

## GABRIELLE'S TRIP TO THE MCOA NATIONAL

In 2009, tentative plans were made with Debbie Hobbs for her and me to attend the Mastiff Club of America National Specialty. This was to be held in Eugene, Oregon on the west coast in May 2010. The main reasons to attend, apart from having a well deserved holiday, were to meet with the breeders who had produced litters to our jointly owned boy, 'Clinton' Aust. Ch. Yanoor Tip O The Iceberg (AI) and to see his babies.

Unfortunately, the Global Financial Crisis hit our household and all non essential expenses were soon off the budget. Obviously, a holiday to the MCOA National was not possible which was very disappointing.

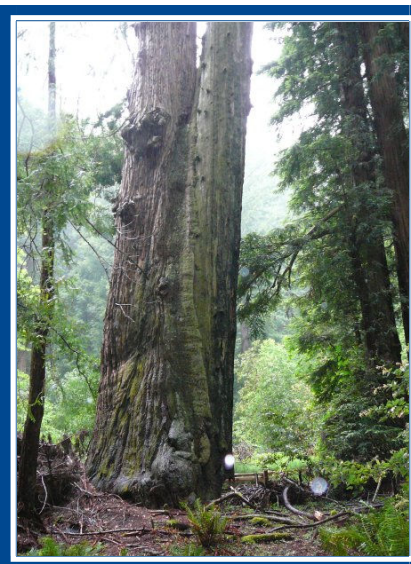
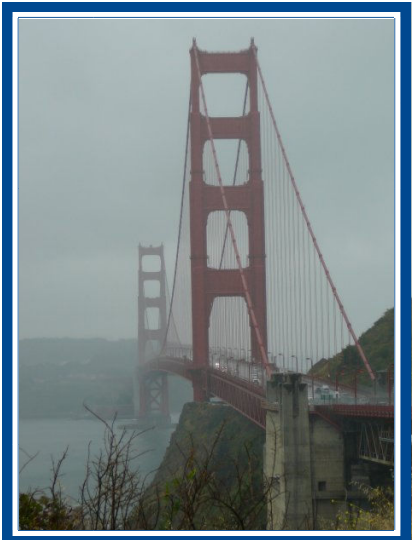
However, in late February 2010, Paul secured a new job. The first thing that he said to me when he received the 'good news' phone call was "Now you can go to the National."

Deb wasn't able to come with me but I was determined to make it. So the organising commenced with the assistance of Monica Coyle of Harmony Mastiffs. Monica's bitch 'Dreamer' (Ch. Goldleafs Hot Summer's Dream) had whelped a litter of seven puppies sired by Clinton and five of these were entered at the National. I would stay with Monica before travelling up with her to the National in Eugene. We would be staying in her fifth wheeler.

I arrived in San Francisco on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May, one hour before I left Melbourne on the same day! I had secured a very reasonably priced flight as well as accommodation at a boutique hotel in a very well located area of the city. Like a zombie, I wandered around that day and planned my next two days in SF.

Apparently, it never rains in May in SF with the exception of 2010! I had booked in with an eco friendly tour company named 'Green Dreams'. Interesting name, although it doesn't have the same lethal veterinary connotation in the US as here. Although the weather was fairly poor, and therefore the stops shorter than usual, I saw most of the major sites, including Muir Woods. The tour leader/driver/owner was Elie Sasson who was a wealth of local knowledge and his tour gave that little bit extra (including a CD of SF music!).

I loved San Francisco and felt completely safe travelling on my own. It is a very cosmopolitan city and I found some fabulous food to enjoy – Indian, Italian and Mexican, which included an authentic burrito which originated in SF.



The public transport system is fantastic and so easy to get around on. A mandatory cable car ride was included although not such a thrill for a Melbourne girl. I saw the latest tram that Melbourne had given to SF which arrived on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2009 and made my way to the Japanese Gardens via public transport.

Of course, there was some obligatory shopping which included a weather proof jacket from North Face. This company was originally formed in SF. I also discovered the department store Macy's which offered tourists a further 10% discount off the already sale items. What a discovery that was!

