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Donnie Egli

Lockridge Iowa

Age 68

Mark::::: Donnie , tell us about how you started coon hunting and how you grew up ?

Donnie ::::::I was born 1 Nov 1942 at home, doctors came to residences to deliver babies in that era.

Fishing, hunting and trapping was my source of entertainment and financial income.

My first coon hunt alone occurred Halloween Night on the eve of my 11th birthday 31 Oct 1953. I walked ½ mile to my neighbors and borrowed tanner ½ B&T ½ walker, walked another ½ mile to brush creek with my coal oil lantern, three cell flashlight, and Winchester single shot rifle. Treed one coon, shot skinned it, poked the barrel through the eye hole, slung it over my shoulder and walked home. I was one proud young fellow.

Every breed was tried in my quest to find the best coon catching hound. I was a hide hunter until I became a Nite Hunter.

I went to a one room school, 9 Grades, one teacher, said the Pledge of Allegiance, saluted the Flag and said the 10 Commandments. High School, College, U.S. Army in the taillights I began Dairy Farming on a large scale.

I hired a herdsman named Owen Bowman. He had a B&T name Nt. Ch. Eads Black Brusier. Owen heard of a B&T female for sale. An elderly Couple said she treed 19 coons last year. They turned her loose each Night at dark from the house. She was house broke. She would come back to the house scratch and bark at the door like Lassie and lead them to the tree and they would shoot the Coon. You young folks probably don't remember the Lassie Show. 😊

Iowa Ann was my first register B&T. She was a Coon Catching Machine, but because of her quirks not a Nite hunt winner. I killed 242 Coons one year with her. They averaged \$12 each. She could manufacture a Coon. She would tree a coon , quit barking when you got to the tree and stare at the coon until you shot it out.

Owen talked about Nite hunts constantly and convinced me to try one. I went to one of the first B&T Sectionals at Kirksville, MO. There were 66 entered if my memory serves me correctly. All grade & open reg. except 3 Nt. Ch., no Grands in those days. I entered Brusier.

I drew Tam young and Tenn. Deacon. Needless to say, my 1st hunt and being naive and overpowered by an exceptional hound and handler I came upon the short end. Deacon is still one of the better tree dogs I've ever heard.

I was hooked, Man this is fun. Nite hunts are as addicting as drugs or booze, but not nearly as hard on your health. They sure can be hard on a marriage though.

Mark::::: When did you attend your first B&T days and where is your favorite site?

Donnie::::: I went to B&T days in the early 1970's to find the best male available to breed to Ann. Jarvis Umphers told me the best he had drawn was a hound named Bellars Bearcat. I went hunting with him and he was exceptional so Ann was bred but failed to conceive. Bearcat was killed by a train a month later.

I called Russell Bellar and he told me that he had a 2 year younger full brother that had been hit by a car and carried a hind leg if hunted real hard. He couldn't handle the hunting Russ demanded.

Young Bear became my first stud, a Dual Champion and exceptional reproducer.

I have missed very few B&T days since. I still remember Frank Maddox calling out casts from a white Shack on the Flora, ILL fairgrounds. 150 hounds was the goal in those days.

Boy time Flies!

Flora, ILL is my favorite place to hold B&T days, Flat Land, Good guides, we're welcome and the coon population has exploded.

Mark::::: You are well known to be an opinionated person and not afraid to say what you think. What

is your philosophy on breeding hounds?

Donnie :::::: Disclaimer ! 😊

The following are my ideas on breeding and improving the breed. They may be worth what they cost. Titles prove very little to me anymore over the years I owned and sold plenty of titled hounds and a bunch that would have titled easily if given the opportunity. Especially my females that were seldom entered in a hunt.

I BREED for REPRODUCING TREEDOGS not titles. Back when I was into nite hunts we made 6 Nite Champions one year with the help of the young Amish men that helped me on the dairy farm. We milked 300 cows.

A walker sectional comes to mind. There were 88 open registered, 12 Nt. Ch.. and 6 Gr. Nt. Ch. We had the only 3 black dogs there and placed 1st, 2nd, and 7th. They boo'ed, good naturedly off course. I took it as a compliment.

