

The Rebirth of the US English Field Cocker

by
Vicky L. Thomas

1962

In April 1993, the first Cocker Trial held since 1962 took place in Colorado. To many people, this has become the acknowledged date of the working Cocker "re-birth" in the United States. However, the Cocker popularity took root in the 1980's and is a marvelous, and largely untold story.

In 2000-2001 I was fund raising for the next National Cocker Championship and when I asked the owners of Spaniels in the Field to donate something, they countered by asking me to write an article for their magazine. Seemed like a fair trade, so that next year as we went through the Field Trial Circuit, I asked everyone I could find to tell me "their story."

Well, after I finished the initial article, Vance Van Lannen called me and asked me not to publish it. I told him I had made a deal with Spaniels in the Field for a \$200.00 donation to the NCC. Vance offered me a \$250.00 donation if I wouldn't publish it, but we never got the money! And, Spaniels in the Field never published the report. So with the changes of Spaniels in the Field ownership, I think it got lost, perhaps as a testimony to my writing style, on purpose!

I still feel it's an interesting story and should be remembered, even if it's only by us! Someday, someone might be interested.

So here is our history, as we remembered it:

Green Bay

Vance Van Lannen (An industrialist from Green Bay-Wisconsin):

"I think the Cockers died in the 1960's due to a lack of people and lack of game, especially pheasants. The Harriman Estate was one of the few kennels that kept going. (You have to keep in mind that very wealthy people were active in Cockers at this time.) They had one of the most famous Labrador kennels in the country (Arden Kennels), but Mrs. Harriman liked Cockers so they had also started Cinar Kennel for her Cockers. Cinar was run by a progression of British keepers, the last one named Lionel Bond. When Mrs. Harriman died, the Harriman Estate was given to the State of New York and Lionel was bequeathed some acreage from the estate and what remained of the Cinar kennels, I assume to retire on. When I think back on it, his cockers were very large, Springer like dogs."

But, my first real brush with Cockers came from Alan Hurst who was a keeper and dog trainer from England. I ran into him here in the states. He was working for an exceptionally wealthy banker, Jack Puelicher who owned a 10-12 thousand acre hunting lodge. Jack would have pheasant shoots at the lodge and invite his customers.

Jack was fond of Salmon fishing and would go to Scotland to fish. On one trip he met Admiral Gregory who was the founder of Tayburn Kennels. Jack was a good money man, but not really a good dog man. He wanted Cockers because they were unique and nobody else had them in the United States. He then hired Dave Duffy to run the shoots and train his dogs. Well, at some point he was running short of Cockers so he contacted Dennis Douglas in Scotland as Dennis had taken over the Tayburn Kennels from Admiral Gregory.

Puelicher asked Dennis Douglas to find him the best Cocker dog in England. Dennis told him the best dog was Ardnamurcham Mac, but the owner didn't want to sell him. Ardnamurcham Mac never won

the British Championship as he was competing with Speckle of Aardoon and maybe that played into Puelicher's benefit.

Puelicher then hired Alan Hurst from England to run his shoot. When Alan came to the United States, he brought Mac and several very well bred springers. Unfortunately, Alan's wife required some blood pressure medication that was not FDA approved and she soon had to return to England. Alan wanted to be with her, but lacked the funds for his ticket home.

My last Labrador was old (I was really more of a lab man then) and I couldn't find good duck hunting, so I decided to hunt grouse and woodcock and try a Springer. I started taking the magazine "Springer Bark" and was watching who was winning trials and looking at the bloodlines. During my research, I decided the Springer bloodlines that I wanted were only found in England. Then, I found an ad for a litter of pups with an absolutely beautiful pedigree! It was everything I wanted. When I looked at the phone number, it was (Alan Hurst) in Wisconsin!

So I called Alan and couldn't understand a word he was saying because of his heavy accent. I made a trip to see him and his Springer pups. While we were walking out to the kennels I saw a bunch of smaller dogs in a run that I mistook for the pups. I walked over to see them and Alan wanted to know what I was doing. I told him I was looking at the "Springer" pups. They were Cockers.

I didn't believe they were "hunting" dogs. This got Alan's back up and so he got two shotguns and a couple of Cockers out and we went hunting. They were fabulous! After that, I did buy a Springer pup, but I now wanted to talk about Cockers. I was especially impressed by Mac but he belonged to Puelicher and the bitch I liked was Alan's personal dog. He didn't have any Cocker pups for sale.

Walt Cline (A preacher for the First Christian Church Alliance, Nebraska):

I had always been an English Pointer or German Shorthair Pointer person. Well, I was transferred to Newcastle, Wyoming and the new Parsonage yard was too small for my pointers. I had to give them away. My wife and I discussed getting a smaller bird dog. I had read an old book about English Cockers so went looking for one. I could only find show bred dogs and went to look at a bitch in Rapid City, which I bought. Through that dog I came to get Kate Romanski's name at ECSCA.

I contacted Kate and she told me a Dr. Nelson from Kimball, Nebraska had an imported field bred bitch, which was in whelp. So, I drove down there and bought one of the pups. This was about 1980.

A few years later, I think this was in 1984, I had Dr. Nelson import a few more Cockers for me. I was breeding a litter or two a year selling them to hunters I knew. I really thought these were great little dogs.

A few years later, I happened on an article written by Bill Tarrant for Field and Stream called "Gun dog of the Future." As I read Tarrant's article he described a dog that was versatile, small, could live with kids and work in the field. I thought he was describing English Cockers but it turned out to be a Brittany Spaniel! I wrote to Tarrant and told him how much I liked his article except for his conclusion, which I thought was incorrect. I told him he needed to give the English Cocker a look.

Tarrant came out and interviewed us and wrote the article that appeared in Field and Stream in December 1987. About that same time Larry Mueller, who writes for Outdoor Life Magazine, wrote an article about how people should go about finding a good field quality hunting dog. Mueller suggested people contact the field trial organizations of the various breeds to find real field quality stock. Well, that posed a problem for the breeds like English Cockers that didn't have field trial organizations, so I wrote to Mueller and asked him what the other breeds like English Cockers should do?

Mueller came out and we went hunting for Sage Grouse with my English Cockers and he ended up interviewing me. The appeal of that article was to use the smallest field dog to retrieve the largest North American game birds (turkeys excepted). Mueller then told me if people asked him for field bred Cockers he would refer them to me!

I then got phone calls from throughout the United States and Canada. To give you an idea, I think I could have sold 400 puppies, there were that many calls and obvious interest.

Around this time is when I got to know Larry and Charlene Dihel, Dave Williams and several others that went on to get dogs from me. Initially they were used for hunting, but they went on to train them to field trial standards. We still hunt together! I was never able to Field trial because I work Sundays!

But, in retrospect, if the quality of the English Cocker in England had not been improving like it did in the early 1980's, the future of the English Cockers in the United States would not have been what we see today.

