

FC Griffins Pride Rocky

Rocky was a littermate to Freckles. Art Person had sold him as a pup to Mark Rose from Chicago. Mark was a perfect match for the pup. He owns a welding shop doing work all over the city, including O'Hare airport. He took Rocky everywhere. Rocky would ride on the front seat of his work truck from day one, riding around one of the most hectic cities in the country, with complete impunity. On the weekends, he would join Mark salmon fishing on Lake Michigan.

Mark is pretty industrious and caught pigeons in downtown Chicago selling them to springer trainers. He was soon working young Rocky on pigeons, hundreds of them!



Paul (back turned), Rocky & Mark Rose

By the time Mark sent Rocky to me for training, he really was one exceptionally well grounded, abundantly confident, young dog, in large part because of his outstanding formative months spent with Mark. The young dog was an impressive blend of nature and nurture. Reflecting years later, I wish I had his talent to harness now. I would battle him less, but young men fell trees while old men plant them.

The British cocker man, Kieth Erlandson, contributing greatly to the United States spaniel scene through his penmanship and the dogs he shipped over. He only judged a total of four trials in North

America. Three of them were won by Rocky. To quote Keith, "Rocky announced that he was the greatest, the Mohammad Ali of the cocker world."

The first time I saw Rocky, he exuded one and the same presence. He was a thing of beauty. He was never aggressive with other males, simply contemptuous. He just didn't see the point of their presence. I loved the dog at first sight. While I love stylish animated bitches, I don't like effeminate cowering males, any more than I am drawn to yappy little men.

My single Virginia quail pen was an indispensable tool for Rocky. Mark had an inexhaustible source of pigeons to plant and shoot over the young dog, which he had done in abundance. Pigeons have their place, but they don't encourage a dog to hunt. They prompt them to run, and could Rocky run.

The beauty of high quality quail that tuck into moderate cover is that they encourage a dog to hunt. As Rocky started to find a few quail, he gradually moderated his pace, to accommodate to them. Instead of simply running, he became more methodical, checking out likely game holding spots. British trainers rightly state that rabbits bring out style in a spaniel. Properly used, quail serve the very same purpose.

Combined with the training on the quail, I introduced Rocky to the rabbits in the Virginia apple orchards. He never mastered rabbits like my very best rabbit dog, Lucy, and to a slightly lesser degree Freckles, but they served their purpose in encouraging sensible hunting. When he was running too big in the orchard cover to find rabbits, I would call him in to heel, without making a fuss. Then I released another dog. When the subsequent dog had a find on a rabbit, I made sure Rocky got a chance to smell the "seat" it had been roused from. I would then cast him off from that point. This proved a more effective teaching method to modify his range as opposed to constantly hacking him. The better the prospect, the more they resent being bullied.

He was certainly the finest marking dog I have ever handled. He had an uncanny knack for innately knowing when a bird had taken a few pellets and focus on it long after most dogs would have lost interest. Most of the time, if he watched a bird away, there was a good chance of him making the retrieve when it came down no matter where it landed. He was unique in this respect.

Rocky was quite a handful. He had so much power, he was a thrill to train and handle. I credit his early formative days in Chicago. Those most impressionable months spent with his owner Mark Rose gave him a confidence I've not often seen. I am convinced that the first six months, diligently and wisely spent, will chart a lifetime course.

He sire some quality offspring: FC Warrener's Yellowhammer, "Sydney", FC Oahe Sentinel "Hoover", FC Zoe, FC Warrener's Splash, FC Black Zoe.