Today there are more Nite Champions entered than open Registered in Many hunts. Has UKC ever considered requiring the HTX degree mandatory before acquiring the Nite Champion degree?

All Grand pedigrees will sell puppies particularly to the newbies but will it improve the breed. This depends on your perspective and goals. I feel this is why the treeing walker breed has so many false treeing idiots. Think, how many All Grands have won the World Championships in the registries available. Very few, one or two.

The reproducers list can be stacked if a breeder is astute in pup placement particularly in the smaller number breeds.

The incentives and coupons that some breeders offer to stimulate pup sales baffles me. If you sell a proven product you don't have to bribe customers to buy.

The cream rise to the top.

I was dairyman for close to 30 years. The AI industry sampled young bulls and only 3 out of 100 were dominant enough to go into full time service, the rest were culled.

Unfortunately today a lot of breeders state he's t he best I've ever had and feel they have a stud dog. He may have multiple titles and won some big hunts but that don't make him a great reproducer. Only time allows the cream to rise to the top but the sooner that we can identify these top reproducers the better our chances of improving over chosen breed. Time is our biggest Adversary.

If breeders are honest & objective they have a higher probably of spotting the great reproducer.

The first Nite Hunt I ever went to I met Jarvis Umphers and he made a statement that has stayed in my mind for over 40 years. "Unfortunately it ain't what you got but what you make people think you got that brings females to your stud." Think on this statement. We now have tools to better analyze the offspring of the studs in service.

Statistics tell us the great reproducers of the past. When a stud is used on the general population the Dominate Reproducer will rise to the top however time is the limiting factor. Their dead or too old before they are recognized in to many cases.

Mark::::: How do you analyze top coon dogs and dominate Reproducers?

Donnie :::::: I watch B&T days closely and use it as a measuring stick, a hound that is a consistent cast winner on the local and sectional level is good. However a B&T days consistent cast winner means you have a good coon dog that can compete with the best in the breed or any breed in most cases.

A sire that produces a high percentage of cash winners shows a potential outstanding reproducer. You can only win your cast. High score takes a top hound, top handler and luck! Gentle Scratch a son of Gentleman Jim was the only high scoring male I've had in 40 years, however I've been bridesmaid several times.

To prove a point Tobias won his cast very impressively all three rights and drew several highly advertised stud dogs. Carl Minehart asked me after he drew him twice why I wasn't advertising him at stud. I simply stated he has never sired a pup that is a natural tree dog.

Mark::::: -Can you name some of the hounds that you have bred, bought, sold or promoted in the last 40 years.

Donnie::::: - There's too many to remember then all. However you must realize I moved a lot of them on if I had a better competition hound or Reproducer on hand or I should say thought I did. I made some mistakes along the way.

Iowa Ann, Iowa Melody, Iowa Susie, Iowa Hawk, Young Bear, Little Bear, Big John, Bourbon, Hambone, Hamburger, Gentle Scratch, Savage warcry, Ace, Handluck Jake, Hardluck Tobias, Ugly Hoss, Jobe, IT, Hobo , Hoss II, Jimbo, Beavis, Butthead, Ranger, Bad Egg, Slick, Possum, Sam, Several Bo's, Bearcat, Big Bear, Doc, Bacon & Hank.

We used to make a lot of hounds a Nt. Ch., then quit so their name wouldn't be changed by UKC. They changed the rule on name changes if they had registered offspring at UKC.

Several of the above were killed on the road ,oni bear traps, lost, stolen & shot and several sold and never paid for. I now have an easy payment plan. 100% down and no more payments. 😊

Mark::::: What about your females?

Donnie:::::- I have some that trace back to Iowa Ann. I hunt my females get them running & treeing or buy back some I've sold as pups if they become available. They must be natural tree dogs. I farm my females out to Amish kids, young pup buyers, and old stand by hunters that borrow them each season.

