

## Editorial

In 1986, Gigi Mabry Hucabee wrote an insightful article about the Boykin Spaniel titled *Owner's Choice*. It appeared in the South Carolina Wildlife Magazine and is well worth inclusion in this issue ... especially for those who have never read it. The new photos are courtesy of Hollow Creek Kennel. Many folks that Ms. Hucabee quotes or mentions are no longer around or are retired .... politics about this breed remain...but her description of the breed rings truer than any I have ever read. Our greatest "Southern Secrets" can now be found all over the United States and further...and they are now recognized by many national

registries including the United Kennel Club and the American Kennel Club.

Sharon Potter is a good friend and excellent trainer and her article on Puppyhood (pages 6-7)...provides a great base for training a pup. Be sure to read it and learn.

I want to thank all of our readers ...we are now way into the hundreds...for their continued support and contributions of stories and photos. Please keep them coming and be sure to identify yourself and the pets name.

It is my sincere wish that you all have a safe and happy holiday season....next edition is focusing on hunting so pick up

those cameras and snap some good ones....

Merry Christmas  
and Happy New Year

Pat Watts  
Hollow Creek  
Kennel



### *Fall 2007 Hunt Test*

November 3 & 4, 2007 Southwest Georgia HRC

### *Concerning Field Trials you can visit the HRC website:*

www.huntingretrieverclub.org and go to premiums-test entry forms or www.hrc-ukc.com. There is a great menu on this site, with an item called calendar of events and there is one that has maps and directions. The AKC website is www.AKC.org click on events & awards search. Feel free to visit and navigate about. Some events of interest are for the HRC and AKC are:

**October 6 & 7, 2007** The Maryland Sporting Dog Association, Poolesville, MD will be hosting an AKC Hunt Test.

Contact there is Karen Cottingham karenc@dmv.com

**October 13 & 14, 2007** Liberty Cocker Spaniel Fanciers is hosting an AKC Hunt Test in Chester Springs, PA.

Contact there is Jean Marie Tate at jeanmarietate@verizon.net

**October 20 & 21, 2007** Midland Hunting Retriever Club will host an HRC test. Contact info is midlandhrc.net

**November 3 & 4, 2007** Dogwood Welsh Springer Spaniel Club of America will be hosting an AKC Hunt Test.

Contact Susan Willingham at awillingham@bellsouth.net.

**November 10 & 11, 2007** Charleston Retriever Club is hosting an HRC Hunt Test. Contact Susan Darby at osudarbyusc@comcast.net

**November 10 & 11, 2007** Pittsburgh English Springer Spaniel Club will host an AKC Hunt Test. Contact Sue Hershey at 704-264-3052.

**December 1, 2007** Charleston Retriever Club will host a one-day Club Trial. Contact Susan Darby at osudarbyusc@comcast.net

**December 1 & 2, 2007** Cocker Spaniel Specialty Club of Georgia in Cedartown, GA will be hosting an AKC Hunt Test. Contact Sue Kelly at kelly.s@mindspring.com

## Owner's Choice *By: Gigi Mabry Hukabee*

**Seamus**



FLOPPY SPANIEL EARS, docked tail and curly coat give the impression of a dark, slightly larger version of the dog's city cousin, the cocker spaniel. A "lap dog" some might say, but give closer examination to those demon-yellow eyes. Their intensity reminds that first impressions can't be trusted.

For the last 70 years only a small percentage of South Carolinians have recognized this particular breed as the "jewel" that it is - a supercharged hunting dog and a great family pet, the Boykin spaniel.

A welterweight among hunting breeds, mature male Boykins stand between 15 ½ and 18 inches at the shoulder and weigh 30 to 40 pounds soaking wet. Like a paint chart for shades of brown, coat coloration can range from dark chocolate to rich liver, often taking on reddish tints with exposure to the sun. Coat texture also varies, even among litter mates. Wavy to moderately curly is the norm, with a small minority having straight, short coats. Eyes range from amber to brown.

This small brown dog was no lucky accident but the result of careful and deliberate breeding by South Carolina hunters of the early 1900s. Wild turkey and ducks abounded then, as now, along the swamplands of the Wateree River in Kershaw and Sumter counties.

For those that floated the river and trod its swamps a dog was needed that could work both types of game. It had to be a breed small enough to fit comfortably in a turkey blind or in a cramped boat with men and camping gear. For turkey hunting it had to possess good scenting and flushing abilities and sit quietly on command. Duck hunting required alertness, marking skills, retrieving

instincts and a love of water. Also necessary were the desire and willingness to hunt. The dogs bred to fill these needs were the forerunners of today's Boykin spaniel.

