

# Life In The Show Lane

## Tracking With Tai

by Janet Langford Gray

*O'Shea Dalmatians, San Jose, California*

My interest in Tracking began with my first Dalmatian, Shakespeare Rambler, TT. "Rambo" was supposed to be my son Shea's 12th birthday present, but I was the one to take Rambo for obedience lessons, and the instructor suggested Tracking to give this busy dog something to do. Growing up with the woods of Michigan as my playground, this was also a good way for me to get out of the office.

In the early 90's during tracking season on Sunday mornings, I tracked with Susanna Atwell and Loyal Oseau in San Francisco and laid tracks under their tutelage. Unfortunately, Rambo died suddenly one month short of his fifth birthday and he never made it to a Test.

My third dog, O'Shea's Satin Hurricane, CD, TD, CGC, "Tai" recently drew the first TDX Track of the day at DCA this year.

At the start, there were multiple broken grasses lying in different directions so that told me there were critters there recently. Tai explored them, and at a point where I even thought we were going to fail the start,

he took off grandly down the track. It was a short first leg of 50 yards that went 90 degrees to the right at the turn, which we found directly. At the crosstrack, 65 yards down, he paid little attention to it and continued on for another 75. He did a circle at the next corner and nailed the shoe 45 yards down, hovering over it as trained. We made room for it quickly in our pack and continued at a trot for 110 more yards.

We were almost too fast for the corner but it went 90 degrees to the left, crossing again the same crosstracks which he barely sniffed. Straight again, there was an impediment approaching, which, in Colorado, they call a "mound". There was some sort of a tree and some garbage weeds that we became wrapped around in. This surprised Tai and we had to get untangled, but he decided to go over the mound and nail the sock on the other side. The track curved left on an angle. We had trouble here, but finally, I remembered that adage, "trust your dog," and he went straight on. The ditch was 10 feet across and 5 feet deep. Tai had to make a decision here, going back and forth a few times, but he finally chose the out path.

After that, there was a dirt road that we crossed easily. It went very quickly to the right, paralleling another dirt road. Chug-

ging down, he was counting his steps at this point. Hadn't we, mommie, made it now? I FOUND ALL THIS STUFF!!!

At this corner, we were 805 yards on the track but after much coaching, he was done! HE ONLY HAD 45 MORE YARDS TO GO!

I'd been futzing around, waiting for the Judges to blow the whistle. I told him, "They're going to blow the whistle on you if you don't get your act in gear," but I could only do so much. He was pooped.

In Northern California, we have a full Tracking season of October through April. The rest of the year everything is done in pieces, with article indication in your living room, turning corners on local parks/schools, etc.,

Would I do it again? YES! In a HOT MINUTE! Any day, any lifetime ever. This is a sport that gets you out there in the world. I can spend many hours in front of my many computers, but what can my dog and I do together? And what is the quality of his life and mine?

This is so much fun.

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*Janet with "Tai", O'Shea's Satin Hurricane, CD, TD, CGC.*