My stay in SF was just a stop as I was en route to Sacramento – to the home of Monica Coyle and her family and Mastiffs. Monica had many sightseeing tours planned but I received an

*Redwood tree at Muir Woods*

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email two weeks before I left Australia. This left me questioning how much sightseeing we would do, but in no doubt about this lady's commitment to the breed – she had just rescued a Mastiff bitch and dog from a less than desirable 'shelter'. Complication was that the bitch was in pup and due to have them the day after I arrived. So, I did think that this was not going to be the holiday that I had hoped for. I never should have worried!



*Monica's beautiful home in Placerville, California*



*Bella with her puppies*

There was an instant connection between Monica and I. Bella, the rescue bitch, was in the car when Monica met me at the train station, and it was usual Mastiff breeder mayhem – too much to do with not enough time. Monica's mother, Karen, was to look after the rescue litter while we attended the MCOA National. A huge task and Monica wanted to get the puppies on the ground and everyone somewhat settled before we took off to the National. So Bella had a c-section on the Thursday (the day after I arrived) – nine healthy puppies were the result.

Monica and I were travelling to the National in her fifth wheeler. I was not quite sure what this really was but all I could say, and kept saying, when I actually saw it was "Oh my god." It surpassed anything that I had imagined! Push a button and the sides expand. The TV was bigger than the one that I have in my living room! It was fabulous and I knew that this was going to be a fun trip.

On Thursday evening, Lisa Willman and her Clinton/Dreamer son, Hunter, arrived from Missouri. It was late when they arrived after Kevin, Monica's husband, had picked them up from SF airport. I had been involved in getting the air mattress from the garage and inflated for Lisa to sleep on. Unfortunately, the inflation didn't last, so Alex (Monica's son) and I set about taping over the leak. As, Monica was very stressed with the litter and getting ready to leave for the National, we did not want to bother her. Alex and I were very proud of our handy work until we found out the next day that our 'patching' had not really been successful – poor Lisa and Hunter basically slept on the floor!

With Karen in charge of the litter, the girls set off to get supplies for the following week. However, a pedicure (referred to as a 'pedigree' in Monica's confused state!) was needed before anything could proceed. So the three of us sat up in these massaging/vibrating chairs and giggled whilst

we had French manicures on our toenails and battled with understanding each other due to the different accents. We were just missing the glass of champagne which probably would have only complicated matters even further!



*The fifth wheeler hooked up to the Dodge*

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The dogs were bathed and the fifth wheeler was packed with food and beverages for both humans and canines. It was a bit of a marathon but Monica is competent, capable and exudes energy. Finally, with everyone on board, we set off to Eugene on Friday evening planning to travel for four or five hours.

A dinner stop was needed but when you are towing the maximum sized fifth wheeler, it seems that not just any town off the highway has takeaways suited to this sized rig. I have to say that Monica's skill as a driver and calmness was unbelievable when we drove into a Subway car park that really was not designed for this sized vehicle. I gave some guidance from outside whilst Monica skilfully manoeuvred out of a very tight situation. Needless to say, we didn't end up with Subway and there weren't too many more situations like this on our road trip! The posse was sent out to check any situations that looked a bit tight.

The scenery was just amazing on the way to Eugene. We even experienced a light dusting of snow as we drove along, and saw deer on the road's edge (unfortunately mostly dead!). We passed Mt Shasta which was blanketed in snow and rises to a height of over 4,300 metres. Everything was so green and fresh which was so different coming out of our summer and years of drought.

All the RVs and fifth wheels were in the car park of the hotel. We were connected to mains power but also had the generator if necessary. The fifth wheel has its own toilet and shower so we were self-sufficient. Arriving on Saturday afternoon, we set up and organised the outside crates for the dogs so that they could stretch out a bit more, in addition to lots of walks.

The first day of competition was on Sunday which was the Redwood Empire Mastiff Club Speciality. At last I would meet more of Clinton's babies and the owners – their success at the show was an extra bonus. I was really thrilled for Taru Korrensuo and David Barnes of Sisu Mastiffs as their Clinton son, Kane, who they bred and co own with Jamie & Allen Morris of Cedarhollow Mastiffs and



*Set up at the National*



*Taru Korrensuo with 'Tess'  
Am. Can. Ch. Cedarhollows Rock N Roll Fantasy  
who is the dam of 'Kane'  
Sisu Rock You Like A Hurricane  
and 'Betty' Sisu's Black Betty at Cedarhollow*

Shannon Low of Resolute Mastiffs, was Best of Opposite in the Puppy Sweepstakes. Kane was expertly handled by Shannon.