Vicky Thomas (Property Manager, Los Angeles California)

My father was an avid hunter but was shocked when I learned to hunt and shoot, thinking it wasn't a ladylike thing for me to be doing. I knew nothing about dogs or how to handle them and owned an American Cocker, which in hindsight was a horrible little dog. I wanted another Cocker and decided to contact the British Kennel Club for information about hunting Cockers. I was referred to Lynn and Paul Rawlings of Petersborough England as Lynn was the Field Trial Secretary. Their letter, dated June 1, 1984 stated:

"Unfortunately the days of the large working kennels are virtually over in England. We are now down to only a few dedicated kennels. The trend nowadays is for one man, one dog with the occasional litter. Do not get me wrong, the working Cocker is not dying out (at one time we had fewer than a few hundred field Cockers), it's becoming increasingly more popular as people are finding it more difficult to get into Springer Trials, so they are turning to Cockers. And, once they have a cocker, they find out just what the dogs are capable of and stick with them."

Lynn compiled a list of a few people who would be able to help me find a puppy, one of which was Peggy Brown from Yorkshire. Well, Ms Brown was indeed a character and had been a personal acquaintance of James Harriot and featured in one of his books. She had a yard full of beautiful black cockers which she fed sheep heads which were hung from hooks adjacent to the house. She also had been acquainted with the Queen and taught survival techniques to British soldiers during World War II. I could have stayed and talked with her all day! But, she didn't have any puppies.

So I purchased my first pup from Paul & Lynn which was the grandson of Sandrinham Mango (the Queens dog) and Paul's FT CH. Glenfernate Meg of Ormwood who had 7 field trial awards including a 1st in an open stake and a 4th in the National Championship before she was three years old (she went on to have 9 open wins). The pup was named Ormwood Ghillie and I sent him to be trained by Ed Hanks (a Springer trainer) in Tehacipi California.

Two years later I imported a bitch out of Wwynfryd Melygoch and Housty Solo from Peter Jones via the Rawlings. It became acknowledged a few years later that they were two of the great UK cockers of their time. Peter went on to win the British National Championship with Nancarrow Carousel about ten years later. As many know, Carousel was sold to George Tate from Minnesota.

We also trained Dublyn and later bred her (about 1988) and I could only sell one puppy. I kept two of them (Adare and Argeant) and gave all the others to friends as pets. I sent Adare and Argeant to Ed Hanks for training. He thought Adare was good enough to run in a Puppy Stake of a Springer Trial, so he entered her in a puppy stake, I think around 1990. My memory is that she took a first. But, very soon, Cockers were banned from competing with the Springers. I was told the Springer's already had too many people running dogs to open up to Cockers. They told me to go to hunt tests.

Vance Van Lannen:

I kept in touch with Alan and little by little we became friends. Alan eventually returned to England and he gave me his dogs to sell for him when he left. Puelicher never could handle the cockers, so so I eventually ended up with Mac and Alan's bitch!

In the meantime, I had asked Alan (now in England) to send me everything he could find on Cockers. I would spend my winters going through his material and decided I wanted something from the Jordiland Kennels (Jack Windle). I then arranged to go to the "Gamefair" which was going to be held on a very large Estate in Scotland and to meet Alan while there.

We were walking down "gunkeepers" row and Alan saw Jack. We were introduced. Alan asked Jack if he had any pups. Jack said, "Aye." Alan asked Jack if he would sell any of them. Jack said, "Aye." Alan asked if we could see them. Jack said, "Aye." Jack had been the gamekeeper for the Estate where the Gamefair was being held and only lived a stone's throw away. He had 4 female pups, black & white and lemon and white. I picked one of the black and whites and asked Jack to pick the other. "Nye" he said. He just wouldn't do it. I asked him if he ever picked pups. Jack said, "Nye." I asked him if he just kept the pups that other's didn't pick. Jack said "Aye."

I had no intention of breeding. The black & white (Jordiland Biddy) was so good I couldn't believe it. I had been raising labs since I was 7 years old so I thought I knew a little about dogs. Biddy was so good she would take your breath away. People were amazed. I could have sold her time and again, but I never would. I bred her once and she almost died. She had one pup named Annan which I also kept. Jordiland Blondie was Biddy's sister.

We founded the Northeast Spaniel Club. I had insisted that they didn't call it a Springer Club! We use to run fun club trials. At one point I had a bunch of Cockers and there were a hand ful of Cockers owned by other people in Wisconsin. Well, when we would have one of these trials, I would enter four dogs and other friends would maybe enter two. I was running my legs off bringing dogs to the line. One of my memories was asking Sue Neville to run Annan for me as I was exhausted. She had never even seen the dog before. She said, "Vance, I can't run this dog for you!" Well she did and she won the trial that day! This was around 1981-82.

I had people hounding me for pups. I called Jack to send me a male and then another female. Alan got the female from Jim Edgar, a British veteraniar ^{Leeshpark} that started Laypark Kennels.

I think Jack Wendle was a dog genius. (The person who probably has all his papers would be Rosemary Hall from Templebar.)

John Seyman was writing for Gundog magazine and contacted me to do an article about the Cockers. Normally I wouldn't have helped with the article, but I wanted to do it for the dogs. We met at Ray Summers and I took him hunting with a couple of dogs I had. Seyman couldn't believe it!

Art Person (Physician, Natchez, Mississippi):

In 1986 we were in the dog business in a very small way, breeding and hunt testing Labrador Retrievers. My wife, Cheryl, was determined to have a small dog that could be her very own. She wanted a Cocker Spaniel, but having seen a few American Cockers, I was pretty positive that they weren't what we wanted. The ones that I had seen around were nervous, prone to temperment problems and for the most part, untrainable. This is not a broadside at American Cockers, just the ones that we had been around and were available in our area.

I convinced her, based on a 1986 Gun Dog Magazine article featuring Vance Van Lannen and his English Cockers, that what we needed was an English Cocker. Vance was attempting to establish English Cockers in the upper Midwest, with the objective of getting Spaniel Hunt tests established. I telephoned Vance and inquired about the possibility of purchasing a puppy. He gave me pretty short shift, possibly due to many phone calls from curiosity seekers following the Gun Dog article. He actually told me that he had no interest in selling a puppy to someone in Mississippi, unless I was agreeable to participating in Hunt Tests. I was honest with Vance, allowing that I didn't really see the feasibility of someone in Southwest Mississippi committing to run a dog in Hunt Tests in Wisconsin. These hunt tests still being an idea, not a reality at that time. I asked Vance if he could recommend any other breeders that might have puppies for sale. Vance gave me the name of Walt Cline, a Methodist Minister residing in Nebraska. I gave Walt a call, and from that call we purchased our first Cocker female, "Wisp". She bounded out of her crate at the Jackson Mississippi Airport, straight into Cheryl's arms. A new love affair began at that moment. Alas, Wisp proved to be a less than great hunter, but a wonderful companion dog. In 1988 we purchased a male English Cocker from another Nebraskian, Bill Guthrie. I drove to Oklahoma City to pick him up, what we do for our dogs! We got two litters from Wisp, and most of these turned out to be nice little hunting dogs, nothing great, but nice.

A couple of years passed and I decided that I wanted another English Cocker female. Time dims my memory, but somehow I got Paul Mc Gagh's phone number in Virginia. We talked several times about his upcoming trip to England and the possibility of bring back a bitch in whelp. My idea was to find a

really nice bitch, bred to a Field Champion, import her and raise a litter of puppies. I felt that this approach would give us a start with some really nice English Cockers. Paul agreed to try to find me a bitch while he was in the U.K. Paul called me from England to tell me that he had seen several bitches, however he really wasn't very impressed with the ones that were for sale. He did say that he had access to two litters of very nice puppies. He told me that he was bringing back a couple of puppies from each of the litters and I could have which ever one I wanted. Being the complete neophyte, I asked him what the colors were. I was pretty stuck on the idea of a lemon roan bitch puppy and always steered the conversation toward her. Paul told me that he had a Strawberry roan puppy that he felt was the best of the lot, but I could have whichever one I wanted. For once in my life, and probably the wisest decision dog wise that I have made, I followed his advice. That Strawberry roan puppy was F.C. Nancarrow Rosy Mantle "Brit" and the rest is history.

