

FC Nancarrow Rosy Mantle “Brit”

In the fall of 1991, I had located four cocker pups at Headly Millington's Nancarrow Kennels in Cornwall. At this point there was some interest drumming up about the cockers around Virginia. I couldn't afford the money or time away from work to fly to the UK to get them, but Turner Reuter from Middleburg Virginia happened to be shooting in Cornwall and graciously offered to pick them up and carry the pups to Dulles Airport with him.

Two of the pups went to Richmond doctors. The other two, Katie and Brit, eight week old litter mates out of Swallowlaw Snipe and Nancarrow Figurine went to Tom Tullledge, a retired Circuit Court judge living in Middlebrook Virginia and Arthur Person, an anesthesiologist from Natchez Mississippi. I had met Art through an ad in Gundog Magazine. He was already involved in cockers and was selling a litter of puppies.



Art's daughter Dana holding Brit

I sent Art a strawberry roan bitch pup he named Brit, registered as Nancarrow Rosy Mantle. Since I only had the pups for a couple of days when they came from the UK, my first impression was they were quite different from Lucy, Parkbreck Moorhen. They were not as intense; actually they could be described as slightly dull in comparison. Lucy was a very natural retriever from the start, these were ambivalent in comparison and needed coaxing, to complete a simple tennis ball retrieve.

I sent them off to their various homes and got them back to train about six months later. Brit was the best of them, over the years I trained a number of young dogs that Art Person had started. He put a good stamp on his pups in those early months. Where Lucy just loved retrieving dummies and balls and would stick with it, for as long as I wished, Brit was not as compelled to cooperate. Two or three retrieves on artificial aids and she was done. What she did have was tremendous drive and style on game scent. Very eye catching.

Carl Colclough's advice, "train 'em backwards" took on its own life with Brit. Encouraging a young tractable springer or even a nice compliant cocker like Lucy, to free hunt and chase game indefinitely to create impetus and balance is wise. Do that with a dog possessing an independent sprit combined with a strong prey drive, without strong fundamentals instilled, and there is only one end result, a lifelong battle.

I gave Brit half a dozen chases on quail released from one of my recall pens. I had adopted the pen design in 1987 and have had little need to change the basic design over the years but I'm constantly tweaking its many uses. By the fourth time flushing and chasing the bobwhites, Brit was so intense on the departing birds that I would shoot a 20 gauge gun in the opposite direction while she was in mid chase. I have found that when gunfire is introduced properly at this period, there is almost no chance of an adverse reaction occurring.

I took Brit off of quail and steadied her up on pigeons. Her field trial career ran parallel to Lucy's.

There were only a few trials in the US at the time, Minnesota, Michigan, Maine, and Ohio. Initially I just had Lucy and Brit to run, so I would fly from Virginia and meet up with Art Aerson at a destination airport where we would stick the cockers in the back seat of a rental car. One memorable occasion Art and I were driving close to Detroit airport on a fall Sunday evening, looking for a hotel before our departing flights the following morning. We found a pretty run down place with roving security guard though the car park. The only problem with the hotel is that no dogs were allowed in the rooms. There was no way we were leaving the two cockers in the parking lot overnight. We decided on a plan. Art would distract the check in clerk away from the security cameras while I sneaked the dogs into the safety of our room.

The next morning, while we walked Lucy and Brit from the room to the car, Art was confronted by the previous evenings check in clerk, "Sir, I told you last night. There are no pets allowed in the rooms!" she angrily protested. Arthur didn't miss a beat. He exclaimed in his Mississippi drawl, "Honey, these aren't pets, these are hunting dogs." Those early trials provided great memories!

Like her counterpart Lucy, Brit was bred twice in her long life, both times to Bran, Lucy's sire. I had been so taken with Bran when I had first seen him, I had convinced Tom Tulledge, the owner of Katie, Brit's sister to buy him from Carl Colclough. Although not interested or active in field trials Tom Tulledge contributed tremendously to the bloodlines of present day US cockers.

Brit produced four Field Trial Champions. While Lucy's pups were not quite as good as their dam, Brit produced better pups than herself. Two of her pups, Rocky and Freckles, are as good as I have ever seen, in any breed.