The New Zealand contingent arrived on Sunday evening – Brenda and John Cheese of Tessenday Mastiffs and Kathleen and Paul Reynolds. It was not long since Brenda and Kathleen had visited Australia, specifically the MCOV Championship show, and I was glad to have some extra familiar faces. It was also great to meet their very patient partners, John and Paul.

The schedule was pretty full on once the National started. Every day, there were various classes judged, as well as seminars, clinics, and social events. Of course, the dogs had to be looked after

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and we had to eat (although I did go for 24 hours without food as I did not have time to eat! I actually lost weight on this holiday). Any dogs that placed 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> needed to stay so that official photographs could be taken. All the connections take pride of place in these photos and this includes visiting Australian who owns the sire of the dog being photographed. I can happily say that I appeared in so many photographs over the week that it was almost embarrassing. One judge even said “Not you again!” A lot of time was spent hanging around waiting for the photos to be taken, so Monica and I were very pleased that the bar was just around the corner. There were a lot of celebratory Champagne cocktails consumed, some even before midday!

One of the pups that consistently won over the week was ‘Bruno’, Harmony’s West Coast Heart-breaker, owned by Doug Newcomb and Jenna Ford. Bruno was originally Jenna’s dog but he became a bit difficult for her to handle so Doug took over. Well, what a connection these two have – it is just amazing! Doug has never been to a dog show let alone shown a dog and yet he handled Bruno like a professional. They are such a team. Also, many people were asking Monica who the ‘eye candy’ puppy owner was, so not only was Doug a really good handler, he had the looks also! We spent some really fun times with Doug and Jenna over the week. Jenna consumed a lot of oysters but we made sure to remind Doug that his prime responsibility was to show Bruno. We spent some really fun times with Doug and Jenna over the week. Monica kept us organised – instructions were always preceded by the phrase “Here’s the deal!” As the night progressed, hand gestures accompanied this phrase and we took great delight in mimicking Monica. As I mentioned previously, there are a lot of seminars and clinics on offer. I benefited from attending an advanced handling class; a breeding forum (“Everything you always wanted to know about Mastiff sex...”); Breeder’s perspective on the Mastiff standard; and, an information session and lunch on Cystinuria. All of these were presented by experienced people with written attendee feedback given.

Cystinuria is the ‘buzz’ topic for the breed in the US at the moment. The information was delivered by one of the head researchers who is involved with trying to identify a DNA marker for the Mastiff. It was so interesting to hear her speak about where the genetic research is; what could be expected re a DNA test; and the recommendation in regard to breeding.

A number of these seminars were coordinated by MCOV member Cynthia Stewart and Jessica Watson. Paul and I first met Jessica and her partner, Mahlon, in Oklahoma in 2000. We have seen each other at MCOA Nationals over the years (2001 and 2003), and Cynthia and her husband, Arte, even visited Australia. However, it has been a number of years and it was great to catch up with them again. They are very committed to the breed and educating members. I was determined that a group photo of Clinton’s offspring was taken. With the busy schedule, it was very difficult to fit it in, but we did one morning. We all arranged to meet in the hotel lobby, and then our photographer, John Cheese, would take us to our ‘set’. John actually is a photogra-



*‘Dreamer’ Ch. Goldleaf’s Hot Summer Dreamer with ‘Tango’ Harmony’s Tango On Ice and ‘Hunter’ Harmony’s Sir Iceberg Hunter of Dreams 3rd place Brood Bitch, REMC Specialty*

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*(l - R) Nina with 'Glamour'; Doug with 'Bruno'; Gemini with 'Tango'; Lisa with 'Hunter'; Monica with 'Syd'; yours truly; Taru with Kane; and Jamie with 'Betty'*

pher so I was optimistic that he could take this epic photo with 10 dogs and 11 people. After lots of positioning changes from all the 'directors', John was confident he had 'the' shot.

