, the

English-bred, 14-month-old brown standard Poodle, Nymphaea Jason, found himself aboard an ocean liner, sailing across the Atlantic for New York.

Since the entire Whitehouse family, save Mrs. Walker, was spending the winter social season at their apartment in the City, it had been decided that Jason should go to Mrs. Walker at Mt. Kisco for the duration.

Mrs. Walker said in a 1983 *Town Life* interview, "I didn't have him more than 24 hours before I was crazy about him!" So, when her sister confessed a preference for a Samoyed, Mrs. Walker wasted no time in buying Jason from her father, and what was to become Carillon Kennels had its foundation sire.

Poodle-mania soon ensued. Mrs. Walker chose her kennel name from the name of Jason's sire, Eng. Ch. Whippendell Carillon, and soon acquired two more of Carillon's sons, Nymphaea Jasper and Eng. Ch. Whippendell Poli. She imported even more Poodles in 1931, and began to show Jason, ineptly at first, but eventually handling him to his first 2 points, Best of Breed, and a Group 1st at the Westchester K.C. show in June.

After arriving from England in May, Poli was shown 4 times in 1931, taking the points at each show, plus 2 Bests of Breed.

It soon became obvious that both Mrs. Walker and her father had been bitten by the Poodle "bug." Mr. Whitehouse busied himself by organizing what would become the Poodle Club of America. At the call of Mr. Whitehouse, a group of 10 Poodle fanciers met in the spring of 1931 to form a Poodle specialty club. Mr. Whitehouse was the club's 1st president, a post he was to hold for 3 years, and Mrs. Walker was named its secretary-treasurer.

In July, the club submitted its application for



Mrs. Walker with Eng. Ch. Whippendell Poli, Blue Riband and Nymphaea Jasper, Newport, August 1931.

membership to the American Kennel Club, and the application was approved by AKC on August 11th. The Poodle Club of America was then "official," and its members began to plan the Club's first specialty show for June 11, 1932.

By 1932, Mrs. Walker's handling skills had improved enough to finish Poli with a 5-point major at Westminster, making him the first dual English and American Champion Poodle. Poli took another 5-point major and 3 Bests of Breed at shows leading up to the first PCA specialty.

In June, at PCA's first show, the Carillon stud force dominated, with Jason taking a 5-point major and Poli again making history by winning Best of Breed.

Jason was shown twice more in 1932, picking up another point, a Best of Breed, and a Group 3rd at Somerset Hills.

During the year, Mrs. Walker continued to build her kennel, importing Nunsoe Skagin, whom she sold to her father, and the Stillington litter-mates, Christmas and Claus.

In 1933, Poli capped off his show career with Group firsts at Westminster — becoming the first Poodle to win a Group there — and at Somerset Hills.

The year was also a good one for Jason, who, after a slow start, won 2 more 5-point majors, 6 Bests of Breed, a Group 3rd, and 4 Group firsts, finishing his championship at the prestigious Morris and Essex show.

Stillington Claus also finished his championship in 1933, but his brother Christmas died on July 4th of distemper, an infection that devastated many show kennels that year. Pierrette Labory, a double granddaughter of Anderl v. Hugelberg, arrived at Carillon from Switzerland in April and took the points at North Westchester and Greenwich in June.

As busy as 1933 was for Mrs. Walker, she still found time to pursue another interest she had developed the previous year: all-breed Obedience tests.

Dog fanciers in the U.S. and Great Britain had been training and testing working breeds in Obedience for some time, but recently the Kennel Club (U.K.) had opened Obedience tests to all breeds. Confident that Poodles would be ideal Obedience dogs, Mrs. Walker began a campaign to have all-breed Obedience tests sanctioned by AKC.

As a demonstration of interest, a private all-breed Obedience test was held under English

rules in October, at Mr. Whitehouse's estate at Mt. Kisco. While the entry was small, the gallery was estimated at over 150 people, and the test was well-covered by the press.

Buoyed by the success of this introductory event, Mrs. Walker suggested to the North Westchester K.C., of which she was a member, that they hold a similar event in conjunction with their next all-breed show in June of the following year. The club agreed, and Mrs. Walker wrote a letter to AKC's *Purebred Dogs* to publicize the event, noting, "The judging of dogs in the breed classes is a mystery to many, but a series of tests displaying the dog's brain is something they can actually see."

In 1934, Mrs. Walker continued breeding, showing, and importing more Poodles. One of these was Tango of Piperscroft, an apricot dog that arrived from England in May, already trained for Obedience.

In February, Pierrette took a 5-point major at Westminster, then took time off to whelp her second litter by Poli. When she returned to the ring for 4 shows in September, she swept them, winning 3 majors, including 5 points awarded by Mrs. Sherman Hoyt of Blakeen, and a Group 4th.

