

Meet the Judge

By Sara Heesacker
Nunn, Colorado

PETER & MARIE WADE

“See one. Do one. Teach one.” In every aspect of their lives, Peter and Marie Wade have hearts to serve the community, and it runs deep into the core of who they are. In 2017, Peter retired from a career of service as a paramedic and firefighter. Marie followed suit last year after almost 40 years focused on helping those in her community as a physical therapist working in multiple facets of the field. Their love of people isn't just evident in their chosen careers or hobbies but can be seen in every facet of their involvement with NAVHDA, taking opportunities to cultivate growth in everyone that they cross paths with.

In 1988, Peter attended a sportsman's show in Maine with a colleague from work. Walking into that show, he had a vision of his future: no longer walking in the woods solo with a single-barrel shotgun hoping for success but having a Brittney Spaniel to join him on his hunting escapades. The two men split up, taking different paths through the many booths, but his friend soon summoned Peter to check out a dog demonstration. Peter watched as a German Shorthaired Pointer put on quite a show with none other than Mr. Blaine Carter. From that moment on, Peter was reeled in - hook, line, and sinker.

Changing gears slightly, Peter got his first Shorthair (bred by Raymond Dyer) and began his NAVHDA career with a Natural Ability Prize I. He went all in to learn how to prepare a young dog. While helping at a community park building event, Peter had the idea to use some creative ingenuity and designed a bird pen using a discarded playground slide crate. That pen has been home to many birds that have cultivated numerous NAVHDA dogs over the years. The week before he was going to caravan with Roland Drew, the Yankee Chapter President at the time, to Delaware to run his first Utility test, Peter's young dog suffered from an unfortunate circumstance and died. As tragic as the situation was, his breeder set him up with another puppy, and he began his versatile dog journey with a new partner.

In those early years, Marie's passion was road biking. She grew up with animals but didn't come from a hunting background. She came to the Yankee NAVHDA training clinics but found herself just standing around and waiting. For their 10th wedding anniversary, the Wade's went on a vacation with the dog and road bikes in tow. As mem-

orable trips always seem to go, the heavens opened, and it rained the whole time. The bikes were never ridden on that trip, but Marie walked along as they hunted behind their dog. She decided on that trip that if she was going to walk along, she might as well carry a gun. After they came home, Marie went through hunter safety, got her first small game permit, and participated in her first hunting season in 1996. The framed grouse tail from her first hunt hangs in their home. Marie started to find herself in new situations as Peter pursued his goals with his dog. She would lend a hand finding herself on occasions again in the rain, propelling a kayak while attempting to learn how to “properly” throw ducks for Peter's dog while they were preparing for the NAVHDA Invitational.

Peter and Marie started Northern Exposure Kennels with their first litter of puppies in 1997. It was such a memorable period for their family, not only as they sent puppies to their new homes for the first time but within days flew to China to bring home their daughter. A pup from their second litter came back to them, and Marie poured her heart into that dog that unfortunately didn't live. Through her pain and tears, Peter told her, “It's time to get your own dog.” Peter and Marie flew out to meet a litter of pups that Lance Vernam had. Peter had already picked out a little liver pup when he noticed Marie loving on a little white patched female. She declared right there that “this one was hers.” Being around Peter and their son, Jason, as they developed their NAVHDA partners didn't provide immediate osmosis as a new dog handler. Once she became involved herself, only then did Marie really start to learn how to handle dogs, and this pup pulled her in just like the men in her family. Even though Grace had her challenging moments, Marie dispelled all concerns that she would be “too much dog” as Grace went on to become a Versatile Champion.

In 2012, Marie was ready for another dog and called Clyde Vetter with Sharpshooter Kennels to gain some mentorship on what to do. Clyde happened to have a pup available immediately, and he made Marie a deal she couldn't refuse. Peter was brought into the loop on the “surprise puppy” when Clyde called to set up the shipping arrangements. Not only was Toko from an amazing litter that received an Invitational Breeders Award, but Marie says that

Toko's forgiving demeanor and biddability made her the dog trainer she is.

