



## CALLED TO LOVE AND SERVE

Named after the inspiring views treasured by his mountain-climbing owner Chris Wellsandt, Monty, aka Malhaven's Many Vistas, was the first dog to earn the AMCA's Serviceable Alaskan Malamute (SAM) award. Chris shares stories of this exceptional dog.

### You're My Everything

Monty's story began in 1989 with the search for an Alaskan malamute that could do everything the breed was capable of doing, long before it was popular to do dual titles on the breed, especially in obedience. In the Canadian Alaskan Malamute Club Newsletter, I saw the style and trainability of malamute I wanted. She had earned a Utility obedience title. She had a litter, and the sire was a champion and had a Companion Dog - Excellent title. This line of mals had proven itself in conformation, obedience, and pulling sled for Canadian trappers. Upon writing to the breeder, I received a phone call. Her current litter was bred for trainability and work ethic, and the number two pup was the most amiable and structurally sound for conformation.

The sale was sealed like this: I was on the phone with breeder Karen Ibbotson. My husband didn't want me to get a puppy, especially from someone I hadn't met, without seeing the sire, dam, or any offspring. As Gordon was going out the back door, his words were, "You are not getting the pup!" He heard me say, "Ship the pup to Windsor."

Being a mountain climber from the Pacific Northwest, I wanted the pup's name to reflect my memories of the beautiful vistas I had seen from the peaks. Thus the name Many Vistas and Monty for mountains.

A "sporting dog in a fur coat" is what I called Monty. He had the temperament of a Labrador Retriever; loved the water and retrieving. I never had to worry about him with behavior issues around other dogs or children.

In 1991, at two years old, Monty qualified for the AMCA Working Pack Dog and Working



### About the Author

*Originally from Washington, Chris Wellsandt has lived in Michigan for 24 years. Her love of hiking inspired her to transition to mountain climbing, tackling the major peaks in the Pacific Northwest. Convinced only one breed of dog could possibly accompany her, she got her first mal – only to meet a toy poodle on the trail thereafter!*

*Some of her first mal's habits motivated Chris to learn about obedience and dog behavior. Her second mal, Monty, benefited from her experience, making history in our breed.*

*A retired Administrative Assistant, Chris enjoys traveling to assist others. She has helped to rebuild Hurricane Katrina damage, as well as building a study center in a Tanzania village. She also enjoys teaching obedience at her local dog center.*



*You Are My Joy; So Are You  
Monty won Most Weight Pulled at the  
1992 Mid-Union Sled Haulers event.*

# HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Weight Pull Dog titles. His first backpack trip was along Lake Michigan. Monty's brain registered "Water = Swim." While the others stayed on the trail, he pulled me toward the lake and waded in with his 28 pound pack. In the CAMC newsletter, it was reported Monty was "going for a SPD (Swimming Pack Dog) title." On a crisp fall day, earning his second WPD leg, we paused on a fishing dock to look at the view, near the end of the hike. Monty must have thought, "here's my chance for the second SPD leg" - in seconds he jumped in, with his pack still on.

While weight pulling, Monty showed not just strength, but heart. To earn his third WWPD leg, we travelled to Illinois to attend a fun match and weight pull. It was 7:30 pm before our class ran. Monty pulled 1560 pounds in 9.6 seconds. The announcer said, "This dog makes it look easy." After the last two pulls, Monty took my arm in his jaws like Golden Retrievers tend to do. He had had enough; he wanted to go; it was past his mealtime. Having qualified for his WWPD leg, there wasn't a reason to stay. I notified the scorekeeper we were dropping out of the competition, and we walked back to the crate, all eyes following us in disbelief at this malamute escorting me by holding my arm in his jaws. This was a once in a lifetime moment.

At weight pulls, Monty was a crowd pleaser. He pulled for the crowd, as well as for me. Since the audience always wanted to pet him, I used it to our advantage. Leaving the pull area I would say, "Pet Monty to win." He loved the attention. He earned his IWPA Silver medals at two years old, and went on the next year to earn his IWPA Gold medals on wheels and on snow, pulling a sledge.

In 1992, Monty earned his Canadian Championship in two weekends. Karen had told me her line takes four years to mature. Sure enough, at not quite four, in October 1993, Monty achieved his AKC championship.

