



Delmar Smith

July 30, 1926 – September 19, 2026

A Legend in Our Time

People have strived for a life well lived. But Delmar Smith's 100 years on earth were the true definition of a life well lived.

On July 30, 1926, "Aunt" Fannie Purcell, a midwife and neighbor, delivered Delmar in a bedroom of his parents, Richard Lafayette Smith and Minnie Caroline Smith's farmhouse near Big Cabin, Oklahoma. Mr. Smith was a descendant of the Cherokee nation.

During Delmar's childhood, several top bird dog trainers used the area for training on the ample quail population. In the 1930's, several important trials were held there and Delmar's first earnings at the age of eight were for opening and closing property gates for the bird dog events.

The Eppersons, brothers Dutch and Bud, were dog trainers competing in trials. Delmar loved the dog training and trials and his knowledge blossomed under Dutch and Bud. Dutch's daughter Jeanne and Delmar met during this time, married and had three sons, Tom, Rick and Mark. Mark suffered an untimely death following a rodeo accident. Tom and Rick both became successful professional pointing dog trainers as well as Delmar's younger brother Ronnie Smith and Ronnie Smith Jr.

Delmar began working and trialing Brittanys in 1945. He moved to Edmond, Oklahoma in 1950 to take over the training and boarding kennel of his deceased father-in-law Dutch Epperson. The events back then were the top Brittany stakes in the nation and his win record is impressive including wins of the United States Open Brittany Championship and the National Open Brittany Championship. The National featured walking handlers in the beginning but later, with Delmar's encouragement, horseback handling was approved by the AKC.

Delmar participated in field trials or conducted seminars in all 50 states and 14 foreign countries. He won the National Open five times and U.S. Open Brittany Championships before his mid-40s. Early national winners trained and campaigned by Delmar include Towsey, Way Kan Jill, Holliday Britt's Bazooka, Bazooka's Brandy and Brandy's Bullet. Delmar was a breeder along with several of his owners and established the "Bazooka" line which was highly successful.

Delmar was an initiator and supporter of the International Endurance Shooting Dog Championship, a three-hour trial. His reasoning: "You have to have a strong, well broke three-hour dog to do well on the Texas and Oklahoma quail leases." With an eye on breeding the best to the best and evaluating dogs at these events, one could witness dogs that could produce future generations of quality dogs. In 1973, Delmar's son, Rick, won this Championship with the only Brittany ever to do so.

Delmar's dog training skills, methods and philosophy are best expressed in great detail by Bill Tarrant in a book published in 1977 titled "Best Way To Train Your Gun Dog." A gifted writer, Mr. Tarrant presented Delmar's talents, methods and equipment for training with the book being reprinted in excess of 20 times and remarked Delmar was "the best friend a dog ever had." Indiana sportsman Ed Rader, long associated with the National Shoot-to-Retrieve Association, said, "I'm a pretty fair hand with a dog but I can't carry Delmar's luggage."

Delmar was an early strong supporter of the Bird Dog Foundation, serving on the Board of Directors from its inception in May, 1989 and assisting with fundraising. A non-profit organization was the first step to building a permanent site for

honoring bird dogs and their owners from past, present, and future, and preserving the history of field trialing and bird hunting sports.

Honors he earned along the way include the Field Trial Hall of Fame (1998), the Brittany Field Trial Hall of Fame (2000), and a permanent place in the National Bird Dog Museum; and he was the recipient of the T. Boone Pickens Lifetime Sportsman Award (2016).

Delmar walked in the Kalahari Desert and traveled to South Africa, England, and Scotland. He dined with or visited with the Mellons and Rockefellers and met the late John Wayne. Delmar was an Oklahoman wherever he was. He was proud, and the 46th state will forever be proud of him.

Delmar did not care if you were a president or a pauper; you got the same bone-rattling handshake and welcoming ear-to-ear grin.

His sayings endure:

"The best gift you can give a person is your time."

"Always give the dog the benefit of the doubt."

Delmar is remembered by the Smith family:

"He was a man who would sit with us in the field or at the kennel for hours talking about bird dogs and horses and how they think."

"Well, how about that, sports fans" will echo through our minds for years to come. It was one of Delmar's standby one liners. And he had a bag that was stuffed brim full of them.

"Charge it to the dust and let the rain settle it" when someone wanted to pay him back for some generous deed of his.

But it comes down to this one: "I've always wanted to be a dog trainer and a horse trainer. I've gotten to do everything I wanted to do. It's a wonderful thing. I've been very fortunate with all of that."

Very successful as a dog trainer, Delmar was also a lifelong horse trainer and rodeo patron. For over 30 years, he was the Timed Event Championship gateman at the Lazy E. Arena in Guthrie, Oklahoma, the "Ironman Contest of Pro Rodeo" event. Delmar earned numerous nationwide awards for his rodeo participation and was in reality a "true cowboy."

Countless times, Delmar, "King of the Chutes" at the Lazy E Arena, heard his dear friend Clem McSpadden share the words of the Cowboy's Prayer. And while a lot

of people might jump to the end of that prayer at the passing of a friend, today Delmar Smith no doubt would have focused on the opening:

"Our gracious heavenly Father, we pause in the midst of this festive occasion, mindful of the many blessings you have bestowed upon us."

Perhaps no one deserves the title of "Legendary Trainer" more than Delmar Smith. There is no way to describe how important he was and how much of an impact he had on the bird dog world.



**No one has witnessed more bird-dog history than Delmar;
few have made as much.**