

## It's The Next Best Thing

(Continued from page 4)

Carolina Jumbos.

Whitney, a sophomore at the University of Texas in Austin, benefited from the crash course in upland gunning, and her shooting improved markedly as our session progressed.

A big difference between the Rio Brazos birds and the wild brush country bobs is that the former rarely run ahead of the pointing dogs. They hold tight in the traditional manner. This allows relative newcomers to position for safe, confident shots.

### Similar feel

This also is where Diesel earns high marks. The Carolina Jumbos need to be flushed, and the small Boykin is a master at stirring things up. But when the quail take wing, they can accelerate with purpose - maybe not as fast as wild bobwhites but quick enough to confound a sloppy mount or a tardy swing.

The hunting preserve offers several advantages other than sure-fire action within an hour of Houston. Hunters are welcome to use their own dogs with the understanding that the productivity of the hunt might suffer.

The preserve is a great venue for a light gun. You know you are going to have numerous close chances, so the .410 gauge or 28-gauge that seldom gets an honest workout now has a chance. A 20-gauge double gun is ideal - as it is for most quail hunting.

And this is quail hunting in the classic style (well, with never a sideways glance at Diesel). You step behind a rigid point then raise a trim gun as several whirring bobwhites take flight against open sky. Frankly, most of the upland hunting operations scattered across the traditional "bird" country of the southeastern states now depend heavily (if not entirely) on liberated quail.

But Rio Brazos Hunting Preserve is a lot closer than Georgia or South Carolina or Mississippi. Or even South Texas. And, to reiterate, no pressure is placed on the natural resource during this lean wild-bird season - and the plump jumbos are excellent on the table.

Joe Doggett joined the *Houston Chronicle* as a full time outdoor writer in 1972 and he retired 2007. In addition to writing for the *Houston Chronicle* he was a contributing Editor of *Field and Stream* magazine for more than 20 years.



**"Jake" with his Rally Bone toy that he won in Simpsonville, SC.**

**His first Rally trial!!!!**

**95 out 100!!  
Yay Jake!!!**

**- Beth Crocker**



## The Best Walk

By Earl Hamner, author of  
*The Waltons & The Twilight Zone*

A tired old hunter and his dog were walking down a remote dirt road with strong fences on both sides. They came to an overview in the fence and looked in-it was nice, grassy with wooded areas. Just what a huntin' dog would like, but it had a sign saying 'No Trespassing', so they walked on.

Shortly they came to a beautiful gate with a person in white robes standing in the opening. Inside was a beautiful home with manicured lawns and tables laid out with food and drink. "Welcome to Heaven", he said. The old man was relieved and started in with his dog following him. The gatekeeper stopped him. "Dogs aren't allowed; I'm sorry but he can't come with you." The old man questioned, "What kind of heaven won't allow dogs? If he can't come in then I won't either. The man in the robes pleaded, "You don't want to give up

your place in heaven do you? At least, not for a dog do you?" The hunter replied, "He's been my faithful companion all his life, and I can't desert him now."

"Suit yourself", said the gatekeeper, "but I have to warn you that the Devils' on this road and he'll try to sweet talk you into his place. He'll promise you anything, but the dog can't go there either. If you won't leave the dog, you'll spend eternity on this road." The old hunter paused, and then gently calling, he and his old friend continued their journey.

Much later and exhausted, they came to a rundown section of fence covered with hedges, and overrun with partridges

and rabbits. There was no gate but a gap in the fence. Another man in simple overalls stood inside near a quaint old cabin and homestead. Calling out, the old hunter said, "Scuse me Sir. My dog and I are getting mighty tired as we've been walking quite a ways. Would you mind if we came in an' set in the shade of that tree awhile?" "Of course," was the warm reply. "There's a rocker for you and a well with cool water. Make yourself comfortable." The old man puzzled, "You certain it's ok for my dog to come in with me? The other man down the road said dogs weren't allowed anywhere off the road." The kind gentleman asked, "Would you come in if you had to leave your dog?" "No sir," was the reply. "That's why I didn't go into Heaven... he said my dog wasn't welcome. I spec we'll be spending eternity on this road. As much as I'd love that cool water and some shade, I won't be coming unless my old friend can come with me, and that's final."

The man smiled a warm welcoming smile and said, "Welcome to Heaven." The old hunter seemed stunned. "You mean this is Heaven? And dogs are allowed? How come that fellow down the road said they weren't?" The kind man's face turned more serious, and he said, "That was the devil, and he gets all the people who are willing to give up a life long companion for a comfortable place to stay. They soon find out their mistake, but then it's too late. The dogs come here, the fickle people stay there. God wouldn't allow dogs to be banned from Heaven. After all, He created them to be man's companions in life; why would He separate them in death?"





# Hunting with Boykins

by Bill Hamrick

As a duck and upland game bird hunter I was looking for a breed of dog which could serve in both capacities as a small compact hunting companion, that could handle the cold harsh conditions of Eastern Shore Maryland. The reasoning behind my choice of the Boykin Spaniel is partly do to using a canoe in the marshy tidal waters of Nanecoke River.

We came across a sale ad in the paper for Boykin Spaniel puppies where we picked up our male who we named Little Boy Hershey. After working hard with training Hershey, he has become a total hunting package for me, where I have hunted 3 or 4 hours of duck hunting, finishing the day with a few hours of pheasant and quail hunting,

During the hunting season he gets to put on his business tie (hunting collar) and he becomes the focused hunter, where he knows no quitting time until his business tie is removed. When we are at home he is a wonderful and loving pet with, at times, the personality of what we call our clown dog. He can keep us laughing for hours with his antics and playful ways.

There was also a time when I saw a great change in Hershey as a pet with the loss of his companion and friend Max a collie/rottweiler who died in my wife's arms two and a half years ago. The loss of Max was hard on him and he no longer let my wife touch him. That all changed when we got Cocoa, a female Boykin Spaniel. Hershey regained his trust and love for her. Getting another friend for him helped Hershey and Tina bond once again. As she began working and training her new dog, Hershey too wanted a piece of the action.

Back in November we went to Denton, Maryland to a game preserve for a day of upland game bird hunting. This would be the first time my wife had said she wanted to hunt with me. She had gone in the past but just to watch and take photos. But this time she was looking forward to taking her first bird. Once we got there and got ready to start Hershey was pouncing

up and down trying to tell us to hurry. As we headed off into the field, I called to Hershey. He stopped dead in his tracks and looked back at me, to find the bird. I called to him. Off he went head down to the ground sniffing out a bird, locking on to it His head low to the ground and his butt high in the air lets me know he is on a bird. I told Tina to get ready and call his name. Hershey jumps forward at the bird and off it went up, up and away. As soon as the shot rang out Hershey popped out and went running to get it. And if you missed the bird Hershey gives you a look as if to say "what happened, where is the bird". Tina shot her first bird that day and we are now planning many more trips together.



**Max & Hershey**

