

## The Gabriel Chronicles

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and feeling everything. I was once an observer to the following vignette. Outside of Boone, North Carolina, there is a small town called Valle Crucis. The little community is dominated by an old-time General Store – The Mast General Store. The proprietors have done a good job of maintaining the feel of an early 1900's store. But at one end of the store there is magic. There is a vintage candy store that makes Willy Wonka look mundane. Row after row of barrels and racks contain every imaginable color and taste – red, green, orange, white, clear, chocolate, peppermint, sour and fruity. I watched small children stand transfixed in front of this boggling array. And some foolish parent dared to say, "Which ONE would you like?"

I think that Gabe must feel some of this same childhood wonder as he explores his new world. Every twig, leaf and rock must seem like a different piece of candy.

The yard is surrounded by and partly filled with large pines and hardwoods, so raking is a regular weekend activity in the fall and winter. I wasn't sure how Gabe would respond to my raking. He ambled out into the yard, wandered over to inspect a particularly interesting pine cone, and then watched me begin. The rake apparently represented a giant toy adversary. As I swept, he attacked growling and grabbing a tine. He actually attempted to climb the large plastic rake. He backed off evaluating his foe. At that point, he spotted the pile of leaves. Mounting his best charge he attempted to reach the summit. What would I have given for a camera? There will always be an indelible image in my mind – the picture of that little brown head poking from the top of the pile, his body buried in the leaves and a look of total childlike satisfaction on his face.

Would that I could feel that again.



## CHAPTER 3

### "Milestones"

For Gabe, every day is filled with milestones. He climbs the stairs to the back porch with no help. A very few days ago, the doggie door was conquered. All too soon he will leap into the truck without my help.

I mark milestones differently now. Birthdays, surgeries, the death of friend. Occasionally, there is a new hunting adventure, the discovery of a special new book, or the pleasure of watching a niece or nephew catch their first trout on a fly.

One of the great joys of being owned by a puppy is that, vicariously, we relive the excitement of those discoveries that came when we were younger.

Today was special. At almost nine weeks of age, Gabe made his first trip to the farm. Until now, we had walked round and round the house yard, endlessly chased the ball, and wrestled until I wore out. He needed a little more exercise.

I pulled through the gate at the farm and headed the truck to the terrace away from the cows (one new thing at a time). I lifted him to the ground. He cautiously began to explore this new world. I walked off across the pasture

and he ambled along. His legs were growing and he covered the ground surprisingly quickly. We walked by blackberry thickets that held rabbits. We eased down a fence row where sparrows and other birds made their nests. His tail vibrated unceasingly as he explored each new spot.

Soon we reached the pecan grove. The ground was littered with hulls from where the crows and squirrels had fed. Gabe grabbed a whole pecan and ran off with it as if it was one of his balls. About this time, I was looking down the grove. I thought that I had seen a fox squirrel move. I watched for a moment and turned around. Gabe was bounding joyfully toward me carrying what he thought was the treasure of a king. He got closer and I realized that, on this auspicious day, he had discovered the canine holy grail, the incense of which filled his lungs with the joyful essence of eau de cow paddie.

I know how disappointed he must have felt. Here he had brought me this great gift and I chastised him. We headed back to the truck. He tried to approach several more paddies, but I discouraged him. As we reached the truck he passed a particularly ripe and fresh paddie. He looked wistfully at it and turned his head to me as if to say, "But Daddy, you just don't understand."

By the way – As I write this, Gabe is lying at my feet. He twitches and moans as he dreams. I wonder what he is dreaming about.....



*Phyllis & Gabe Bickers of AL*



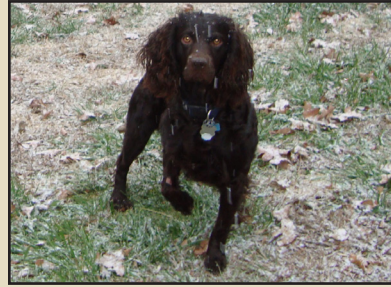
# Waggin Tails



Cousin "Hank, Molly & Abby"  
- David and Robyn D'Agresta of FL



"Lil Boogie"  
- Hank Burdine of AL



His AKC name is Hollow Creek's Jake-Watts RN. He has his Rally Novice title. Rally is a fun sport that is best described as a combination between Obedience and Agility. Dog and handler must execute approximately 15 different signs in an course, and they are judged on their precision in carrying out these exercises as a team.

Jake has also earned his Canine Good Citizen (CGC) certificate. This is a program sponsored by AKC that shows that your dog has basic obedience and social skills. Dogs must successfully complete 10 different exercises in order to be awarded this certificate.

In the spring, Jake will be trying out a new sport called Flyball. In this speed sport dogs race each other across 3 jumps to retrieve a tennis ball on a spring-loaded box, and then come back over the 3 jumps with the ball. There are 4 dogs on a team. The minimum qualifying time for a team to receive points is 25 seconds, so you can see that Flyball is indeed a "speed sport!"

- Beth Crocker of SC



"Sullivan"  
Chris & Courtney  
Challoner of VA



You saw me in the snow recently in the last "Boykins Forever Journal", but now I'm romping in the grass. My name is "NITTANY" and I will be two years old this coming December. I love to play fetch with my red ball and catch frisbees in the air. Everyone asks what I use to get my "highlights". Lots of natural sunlight is all that I use.

- My "Boykin Dad" is Jim Massie of PA.