(Author's Note: Art and Cheryl own 3 Field Trial Champions, one of which was the 2000 NFC Dago Caol Shraid Marshen. Cheryl Persons died of an annuraism in April 2001.)

Larry Hansen: (Owner Silver Shears, Tracy Minnesota)

Around 1987, I had a client that wanted a small dog for his family. I was a lab man so I had to do some research on the different smaller breeds. We heard about Vance's dogs and it intrigued me that this guy had Cockers, so my wife and I drove to Green Bay one day to see them. We met Stan & Lisa Wrobel (sp) who were training Vance's dogs. I ordered one (which is what you had to do then) for the client.

I got the dog a year later and took it out for training. It was the funest dog to work with so I ordered myself one! I ended up getting a really good one!

As time when by, Vance began to introduce me to all of his contacts in Scotland.

Larry Dihel (Scientist, Denver Colorado):

I'll try to give you my impressions of events leading up to 1993. I really should call the year 1992 the "Cocker Field Trial of Dreams: Hold one and see who comes." David Williams, Charlene and myself were training English Cockers with the local Rocky Mountain Springer Spaniel Club and other than Walt Cline (where we had bought our dogs) and Larry Hanson who I had talked to on the phone just once, I don't think we actually knew of many other people with Cockers. There were, occasionally, some advertisements in the back of "Gun Dog" magazine and "Spaniels in the Field" but no real national community of "Cocker People."

I am sure it was Charlene who suggested that we throw a Cocker Trial so we could get to meet other Cocker people and then David agreeing because he wanted to see other Cockers perform. For my part, I looked up the regulations in the AKC trial book and found out how to make an application. That turned out to be very easy, at the top of the Spaniel Field Trial form, which was probably the same one that had been used since the 1950's when there were still ongoing Cocker trials, there were two boxes, one to apply for a Springer trial and one to apply for a Cocker Trial. We checked the box marked "Cocker", then filled in the other information required, addressed the envelope, added a postage stamp, sent it in to the AKC and sat back to see what would happen.

Nothing happened as a month or so went by. At that point, Charlene and I wrote an article for "Spaniels in the Field" talking about our English Cockers and how we hunted them and had trained them and how talented they were and how we wanted to have a Cocker Trial. After that was published in the summer of 1992 a few people called. Most said we could not throw a trial because we did not have the permission of this or that organization. I basically acted politely dumb. My standard comment to the callers was always that I didn't know what was required, but if we needed additional permission then the AKC would let us know and we would ask. Until then, David, Charlene and I just trained our dogs.

The day the AKC approval letter arrived was one of shock for me. Charlene was excited, but for me, I knew now it would come down to finding grounds, birds and workers for a trial. And the big question, that none of us knew the answer to was, would anyone come? The AKC rules said we needed six dogs to have a stake. We counted up all the steady Cockers we knew of and the best we could come up with was six and two of those were newly steadied puppies. So out there somewhere we hoped there were eight or ten steady Cockers besides our six that would be ready to compete. We put out a large ad in "Spaniels

in the Field" announcing the fact that there, indeed, was going to be an AKC licensed Cocker Spaniel Field Trial in the Spring of 1993. Our phone began to ring.

I remember getting a telephone call from Paul Mc Gagh. The gist of his call was to divine what would be the format of the trial and what would the cover be like. I told him the format would be the same as any other AKC Spaniel trial, two series under each judge and a third under both judges. On the issue of cover we had many discussions and what we had decided was the cover had to be diverse. By diverse we meant it would have to include grasses, hedge rows, tree rows, bushes and even some bare ground; and if we could manage it the course would be around a lake so there would be marshy ground with the possibility of a water retrieve or two thrown in. The real strength of any good Spaniel was to take on the cover as it presented itself, relate to his handler so as to produce birds in easy gun range and put birds in the air to shoot and, of course, make the retrieve. The evident strengths of our English Cockers were just those traits. They covered their ground very efficiently and stayed with you over difficult and varying terrain so you could concentrate on making the shot when it presented itself. We felt that the best way to show off those strengths was to have very diverse cover types. Paul must have had been in some agreement regarding our talk because as we all know he came to Colorado and won the first trial with a little liver English Cocker named Lucy.

Today as I sit at my desk and write nostalgically about 1993, I can look outside in the yard and see a daughter of Lucy's sired by the "first" Cocker Field Trial Champion, Sprig. Inside on my desk is a large, thick address book with names and addresses of Cocker people. Now eight seasons later there are Cocker trials on both the East coast and the West coast and in between; and Cocker people scattered from California, Washington State, New York, New Jersey, Maine and in between to states like Louisiana, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska and North Dakota. This fall we will gather in Minnesota to have our second National Cocker Spaniel Field Trial and I'll be there to run my little black companion, Dace, daughter of Sprig and Lucy. Secretly I hope she'll win, but mostly I'll be there to meet with and visit with all the Cocker people. I've gained two very important experiences from that 1993 trial, one the continued company of English Cockers and the continued company of friends that share the love for the little devils. (Larry and Charlene have trained and own 2 Field Trial Champions)

Mark Hairfield, Professional Trainer, Houston Texas)

On one of my trips to England to buy dogs (I was purchasing Springers and Labradors) I had an opportunity to shoot over Cockers. I enjoyed them and thought they had a place in American Hunting venues. The Cocker was smaller, very busy and efficient.

My memory is that the people I was influenced by was Mike Shefford and Peter Jones. I started importing some Cockers and sold them to clients in the Houston area that were mostly interested in using Cockers to retrieve quail after their pointers had found them. The pointers would point, the gunners would shoot and the Cockers would retrieve. Funny now, but that's how it all started.

Around 1993 I got a call from Bob Mc Cowan from AKC. Bob said, Mark, I know you're activities have mostly been with Springers and we've been friends for a long time, so I'd like to ask you what you think about the Cocker movement and what do you think we at AKC can or should do to help these people?"

We had a lengthy talk, the essence of which was the Cocker group was pretty small and that if we could be allowed to have the Springer Clubs hold AKC Licensed Cocker Trials (rather than make the Cocker people organize trial clubs for their trials) would cut through the 3-4 years of red tape and get the breed off the ground.

Basically, we talked the pros and cons. If the Cocker group had to go through all the steps to license their clubs and trials they might lose interest. But, Bob and I were concerned that it didn't look like a short cut. The facts were that the Springers people had run licensed trials for years on a very similar dog, therefore, they were the most likely qualified group to make an alliance.

Bob was instrumental in opening the door and in hindsight if we would have had to go through 3 years to get licensed, we might not have seen the 1993 trial and the strong movement we have today. I hope he gets the credit he deserves for his insights.

