

People: Dawne Deeley

Rare-breed advocate

April Balotro

To say that breeder Dawne Deeley takes on a lot in the dog fancy is a gross understatement. Figuratively speaking, the Vancouver Island, British Columbia, native wears a walk-in closet worth of hats, including breeder of Nordic working dogs, judge, writer, Sighthound Magazine owner, dog-lead designer, Canadian Kennel Club Foundation board member, and the list goes on.

Awarded the Cross of Merit of the Order of the Lion of Finland in 2005 for restoring the country's national treasure, the Karelian Bear Dog, Deeley is one of the rare-breed world's most outspoken advocates. Between exercising the 23 dogs in her kennel, giving judging seminars and going to nail appointments, she discusses her life-long love affair with dogs.

Q: What attracted you to Nordic breeds?

A: I had a boyfriend about 20 years ago who really liked dogs with hair, and we wanted to get something that was a little bit different. I was looking through a dog book one day and saw a picture of a Karelian Bear Dog. At that point, the breed was promoted as being from Russia, and I'm half Russian. It turned out the breed was not Russian; it was Finnish. But by that time, I had set my cap on getting one, and shortly after that, the boyfriend and I split up, so I was left with the dogs, and that was fine. I really liked the breed's temperament and look. I just love Nordic working dogs.

Q: How did you come up with your kennel name, TsarShadow?

A: Finland was in the shadows of the imperial Russian tsars for many decades and was not granted independence until Dec. 6, 1917. Because I have Finnish dogs and because many of the people who helped me were older people who had lived through many of the Finnish-Russian conflicts in World War II, I decided that the best tribute I could give them was to refer to my kennel and my dogs as coming out of the tsar's shadow.

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