North Westchester's June 9th Obedience test drew 10 entries, with Mr. Whitehouse's Nunsoe Skagin of Carillon taking 1st place and Tango taking 3rd. There was detailed coverage of the event in the *New York Sun*, which no doubt increased interest in dog Obedience training among the general public.

Although Tango had come with detailed "instructions" for voice and hand signals that Grace Boyd of the Piperscroft Kennels had prepared, and had acquitted himself respectably at his first U.S. test, Mrs. Walker felt she still needed to know more about how things were done in England.

As Mrs. Walker told the 1983 *Town Life* interviewer, Roberta Synal, "I'd go out on the lawn with the letter in one hand and the dog in the other, and try to follow directions. But I told my father there was only one thing for me to do, and that was to go to the source. So I set sail for England."

Mrs. Walker spent 6 weeks in England that summer, soaking up all she could about Obedience and Poodles. She returned to New York aboard *Aquitania* on September 7th, in time for the second all-breed Obedience test, held at Somerset Hills Kennel Club.

The next private Obedience test took place at the Whitehouse estate in Mt. Kisco on October 21st and included a separate Tracking test. There were 8 Obedience entries and 6 entries in Tracking. Mr. Whitehouse's Nunsoe Skagin of Carillon won both tests, followed by Mrs. Walker's Tango at 2nd, and another Carillon import, Berkham Auguste, at 3rd. Second place in Tracking went to a Doberman from Connecticut. The most striking aspect of the event, however, was a *New York Times* report of "about 500 spectators." Clearly, there was growing public interest in dog Obedience training!

Another thing had become clear to Mrs. Walker by October: she knew she would need a manager for her burgeoning Carillon Kennels. There was simply too much to be done, and her kennel help needed leadership, whether or not she was present. As was her style, Mrs. Walker addressed the matter head-on and with energy, and it wasn't long before she found a likely prospect to manage her kennel.

As she wrote in the foreword to *The Story of Dog Obedience*, Mrs. Walker drove up "...to Brewster, New York, with my pet Poodle — Tango of Piperscroft — at my side, to talk with Blanche [Saunders] about a position in my Carillon Kennel." Mrs. Walker went on, "She came running to meet me — all energy and enthusiasm. [...] This great energy was to carry her, in fifteen short years, to the top of her profession as a trainer of dogs and their owners."

Blanche Saunders started her new job in late 1934, and another chapter of the Carillon Kennels story began. In 1935, only 2 weeks into her employment at Carillon, Miss Saunders had asked Mrs. Walker if she could train a puppy called Glee for Obedience. Mrs. Walker agreed, and Miss Saunders and Glee started to attend Mrs. Walker's training classes at Bedford Hills. As Mrs. Walker told it, "This lasted for about two months until one day I lost my voice completely, and she offered to pinch hit for me. That was that; from then on *she* conducted the class."

Miss Saunders, it turned out, not only had great rapport with animals, she was also a gifted teacher.

The established Carillon routine of planning litters, showing Poodles, and getting puppies off to a good start continued in 1935.

Hollow Hill Jocko, a Poli son, had ended 1934 with 3 majors and 11 points. He finished his championship in June with a 5-point major,

following it up with a Best of Breed and Group 4th at Ox Ridge.

On a parallel track, Mrs. Walker and Miss Saunders continued to work on acceptance of Obedience competitions by all-breed clubs, 6 of which held tests in conjunction with their 1935 shows. The Poodles of Carillon — Nunsoe Skagin, Tango of Piperscroft, Carillon Cordon Bleu, and Carillon Epreuve (Glee) — were “in the ribbons” at all the tests in which they competed.

That summer, Mrs. Boyd brought 3 of her Obedience-trained Poodles to the U.S., to bolster Obedience entries and to give a number of demonstrations to introduce the sport to the public. Boyd’s Joker of Piperscroft placed 1st in the Open class at Westchester. The judge was Mr. Josef Weber, a noted dog trainer based in Princeton, N.J.

Given the growing interest in Obedience over nearly 2 years, Mrs. Walker decided the time was right to approach AKC with a formal request to adopt it as an approved and recognized event. Accordingly, Mrs. Walker wrote and published a booklet, “Obedience Tests: Procedure For Judge, Handler, and Show Giving Club,” with 6 illustrative photos of Mrs. Walker and Tango, taken by Miss Saunders. The booklet, along with a summary of the results of the tests held in 1935-36 and a cover letter by Mrs. Walker, was sent off to AKC on December 7, 1935.

The year 1936 was especially eventful. In March, AKC approved Mrs. Walker’s proposal, and published the first rules for Obedience tests in the April *Gazette*. Quite fittingly, the first AKC licensed test was held on June 13th at the North Westchester K.C. show.