As with many breeds, time and lack of accurate record-keeping have obscured the details of the line's evolution. However, tradition has it that the original progenitor was a small chocolate-brown dog of obvious spaniel bloodline.

L. Whitaker Boykin, of the small Kershaw County community by the same name, was one of those early twentieth-century turkey and duck hunters and is credited with the initial cross that resulted in the breed. Through his efforts and those of his family, friends and descendants, the Boykin spaniel was developed.

Other hunting breeds were introduced to improve the stock, although when and by whom is a matter of some debate. The Chesapeake Bay retriever, American water spaniel, cocker spaniel and springer spaniel are reportedly among the Boykin's ancestors.

The building of a dependable, recognized breed takes time, and for many years few knew of these dogs except those who hunted along the river. Any treasure enjoyed by some, however, cannot remain unknown forever.

By the mid-seventies the little brown dogs were drawing praise and respect from sportsmen across the Palmetto state. This attention did not go unnoticed by members of the state and national outdoor press, including South Carolina Wildlife magazine. (See "The Spaniels of Boykin," September-October 1975.) A decade later, much to the delight of all Boykin owners, the South Carolina General Assembly designated the Boykin as the state dog.

Recognition for the breed continues to grow as owners aren't one bit bashful in proclaiming the Boykin's sterling qualities as a hunter and its lovable disposition. These traits, they say, combine to make the Boykin an ideal weekend companion afield and everyday companion at home.

ALTHOUGH STILL USED AS A DUCK DOG, the Boykin, a many-faceted gem, has adapted to other hunting situations. South Carolina sportsmen use the dog primarily in the dove field, but some Kershaw County residents, including Dr. Baynard Boykin, have found the energetic, sharp-nosed spaniel to be ideal as a jump dog in deer drives.

In other sections of the country, Boykins are making their reputation as flushing dogs for a wide variety of game, often under adverse conditions. As in South Carolina, their owners can't seem to praise them enough.

David Parr of Newberry says that one of his dogs was sold to a man from

Buffalo, New York, who later claimed that this Boykin was "the best grouse dog he ever had."

Bill Gaddy of Tucson, Arizona, says of his Boykin, Rosie, "She's the most versatile dog I've ever owned, and I've been hunting for many years."

Gaddy often uses Rosie to flush quail and notes that after only a few trips she learned where the birds were and how to flush them for the shot. "It doesn't matter what the cover is; she goes right into it," he says. "We have a thorny bush called catclaw, similar to briar bushes in the South, and Rosie goes right into them. I take her everywhere. She hunts ducks and doves and never tires."

"I think what I enjoy most about my Boykin is that he adjusts to situations," says Kelly Mahone, a physician from Hot Springs, Arkansas. While confessing that Willie was purchased as a pet for his wife, Mahone praises the dog's ability on pheasant and duck. "He's at his best, however, when used in quail hunting. He'll honor my pointing dogs, then retrieve the dead birds."

As versatile as the Boykin is, in hunting situations requiring long-distance swimming, breaking ice, or negotiating turbulent waters, the larger breeds still have the upper hand. Because of the Boykin's smaller dimensions, it is also not a recommended breed for use in goose hunting. "They have the heart to do it; they just may not be big enough," explains McKee Boykin Jr. of Camden.

This explanation seems more than sufficient upon hearing from owners such as Jim Finley of the Chicago area, who tells about these spaniels' adaptability to varying weather.

"They are great upland game dogs on pheasant and chukar," says Finley, who uses his Boykins for pheasant hunting in Wisconsin, dove hunting in South Carolina, and retrieving blue quail in Texas. "They'll work in heavy snow and it doesn't seem to bother them. They just jump and run."

Thus, the Boykin appears to be a dog for nearly all game and all seasons, a dog capable of withstanding the merciless heat of southern dove fields and adapting easily to northern snows. Owners claim that the dogs are equally adept at becoming a part of family life.

One purchaser of a Boykin pup wrote kennel owners John and Anne Chappell of Leesville that in just a few days his dog had made more friends in the neighborhood than he and his wife had made in four years.

"If our children had been as eager to please as our Boykins," says Mabel Bush of Lexington, "raising a family would have been a lot easier."

"A people dog," says Dr. Eddie DuRant  
(continued on pg 5)