When the pro's came into Cockers, they set a good standard. I give credit to the Amateurs that they have learned from the pros and we've seen a steady improvement of the competing dogs. Today the

competition is tremendous, especially as compared to some of the earlier trials. Over the past years, I've been many Cockers and know they have their place. I enjoy the heck out of them!

Paul Mc Gagh (Professional Cocker Trainer, Bismarck, North Dakota):

When I first decided to try a cocker, I did something completely out of character. I researched. I called a couple of keepers I knew in England and asked them to find out where the best working Cockers around originated from. I had no interest in the armchair experts who could wax on about the relative merits of one pedigree as opposed to another. Rather, I sought out the opinions of individuals who's working gundogs are an intragal part of their everyday job.

The pup I eventually purchased was a complete pleasure, a highly focused, obsessive retriever and hunter. A pure joy to train. A short time after getting the first pup, I had a friend pick up two pups from a breeder located a short distance away from where he was pheasant shooting in England. They were horrible! Basically, they were non-hunters, non-retrievers and incredibly dishonest. Simply a nightmare. If these dogs would have been my introduction to Cockers, they would absolutely been my last. There belies my personal experience with training Cockers from a variety of strains and sources. It is feast or famine. With so many people advertising these days the moral of the story is more appropriate now than ever. If a potential buyer is not prepared to take the time to scratch through the vineer of self promotion and truly research he will almost certainly get what he deserves

Ernie Hasse (Executive with the Auto Club of America, Holly Michigan):

I was raised with Cockers. They were all field bred then, maybe I'm dating myself. We hunted with them all the time. They were very popular dogs back then in Michigan. But, the pheasant population was vastly depleted in the 1950's and 60's, so other breeds like Labrador Retrievers came to the forefront. Perhaps if there had been more publicity and venues for the Cockers they wouldn't have declined. Probably because of the size and looks of the English Cocker, they began to appeal to women and more and more they were switched over to show dogs.

My interest was rekindled around 1990. I had Springers for years, and when I married Andrea, I thought a Cocker would be a smaller and easier dog for her to handle.. I had read a few articles about Cockers and bought a pup from Walt Cline.

When "Spaniels in the Field" advertised the 1993 Rocky Mountain "hardown" Andrea and I decided to attend and we've been attending trials ever since. The first few years of trials were a learning experience for most Cocker people and if it hadn't been for the Springer people who put on our trials, this could never have happened. (Author's note: Ernie went on to win 1st Cocker National Championship with his dog, Rocky and also be the "high point dog" for several years. He and Andrea own 3 Field Trial Champions)

Sue Rose (ECSCA lifetime Member, Michigan)

I became involved in English Cocker Spaniels with the acquisition of a puppy names Sherry in 1965. Sherry was the lesser puppy of a show-bred litter, being small and having a poor face marking. Her life had a lot of activity in both the ring and performance events (a \$40.00 wonder dog.)

Sherry and I completed her (show) championships and three levels of obedience titles by the time she was five years old. Then with the assistance of several books and the AKC booklet on Spaniel Field Trials, she began her fieldwork. Quartering, flushing, retrieving and water work were easy for her; she loved the birds. Alas, after several letters to AKC, it was determined that English Cockers had no field trials anymore. So, fieldwork went on the back burner and she did man tracking. Her birdiness presented some difficulty with tracking, though her excitement on a game-tracks always told what she was up to.

In the late 1970's, the ECSCA sponsored some training sessions and a working certificate test out east. Sherry was now twelve years old and nearly deaf. We sojourned to out to Abracadabra Kennels (Mrs. Babs DeGaris/ in Millbrook CT and tried her in the field again. Her advanced obedience training coupled with her earlier fieldwork did her well. She followed hand signals, flushed boldly and retrieved to hand. Sherry was one of two dogs to earn a Working Dog Excellent Patch that weekend. Her lineup of

titles were Canadian Obedience Trial Champion, American-Canadian *Bench* Championship, American/Canadian Utility Dog Tracker, Canadian Tracking Dog Excellent, and ECSCA Working Dog Excellent.

From that time forward, I have been actively supporting the ECSCA Working Dog Tests and working test seminars through the Heart of Michigan English Cocker Spaniel Club. I've judged working tests and all levels of Spaniel hunt tests along with half the sporting group (bench, obedience trials and tracking tests). I've been an active member of the ECSCA Field Events Committee since the early 1980's.

When the AKC Hunting Test Program for spaniels got underway, I was working seven year old Jamie. He had his bench Championship, tracking and obedience titles and as Sherry, loved the birds. He completed his WDX, Junior & Senior Hunter by the time he was nine.

I was invited to judge the puppy stake of the 1993 Cocker Field Trial in Colorado and was pleased to attend.

John and Sheila Courts (Owners Lockridge Kennels, Harris, Minnesota):

We read an article in a magazine about field Cockers and decided it was a dog that would work for us. We are a small family living in the country. We had a lot of different hunting dogs as my husband and son "live" to hunt and fish. The English Cocker was a dog we could have in the house and take hunting.

We got our first puppy from Walt Cline (which took some time to track him down) after spending a lot of time talking to him on the phone. He was very knowledgeable about the breed and very helpful when it came time to get our next Cocker which came from Alan Gwinn in the United Kingdom. That dog "Glen" was fully trained and we did a lot of hunting with him. He gave us the "gift" of learning the pleasure of working behind a fully trained, multi-talented gun dog and started us on the wonderful road of establishing our kennel.

Walt Cline also introduced us to the small network of Cocker enthusiasts across the country which largely exists today. In those days everyone was talking on the phone and we seemed to all share something similar that truly made us excited, but at the same time isolated.

Rocky Mountain had the capability of putting on a trial and we felt it was important to show our support. We were approached by Kevin Martineau to handle some of our dogs and entered a total of five. Windmillwood Honey placed second at that trial. Kevin went on to make our Cocker "Sprig" the first US Field Trial Champion. Spring has sired several generations of additional field champions and became the foundation of our kennel.

My husband, son and I really got interested in field trialing and organized the second Cocker trial at Hudson, Wisconsin. We've also expanded (and have had our share of wins) into Pheasant Hunter Unlimited tournaments, the US Pheasant Open Championships and the Minnesota State Partridge Championships where we usually compete against Labs, Springers and other flushing dogs. Not bad for our little Cockers!

Dave Williams (Crop Duster, Colorado & Nebraska)

I had two springers and one of them, a female. I bred her and kept one of her pups. I got him to hunt pretty well and we hunted together until he was thirteen. Then I thought, "I need a new hunting dog!" There was an article in *Outdoor Life* about Walt Cline and his dogs and it struck me so I kept it on file. I contacted Walt and asked him to come up and see one of his dogs because it wasn't that far away. So I took my airplane and flew to Scotsbluff Nebraska and borrowed the airport courtesy car (an old beater) and drove to Walt's place near Morrill.

He had an old dog named Daily which was an import he used for stud. Walt worked him and some other dogs for me using pigeons and such. It wasn't a big time demonstration and I thought, "These are pretty good dogs, they have some flash. One of these, just might be the ticket and fit into my plans!"

Walt didn't have any pups but he had one dog (from his two imported dogs) that a guy had backed out on, so the pup was now 14 weeks. I thought I had to have a 7 week old pup, but when I saw that black dog, I

changed my mind. And that's how I got Zeke. In all reality I didn't think I would return with a dog but it was kind of neat that he fit into the airplane just right.

