



Sunfire Golden Retriever breeders Michael "Mike" Book and Barbara Biewer hold littermate puppies.

to be a strong collaborative team in breeding and raising Sunfire Golden Retrievers.

THE NAUGHTIEST PUPPY

Crediting Biewer's ability to match the right dog to the right owner, Heidinger says, "She always sends me the naughtiest puppy."

Tapper was one of the naughtiest puppies. Heidinger's late husband, Joe, who had recently stopped judging obedience and had retired from showing, had wanted a male with a dark golden coat color to be his buddy. "I called Barbara and asked her to send a dog before he changed his mind," she says. "That puppy was Tapper."

Sadly, Joe Heidinger died six months later.

Many years before having Golden Retrievers, the couple had German Shepherd Dogs. Among her

obedience stars, Heidinger put UD titles on bitches "Mitzie" and "Lacey."

"Then, one day Joe brought home a Golden Retriever puppy," Heidinger says.

The puppy came at the right time, as she was recovering from a mastectomy and was undergoing chemotherapy. After six months, Heidinger began battling an addiction to the chemotherapy drug.

She named the puppy "Chemo."

The uplifting determination and rallying strength that Chemo brought Heidinger is reflected in their accomplishments. NOC OTCH Meadowpond's High On Chemo UDX19 OBHF won the first AKC National Championship in 1995, and became the third highest-rated Golden Retriever in obedience history. "Chemo helped me beat cancer and chemotherapy," Heidinger smiles.

Heidinger's obedience resume includes being the only person to have handled two different dogs to Top Obedience Dog of the Year, which she did with Tapper and Toasty. Her other noteworthy achievements are:

- 27 perfect 200 scores
- 627 High in Trials
- 722 plus High Combined Awards
- 22,393 OTCH points earned over her career

This brings us back to Tapper. Through mid-March, he has tallied 3,875 career OTCH points. As Tapper and Heidinger take out again on the obedience circuit this year, she says, "My goal is to get him in the Top 25 of lifetime points among all breeds."

Doing so would make him her third Golden in the Top 25, joining Toasty and Chemo. ■

A TRAINING TIP

Lynn Heidinger, of Tinley Park, Illinois, the owner-handler of "Tapper," the Top Obedience Dog in the country in 2016 and 2017, offers a training tip: Try using your dog's dry food, or kibble, as a training treat. Tapper is fed and trained with *Purina Pro Plan FOCUS Sensitive Skin & Stomach Salmon & Rice Formula*, a complete and balanced dog food made with real salmon as the No. 1 ingredient and natural prebiotic fiber to promote digestive health.

