

"AS NATURE DESIGNED THEM"

I belong to one of the most oppressed minorities in the country. You wouldn't know it by looking at me. My oppression has nothing to do with my skin color, my religion, my sex, or even my nationality, which is American.

Yet for over 30 years, a small class of working people who are employed as professional, state-licensed caretakers and breeders of Racing Greyhounds, have been subjected to a relentless onslaught of slander, libel, and otherwise vicious assaults on their profession of choice, as well as their character, by assorted groups of ideologues and organized, angry mobs of animal rights fanatics.

The media has been only too willing to give voice to those who believe that it is inhumane for Racing Greyhounds, who are bred specifically to be racing athletes, to give vent to their innermost need and most visceral instincts, which are rooted in their prehistoric genetics, while almost completely ignoring the voices of those people who are the actual custodians of this most ancient of dog breeds.

In Massachusetts today, the animal rights activists of a political action, of an animal rights group which calls itself Grey2K, are once again out in force, canvassing the malls and pet stores of the Commonwealth (of Massachusetts). They are trying to get the 68,000 signatures necessary to pass their latest version of an already failed ballot initiative, which seeks, covertly, this time, to ban the State-regulated racing of Racing Greyhounds in Massachusetts.

In 2000, the original ballot question that Grey2K had authored was defeated by the voters. This time, they have suddenly taken an interest in increasing the State's penalties on those who keep fighting dogs and engage in dog fighting, and just as suddenly developed an acute sensitivity toward the nebulous abuse of service dogs.

The ballot initiative this time barely mentions greyhounds or greyhound racing, until the last sentence. So now they are able to approach and hopefully fool voters into thinking that they are signing a petition that will actually do something to prevent the breeding of pit bulls and the abuse of service dogs (which it won't, as there is already strong legislation on these matters), all the while attempting to cleverly couch their true agenda, which is and always has been, to ban greyhound racing.

They didn't get the result they sought the last time the issue was put before the voters, so they have obfuscated their true goal, and correlated the lawful racing of dogs who are bred specifically for that purpose, by state sanctioned and licensed trainers and kennel operators, to the unlawful, deliberate and underground savagery of pit fighting, where the intent is to maim and kill.

Apparently this tactic is working, and the voicemail at the website of the Greyhound Racing Association of America received a particularly shocking call, from a Massachusetts resident, who encountered Grey2K's activists one day recently, and visited their website, which is entirely devoted to defaming greyhound racing, and those who do it lawfully. As a retired member of the minority who are in clear and present danger of losing their jobs as a result of the treachery of Grey2K, and as an unabashed advocate of the Racing Greyhound, and his need to do what nature intended him to, I felt obligated to author the following response to the woman, who was so obviously disturbed by the lies she had heard from Grey2K.

After 4 decades of association with the Racing Greyhound breed, and with hundreds of supremely dedicated professionals who are employed by greyhound racing and its infrastructure, I've grown tired of the lies and the prejudices of the various animal rights extremists, whose "final solution" for all supposed animal abuse is the eventual extinction of all domestic animals. It's time the media let the other side be heard.

Dear Neighbor,

It was very upsetting to hear your message on the GRA website, inasmuch as I am your fellow resident of the Commonwealth (Massachusetts), and also a former Greyhound racing professional.

I infer that your numerous references to "you people"; as in **"And I think you people are horrible and I hope you lose the fight,"** refers not specifically to the garden-variety "you people" who are your fellow denizens of the Commonwealth ---- a majority of whom voted against the abolition of Greyhound racing only 4 years ago ---- but to a specific class of us, none of whom are apparently known to you personally.

I would further infer that you aren't pointedly speaking to any of the "you people" who are of a different religion, race or nationality than yourself.

So I guess you must mean me or "us." That is, the class of "you people" who happen to be Greyhound racing professionals.

Anyhow, your neighbor is one of the "you people" who once bred, raised and trained Racing Greyhounds, 18 hours a day, 7 days a week and holidays, with no time off for good behavior, and no fringe benefits, other than having known and loved, and been loved by so many wonderful Racing Greyhounds ---- one of those "you people" who have seemingly and suddenly become the object of your scorn.

