

Recently I have been considering how far Go Dogs has come as a club and the changes that have taken place not only within the club, but in the sport of agility. I decided that I would write a little history of Go Dogs.

Once upon a time..... well actually back in 1992 – there existed a group of dog trainers in Omaha who became involved in a new exciting dog sport called agility. It was said by naysayers that the sport was a fad and would never last! Not to be deterred but with nowhere to train and no equipment, this group of trainers pooled their resources, experience and imagination, which resulted in a new dog club in Omaha that offered classes in agility, obedience, flyball and conformation – Go Dogs!!

A bit of history – Pam Reid, originally from Nova Scotia but working on her PHD in Toronto, moved to Lincoln in 1992 to continue research required for her PHD in animal science. Pam and her border collie, Ciaran, along with her saluki, Shaheen, were active in flyball, obedience and the dog sport called agility. At that time, the sport of agility was very new in the states. Kenneth Taatsch had watched the sport, which was adapted from horse jumping, on a trip to England. He brought the concept back to the states and formed the United States Dog Agility Association, based in Dallas Texas. Bud Kramer of Kansas took an interest in the sport and formed NCDA, another venue with a format which was quite different from the USDAA format. Various other venues eventually joined the agility scene, including AKC in 1994.

My husband, Greg, and I met Pam at an obedience class held at the old Companion Dog Club meeting on Saddle Creek. Greg was participating in flyball and obedience at the time with his mini poodle, Max. We became friends with Pam and shared her interest in agility and learning more. An agility seminar was being held at Companion showcasing NCDA agility and their unique equipment. Greg entered Max who learned the equipment in one day of the seminar. The next day was a trial, which he entered and received qualifying scores! NCDA stressed more control and less speed than USDAA agility, consequently we became intrigued with USDAA which was also the venue that interested Pam. Fortunately, a Lincoln club GLOC became a sanctioned USDAA club and began holding trials in Pioneers Park in Lincoln in April. We were hooked and began traveling to USDAA trials in Minnesota and Colorado, then to USDAA Nationals which were always held in San Antonio or Houston, Tx until they began moving around the country to accommodate the growing interest in the sport. Our interest sparked interest from our friends who wanted to learn the sport as well. In order to do that, we knew that we had to have equipment and a place to train, which was not a possibility with the club that we belonged to at the time. Our solution was to form a new club.

The original group consisted of about a dozen people, a few of them still members. Our goal was to provide a place to participate in dog sports of our choosing, whether it be agility, flyball, obedience or conformation. Our first meetings were held at supporter's houses – to brainstorm and to determine the financial risk in forming a new club. But we had no shortage of enthusiasm so we forged ahead, adopted the name of Go Dogs, which comes from the Dr Seuss book Go Dog Go.

Some of us contributed money and some of us contributed experience and time, and some contributed quite a bit of both. We were dedicated to our cause and spent a huge amount of time toward fulfilling our goal. We built agility equipment with a start up fund obtained from obedience classes that were held in parking lots and agility classes held at a members acreage near Ashland . Deb & Mike Stiner suggested that we contact the owner of the building across the street from them, which had recently been vacated. We were fortunate that George and Edna, the owners, believed in us and allowed us to rent the building on a monthly basis, with no lease. We moved into the current building in July 1993. We were pioneers in the exciting, addicting new dog sport of agility!

Go Dogs was the first facility to offer agility classes in Omaha, and we had a tremendous amount of interest, consequently generating a very good income. We continued to offer obedience, flyball and conformation classes, although conformation was eventually dropped due to decreased interest and the availability of other classes in the area. We became a sanctioned USDAA club and held USDAA trials for over 10 years. Several years later, we became an AKC sanctioned club. We held an AKC trial in the spring and a USDAA trial in the fall. Due to Omaha's strict leash laws, it was difficult to find a park that would give us permission to hold an agility trial. Consequently, our first USDAA trial was held at Playland Park in Council Bluffs. Eventually we were given permission by Hefflinger Park in Omaha to hold a trial on their ball fields. We were fortunate to have contacts at the Nebraska Humane Society and moved our trials to the Meadow, next to the Doggie Day Care Center. Eventually, the weather took it's toll and we had to re-evaluate the possibility of finding an indoor site. (One of our USDAA trials was actually cancelled due to snow) We moved our trials to Chance Ridge (on dirt with plenty of distracting animal smells) in Elkhorn for several years. We have since moved on to the Omaha Sports Complex for our AKC trials, which has offered us the opportunity to hold indoor trials on soccer turf. We currently also host one CPE agility trial a year which is held at the Gretna Soccer Club.

As more clubs in the area became involved in agility and began hosting trials, Greater Omaha Agility Group (GOAG) was born. GOAG is a consortium of several clubs (including Go Dogs) in the Omaha area, with representatives from each club. Yearly club dues and occasional fun matches provide income to maintain our equipment as well as obtain new equipment. .

In 2020, we continue to offer successful agility classes, as well as introductory obedience CGC, tricks, AKC STAR puppy, flyball, rally, and nosework classes and barn hunt opportunities. I believe that we continue to meet the founding member's original goal to provide a place to train in the sport of our choosing.

It's been quite a 27 year ride and Go Dogs is still around – guess the sport of agility is here to stay as well ☺

Mary Ruhe

Updated 4/25/19 by Mary Ruhe