

From the Eagle's Nest
By Karolynne McAteer
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So...this is a personal tale. Elsewhere in this issue of the Memo you will see a report from Anne Marie Kubacz about an eye clinic, starting at the Colorado National this year, and explaining the reasoning for it.

The dog that Anne Marie kindly did not name, though am sure she knew I would reveal it, as I am now, is my CH Red Barn Huntly Syncopated Rhythm MH, call name ZAC. A bold, spirited and talented boy, pretty much in his prime. His sire and dam, Barry and Diva have pedigrees related to me, and outcrossed too.

So the story begins like this...in March of 2020 I left the AKC Delegate Meeting, hopped on a flight from Newark to Raleigh, and got home about 6PM. Greeted in Zac's usual bounding way with the carpets flying left and right. The following weekend Zac completed his Master Hunter title, making him, I think only the 23rd CH/MH in the breed's history, at that time. Clearly he was seeing well! Happy to report that more have joined this rank of CH MH. Well you know what happened next. Late March the state of NC shut down, we came to a standstill, dog events were all cancelled both indoors and out, and we cancelled our planned trips to two Field Trials. (he is field trial pointed too)

2020 was a lost year in total, and really, we were not going anywhere that I couldn't drive to, so Zac always with me. In March of 2021 I started to see some oddities that were out of place for Zac and his big bold attitude about life.

Suddenly he was cautious about stepping out the door, which has two steps to the patio and out to the yard. At dark I had to actually step outside with him, and say "what the hell is up with you." I thought something had scared him out in the back yard, so I toured the yard, did find bunnies outside the fence line, but I know from personal experience that he is NOT afraid of those. Daytime he seemed perfectly comfortable and moved with breakneck speed through the yard. So I started to watch him carefully, which isn't hard when you are spending 99.9% indoors with your dog. I made notes.

One day first week of April, I was playing our usual morning game of "dive for the enormous cookie", when again an oddity appeared. Zac was searching the carpet with his nose, for where the cookie had landed. He was not diving at it and tossing it around. I kept at this little test for three days, and said to myself, **OK what is happening here.** My mind immediately went to an eye injury, perhaps scratched while crossing fields and getting under trees while pointing his birds.

Luckily I had an immediate thought (this does not always happen) and realized that at my All Breed Show first weekend in May, of which I am the show chair, there was going to be a really significant health clinic sponsored by the Tar Heel Golden Retrievers. Big names in all avenues of health were coming down, and I called to ask if I could please participate. Regrettably the clinic was filled. So I called my own vet, went to see her, and asked for a referral to NC State. She asked why, had a look in his eyes and said it did not appear to be a simple injury. I received a referral but could not get an appt for at least 6 weeks. I said a bad word!! But one evening in late April I receive a call from someone in the Golden Club who said "Ms McAteer, this is (name) from the Golden Retriever Club, " I had no idea you were the show chair at Moore County and of course we will fit Zac in. Come up to the clinic on the grounds at your convenience and we will fit you in immediately." They did! Zac was seen by Dr. Brian Gilger DVM, MS, Dipl.ACVO, Dipl.ABT, NC State University College of Veterinary Medicine. His eyes were dilated, Zac walked around greeting everyone and 30 minutes later Dr. Gilger asked me to come in. He said, "definitely something is going on, and I am calling the clinic, and making an appointment for you." He did. 3 weeks later I went to NC State CVM, with Zac's health file, all his tests which were copious and all with perfect results to date and threw in the pedigree, Barry's tests and Diva's. So that is his info and that of his sire and

dam. The Fellow came out to collect Zac, and said come back to your car in 90 minutes. So I walked the grounds which are GORGEOUS and which include amazing artwork, life-sized bronzes of dogs and finally arrived back in the parking lot, just as my phone rang to say they were coming down with Zac. He was returned by the Fellow, and he said you will hear directly from Dr. Davidson with a report, end of today, or first part of tomorrow. At that moment from behind me came a voice and a very handsome gentleman whose lab coat said Dr. Michael Davidson. "Wait, I'd like to speak with you directly." When he started, he said "your dog has PRA," I of course said "NO HE DOES NOT". He is clear both levels, as are his parents and generations before that." I handed him Zac's file which the Fellow had not taken. He was baffled for sure. He asked if I knew of Gus Aguirre, of course I said "of course." He said I am going to send my results to him as soon as I get to the office, and of course he did.

Moving forward. Sobbed the whole way home, and my feet hadn't stepped two steps into the house when I called Anne Marie, who I had been speaking with all along. I told her the news Dr. Davidson shared, how he said IT IS PRA. And asked What Now? Anne Marie called Paw Prints Genetics to ask about other eye tests for Zac. They re-ran his tests for Zac which had originally been done by Optigen for rcd-1 and rcd-4 he was once again CLEAR for all. Paw Print Genetics were totally involved from here on, in what we did as we tried to rule out what was going on with Zac. His sire, deceased, had been tested more than twice, and had blood banked at CHIC. His mother now 13 was tested by Paw Prints and was of course, clear. Other siblings were tested, also clear.

I drove up and Zac went with Anne Marie to Gus Aguirre in Pennsylvania, and I headed into NYC for the AKC meetings. Dr. Aguirre agreed he had PRA, just not Irish Setter PRA and no other member of his immediate pedigree had PRA. So Dr. Aguirre mentioned to Anne Marie about PDE6B which no doubt is a part of Anne Marie's report. It would be considered a mutation. And Dr. Aguirre also mentioned "things that happen after 5 years of age." Also addressed in Anne Marie's report.

As a final stab for any information, Zac was tested for eye disease in all 13 breeds that have a definitive eye test (starting with B as in Beagle.) You know the answer to that ALL CLEAR.

But one night I received a call from Paw Prints from their Medical Director. He said he wanted to speak about Zac. I hung my head and said "OKAY." He said in his opinion this was either an anomaly or De Novo. In all my years of breeding Irish Setters this is not a phrase I have any knowledge of. Of course I said "what." He said we should consider that somewhere during the dam's pregnancy she was exposed to something, and in vitro, only Zac was affected as a result of that. Interesting, but still depressing.

Whenever I finished a conversation with any vet, either on the phone, or leaving their office, they have said as I departed. BLIND DOGS ARE VERY HAPPY DOGS. And so far he seems OK. Clear that his vision is diminishing, and it seems to be lower half of the eye at this point, because he doesn't see things on the floor and trips over them. If one had to laugh, and at some point you have to, my dog's Master title, is joined by a PHD in PRA testing. The saddest thing of all for my very well adjusted dog, is he won't be able to compete in the field. It is his first love. He cannot run on unfamiliar grounds for fear of going off a cliff or drowning in some lake. He runs weekly (Monday), with his trainer Janie Bristow, for the pure pleasure of hearing the wind in his ears. He knows these grounds like the back of his hand.

In closing, I believe in science. I therefore feel he was an anomaly or de novo. Everyone should be vigilant as to changes in their dog's behavior and continue with testing, particularly after 5 years of age.

I am grateful to the ISCA Foundation who kindly footed the many bills, in pursuit of Irish Setter Health. And to my friends who knew of this tale and individually took up their posts to support me personally, words cannot express my gratitude. So this is Zac's tale, and his tail is still wagging.

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