After making some revisions as proposed by Mrs. Walker, Josef Weber, and Miss Saunders, AKC adopted final “Regulations and Standard for Obedience Test Trials” on November 10, 1936. By the end of the year, Tango of Piperscroft and Carillon Epreuve had completed CDX titles and Mr. Whitehouse’s Nunsoe Skagin of Carillon had earned his CD.

In spite of their intense concentration on Obedience in 1936, the show ring wasn’t completely ignored by Carillon that year. Carillon Joyeux, a brown Jason son, took a 4-point major from the puppy class and was shown thereafter only in the American-bred class until he finished his championship on May 16th at 13 months of age, becoming Carillon’s first home-bred champion. Joyeux won 2 more 5-point majors and

a Best of Breed in May, and when moved up to the specials only class, took another Best of Breed and a Group 2nd.

Kaffir of Piperscroft, given by Mrs. Boyd to Mrs. Walker as a puppy, following Boyd’s trip to the U.S. in 1935, began his show career, winning a 3-point major in August.

In 1937, the show ring saw even more Carillon champions made, as get of the kennel’s stud force started to come of age. Carillon Memoire, from the 1934 litter by Poli ex Pierrette Labory, finished, as did Jason son Carillon Joyeux, and the son of Ch. Stillington Claus, Carillon Courage.

At the same time, Miss Saunders continued to compete in Obedience with Epreuve, who made history in 1937 as the first dog of any breed to earn all of the AKC Obedience “degrees.”

But 1937 was perhaps Carillon’s most notable year so far. It was in that year that Mrs. Walker, Miss Saunders, and 3 standard Poodles spent 10 weeks touring the U.S. in a 1936 Buick pulling a 21-foot trailer, to give exhibitions and talks about AKC Obedience. From September until they arrived home on December 7th they had covered 10,000 miles, making friends and Obedience enthusiasts all along their way.

The Poodles that made the “Trailer Trek” were Ch. Joyeux, who took a Group 1st at El Paso; Carillon Bon Coeur, who finished his championship during the trip; and the “brilliant” Epreuve UDT, who forgot her recall long enough to chase a Texas jack rabbit.

Miss Saunders, in her posthumously published book, *The Story of Dog Obedience*, gives a wonderful description of the highs and lows faced by the “...‘two crazy women from New York with their three trick Poodles.’” [Although the book has been out of print for some years, a search for a used copy is well worth the effort.]



Mrs. Walker with Tango of Piperscroft
Photo by Blanche Saunders

In 1938, Kaffir started the show season with a 5-point major at Westminster and completed his championship with another in April, followed by a third 5-pointer on May 1st at Baltimore. Kaffir had picked up a leg on his CD degree in the fall of 1937 and completed it in June 1938 with 1st and 2nd placements.

The black Jason daughter, Carillon Cendrillon, and the beautiful apricot Carillon Amour, a Kaffir daughter, also attained their championships in 1938.

But it was Ch. Carillon Courage CDX that put to bed the canard that once trained for Obedience, a dog would be “ruined” for the show ring. Courage, handled by Miss Saunders, won Best of Breed, 1st place in his Obedience class, and Group 1st at Somerset Hills on September 18th, the first dog of any breed to take a 1st in Group and a 1st in Obedience at the same show.

The last year of the decade brought 2 new championships to Carillon: Carillon Plaisant, a Jason son, and Carillon Colline, a Courage daughter. It also marked Mrs. Walker’s first term as president of PCA, a post her father had held from 1931 to 1933.

Obedience got coverage in the New York *Times* again in February, when a special exhibition, arranged by Mrs. Walker and judged by Mr. Weber, was held at the Westminster K.C. show. Two teams of 7 dogs each competed against each other, with one team handled by men and the other by women. Although the women’s team led the men 74 to 70 in the afternoon, by the end of the evening competition, the men had won with a total combined score of 152 to 143. Kingsley Child, writing for the *Times*, made particular note of the Collie, Buster Whiteson CDX, and Ch. Carillon Courage CD, who “were worked by their handlers from bicycles.”

In September, a tracking test was held at the Whitehouse estate, with Mr. Whitehouse’s Nunsoe

Skagin taking 2nd place and Epreuve taking 4th.

But not all news in 1939 was good news. In November, Jason, the start of it all, was euthanized.

With close family ties in England and France, Mrs. Walker was concerned about what appeared to be a looming, inevitable war in Europe. In response, she began “reducing our breeding program and the number of adult dogs at Carillon, keeping only the best breeding stock.”

In 1940, Carillon finished 3 Poodles: Colombe, a Courage daughter and litter-mate to Colline; and 2 Kaffir sons, Jaseur and Distingue. Ch. Amour was placed in 1940 and never bred.

Colombe and Carillon Pivoine, a Poli daughter, were placed in September 1941. Rene was the only Carillon Poodle to complete a championship in that year.

