

Completely Devoted to Dogs

Nowhere are dogs more royally treated than at Jagersbo Kennels.

*Fresh air, sunshine, exercise, good food, and lots of love
make up the recipe for producing healthy, vigorous dogs.*

Summer swims in the pool are simply exhilarating.

Knock on the door of Erik Bergishagen's home, which is right across the driveway from the boarding kennel, and you are likely to be greeted by housedogs "Piper" and "Meggie." An orange Scottish Fold cat named "Otis" usually isn't far behind.

Their master has a favorite saying embroidered on a pillow in the living room, "One can never have too many dogs." Perhaps it best explains the many treasured breeds that have

called Jagersbo home.

President of the Detroit Kennel Club, Erik and his wife, Jane, and daughter, Erika, run a third-generation boarding kennel. Breeders of prized conformation Labrador Retrievers, along with many other

"Meggie," a Border Terrier, and "Otis," a Scottish Fold cat, in the living room at the Bergishagens' home.



breeds, their passion is whelping a new litter and seeing the dogs develop to their potential.

Steeped in History

Jagersbo, located in the Detroit suburb of Birmingham, began in 1929 when Erik's father, the first Erik Bergishagen, registered the name, meaning home of the hunter in Danish, with the American Kennel Club (AKC). A sportsman with a passion for bird hunting, he built a reputation as a breeder and trainer of champion English Setters and English Pointers.

Born to a sporting family in Denmark, Erik Bergishagen was a lieutenant in the Royal Danish Guard before coming to the United States in 1922. His status had allowed him access to some of Europe's finest hunting estates. In this country, he started importing setters and pointers from Scandinavia.

When Erik was 6 years old, his father moved the family to the current location of Jagersbo Kennel. "I remember a team of horses scooping out

At right, Erik Bergishagen hugs housedog "Piper," a 10-year-old Labrador Retriever.







Erik grew up around his father's English Setters.

the basement of our house," he says. The kennel came next.

Primarily a private sporting kennel, Jagersbo included setters, pointers, Chesapeake Bay Retrievers, Irish Water Spaniels, Dachshunds and German Shorthaired Pointers. Memories of dogs extraordinaire can be found on shelves in the kennel office where heavy silver ornamental trophies are displayed. Some were Swedish Kennel Club champions: INT CH Spiron, CH Frank II of Jagar-

hem, CH Valkyr-Jagarhem and INT CH Tula. Several were featured in the book "The Complete English Setter."

Helping his father with the dogs, Erik cleaned the kennels and went to dog shows where he held dogs ringside. From the beginning, Jagersbo was loyal to *Purina* brand dog food. In a *Purina Dog Chow* advertisement from 1949, Jagersbo Kennels was No. 14 in a series featuring "Visits to Homes of Fine Dogs." Photos of the kennel and Erik and his father showcased Jagersbo. Today, the kennel feeds *Purina Pro Plan* brand Beef & Rice and Lamb & Rice Formulas to boarding guests, as well as personal dogs.

Launching into Dogs

Unexpectedly, in 1952, Erik's father died in an automobile accident en route to the opening day of pheasant season in northern Michigan. Erik



Erik's father, Erik Bergishagen Sr., founded Jagersbo Kennels in 1929. His passion was English Pointers and Setters.

was supposed to accompany his father, but he was working at a local car dealership.

"I was launched 100 percent into the dog business when my father died," Erik says. His younger brother was in college, and his three older sisters, though they liked dogs, did not get involved with them. His mother, Sonika, was a pianist who loved and bred an occasional litter of Dachshunds, but she was not her husband's partner in dogs.

Timing was excellent for developing a boarding and grooming business. The construction of super-highways and air travel had just begun. Suddenly, a person could fly to Chicago in an hour or be in New York in a reasonably short time. Erik threw himself into field training, obedience, grooming, dog showing, and the dog boarding business.

One boarder, Jane Fisher, occasionally brought her Cocker Spaniel, "Tippy," for weekend stays at Jagersbo. When her family was moving, she needed a place to board her horse, "Questro." Erik put up a fence, and Questro also boarded at Jagersbo. Erik asked Jane to a movie and the two "realized we had so much in common with animals," Erik says.