After Marie's third Versatile Champion in 2018, questions kept being presented as to when she was going to become a judge. Now, this had always been Peter's thing... the one area of NAVHDA that was just his. At the urging of Roland Drew, he entered the apprentice program and became a NAVHDA judge in 2002. Three short years later, Peter became a NAVHDA Senior Judge, and an exciting journey began as he ran his first Invitational in 2006. He spent one day as an alternate judge at the 2007 Invitational which ended with

Bob West asking, “Want to judge tomorrow?” From there, Peter has gone on to become an AIMS Clinic Leader and an Apprentice Judge Mentor, teaching and encouraging the next generation of judges. Peter gave his blessing and Marie decided that it was “do or die” time. Through her apprenticeship, Marie would text Peter or Jason questions from the Rules Book and use her support team to prepare for the next stage of her NAVHDA journey. As with most couples that support each other, there was juggling of work and other responsibilities, like Peter taking his turn in the whelping box with a litter of puppies while Marie was at a test apprenticing. She found her vast experience with training dogs and working with an array of personalities in her career to be helpful. Always learning themselves, both Peter and Marie have found it interesting to observe training trends in different parts of the country that have added to their own training toolboxes.

They have used their ability to teach and cultivate people as well as dogs. Problem-solving and watching to observe has been a way of life for Peter and Marie, and those skills have translated to their effectiveness of “see one, do one, teach one.” They enjoy coaching dog handlers on how to train their dogs, meeting with them and sharing “next steps.” They have been instrumental in teaching over 15 other NAVHDA members how to cultivate exceptional hunting partners and putting Versatile Champion titles on those dogs. In so many ways, they lead within the Sebasticook Chapter by example. Being the Chapter President for years, Peter encouraged the institution of the National Anthems at their local NAVHDA tests to bring the grandiose feel of the NAVHDA Invitational to their own testing grounds. Marie has been the chapter test secretary since 2005. We all know how challenging and time-consuming that job can be, but for Marie the ongoing 19-year commitment has been an incredible experience where she enjoys teaching people through the process.



Being a year removed from the apprentice program herself, Marie shared advice that unless you are a physical therapist, most wouldn't consider as they are learning to achieve the skills required to be a NAVHDA-instituted judge. “Get in better shape. Be physically fit so you have the stamina to mentally process well the whole time you are evaluating dogs. You can also be “Johnny on the Spot” and proactively help the team make things happen.” As an Apprentice Mentor himself, Peter reiterates that the mentors are there to help provide feedback, so reach out to them and use their help, because those individuals are in

that role to help apprentice judges succeed in the program.

While teaching and training have been a huge part of the Wades' lives, hunting has provided so many memories for this outdoor-loving family. A few moments among the many hunts still stood out. Peter and his dog Marcus, along with Peter's son, Jason, and Marcus's son, Quinn, had a Woodcock hunt where the father-son dog team pointed and backed two Woodcocks that were harvested by both members of the father-son human team. Peter has his bird mounted to remind him of such a special bonding moment. Peter and Don Olszewski volunteered for a NAVHDA veteran's hunt in Kansas, where the dogs performed at the highest level, allowing those retired servicemen to produce over 25 birds. Marie has opportunities to go hunting with her friends as well, and the ladies try to set up their own hunts each year. They have also enjoyed hunting as a couple and trying new experiences, like traveling to South Dakota so Tate Martinsen with Red Point Kennels could teach them how to pursue running pheasants. This year, they are excited for another new adventure in North Dakota to hunt Prairie Chickens and Sharp-tail Grouse for the first time.

Through the past 36 years, there have been so many people who have poured into Peter and Marie. They have been fortunate to watch countless great dogs' work. They have done the training, testing, and hunting behind over a

dozen of their own personal dogs, seven of which have achieved the Versatile Champion title. They have taught and continue to teach enormous numbers of NAVHDA members each year. To have the inherent passion to teach, guide, and support others as they do is the true definition of a servant. Paying it forward isn't just something for some of us within NAVHDA...it's a vision that, when caught by the whole NAVHDA membership, can truly elevate the organization to new heights! 🐾