Over the years I have gone out and purchased both males and females preferably from proven crosses from the "Flavor of the Year or Hot Stud Dog," brought them home and crossed them with Hoss II and his descendants If they were natural tree dogs.

I've had offspring Ace, Cain, Combs & Smith Smokey, Easy Ace, Hobo Hoss, Jet, Jet son, Rex, Rugar and sting and several more.

There have been varying degrees of success. Different strains have dramatically different strong & weak points.

Hoss II's offspring biggest weak point was as young hounds they would try to grub out a bad track they couldn't handle.

The large majority were natural born treedogs. I feel this is why he made such a dramatic imprint on our breed.

I cannot emphasize enough that a natural born treeing female must be used in your breeding program if a person is serious about improving the breed.

Mark::::: Why don't you advertise your studs in the magazines anymore?

Donnie:::::- I used to advertise males at stud but became disenchanted with the hassle involved. People not showing up, always ready Saturday or Sunday, too early, too late, and your male was at fault if the female fails to conceive. The men that called and blowed for hours on how good "Super Sally" was and would you breed for a pup drove me nuts.

I mainly sell pups and guarantee them to tree or I will replace. I have very few returns provided they are given opportunity.

I have sold started and country coon dogs for years with about 80% success, 10% the good lord couldn't satisfy, and 10% the hound didn't work. I replace or try to find one that satisfies the customer. One unhappy buyer makes a lot more noise than a dozen happy buyers.

Mark:::::What does this breed need to do to become more competitive at the World Hunt?

Donnie:::::The biggest problem in my opinion is objectivity in hound evaluation. Go hunting, get struck, locate and tree accurately, split tree when necessary and take pull and fang pressure.

Too many B&T men are unable or unwilling to analyze and evaluate due to tunnel vision.

A competent handler, a finely tuned hound that meets the above criteria will be competitive at the highest level. True objectivity is rare. Consistency is the key ingredient.

If the hound wins 50% of his casts you have a good hound. If he wins 75% of his casts you have that rare & exceptional hound. I can count on my left hand the number of exceptional hounds that fit the above criteria that I've owned. The best competition hounds that I've owned are Savage Warcry, Tobias, Bacon & Bearcat.

When Warcry located a tree he had a scream that would make the hair stand up on a bald headed man. I recall a PKC hunt where I drew a 90# walker that was notoriously mean. Barred in UKC, 2 write ups in PKC. Warcry treed deep in the bottom, soon World War III broke out, when we got to the tree Warcry was belly up and the walker was back 20 feet licking his wounds. The owner looked at me smiled and said, "Damn, he's a good one."

If they don't stay they won't stay at my place.

I have yet to be scratched for a fighting dog. I don't believe in bringing back questions to the Clubhouse. Knowledge of the rules is your biggest asset, you can settle questions in the woods. If you win consistently with a top hound, honestly, all houndsmen from all breeds will respect your accomplishments.

Mark::::: Do you think B&T's won more back in the 70's and 80's and if so , why?

Donnie:::::The reason that B&T's won more in that era was due to some real dedicated houndsmen that hunted in the woods rather than behind a computer.

Have you ever noticed that when you draw out for a hunt the man that talks the most is usually packing the least dog power? I am very computer challenged. I don't e-mail, PM, text, twitter or any of that stuff but have learned how to surf the web. IT has been my observation that the self-proclaimed experts that have the answer to every questions, have the answer to all breeding crosses and the best hound to ever pull up under a tree don't win many casts at B&T days.

They have more excuses than a call girl at confessions. 😊

Mark::::: What kind of hunts do you prefer?

Donnie:::::- PKC is the varsity level of competition they have the best rules, hounds and handlers and they also have cheaters like all the other kennel clubs and eventually they get barred. PKC used to be set up so the little man could compete however they have priced their programs out of the market for the average man.

I commend UKC for their performance program. A much lower investment is needed in the Performance Program and anyone that participates with a good hound can get a piece of the pie. Hundreds of happy recipient's vs. a few dozen incentivizes participation.

A lot of UKC hunts, Autumn Oaks, Winter Classic for example used to be a joke. The best cheater usually won. They changed the Format for the Grands this past year and amazingly the scores became more realistic.

