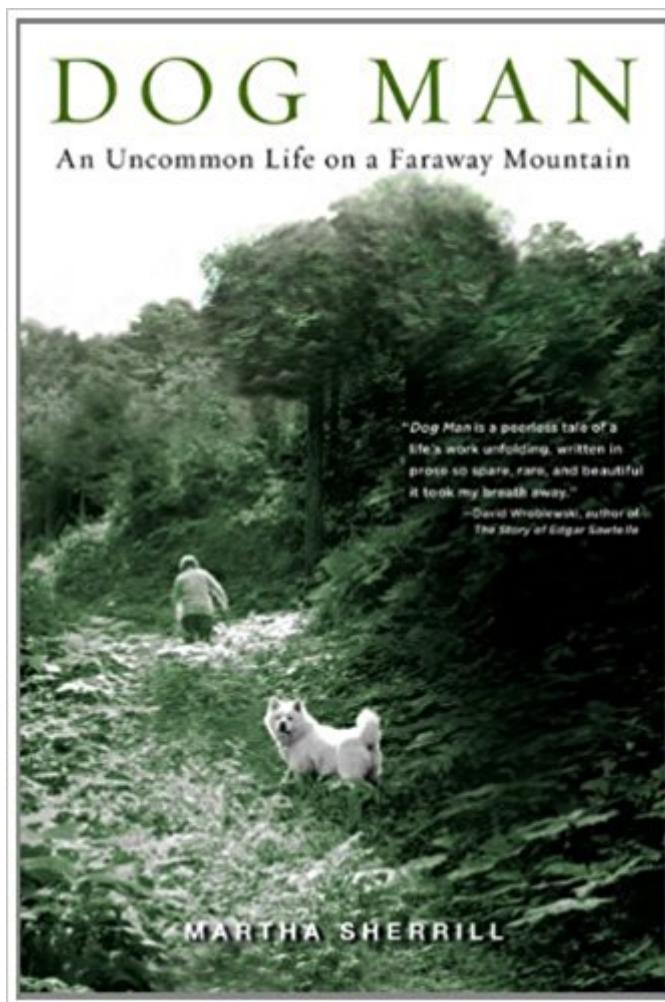


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Dog Man: An Uncommon Life On A Faraway Mountain



Synopsis

Dog Man: An Uncommon Life on a Faraway Mountain is a stunning portrait of the Japanese rebel who single-handedly rescued the 4,000-year-old Akita dog breed. At the end of World War II, there were only 16 Akita dogs left in Japan. Morie Sawataishi became obsessed with preventing the extinction of the 4,000-year-old Japanese dog breed. He defied convention, broke the law, gave up a prestigious job, and chose instead to take his urbanite wife to Japan's forbidding snow country to start a family, and devote himself entirely to saving the Akita. Martha Sherrill blends archival research, on-site reportage, and her talent for narrative to reveal Sawataishi's world, providing a profound look at what it takes to be an individual in a culture where rebels are rare, while expertly portraying a side of Japan that is rarely seen by outsiders.

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Customer Reviews

Morie Sawataishi had never owned a dog, but in 1944, when the Japanese man was 30 years old, the desire for one came over him like a sudden... craving. During WWII, snow country dogs were being slaughtered for pelts to line officers' coats; working for Mitsubishi in the remote snow country, Morie decided to rescue Japan's noble, ancient Akita breed—whose numbers had already dwindled before the war—from certain extinction. Raised in an elegant Tokyo neighborhood, his long-suffering wife, Kitako, hated country life, and his children resented the affection he lavished on his dogs rather than on them. The book brims with colorful characters, both human and canine: sweet-tempered redhead Three Good Lucks, who may have been poisoned to death by a rival dog

owner; high-spirited One Hundred Tigers, who lost his tail in an accident; and wild mountain man Uesugi. To Western readers Morie's single-mindedness may seem selfish and Kitako's passivity in the face of his stubbornness incomprehensible, but former Washington Post staffer Sherrill (The Buddha from Brooklyn) imbues their traditional Japanese lifestyle with dignity, and Morie's adventures (he is now 94) should be enjoyed by dog lovers, breeders and trainers. B&w photos. (Mar. 3) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

One day in 1944, in the midst of World War II Japan, with people suffering and starving around him, Morie Sawataishi heard something troubling. The country people of Akita Prefecture were killing their dogs and selling their pelts to the military in order to line the winter coats of officers. The Akita dog, already dwindling in numbers as it fell out of favor, neared extinction. When an acquaintance offered him a puppy, Morie could not resist buying her and later purchased a male for breeding after he was able to verify the existence of only 16 other Akita dogs. Sherrill tells the story not only of the salvation of an ancient breed of dog but also of the complicated man who loved them and of his Tokyo-born wife, who had to learn country ways and how to love dogs. Throughout the book, the changes in postwar Japan are woven into the narrative, along with tales of Morie's Akitas.