I had gotten Zeke in January and at that time, I had only trained two springers and not too well either, I was on my own with only a couple of books to guide me. Summer came and it was hard to find time as I was spraying in Nebraska non-stop and although there were plenty of places to train, I just didn't have the time.

I then read another article about Lisa and Ken Worbel from Wisconsin. They trained Vance Van Lannen's dogs and I thought I might have something special in Zeke and I didn't want to screw him up. So, the next time I was spraying, I thought I'd send him to the Worbel's for the summer to train him and I'd pick him up just before hunting season. And that's what I did.

Vance didn't have many litters in those days and when he did, the pups were pretty much promised to Vance's friends. Walt Cline was a little more of a free market kind of guy thinking the Cockers were so much fun everybody should have a chance to own one! So, I got a call from Larry Diehl one day and he'd been talking to Walt Cline who told him Zeke was a pretty nice dog. Larry and Charlene had never seen a Cocker and they wondered if they could come down and see him. So we went to Cherry Creek State Park and ran him on a couple of pigeons. They were impressed enough and they went back to Walt and got Promise.

They were members of the Rocky Mountain Springer Spaniel Club because they had owned Springers. So they told me they had places to train, birds to train with and all the stuff dog Clubs can do for a guy So, I joined the Rocky Mountain Club and sure got a lot of good training points.

I don't remember whose idea it was to have a Cocker Trial. Of course, one of the big worries was we had to borrow the Rocky Mountain license for our trial. So we negotiated a deal with them that Larry, Charlene and I would do all the background work like the premiums, trophies, and money raising. The Springer folks would come into play at the actual trial and they were great on the day doing all the planting and gunning. We had a pretty successful event. But, at the end of the weekend, between the catalog sales, donations and raffle, we'd make quite a bit of money. We had just wanted to break even so we felt a little guilty with the profits we'd made. So, we decided to contribute to future groups that put on Cocker Trials with those funds and that's what we did.

Kevin Martineau (Pet Food & Supply Distributor, Minnesota)
countryhomedist@frontiernet.net

I first heard and got to see English Cockers in the mid to late 1980's when Vance Van Lannen ran some of his dogs up in Canada. A year or two later Val Walsh and I were asked to judge a Springer Trial by the North East Wisconsin English Springer Spaniel Club up at Pat and Janet Fischer's place. They asked us come in a day early for a sanctioned "fun" trial for Cockers. It was set up pretty much the way we do it today with braces and bird planting. There were about a dozen or so Cockers entered, and it was a lot of fun. I saw some quality animals and they worked their hearts out. I will admit, the most common fault at the time was the occasional hard mouth.

Up to this point, Vance Van Lannen had created most of the buzz and interest in the Cockers, to his credit. But, from that point on, other groups of people, like the guys in Colorado, began contributing too.

Marty Knibbs had a great Cocker he used for hunting. And, in the spring of 1991, Marty and I were asked to judge a trial in Kansas. Marty flew in to Minneapolis and I picked him up at the airport. He was training a dog for Sheila Courts and we all had breakfast together to he could give it back to her. That was the first time I had met Sheila and she was really excited about Cockers. We talked about the possibility of having regular trials for them. So at the end of 1992, when it appeared the Colorado Trial

would be a reality, Sheila got a hold of me. As a note, Marty Knibbs was still working in the Oil industry and was limited to the number of trials he could attend in the United States. So I ran Spring, Sandy and Flo in the 1993 Trial. We took 2nd with Sandy (she had a beautiful runner in 3rd series that day.) But, Paul and Lucy clearly won the event with a great trial.

The next licensed trial was held in Minnesota and I remember it as the one where Arthur got his car stuck because it was raining pretty good that day. It was neat to see all the different clubs jumping into Cocker Trials and we were all organizing new field events by borrowing different dog club "licenses" to stage AKC licensed trials. Anyway, I won with Sprig that day.

The 3rd trial was held in Pennsylvania and I won that one with Spring too. They held a water test so he could finish off his Championship. This was a big thrill as Sprig became the first English Cocker Field Trial Champion in 30 years! He was actually one of the best dogs I'd ever worked with. If he knew what you wanted, he'd try his best to please you. Really a great dog and I felt really honored to Champion him.

The 4th trial was in Michigan and Sprig won again! Going to all the different events was really a lot of fun and I have great memories from this time.

I always thought it was neat that the Cocker people invited judges from England because it gave us the opportunity to talk about English trials and how we trained differently. So, in the following spring we went to the Virginia trial where Dennis Douglas from Scotland had been invited to judge with Mark Hairfield. Dennis was familiar with Sprig having seen him run in UK trials before he was sold and exported to the United States. Dennis thought the way I was running him wasn't good at all. He told me in his Scottish broug "Ye runit that doog!" So, I was out with Spring but still in the running with Sandy as she still ran in a very "British Style" that Dennis liked. We'd had a pretty good trial going when we came into the third series and you can imagine how pleased I was when Sandy took off after a runner. Exasperated, Dennis just threw his hands up in the air thinking I had blown the trial! It took Mark Hairfield to explain to him that it was OK to leave the beat in America to follow a runner. To Dennis' credit, when he understood this difference, he was OK with it and Sandy ended up winning the day. It demonstrated how we had people on both sides of the ocean trialing spaniels but with different emphasis. It was interesting to learn the differences between our styles and why. But the bottom line, we loved the dogs equally.

Tom Ness (Owner Oahe Hunting Lodge, Professional Dog Trainer, Menoken North Dakota):

I was buying Springers for Clients from England and had purchased a couple of Cockers from Walt Cline. Alan Gwinn kept working on me to get a cocker from him.

I had been in a serious shooting accident while guiding a group of surgeons hunting, which if you have to be shot would be the group of choice. Anyway, I was months healing and was suffering a little from depression. My wife began to urge me to consider buying a cocker, I think, to get my mind off the accident. That's how I got Mave from Alan.

The minute I saw and started working with her caught my interest and I thought it would be important to trial so the rest of the dog world could come and see how good Cockers could be. (Tom has trained 2 Field Trial Champions)

Paul Harris, (Professional Trainer, Pedericksburg, New Jersey)

When I was a little kid I had read a book about working or field cockers and for some reason the thought had stuck with me and I always wanted one. I was training Springers and Labs when a client brought me a Cocker he had purchased from Walt Cline to train. I really had fun with it.

My wife, Connie, had a job she accepted in London and wanted me to come with her for a week. I didn't know what I was going to do while she was working and didn't particularly relish the idea of staying in London. So I decided to take this opportunity to see if I could find a cocker. Somebody had told me

about Hedley Millington's kennels, Carl Colclouth's and Perry Donovan. So, I got a map, located them and paid them a visit. None of them had any puppies. I was a little disappointed.

We went back the following January and visited Talbot Radcliff's shoot and then went on to the British Cocker Championship which was being held at Sandringham in 1993. We had to drive from Wales and got to the championship just as it was starting. I was in a rush to put my boots on. A black and white cocker came running around the corner of the rental car and jumped into my lap. Its owner, Wendy Knight, came after him, totally embarrassed. I said, "It's all right, I'll take him home!"