I believe the world Hunt incentive Fund will motivate the best B&T owners to do the homework necessary to accomplish the goal of winning the UKC World Hunt.

Mark::::: Why have you always been in favor of single registration ?

Donnie:::::- Wallpaper hounds were a common commodity in all breeds in the past. I can still remember an old dog trader saying I know they are the right papers, I gave them to him.

Single registration allows a B&T hound that meets Breed standards and can strike, trail, and tree a coon for an approved inspector to enter the UKC registry.

If one person per year becomes a breeder and promoter this program is a success.

The most famous single registered B&T in history has to be Hardrock. He has won more money in PKC than any hound in history. The critics were jealous and did everything in their power to downgrade this tremendous coon dog. I commend Tam young for being open and honest about his ancestry. He never ran him at stud in any magazines and true to the American way, it was your decision if you wanted to try breeding a female to him. Tam readily admits that he wasn't a dominate Reproducer.

Listen - Now, at the height of the controversy, 7 of the top 10 on the reproducing male list had a phony papered hound close up in their pedigree.

Where would this breed be today without the following 4 examples and there are many more!

- Brocks Hobo
- Combs & Smiths Smokey
- Ozark Bo
- Super Sting

I expect to be cussed and discussed for the above revelations. The old geezer's in our breed already know the truth.

I predict a few years from now an outstanding hound or top reproducer will show up with Hardrock close up in his Pedigree just like the above examples. However we know the true ancestry in this case.

Mark:::::- A lot of people are curious about Egli's Ragin Black Hoss II. He is in so many pedigrees of top dogs today. What can you tell us about the kind of dog he was, and his reproducing ability.

Donnie:::::- It's best I start at the beginning. I purchased Gentle Scratch, a son of Gentlemen Jim from Carl Hanselman. Carl was a well known salesperson of top of the line Black & Tans (Dog Jockey). He could sell ice cubes to an Eskimo. Scratch was a natural that just needed hunting, he was King of Hunt at B&T days in 1979. Later he was killed on the road.

Jim was the Sire of Ragin Black Hoss that sired the Ugly Hoss hound that I owned that sired 61 pups before he was killed. Those pups were natural born treedogs.

The light bulb finally went on, I had found the strain that sired the highest percentage of natural born tree dogs in my opinion.

Umphers Ragin Black Hoss sired Ozark Shep that sired Ozark Bo the sire of Hoss II.

Here is an interesting side story. I was always looking for a winner and heard of Ozark Bo. Being an overworked diary man I called Ron Meyer and asked him to go to Eddie Combs home, that was close to him, and try the hound. The Price agreed on was \$2,000. Subject to Ron's recommendation. Ron called and said He's the "Real Deal." I called Eddie and he said that he'd changed his mind about selling him. A couple of weeks later Ron owned 1/2 of him.

I'm not upset about this transaction in fact I'm glad because at that time my patience level was very limited. Bo would run anything that had a body heat and come treed someplace. Just think what this hound has contributed to our breed.

I did purchase a littermate brother to Bo that I named It. He easily was made a nite Chamption, lost his mouth at 3 yrs so I moved him on. Two years later, Jarvis Umphers was winning regularly in PKC with a 20 month old named Hoss II. I called the Hunt family in Mississippi that had bred a female to him and they were ecstatic about these pups at 6 months old running and treeing their own coon. Now if you know Jarvis everything is for sale if you're willing to pay the price. I arranged a hunt as soon as I checked on his first 2 litters. His mouth was tremendous, a quick one bark locator and had a treeing intensity I had never witness before.

I mortgaged the farm (not really) and bought him to cross on my females several were daughters of Ugly Hoss.

Line breeding works if you are judicious in breeding only naturals.

Hoss II was the reproducer of a lifetime. He treed so hard and intensely that you could shoot a coon out and it would land right beside him and he kept looking straight up. He was a split tree artist and had the coon a high percentage of the time.

My 10 year old son made him a UKC nite champion. He was easy to call.