--Nancy Bent --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If you love the Japanese Akita Inu - or any kind of dog - you will enjoy reading this true story. It is about the remarkable man and woman who, through the darkest days of WWII and the difficult years of rebuilding which followed, sacrificed city comforts and career... but managed to save a celebrated and unique breed. During the war years, especially, and despite the famous Hachikō story of pre-war years (look it up!), Akitas were being skinned for aviators' jackets and were generally considered an "antisocial" waste of food... in a society not accustomed to individualism or dissent. Under these horrible circumstances, Morie Sawataishi and his wife Kitako performed the ultimate rescue: They saved an entire line of splendid creatures, from a low point of only sixteen individuals. An inspirational story for sure.

I own an Akita and this book brought so much new insight to the breeds history that I never knew. In addition, great lessons about marriage and being involved with your community; and just being true to your passions - this is a must read!

This book was just so beautifully evocative and moving on so many levels. At the heart of the story are the Akita dogs, brought back from the brink of extinction after WWII by a few dedicated breeders including Morie Sawataishi, the extraordinary engineer and dog lover, and his wife, Kitako, an equally compelling personality. The Akita dogs themselves, and in particular one very special dog called Three Good Lucks, are described with great reverence as a breed which, at its best, embodies loyalty, intelligence, fighting spirit, a calm sweetness, even wisdom. There are some heartbreakingly events involving the dogs that had me sobbing for days, but it is worth the pain to get to know these magnificent animals. But the author explains that as Akitas are bred more for their looks than for personality traits, their vital essential character may be disappearing. So, too, is the quiet rural life of the snow country in Japan, which was fraught with hardships but also poetic in its Spartan beauty. Morie sees these national treasures slipping away. Symbolically, he plants hundreds of cherry trees around the power plants he helps build as a sort of visual apology to the region, as well as doing what he can to preserve the integrity of the Akita breed. The book is also memorable for its description of a mountain man, or matagi, named Uesugi. Although I found his profession of killing bears for their gall bladders repellent, he is an absolutely fascinating character with an ancient, shaman-like wisdom. Finally, the story of Morie and Kitako, in many ways an incompatible couple with different values, who learned to love and respect each other through the course of a long and often difficult marriage, was inspiring. The book is written in a lyrical style which complements the romance of the subject matter, although it can occasionally be distracting. But I can only thank the author for bringing this rarest and most beautiful of stories to a wider audience.

Wow. I have recently adopted an Akita and wanted to acquaint myself with the breed. I bought a book written by an American breeder, but it was all about who won what show. This book is the history of the Akita. Specifically it targets the Akita breed post WWII. What a great story of an amazing breed of dog. The book is well written and informative. I highly recommend this book to anyone who owns or is curious about the Akita. Oh, and there are lots of pictures, too, of the old dogs.

I own a Chow Chow and somehow, as I was looking for books on the breed this book came up on an search. It must be because of the common ancestry the Chows have with the Akita. This book surprised me and I read it in two nights. It is a reflection of post war (WWII) Japan and reveals the culture and struggles people went through during this period. It talks about Morie and how he loves

the Akita and brings them back from the brink of extinction to a national treasure. The book looks at the interactions that Morie has with the family, dogs and the natural world around him. The book is full of heartbreak and happiness. Overall the book makes me want to find a cabin in the woods and grow a garden and live a simple happy life.

Once I got into I loved this book. It gave me a very different perspective of what I have expected when I purchased this book. The dog man reminded me to someone who has a personality similar to one with Asperger syndrome - highly intelligent and hyperfocused in one area to the extend of neglecting everything else but I suppose his existential philosophy is also very much related to the Japanese culture and this dog man's unique coping style with the rapid development and paradigm shift in Japan's industrial development since it's capitulation in WWII. His intelligence and great contribution to the Japanese post war development is in striking contrast to his life style and strong desire to remain in accord with the nature of his home environment including the rescue of their native dogs. He is a man who drives to love a life as independent as possible and as close as possible to the nature of his home country by almost opposing westernized/American's acquisitions. Akita dogs are his close companions as they are best equipped to share his chosen life style.

I have read the other reviews written by readers and am so impressed with them. For my part, I agree with the others, and then some. I found that Morie and Kitako are elegant and honorable, much as their dogs were. As with any book one reads and thoroughly enjoys, I dreaded that the words would end and I took my time with every story. I found hardship, honesty, love, respect and great adventure within this book's pages. The children that Morie and Kitako raised are also an interesting bunch. Samari Tiger is my favorite dog, bigger than life. I would like to meet Shiro and would have loved to know Hoku.

This book is a treasure for anyone interested in the Akita breed and origin. It was also a thoughtful and touching memoir in its own right. I learned a great deal about the history of dog shows and the Akita breed. I highly recommend.

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