Connie and I watched him run during the championship and I loved that dog. His name was Clip. Later that afternoon, Connie told me Clip was for sale. Two days later I owned Clip. It's sort of weird, but I got more excited about Clip because of his temperament and what he could do in the field after I got him home. It so happened that the Rocky Mountain Field Trial was about that time, so I called and entered. I lost Clip on the second bird of the third series on a runner that I think is still going, probably in Canada by now. He made his Field Trial Championship in 1995. This was in the days of only a few trials every year.

I put on the 3rd or 4th trial at Valley Forge in September 1993. Because there were beginning to be more and more trials, naturally there was a lot of talk about Cocker Field Trials and worries about "Springerizing" cockers. This was probably due to the fact that most of the early Cocker people previously ran in Springer trials, but there was a controversy about whether we should copy what the British were doing.

To illuminate this, I remember going to Virginia for the Cocker Trial because I had entered Clip, paid his entry fees and he cut himself the day before the trial and had to be scratched. It so happened that Connie had given Charlene Dihel a frequent flyer coupon for an airline ticket to come back so we could attend a meeting to discuss the format of Cocker trials and "Springerization" issues. I would have stayed home, but Charlene was riding with me. (I think we raised a few eyebrows when the two of us showed up together and I kept telling people "Connie bought Charlene's ticket!")

Anyway, Paul Mc Gagh was running Lucy in the 3rd series. Dennis Douglas from England was judging with Mark Hairfield and Lucy took a runner. Paul and Mark started after her, and Dennis just stood there, as the British don't take runners. It wasn't that Dennis wasn't a good judge, it was a matter of difference between the British method and American method. Now a days, the British judges have read or been informed of how we run dogs, but then, they didn't know. But, this crystallizes what all the hub-bub was about. There is a difference in how Americans hunt and run dogs and what the British do.

So we had this meeting and were all discussing the "Springerization" issues, as if this was a bad term. It was odd because most of us were Springer people. But, it was a very good meeting and got everyone to the middle of the road, half way between the Springer way and the British way. In my mind, it was a good compromise. We would try to copy the cover, but adapt American hunting styles.

I had been asked to judge the ECSCA's National Championship Hunt Test. There were several dogs entered and I didn't pass a single person, which really angered a lot of people who were contestants, most of which didn't have a clue of what a hunting dog should do. As this was going to be our parent club, I could see we were going to have a lot of educating to do.

(Author's note: Paul's Clip became a Field Trial Champion in 1995)

Vance Van Lannen:

I like the character of the Cocker. They make you laugh! They put you on. My opinion for this dog is that it is best suited for Grouse and Woodcock. The king of pheasant hunting is a Springer or one of the pointing breeds. There are few Grouse hunters and most of them use English Setters, so the Cocker was a secondary dog. Even in England, it's a secondary dog or on a second tier in popularity. But as far as being useful to the hunter, if you hunt in wooded habitat, the cocker is as good as any and maybe even better. This is why the cover that Cockers would be trialed on was important to me.

We had been running two or three sanctioned trials. I didn't want to run a license trial because I didn't think we were ready for it. We would have been hard pressed to find 10 good quality dogs or handlers. Mostly Cockers were with hunters that didn't have their dogs to the quality level of a licensed trial. Licensing trials could risk of creating "cheap" champions with second rate dogs that would then have a huge influence on the breed here in the States. So, when the people in Colorado had a license trial,

I felt like I was hitting my head against the wall. But, after Colorado, the trial game was a foot. Once there was a crimp in the dam, it burst!

Tawney Crawford (Veterinarian Assistant, Yelm Washington):

I had English Show dogs but my primary interest was obedience training and AKC Hunt Tests which I had participated in from their onset. I attended the 1st AKC Licensed Hunt Test which was judged by Jeff Miller in 1989. There were no field Cockers there. Stony, my English Show Cocker, was the first English Cocker to get all three levels of the Hunt Test Title.

So when they announced the 1993 Rocky Mountain Field Trial, naturally, I was interested. I knew Stony probably wouldn't be competitive, but I wanted to go anyway.

At the 1993 Rocky Mountain Trial I fell in love with Paul Harris's Clip and Paul was really good to me even though I had show dogs. Not all field people were like that at that time. Concurrently, I was Field Chairman of ECSCA and in the years that followed it became apparent that if we wanted to get Cocker Trials going, we would have to assimilate these new field people into the ECSCA parent club.

Actually, I think Rocky Mountain got the licensed trial as a mistake. I don't think the AKC caught that it was a Cocker Trial! But, there was controversy about all the new trials that were coming on board. It was touchy times. Since I had been a long time member of ECSCA and had some "Field" experience due to the Hunt Tests, I was probably the only person ECSCA had as a member they could call on to report what the new field contingency wanted. They were largely members of Springer Clubs and didn't want a bunch of "show" women dictating to them. I was caught in the middle.

Van Van Lannen:

There were trials beginning everywhere. They were organized by Springer Clubs and I was worried they were premature and somewhat uninformed about what the Cocker was all about. I had heard there was going to be a trial in Virginia and encouraged using Dennis Douglas to judge it as he was the Chairman of the Cocker Section of the Kennel Club in England. It occurred to me that we should have a meeting with all the then current Cocker enthusiasts and Dennis.

Art Rodgers (Editor, Spaniels in the Field):

Vance was worried about the form that Cocker Trials would take. He wrote me a letter:

"proposing that an ad-hoc meeting be convened in February or early March 1994 to develop a statement of Standards and Conduct of Field Trials for the English Cocker Spaniel, separate and distinct from those presently governing Springer Spaniel Trials. It is intended that the resulting recommendations be submitted to the Working and Field Committee of the ECSCA for their approval and adoption. I am sure that many...of you would agree that unless something like this is done soon, trials for Cockers will remain "junior" Springer trials resulting eventually in the "Springerization" of the breed in the field. This would...bring about a tragic loss of those distinctive characteristics that make the Cocker a special companion in the field and in the home.

.....I hope you will consider this an opportunity to help provide a competitive environment that will protect and promote the special Cocker quality in this country.

My memory and notes of this meeting reflect it was a very positive and stimulating occasion. I remember Dennis Douglas giving us details of the British trials and how we might adapt certain aspects. It was great to have him there. Invited to attend were John Courts, Larry Dihel, Larry Hansen, Tom Ness, Art Person, Kevin Peterson, Sue Rose, Stan Wrobel, Paul Mc Gagh, Ernie Hasse, Paul Harris, Art Person, Tawney Crawford, Kevin Martineau, Charlene Dihel and Mark Hairfield. We discussed simulating hunting as much as possible using natural hunting grounds and planting birds where they would be found in the wild. It was agreed that without this, the dogs could not be judged properly.

We thought it would be better to encourage fall trials for better cover and birds. If there was to be a spring trial, use light woods and Chuckar to simulate grouse hunting. We discussed eliminating or

minimizing the use of centerlines while running the dogs in braces allowing the judges to decide as to when a dog interferes with the brace mate. There were discussions regarding plant birds unevenly, spreading them out for longer dry runs, as a good judge can tell much about a dog running dry if its in good cover. Or put two close at times. Some mention of using mixed game if it were available. Pheasants being OK in open fields or light woods. I even have noted "How about a full flighted duck every now and then?"

We thought beats should consist of running through and down hedgerows, in briars, across creeks, perhaps one dog in woods and the other out, in cut corn, CRP land, woods, etc. Don't worry about making it exactly "equal for all dogs". But it was stressed "No cut grass!" This is where the term "Cocker Cover" was born.