While I didn't recognize your voice, it could be that we live in the same town in Massachusetts, or that our children or grandchildren go to the same schools, or are even friends.

Heck, you and I might have gone to school together, and perhaps even known some of the same friends. We might have seen one another at the supermarket once, and maybe we even exchanged greetings and/or pleasantries. It's a small world, and an even smaller state, after all. But, I digress.

So far, the ideologues at Grey2K have not yet passed a law that requires any of us Greyhound Racing professionals, or past-professionals, to wear a scarlet letter on our brow.

They really don't need to, because of their willingness and skill at cultivating the sort of unabashed prejudice you have expressed (unwittingly, I hope), among the public at large --- -- the vast majority of whom are much like yourself, having no empirical knowledge of or experience with Racing Greyhounds, or of Greyhound racing itself.

Not to worry. That makes you just like Grey2K, and their army of anti-racing zealots, inasmuch as they also have no experience with, or knowledge of, Racing Greyhounds or Greyhound racing. None whatsoever. Hopefully, you have the intellectual curiosity to question what you have supposedly "learned" from those who have not one iota of expertise with the matters at hand.

WHERE TO BEGIN?

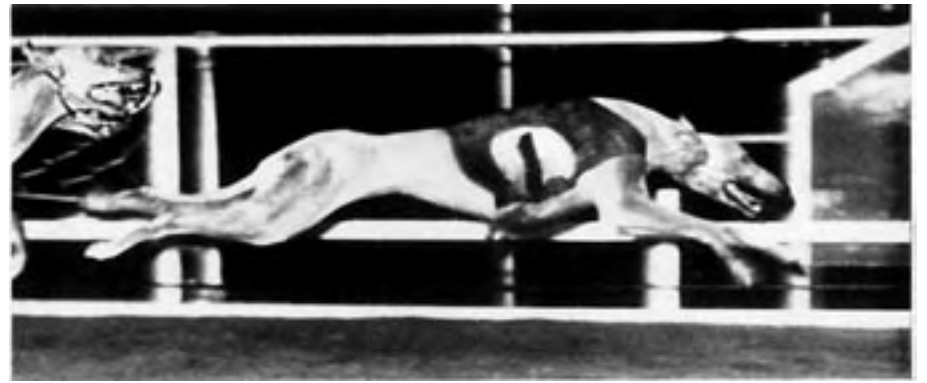
Well, we can start with the Racing Greyhounds themselves, who are actually a unique and specific population of canines. The descendants of ancient dogs, they evolved into "greyhound" form in the wild, as a matter of natural selection, in prehistoric times.

Recent investigations of the canine genome, by scientists, recognize a strain of DNA (the building blocks of life) as being specifically "greyhound," and the one from which a significant percentage of all the dogs who have been born and who have lived and died, throughout the ages, have descended.

Greyhounds love to run, and they have since the dawn of time. They are naturally inclined and predisposed to it. That this was not the case was never arguable to anyone who had any experience whatever with the breed, and its no longer arguable as a matter of hard science.

At any rate, the wild, prehistoric Greyhound survived by his uncanny ability to chase down small game, dispatch it, and eat it. Greyhounds lived in packs, and established hierarchies that are typical of the myriad canines who have descended from them.

The strongest and the swiftest of them ruled the packs and begot the whelps, who would carry on with the future of the pack, were they themselves strong enough to survive, and to then contribute their "successful" genetics to the population, so that it could evolve correctly, and take care of itself.



Illustrations from The Greyhound by H Edwards Clark, (published in 1965 by Popular Dogs Co Ltd, UK) Goldent, one of the outstanding stayers of the Australian Track and below, UK dog Hack Up Chieftain



And so it went, until men began to domesticate wolves and other wild canines. Apparently, the ancient Egyptians were especially fond of the wild, Greyhound dogs who roamed the earth in their time, and they began to breed them for their own pleasure and purpose. Greyhounds were prized for their grace and beauty, as well as their deadly skill as hunters and coursers, and gatherers of game.

The Greyhound eventually found its way to Europe and to the New World, and was always prized for the same attributes and aptitudes that so enchanted the Pharaohs and their subjects.