I only had breakfast in the hotel one morning. I remember that there was real pressure to get the breakfast over as some of us needed to be in the ring. There were seven people at this table and the combined Mastiff experience totalled over 200 years and I was a 'newbie' at 17 years! Our table consisted of Bill Newman, Dianne Collings, Michael Jensen (Denmark), Dee Gennsburger, Toni Hyland, Joanne Williams, and me.

After being in contact with Kim Morrell of Brodancroft Mastiffs for many years, we finally met at the National. The two of us took some time out to spend a quieter hour chatting over lunch (some very good Mexican!).

Over the week of the National, there were many social functions to attend, the main one being the Banquet on the Saturday evening. Many awards were presented on the evening and it was wonderful to be able to help celebrate the success of the winners.

Theresa Lyons and Denise Flaim from Modern Molosser were there to record the event. It was so good to be able to put faces to the names after lots of emails.

There was very limited 'free' time, but I did find a few hours to go over to the shopping mall.



*Yours truly showing 'Dreamer' wearing the much admired suit.*

Macy's had a HUGE sale and then gave further discount to international visitors. I bought a couple of lovely suits for dog showing at much less than I would pay here in Australia, however Monica could not believe how much I spend on my suits in comparison with what she usually pays. However, I did handle on a number of days and I actually had so many comments about the suits that I had brought over from Australia to wear.

Congratulations to the organisers of this mammoth event, as well as all the winners.

Even though we were exhausted, the trip back to Sacramento was still fun. But the hard work was to start again for Monica as she had the litter from the rescue girl to

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keep her busy for the next few weeks. Monica's mum had done a great job but she needed a well deserved break. It was an absolutely fabulous holiday that I will always remember and cherish. I look forward to repaying Monica when she comes out to Australia!

Gabrielle Simmonds



*'Dreamer' Ch. Goldleaf's Hot Summer Dreamer with 'Bruno' Harmony's West Coast Heartbreaker and 'Glamour', Harmony's Addicted To Beauty 3rd place Brood Bitch, MCOA National Specialty*

Mr. D. Henson  
President  
Mastiff Club of America  
[hensond@embarqmail.com](mailto:hensond@embarqmail.com)

Dear David,

I would like to thank the MCOA committee and members for making me so welcome at the recent National Specialty in Eugene, Oregon.

From the time I commenced contact with MCOA officials re organising various aspects of my trip, I was overwhelmed with the prompt and helpful advice that was given.

Doreen was just amazing! I am sure that she had far more important things to attend to than comparing USA and Australian clothing sizes so that I could pre order items, but she replied to all of my emails so quickly. She made sure that I had accommodation booked in the hotel and looked after where my room was.

When I booked in for the Advanced Handlers' class, Jodi offered to loan me one of her dogs if I needed it. Later, when I asked about the possibility of one of the New Zealand members borrowing a dog, there was no hesitation.

My friend, Cynthia Stewart, also looked after my bookings for sessions and the opportunity to attend these was appreciated and beneficial for various aspects of my Mastiff knowledge as an owner, exhibitor and breeder. It was obvious that much planning had gone in to making these sessions worthwhile and good that assessment of the sessions was requested from attendees.

Pat designed a fantastic advert for me for the catalogue and has contacted me since the National to ensure that I was satisfied with what I had paid for. She has also generously agreed to send me the advert in a format that I can easily use in another publication. I am very grateful for this.

Being able to catch a quick bite for breakfast from the Hospitality room was appreciated and helped keep the costs down (although one of the vendor's probably received the money I saved!).

This MCOA National (my fourth visit) was made more special this year as my dog had offspring (two litters sired by his frozen semen) being exhibited and I was also handling in a number of classes. But that was just the 'icing on the cake' to what was already a wonderful show.

Thanks so much.

Very sincerely

Gabrielle Simmonds  
Australia



*Harmony's West Coast Heartbreaker*



*Harmony's Addicted To Beauty*



*Harmony's Tango On Ice*



*Sisu's Black Betty at Cedarhollow*



*Sisu's Rock You Like A Hurricane*

The official photos of Clinton's kids making their mark at the MCOA National Specialty in Eugene, Oregon. They are entered in the 6-9 month age class.



*Harmony's Addicted To Beauty*



*Harmony's Tango On Ice*



*Sisu's Rock You Like A Hurricane*



*Harmony's West Coast Heartbreaker*