Send on all safe falls. Give the handler the option to move up to help the dog. Don't nit-pick details. Make it like hunting!!!

From this meeting arose the committee and the grass roots for the establishment of the "Standards and Procedures for Cocker Trials" called the Green Book. We covered the role of Springer Clubs in Cocker Trials and the role that ECSCA would take in the future. We wondered what would be the role of the American Cocker. Other questions included the point system for Field Champions and establishing a suitable list of qualified judges.

Again, my memory of this meeting was that it established many of the principles found in Cocker Trials today. Dr. Kevin Peterson from Minnesota was given the task of writing the Green Book. He did a ton of work on this and it's a shame he's never really been given the recognition he deserves.

Mark Rose (Owner Dupage Welding, Chicago, Illinois):

My friend Ted Soukup had a Cocker from Walt Cline he called Dotzie and another from Sheila Courts named Vanilla. I had just lost my springer and Ted invited me to see how his dogs worked. I decided to give a Cocker a try. Ted's son Mike had also lost his Cocker to an auto accident and they had been negotiating with Art Person on a six month old pup. Mike thought the price was too high so he gave me Art's phone number and I followed up. That's how I ended up with Rocky. I now think the \$100.00 extra was a pretty good deal. On top of that, Art so believed in his breedings he made a deal with me that if Rocky made his Championship, he would give me my \$400.00 back! Well, Rocky did make his Championship and Art was good to his word and we donated that money to the first Cocker National Championship.

Jim Karlovech (Professional Trainer, Ohio)

In January 1992 I went to England to see the Springer National Championships. I didn't much care about Cockers because I had the stereo type in my head. But, I had arrived in the UK a day earlier and it so happened they were running the Cocker Championship. I had nothing else to do so I reluctantly went to watch.

Within an hour I thought "Boy, are these neat little dogs!" I Immediately knew I was going to get one! The remainder of my stay I "boned" up on pedigrees and breed lines that were doing well. I visited with Keith Erlandson, Mike Sheppard (Housty Kennels), Cyril Gwinn (Wynnfred) and Carl Collclough (Parkbreck) which were some of the top breeders to get their advice.

Having confired with these individuals and sorting through their advice and knowledge I decided upon a specific litter I was interested in. It took three months until a pup was sent to me in Ohio. About the time I got the pup was when I heard about the Colorado trial. I knew my pup wouldn't be ready, but I wanted to attend the trial to show my wife why I bought a Cocker as she wasn't completely convinced of my wisdom and judgement! Since I had been involved in Springer trials for years she questioned this new branch I had taken!

So we went and I guess the rest is history. I feel really fortunate that the first three pups I got and trained all went on to get their Field Trial Championship. I think that is amazingly lucky to have three dogs that all work out in a row!

Rumi Schroeder (Fallen Wings Spaniels, Wisconsin)

We purchased our first spaniel as a wedding gift upon return from our honeymoon. She was a small springer by field trial standards. We bred her when we were ready for a new puppy and I got my first dog from her second litter. I lost her at the age of two and was heartsick. I swore my next dog was not going to be a springer.

*The month before my 29th birthday my husband (Mike) made the mistake of asking me what I wanted for Christmas. I replied an English Cocker. Mike was surprised because I never spoke of wanting an English Cocker and wondered where I had heard of them. I told him I remembered reading an article in *Spaniels in the Field* which intrigued me.*

As my birthday approached, Mike frantically looked for a Cocker pup for me. They were not easy to find. He saw an ad in the local newspaper that put him in touch with a lady who bred show dogs. Mike explained to her that he was looking for a field bred dog and she gave him Walt Klein's phone number. Mike called Walt and asked where he could find "pure" field blood lines and Walt gave him a list of four British Breeders. Alan Gwynne's name was on the top of the list.

Poor Alan, not knowing much about international travel we counted back six hours instead of ahead and called at 4 o'clock in the morning. A groggy Alan suggested if we were serious to call back in twelve hours and he'd see what he could find for sale. He found two bitches for sale, a young lemon and white and a 5 year old British field trial winner. Alan explained the 5 year old was one his brother's personal trial dogs and she was expertly trained. We decided we would take her.

It was months later we found out who Cyril Gwynne was and how fortunate we were to have one of his personal dogs. Soon after that the plans were set and FTW Wernffrwd Heulwen (Dark) came to the states. She cost much more than the puppy we originally thought we were going to buy. Mike sat me down and said, if I buy you this dog, you are going to field trial it. Not realizing what I was agreeing to, I said "of course" and my addiction to field trialing began.

Dark arrived just in time to run in the first Cocker trial in Colorado. I sent her off four weeks pregnant and with an inexperienced handler. She broke in the first series. After having her puppies, Mike and I started field training with me handling. I learned so much from her. She was trained to such high standards that sometimes I'm sure she looked at me and wondered why I had the whistle in my mouth. I truly believe if Alan would have sold her to someone who knew what they were doing she would have championed. She was not only a great teacher, but a great friend, companion and gave me a love for field trialing. My proudest moment was when she was 10-12 years old winning the judges Certificate of Merit at the 1998 Cocker National Championship.

After her arrival, Alan helped us import many wonderful Cockers and Springers. The dogs not only took over my life, but the lives of our families. It has been a roller coaster of emotion with its many ups and downs, but has always been a hell of a ride!

Kevin Peterson (Physician, St. Paul, Minnesota):

There were a bunch of us that had Cockers in this area. We were getting together and training and around 1987 we organized a club that we called the Minnesota Hunting Spaniel Association. Style of a Cocker Spaniel.

The AKC had just released the Hunt Tests, but they were restricted by breed. We began to look at how we should put on a Hunt Test and if we could find a group interested. There weren't enough Cocker people, so we then applied to AKC for sanctioned test which would allow us to expand our test to include all Spaniels, not just English Cockers. This allowed us to join a Springer Club to run our contests and we did this for a while.

Then we discussed the fact that we might be ready to have a Field Trial. I discussed the idea with several people, including the Courts and we began to put together our thoughts for a trial. We didn't know anyone we could trust to know what a cocker should be! We wanted to do things right. We were worried that the Springer people would tell us that a cocker should run like a Springer, but that wasn't the impression I was getting from the older experienced previous Cocker crowd. And, you also have to consider that the dog's of the 1960's had died out, this presumably for a reason, and we didn't want that to happen either.

So, the first thing we did was to explore why they stopped. I went over and talked with Kate Romanski. She had written a history of Cockers. I also interviewed Vance Van Lannen as he had one of the few kennels that had field Cockers. All of the show people SAID their dogs could hunt too...at least as well

as field dogs! I even interviewed Lionel Bond that had worked for the Harrimans'. We talked about how he trained, what his dogs were capable of and the field qualities we should aspire towards.

It occurred to me that we needed a statement of what a Cocker should hunt like, perhaps a paragraph describing the ideal style and unique traits which would delineate them from Springers. I began to draft up this statement and take it around with me when I was interviewing people.

