

Thomasville Scene

A reflection of our culture



A wonderful time

Follies fondly remembered

- > TUCKERS PARTICIPATE IN **REENACTMENT**
- > **FOOD SAFETY** IN THE GARDEN
- > SULLIVAN NAMED **HANDLER OF THE YEAR**
- > **STARTING A HOME GARDEN**
- > **GUIDE TO VIRTUAL TOURS**

SPRING 2020

A PRODUCT OF THE

THOMASVILLE

TIMES-ENTERPRISE

Sallie Sullivan receives **Handler of the Year** award

compiled by Tammi Mott | photography by John Gerbino

Sallie P. Sullivan of Thomasville, Georgia has been selected by the Master National Retriever Club Foundation as the recipient of the 2019 “Bill T. Teague Handler of the Year.” She becomes the first woman to earn this prestigious Handler of the Year award.

Over 150 family, friends, and hunting retriever enthusiasts watched Sullivan receive her award Saturday, March 7 at a special tailgate celebration following the Tallahassee Hunting Retriever Club Hunt Test in Thomasville.

Samuel Ferguson of Tallahassee, Florida opened the program by recognizing Sullivan for her

Sullivan has the most Master National plates of any amateur handler, ever, in the sport.



Jack Combs, Samuel Ferguson (past presidents of the MNRC) Sallie Sullivan and 2020 MNRC President Allen Dillard, and MNRC Treasurer Jimmy Hughes.



Sallie at home with some of her Master National plates.

exemplary performances with Labrador retrievers over 30 years, including placing nine dogs in the Master National Retriever Club's (MNRC) Hall of Fame.

Dr. Fred Nusbickel of Meigs and Jack D. Combs of Wickford, Rhode Island told of some other achievements. Dr. Nusbickel thanked Sullivan for her generosity as a land owner and her support of the AKC Hunting Retriever Test program. He said the retriever community represented at the celebration was there because of Sullivan and her devotion to the support. Combs said Sullivan, "is truly, the Gold Standard of Excellence," for our sport.

On behalf of the Master National Retriever Club Foundation, Allen Dillard, 2020 MNRC President of Brownsboro, Alabama, and Jimmy

Hughes, MNRC Treasurer of Columbia, Tennessee presented Sullivan with a plaque and a check for \$1,000 before the crowd was treated to a buffet dinner. The Tailgate Celebration was hosted by the Tallahassee Hunting Retriever Club, Wiregrass Hunting Retriever Club, as well as the Atlanta, Magnolia and Fall Line Retriever Clubs.

Sullivan's accomplishments illustrate her exemplary skills knowing she trains and handles each dog as an amateur. Every dog she has competed with has been her own Borderline breeding. She holds an astonishing 40 Master National event Plates, the most earned by an amateur in our sport. As well as seven Master Amateur Crystal Plates as well as two Master Amateur Invitational Hall of Fame retrievers. The crowd applauded when Combs told the crowd that Sullivan has qualified at

an incredible 956 AKC Master Hunt tests over the years, and is still going strong. Sullivan has the most Master National plates of any amateur handler, ever, in the sport.

The AKC Master National Retriever Club holds an event each year, and since the club's creation in 1991, Sullivan has competed in every event except one. In 1999, Sullivan served as president of the Master National Retriever Club and in 2003 hosted the Master National event at Borderline Plantation in Thomasville.

In addition to her success at the Master National event each year, Sullivan is an active member and past president of the Tallahassee Hunting Retriever Club.

The Master National Retriever Club calls Sullivan a role model for women in the sport and her pioneering spirit in the game has proved as motivation of other women handlers.

In addition to representing the highest standards in training and testing, Sullivan has bred Labrador retrievers for over 30 years, and holds the highest standards for furthering the Labrador retriever breed. She has bred 10 Master National Hunter (MNH) AKC titled retrievers and 2 AKC Master Amateur Hunter retrievers.

She was also the first woman to receive the Master National Retriever Woman's Challenge Trophy.

Sullivan won top honors at the 2019 Georgia/Florida Plantation Challenge. An honor she has received several times.



Speaker Fred Nusbickel



In 2013, the Bird Dog Foundation Inc., in Grand Junction, Tennessee also honored Sullivan at the Field Trial Hall of Fame Induction ceremony. Sullivan is a true Icon of the sport of retriever hunt tests and training.

The "Handler of the Year," award ceremony will be re-created at the 2020 Master National Retriever Hunt Test on September 24 in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

A total of 1,020 retrievers were entered into the 2019 Master National event making it the largest field and performance event in AKC History. The Handler of the Year award was established in 2015 to recognize exemplary performance of a series of criteria by handlers of dogs at the Master National event. *TS*