

March 25, 2007

Triple Crown Champion SVCH HC WTCH HTCH ATCH Alt-CH Grandeur's Social Rainier PATDs OA OAJ

WHAT THIS IS

On March 18, 2007, Rainier earned his HTCH (Herding Trial Champion) from AHBA (American Herding Breed Association), thereby obtaining all three herding championships offered in the US. The other two are the AKC (American Kennel Club) HC (Herding Champion) and the ASCA (Australian Shepherd Club of America) WTCH (Working Trial Champion).

WHAT THIS MEANS

Any herding championship is meant to demonstrate reliable and high quality herding by obtaining high scores consistently on various stock.

HOW WE GOT HERE

Rainier is a good dog with really great training. He started his herding training at Ewe-topia when he was 9 weeks old and we have never trained anywhere else (except where Linda has organized a training event). For a good portion, we trained two days per week with two lessons per day and he boarded at Ewe-topia to get private time with Joe and Linda. However, even a good dog with great training needs a handler. Everything I have learned about handling I have learned here. The single most important ingredient, which is one of the main messages underlying every piece of training advice I've ever heard from Joe and Linda, is to be a good leader. The message comes in many forms and varieties depending on the situation that is being discussed, but if you listen closely, you will hear the same concept over and over. It was only after Rainier and I both understood this that we began to have great success.

HOW YOU CAN GET HERE

First, realize that every dog/handler team may not be able to get to a Championship; herding is difficult for both you and your dog and it takes a lot of time to understand the subtleties that make it work. However, if you are dedicated to pursuing your best performance, make the commitment to take advantage of this amazing training facility and learn as much as you can from Joe and Linda while you are here. Take advantage of the clinic style lessons by watching others and listening to advice they get. Be patient and try to block out advice other people give you. Every dog is different and advice from other people who don't know you or your dog is likely to only confuse you. Try not to compare yourself to other teams, rather practice comparing your progress against your past performance. Does any of this sound familiar? No doubt, you've heard it before from Joe or Linda or read it in one of Joe's articles. I can attest that they know whereof they speak, so my main advice is to really listen and try to practice the principles you hear. Become the leader your dog wants you to be.

THANKS JOE AND LINDA, how can I thank you enough for sharing your thoughts and your expertise, for being great coaches and helping Rainier and me achieve more than I would ever have thought possible. The journey has been great, even with its frustrations, the messages I've learned from you have been useful in all aspects of my life and I wouldn't trade my experience here for anything. Trainers never get the credit they deserve, but I know this is your victory as well as mine.

Annette Hoffmann, Proud Ewe-topia student since 1996.