Today, Erik and Jane have been married 48 years. "The two of us really put the boarding business together," Erik says. Meanwhile, they also showed dogs together. After Erika was born, Jane's parents helped with both the kennel and the baby, while Erik and Jane went to dog shows.

Christmas 1959 Jane surprised Erik with a 4-month-old female German Wirehaired Pointer puppy. Knowing that Erik has always admired the breed, she talked to handler Dick Cooper who helped arrange for her to buy a female pup from breeder Newt Compere. "I finished her and then went on to finish many more," Erik says. "I won the German Wirehaired National Specialty two consecutive years in 1972 and 1973."

Showing dogs became as much a pleasure as a job, and in 1967 Erik applied to the AKC for an all-breed professional handler license. He began showing Borzois, and was undefeated in the Borzoi ring for many years, handling the Borzois of breeders Rick and Shen Smith.

Other breeds that he handled were mostly Sporting, Hound and some Working breeds. Primarily traveling to dog shows in the Midwest and the East Coast, Erik enjoyed "taking good quality dogs and competing in the

classes. It was so exciting to go in and win a class of 60 to 70 dogs, and then to get BOB (Best of Breed). I was never one to campaign dogs for win records." Personal dogs he finished to enhance the Jagersbo bloodline with champions.

During these years, Erik learned from mentors such as Julia Gasow and her veterinarian husband, Fred. Living only about a mile from Jagersbo, Julia was president of the Detroit Kennel Club, and she had made a tremendous impact in the dog world as a breeder of Salilyn English Springer Spaniels.

Terrier handler George Ward taught Erik how to hand strip a terrier's coat, and also how to "put down a German Wirehaired Pointer. Dick Cooper showed me how to lay the shoulders down on setters and spaniels. When I had a question, I'd call George or Dick."

One day, in 1989, Erik called Jane to tell her he would be late returning from a dog show. He had fallen asleep while driving home, and had had an accident. Knowing that Erik didn't sound hurt, Jane's first question was, "Are the dogs OK?" Erik knew it was time to stop handling.

Later that year, Erik applied to the AKC to be a licensed judge of Labrador Retrievers, English Setters and German Wirehaired Pointers. Next came Golden Retrievers, Borzois and English Springer Spaniels. His love for judging sporting breeds continues to this day. Erik judged the 2005 Labrador Retriever Club National Specialty, the 2004 Canadian



Jagersbo Kennels is featured in this Purina ad from 1949. In the middle photo at right, Erik's father holds Spiron III, a 6-month-old pup who was a descendent of two Swedish Kennel Club champions, INT CH Spiron and INT CH Tula.



"Harriet," one of many German Wirehaired Pointers that Erik finished during the years he worked as a professional handler.

National Labrador Retriever Specialty, and the Sporting Group at Westminster in 2003.

"In sporting dogs, you want qualities that are the same for field and show," he says. "You want a dog that is true to type and one that is balanced and sound. You want to combine those components with hunting instincts and the ability to retrieve and hunt."

Jagersbo Labradors

While Erik's father made a name for himself in setters and pointers, Erik's passion is the Labrador Retriever. When he was 18, his father bought his first Labrador, Jock of Atkabaska. "Dad let me show him. He was the first dog I showed and finished." The handsome black Labrador appeared on the cover of Bede Maxwell's book "The Truth About Sporting Dogs."

America's most popular breed of dog, based on AKC registrations, the Labrador is a natural retriever and wonderful family pet. "Show Labradors today are an influx of English dogs," Erik says. "They are more square with more body whereas field Labradors are built for speed and moving. To this day, they are still quite different, the show and field Labs."

Other favorite famous Jagersbo Labradors include CH Jagersbo Mr. Mustard, a yellow male bred by Erik. Sired by CH KimValley Clippa of Lawnwood out of CH Jagersbo Yellow Gail, "Mr. Mustard" like his father had a large, square English head. "He had such substance and type," Erik says.

Bought from breeder Martha Lee Voshell, CH Jagersbo Hawk of Broadreach ("Hawkeye") came "from an exceptional bloodline, and he added



In his office, Erik keeps up on reading and duties related to being president of the Detroit Kennel Club. Above left, Jagersbo Kennels offers boarding, grooming, training and day care.

greatly to our breeding," Erik says.