Another requirement of the SAM award is proof the dog has a good temperament. Monty completed his Canine Good Citizen and American Temperament Test certifications in one day, at the age of two. The judge, a Marine dog trainer, said he couldn't believe a malamute that young

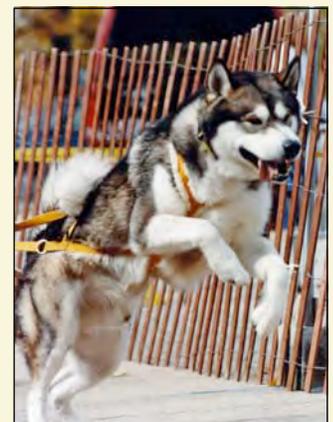


**When I Smile,  
the World Smiles with Me**

*Don't walk in front of me,  
because I may not follow.*

*Don't walk behind me,  
because I may not lead.*

*Just walk beside me, and be my friend.*



# HISTORY IN THE MAKING

could hold together under a full day of that kind of testing and behave so well.

Monty's temperament and sense of humor stood out in a Novice obedience class. As a female Belgian Tervuren entered late, Monty did a head swing. Was he thinking, "Wow, look at her beautiful coat?" The Tervuren was sitting four dogs down the row from Monty. We prepared for the "Sit/Stay"; as I was walking across the ring I heard, "Chris, Monty!" I turned. He had left his "stay" and was sitting in front of her, licking her face. I put him back in his spot, but he proceeded to go adore her. Monty is still remembered as the Gentle Giant.

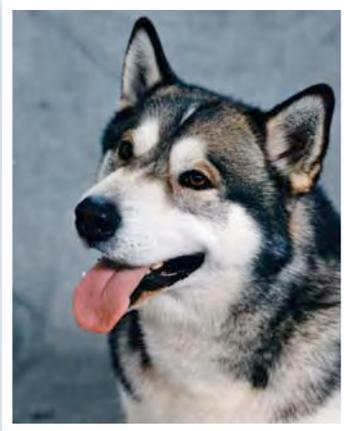
In 1993 we attended the Kindling Classic dogsledding event in northern Ontario. The event organizer wrote this letter in support of Monty's SAM award: "The Kindling Classic is to encourage rookie dogs and owners in sledding. The dog Monty was teamed with was not able to work the distance and was put onto another sled. Monty was hitched up with my team of mals. There was no room on the gang line so I attached him to a long line, thinking he would run along side the team. Instead he ran up front without any problems. It is commendable that Monty would accept strange people and dogs working him in the conditions the day presented. My team were all intact males, as was Monty. At the end of the event, participants vote for the dog they want to add to their team, and that dog receives the "Most Coveted Dog" plaque.

Monty was the clear cut winner. The criteria: having the physical ability to work AND the temperament that allows him to."

A competitor in IWPA weight pull and obedience with small dogs wrote: "Monty was a gentle giant; friendly and open to all, even small dogs. He was the weight pull PR dog. Gentle to not bowl over the children who would run to hug him...If a good working malamute is a stable creature with an excellent working relationship with its handler and a glow for strangers, human or canine, Monty has that."

Monty had a soul that was sensitive to the elder citizens as well as to young children. On a cold winter day, a friend wanted to walk her malamute puppy through downtown Ann Arbor. All the attention was on the puppy. Monty didn't mind, he had had his share in life. He seemed to notice, as I had, a street-person. I called her the "Lady in the Blue Coat." As she crossed the street and was walking our way, her head down to not draw attention to herself, Monty pulled me toward her. He went up to her, laid his 26 inch, 95 pound body horizontally across her kneecaps, and at the same time tipped his neck upward allowing eye contact. As I stood at the end of the leash, she lifted her head to look at me. Her eyes sparkled, as mine beamed. Amongst all the others on the street, he had selected her to stroke his bear size head.

One of the fun events we did was to go to a small town in July. They had contests for the dogs. Monty's costume was



Photos clockwise from above: Weekend win at the weight pull; My eyes reflect my soul; the Front and Finish Certificate of Canine Distinction is one of Monty's many awards.



