

## Dog Man and the Akita

**New book tells the tale of one man's mission to save the breed from extinction after World War II.**

Posted: May 5, 2008, 5 a.m. EST

After World War II, only 16 Akitas remained in Japan. Used in battle, for fur vests, and for food, the country's national dog was on the verge of extinction.

Morie Sawataishi had never wanted a dog, never thought about owning one. But one day, at the age of 30, he felt a strong urge to get one. In the dead of winter, he drove his cart to see an Akita puppy in a village a day's ride away. Upon seeing her, he couldn't resist the dog's soulful eyes and soft coat. Against his better judgment and with the knowledge that police were rounding up and killing any dogs they found for their pelts, he took her home.

"Dog Man" by Martha Sherrill follows Sawataishi's growing passion for the Akita, and his determination to keep the breed alive in Japan. He refuses work promotions, sought-after job offers in Tokyo, and the lure of bigger houses in order to focus on breeding and raising his Akitas in his remote village.

At the age of 88, Sawataishi was honored with a lifetime achievement award for his part in resurrecting the Akita. Now 92, his passion for his dogs remains as strong as ever. He has never sold one, eschewing financial gain for the joy of giving them away instead.

"Dog Man: An Uncommon Life on a Faraway Mountain" by Martha Sherrill is on sale now.