Western World Greyhound fanciers and those in rural, agricultural areas, who employed Greyhounds to dispatch vermin and pests, soon undertook the task of "selectively breeding" only the fastest of the fast, in order to produce a more lethal hunter and courser, gifted of ever greater speed and stamina, so that they were able to perform their job in the grand scheme of human survival and progress, ever more efficiently.

According to his writings, possessed by the family of Owen P Smith, the man who invented the mechanical lure, (which impelled the advent of track racing for greyhounds), said that one of the primary motivations for his invention was to spare the use of live rabbits, which were once coursed by Greyhounds in competition.

His invention allowed athletic competition between and among greyhounds, without the need for live game, and on a specially prepared and maintained surface, which was considerably more forgiving than the often rocky or otherwise rugged terrain of the coursing field or hunting grounds.

So a new sport and new business sprung up around the greyhound, beginning, in earnest, in the early 1930s. States became attracted to it, because of the windfall of taxes and fees they could levy on those who gambled on Greyhound racing, those who owned the Racing Greyhounds, and those who owned the racing venues ---- i.e. the racetracks.

The public, always fascinated by speed and animals, lionized greyhound racing, and the Racing Greyhound became known as the "poor man's racehorse." The sport, because of the greyhound's historic favor among royalty, became known as "The Sport of Queens."

Hundreds of millions of dollars for the public good has been generated by greyhound racing over the decades, and it remains one of, if not the most liberally taxed businesses in the country ---- and the Commonwealth.

For his part, the Racing Greyhound, not to be confused with the "show" greyhound, is the functional, modern day incarnation of those wild, prehistoric Greyhounds, who found their way into the kingdoms and the hearts of the Pharaohs and their subjects, all those centuries ago.

Thanks to Greyhound Racing, and to the selective breeding of only the most well-adapted and perfectly evolved specimens from the population --- -- which competitive racing demands and compels ---- the Racing Greyhound, as an individual with unique and specific set of athletic/survival aptitudes, and as a unique and highly functional population,

differs very little from his prehistoric ancestors.

He is kept genetically vibrant, and diverse, only because of greyhound racing, which alone supports the Racing Greyhound population, and the 46 different female families of Racing Greyhounds, from which flow the wellsprings of all greyhound vitality and well-being.

Just as in nature, the way the prehistoric greyhound evolved, only the most well-adapted, dispositionally and genetically sound and "successful" Racing Greyhounds are bred ---- and we measure this genetic success, by formal, State-regulated racing competition among Racing Greyhounds.

Those greyhounds who distinguish themselves and their families by excellence in their racing performance, are the only greyhounds "selected" by breeders to carry on with the breed.

Form follows function. Racing Greyhounds are bred to race, and their form is the same basic form as their prehistoric forbears, because their function is still essentially the same, racing being the only expression of the greyhound's ancient and natural survival mechanism that is available to them today.

It is no accident, that of all large canine breeds, the only breed that is free of the congenital, degenerative, crippling and excruciatingly painful defect of hip dysplasia is the Racing Greyhound. The genetics of morbidly unsound hips simply cannot exist in such a meticulously bred population of functional, performing athletes.

The Racing Greyhound has the largest heart and greatest lung capacity of all canines, is among the most long-lived of the large breeds, and is, pound-for-pound, over 10 times faster than a Thoroughbred racehorse.

American Kennel Club breeders of non-racing greyhounds have once again opened their "studbook" to Racing Greyhounds, in order to reinvigorate and revitalize their tightly inbred bloodlines with the diverse and functional genetics of our 46 female families of Racing Greyhounds.

While there are 75,000 in-training or actively racing and breeding Racing Greyhounds in the country, the entire population of non-racing greyhounds in the US numbers somewhere in the area of only 4,000 individuals, less than 10 percent of whom might be "breeding specimens" ---- a dangerously small population, and a disastrously small breeding population.

The visionary AKC breeder realizes that this small non-racing population will benefit immensely from genetic dosing with the highly refined athleticism of functional Racing Greyhound genetics --- which are preserved and nurtured by greyhound racing, and the selective breeding of only its most functional specimens, who are illuminated, objectively for breeders, by competitive greyhound racing.

Far from being an object of pity, the modern Racing Greyhound is a marvel of breed husbandry