Jagersbo averages one to two litters a year. Whelping puppies is Erika's favorite part about breeding. "I always loved the job of helping whelp puppies," Erika says. "My thrill is seeing a good-looking dog I have bred and knowing it is a lovely specimen of the breed with type and balance and proper conformation. I love seeing what the dogs look like when they are older."

"Very little compares to how wonderful it is to have a quality bitch, go through bloodlines and find a dog that is something comparable to your bitch to use for breeding," Erik says. "Watching puppies being whelped and then

weaned, and working with them every day is quite satisfying."

Repeat buyers affirm the quality and temperament of the Labradors bred at Jagersbo. "From the beginning, I have worked to develop dogs that are able to get hunt tests and working certificates to show that they still have the ability to do both conformation and fieldwork," Erik says.



A Well-Known Kennel

Today, Jagersbo Kennels is a well-established boarding, grooming, training and day-care kennel in one of the country's wealthiest areas. Executives from the automobile and advertising industries live nearby, and everyone loves dogs. A traditional kennel with indoor-outdoor runs,

Two famous Jagersbo Labradors were "Hawkeye," above, and "Mr. Mustard," above right.

Erik says, "We are firm believers in fresh air and sunshine. It wouldn't be a kennel if it were in an enclosed building."

Though the kennel is in the original building built in 1935, numerous updates have made it among the best facilities anywhere. Most recently, in the fall of 2005, stainless steel gates were installed. Ceramic-tiled walls make it easy to clean the inside runs, and gutters along the outside of each kennel ease the cleaning of waste. Air moves constantly through the air-conditioned and heated kennels. Epoxy flooring similar to what is found in airplane hangars is ideal for cleaning and disinfecting the entire kennel. Shading is put over the outdoor runs in the summer to provide relief from the sun.

Erika, who owns the boarding kennel, grew up around dogs and was a junior handler in the show ring. Her canine friends absolutely adore her and she them. Skilled in obedience training, Erika once taught a deaf Australian cattle dog to understand sign language.

Steadfast in feeding *Purina Pro Plan* to their boarding guests, Jagersbo accumulates lots of weight circles from bags of dog food, especially when you consider the kennel may feed over 100 dogs at Christmastime. As members of *Purina Pro Club*, they recently redeemed 50,000 Purina Points for a \$500 Best Buy gift certificate that helped them buy a new washing machine and refrigerator for the kennel.

Sharing Dogs in Common

Adjoining the kennel is the house where Erik, Jane and Erika lived for 30 years. With most of the furniture and dog art still in place, it provides a quiet



Jane, Erik and Erika pose with "Gracie," left, and "Gander."

respite for Erik to use as his office. Limited edition prints of sporting dogs and shelves filled with books and statues line the walls. Here, he keeps up on duties related to being president of the Detroit Kennel Club.

"I like doing the Detroit Kennel Club Dog Show," he says. "It's very satisfying to work all year, and then to put on a quality benched show for two days."

Since 1976, Erik has been one of 10 members who organize and present the Detroit Kennel Club Dog Show. He was elected president in 1988 when Julia Gasow stepped down.

One of the largest all-breed benched dog shows in the country, the Detroit show allows the public to learn about breeds of dogs from exhibitors who share information and keep their dogs in the benching area throughout the dog show. Held in downtown Detroit at Cobo Center, last year's dog show had more than 2,000 entries each day. The 2007 show will be two weeks earlier on March 3 and 4 to help attract the fancy to Detroit following the International Kennel Club (IKC) of Chicago Dog Show the preceding weekend.

Erik's passion for dogs extends to wanting them to live long and healthy lives. For many years, he served as a trustee of the Morris Animal Foundation. For two years, he was the canine vice president, helping to raise money to fund health studies.

Through the years, Jagersbo has had many great dogs. "To me, a great dog means one that is great in conformation, a great house dog, and one that excels as a hunting dog," Erik says. "I've actually had many great dogs in different breeds. Through it all, we've met some wonderful people. We all love dogs. That is what we have in common." ■



A litter of nine yellow Labrador puppies depicts the adorable qualities that make the breed the most popular dog in America. Jagersbo Kennels average one to two litters a year.