Mr. Whitehouse again took over the reins of PCA in 1941, but relinquished them to his daughter in 1942 as he became more occupied with war work. The 1942 PCA specialty was canceled, and Mrs. Walker continued as the club’s president until 1946.

After Pearl Harbor was attacked in December 1941, Miss Saunders left Carillon to join Josef Weber in Princeton, N.J., in training sentry dogs for installations critical to the war effort. In 1943, Mrs. Walker closed Carillon Kennels, and in 1944 her beloved Tango died. Mrs. Walker never had another dog.

In her foreword to *The Story of Dog Obedience*, Mrs. Walker wrote, “... when Blanche opened up her own place in New York City, I gave her the Carillon name and good will, and some brood bitches representing my best bloodlines, hoping the she would eventually be able to carry on where I had left off.

“She scrupulously maintained the high standards I had set in breeding to establish important qualities of character and disposition as well as excellent conformation. It was always a great pleasure for me to go to her kennel and see such uniformly true-to-type Standard Poodles.”

Blanche Saunders did carry on. In 1943 she bred Ch. Colline to Ch. Puttencove Impetuous, a Kaffir son. The stud fee pup of that litter grew up to be Ch. Carillon Colin of Puttencove, who took Best of Breed under respected judge Percy Roberts at PCA in 1949.

In the 1940’s Miss Saunders bred 8 more Poodles destined to become champions: Caccia,



Mrs. Walker with Ch. Carillon Amour CD

the inimitable Jester UDT, Jestina, Jongleur, Matinal, Moiree, Scion and Sibelius.

In the 1950's she bred 9 future champions: Blue Boy, Commando, Dana, Dart, the great Dilemma UD, Gossip UD, Honeysuckle, Michelle UDT, and Clarion Blue Comet.

In the 1960's, Miss Saunders bred Ch. Carillon Regardez-Moi UD, by Dilemma out of Carillon Just A Whiz.

Throughout this period, Miss Saunders continued to be active in Obedience training. In July 1944, she established a training program for the New York City ASPCA. She held training classes and traveled to offer "clinics" for difficult dogs. She wrote books and made films on Obedience. She became an AKC Obedience judge.

By 1962, Walter Fletcher, writing in the New York *Times* of August 2nd observed, "Miss

Saunders, for sixteen years, was the training director here for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. She brought more than 17,000 owners and their dogs to 'graduation.' Miss Saunders accepts few judging assignments these days. The Bedford Village (N.Y.) woman prefers to conduct clinics."

In her foreword to *The Story of Obedience*, Mrs. Walker wrote, "Little did I realize when I assembled the preceding thoughts for a Foreword, that within a few months it would have to be written as an obituary. On December 8, 1964, Blanche Saunders died the way she lived — quietly, and just after doing the thing she loved best, teaching people how to train dogs."

Helene Whitehouse Walker died in 1986, having dedicated her life after Carillon to charitable works.



Blanche Saunders and Carillon Epreuve UDT

The Poodle Club of America
honors the memory of

Blanche V. Saunders
Carillon Kennels
1906 — 1964



Blanche Saunders and Helene Walker with Ch. Carillon Dilemma UD, Kaeley Audacious Coquette UD, and Robin Hill of Carillon UDT in 1962. Photo courtesy of AKC

Author's note: Many of the anecdotes in the foregoing article were gleaned from various accounts written by the late Catharine (Kae) Reiley, whose Kaeley Kennels kept much of the Carillon legacy alive. Without her chronicles of the Carillon and AKC Obedience stories, this effort would have been dry dust, indeed. My thanks go also to Tom Carneal, who provided me with a photocopy of a Kae Reilly account of the Carillon story that appeared in a PCA catalog that I did not have in my own collection.

I was also fortunate to have been given by Christa Skiebe the opportunity to photocopy the old Carillon kennel records she inherited after the death of Patricia Standish. Those records include numerous handwritten notations that provide insight into the challenges faced by breeders of that time.

Articles from the *New York Times* and an interview of Mrs. Walker by Roberta Synal published in the March 9, 1983, issue of *Town Life* were also helpful, as was Ancestry.com.

The Standard Poodle Database, brainchild of Lynn W. Brucker, provided access to levels of detail that otherwise would have taken days to research.

Finally, I owe an eternal debt of gratitude to Brynn E. White, archivist at the AKC library and archives in New York. Her patience and willingness to go above and beyond made possible the photos that accompany this article.

I encourage breeders of standard Poodles to use the free extended pedigree-tracing that is available at phrdatabase.com (a project of the Poodle Health Registry) to explore the influence on their own dogs that the Carillon Poodles have had. The odds are about 60:1 that any given standard Poodle living today shares at least a few genes with a Carillon progenitor.

— Kathryn Foran