## SAM I AM

### How does a dog become a Serviceable Alaskan Malamute?

The first dog to earn the SAM award from AMCA, Monty was recognized for his accomplishments in the Fall of 1997.

Earning the SAM award requires:

- **Conformation:** A Championship title
- **Obedience:** A Companion Dog title or better, or equivalent in Agility or Rally)
- **Working:** Any one of the AMCA Working titles (sledding, weight pulling, backpacking)
- **Temperament:** Written verification by a neutral party of what the dog has done in public contact. A therapy dog certificate, Temperament Test title, Canine Good Citizen title, etc. is not enough to fulfill this requirement, but should be included in the application if the dog has them.

Monty's full name with titles is: A/C CH Malhaven's Many Vistas A/C/U CDX, Sts & ASCA CD; CGC, TT, IWPA WWP, and AMCA's #1 SAM, #2 VAM, Oonanik Award, Flaming Flirt Award, WPD, WWPDX, 1994 AMCA HIT.

# HISTORY IN THE MAKING

"Christmas in July." Ten judges voted Monty Best Costume, Best Looking, and Best Trick.

An obedience title is another requirement for the SAM award. Monty's obedience career earned him AKC/CKC/UKC Companion Dog - Excellent titles, and smaller kennel club Companion Dog titles. As his canine alopecia worsened, I believe he felt insecure and vulnerable without his fur coat. Completing "Sit-Stay" became impossible. As we were trying to get our last CKC CDX leg, Monty left his "Sit-Stay" and followed me across the ring. The popular American judge said under his breath "Oh S\_\_\_." Acting like he was just standing watching the dogs, he cautiously let me look at his scoring sheet. It was a large entry, and we would have had a 197.5 score out of 200, and fourth place after three Golden Retrievers. The next weekend, I said that if he didn't make it through the "Stays" we were done trying. So, he earned High Scoring Working Dog and fourth place!

An obedience moment to remember was taking High in Trial at the AMCA 1994 National. That year, Monty received the Flaming Flirt Award from AMCA for his obedience performance. The prestigious AMCA's Oonanik Award became an aspiration for us, after seeing Bev Pfeiffer receive it at the 1994 National. We received a phone call in 1997 announcing that Monty was awarded the Oonanik Award. My husband hugged me and cried, "To think I told you to not get the dog." Monty didn't stop there and went on to be awarded the first Serviceable Alaskan Malamute, and in November 1998, the second ever Versatile Alaskan Malamute.

At the 2000 AMCA National Specialty in Wisconsin, Monty pulled it together once more for me. He was nearly 12 years old. He competed in Veterans with five mals between ten and 12.5 years old, scoring 195.5 and second place. By this time, the canine alopecia had taken 80 percent of his coat. He had his last hurrah in the Parade of Titled dogs, wearing a gold lame' bow-tie! He accepted people examining him to learn more about canine alopecia/Coat Funk. I feel this was another history-making moment for the Alaskan malamute breed! This was Monty's ultimate service to the malamute world; his fame in our breed allowed Coat Funk to come out of the closet. I created an extensive website providing information on Coat Funk to the world. Positive responses came in from many countries.

This story would not be complete without remembering Monty's special toy, an octagon shaped yellow ball with which he never played. He would communicate to "Mr. Yellow" on what he deemed were special emotions to share. He would gently nudge it and make it squeak softly, then he would reply in various octaves and the sequence would repeat, until Monty ended the repetition of creating their interaction. Mr. Yellow was his other soulmate, next to me.

Monty's breeder, Karen Ibbotson, was correct: this malamute would be "trainable and amiable." Monty was biddable, enjoyed being my team partner for the goals I set for him; but mostly we enjoyed playing together. I'll have other buddies, special dogs, but not a soulmate or a dog that looks at me like Monty ...you all know, "The once in a lifetime dog only comes once in your life." I had mine. I was blessed! So was Monty.



## Another Great Day with You

Photos from top: Taking time to smell the flowers; Monty celebrating his birthday with several playmates;

Hamming for the camera after a three point major win in conformation at a show in Flint, Michigan; Pulling with heart and soul at the

2000 Snow Days event in Kalkaska, Michigan; relaxing at home with favorite toy and soulmate, Mr. Yellow!