His sons & daughters dominated in PKC hunts for several years.

The most gratifying statistic in 2010 up to 50% of the top reproducing males in UKC were out of sons or daughters of Hoss II and none were titled – get the drift, titles don't make reproducers – genetics are the key component of transmitting ability.

Make no mistake about it, titles are the best tool available to tell us who is reproducing.

I have one big regret about Hoss II a number of son's and daughters were sold with 1st place wins and the new owner never finished them. Otherwise, he would still be ranked on the historical reproducers list. Another regret is that I never took pictures of the hounds that I raised, bought and sold.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

You can break a dog from treeing too much, you can't make them tree, I can use an e-collar and make them be present at all trees. Have you ever wondered about some of those present but not barking hounds? I've had several that were smart enough to quite barking, mostly females.

Egli's Hoss II

**PKC Champion, UKC Nite Ch. - Bench Ch.**

## **RAGIN BLACK HOSS II**

**PKC Super Stakes Sire of the Year, 1993 & 1994**  
**Sired 1994 World Champion PKC**  
**Black and Tan Male, Youngest Ever!**



Mark:::::What is your biggest concern in our breed ?

Donnie:::::- Last year, 2010 before B&T day at Flora, ILL a gentlemen who had been line breeding a strain for several decades made arrangements to pleasure hunt with Bearcat. Over a dozen coon were treed and seen by Bearcat in two nights. His stud dog that he advertises never ran a track, never made a tree and wouldn't even fight a coon that had a heart attack.

They sold pups sired by this hound at B&T days, Autumn Oaks and the Winter Classic. They sold pups because he traces 16 times to wonderful blowhard. Remember the statement objectivity and tunnel vision.

Those who live in the past are soon passed over.

We have to look to the future and improve this breed by using all the tools at our disposal.

Mark:::::What are your recommendations for young hunters?

Donnie:::::Parents & grandparents need some guidance along these lines in my opinion. Up to 12 year old buy a puppy for that young person. Over 12 buy a started or trained hound because they need almost instant gratification. Teenagers want results not potential. Look folks, when that estrogen and testosterone kicks in they need a good hound to keep their mind on hunting. A natural born tree dog, hard work and patience are necessary to make a coon dog. There are a lot of adults that don't have the patience and dedication necessary. If you're buying a started or trained hound, go hunting with it. I watch puppies at feeding time and tease them with food. You can determine the most aggressive, hardest barkers and best mouths. I look for the one that has its head back, eyes bugging and keeps barking when you throw feed in the pan. Patience is a virtue that very few of us achieve in a lifetime. I was one of the worst until a heart attack slapped me in the face about a dozen years ago.

Mark:::::What improvements have you seen in this breed over the years?

Donnie:::::The natural instinct to tree has definitely improved in this breed. We have improved the type and conformation DRAMATICALLY. A good looking natural tree dog is much easier to find today than in the past. I didn't say coon Dog. I feel that we have lost some nose, mouth and accuracy.

Mark:::::What do you consider your biggest accomplishment?

Donnie:::::- I was 33 years old before I found a woman that thought she could handle all my faults. We were married 4 July 1976. Sonja and I raised 6 children, 4 boys & 2 girls that are law abiding productive members of society. This by far is the pride of my life and biggest accomplishment.

Mark::::: Any final thoughts for your profile ?

Donnie:::::- I've met a ton of good people in this breed and a few butt holes. Unfortunately my memory is slipping and I have an increasingly hard time with names. I have brought some criticism on myself because I've told it like I see it and haven't been politically correct at all times, well most of the time. Paper holds still for anything a person writes and a computer prints what a person types. Throughout the years I always listed references with phone numbers in my ads. I am proud of the small contribution that I've been able to give to the B&T breed. Remember This. It takes a patient woman to put up with coon hunter. Your children need a daddy to help them with life's challenges. Think hard before divorce. Coon dogs come and go but family is forever. Success is measured by many different people in many different ways but the smart person measures their success by the quality of their family & friends. So Long - Good Hunting - Much Success  
Donnie Egli