We went to England in 1993 and I spoke with Cyril Gwinn who had won two or three British National Championships. I also spoke with Keith Erlandson asking him, "What do you think of this?" We also went to the British National Championships which were being held at Sandringham and apparently someone had told the Queen of our activities and the paragraph. She actually ended up walking over and started talking to us about how she felt the Cockers should run! She told us that she raised Corgies, but really only hunted over Labs and Cockers. She said what she liked about Cockers is that they "would wiggle around under cover and not sweep through it" and we added those words exactly.

Now that we were fairly satisfied we'd defined the "Style of an English Cocker" it was still a big task to complete the Green Book and we thought we needed this before staging a trial. So, when we heard of the Rocky Mountain Field Trial, it took us a bit by surprise as we had been going through a lot of hoops that we thought AKC would require before granting a license. There were some that thought, even before the Rocky Mountain Trial that we should pull away from AKC and join the United Kennel Club.

But, we tried to support the Rocky Mountain group as it would be the first time that people from all over the United States would get a chance to get together and that was a plus.

I attended the meeting in Virginia and was given the task of writing the "Standards and Procedures for Cocker Trials" which is what we call the Green Book. One of the problems was that the committee was formulated by some show people and they thought conformation should be included in the Field Trial format. I remember discussing whether "the legs of the dog should be behind and not under it". We actually took some dogs out to a field to prove that field dogs ran better than show dogs. I don't think it was until after Field Trials actually began that they were convinced.

We had taken the notes from the Virginia meeting and began to piece together the format for Cocker Trials. It is heavily based on the Springer formats even though we'd had recommendations for not using centerlines, varying the plants, etc. We decided these things were just not feasible.

Also, we had to get people to join ECSCA, the English Cocker parent club and that was a hassle. To tell you the truth, it was a marriage of sorts. I had a lot of fun doing this, but, it was a ton of work. There were many, many people who contributed, I can't remember them all, but as you read the paragraph, you can see the blend of each's contribution.

Hunting Style of the English Cocker

The hunting style of the cocker is characterized by a close-working pattern before the gun. Cockers exhibit a quick busy action and a merry temperament. They are thorough, speeding up in sparse cover and working meticulously through heavy cover. They may often get under and wiggle through heavy cover, rather than sweep through it. The style is ideally suited to the dense wooded habitat of the Woodcock and ruffed Grouse, and may be of considerable benefit in a wide variety of interrupted or broken covers. They exhibit an enthusiastic and persistent quality, questing for game within gun range and working closely with the handler. Cockers are capable of handling both fur and feathered game, putting all before the gun with a decisive flushing action. The ideal dog will require a minimum of quiet handling, will be steady to flush and shot, will accurately mark downed game and retrieve quickly and tenderly to hand.

Post Script: The author wishes to apologize to Ed Fellers and the Worbels for not including them in this article. It is hoped their contribution will be published at a later date. Also, I've been told some of the British information is incorrect.

Kate D. Romanski

From: Larry Michnevich [michnevich@wispwest.net]
Sent: Wednesday, January 03, 2007 1:33 PM
To: Gigvicky@aol.com
Cc: kdr252@netwurx.net
Subject: Re: Re English Cocker History

Dear Vicky.

I recall our conversation. It was a bit rushed so I can understand the confusion. I apologize for this late reply but the holidays kept us busy.

I thought I had the history of the spaniels in two little volumes, *The Spaniel and Its Training* by F.H.F. Mercer,(1890), and *All Spaniels* by Freeman Lloyd. Do you mean to say those histories are running around in some other volumes? :)

It is not exactly correct to say I am "into English Cockers", although one might say English Cockers have gotten under my skin and in that sense they are into me. I have trained a couple for friends and helped a few people new to the game train theirs, the most recent being Robert with Annie. Most people would peg me as a Springer man since I bread the first Triple Crown winning Springer, Solo Sam, but my Chessy has been on the cover of *Gun Dog* magazine two times and my Setter and I were on the cover in the past September issue.

I entered my first Field Trial on April 2, 1955. It was put on by the Moravian College Field Trial Club in Fogelsville, Pa. In those days the clubs put on AKC Sanctioned field trials in the spring and licensed trials in the fall. The sanctioned trials were more informal and had stakes to encourage newcomers as well as some more competitive stakes, such as the gunner/handler stake. I entered and ran my Springer, Burn in the Novice Stake. As I was walking back to my car with my dog, I was stopped by a large Santa Clause type man who said "Young man, You are going to run your dog in the Field Dog Stake." I asked what is a Field Dog And he pointed to my dog and said "That is a Field Dog."

When the ribbons were handed out I had won the Novice and took third in the Field Dog Stake. I was hooked and in the next five weeks ran in the Field Dog Stake (It would be more accurately and graphically be called the Meat Hunting Dog Stake.) at Keystone, New Jersey, Cocker Spaniel Field Trial, Bushy Hill and Albany Clubs. I ended up taking two Firsts, two Seconds And two Thirds in the six Field Dog Stakes.

That man who stopped me at the Moravian trial was Dick Jones. He was a history professor at Moravian Collage and reputedly gave Cocker puppies to his students to get them interested in the breed and training them for the field. He was the Moravian club as far as I could tell. He was very enthusiastic about Cockers and probably promoted them more than anyone else I encountered. Unfortunately, his wife died and it was too much for him. He called me and asked if I would take some of his dogs, they were too much for alone. I didn't take any for myself but took Col. Whitten, a friend to Dr Jones home and he took two nice young dogs We trained them on woodcock at my place on the Manasquan River in New Jersey. They were fine woodcock dogs.

In those days, at the Sanctioned trials they ran separate Stakes for Cockers and Springers. If there were just a very few dogs entered in a stake they would combine it with the other comparable stake and run Cockers and Springers in the same stake. I didn't think that was entirely fair for the Cockers. Some Spriger people could not conceive that any Cocker could be equal to a Springer. I judged a fun trial in New York State one summer and a handler had a really hot Springer that just passed bird after bird in the heavy green cover. Ruth Greening won with a good little Cocker that covered the course and found birds just fine. That Springer guy came up to me furious. He could not understand how I could place that Cocker over his fast, stylish Springer, or any Springer for that matter.

In the Licensed trials in the fall they would run the first series of the Springer Open to be followed directly by the first series of the Cocker etc. Some of the courses had cover that was tough on Springers and the Cockers just didn't show well in it at all. Some Cocker people such as Ruth and Charles Greening ended with Springers. Henry Berol went into Pointers, Dick Jones left after his wife died and the Cocker game suffered.

Some of the people I recall running Cockers back then were;

Dean Bedford was president of the New Jersey Club and ran dogs that I consider were English Cockers. I think he used Pembroke name.

Alby Winslow ran dogs that were English Cockers.

Henry Berol ran his dogs under the Berol Lodge banner. He left Cockers for the pointer trials.

Pete and Billy Garvin ran Cockers.

Ruth and Charles Greening moved from Cockers to Springers.

I spoke of Dick Jones above.

A couple years ago, my friends, Kiku and Johnny Hanes bought a piece of land that we trained their English Cockers on. During a break one morning I told them I thought the place was ideal for a Cocker trial and would they be interested in hosting a trial They just grabbed the idea and you know the rest because you were there last September, at Cranefield. They are wonderful people and the most gracious field trial hosts you will ever encounter. With people like them and grounds such as Cranefield the game will flourish again.

Have Fun!!!

Larry Michnevich

----- Original Message -----

From: Gigvicky@aol.com

To: michnevich@wispwest.net

Cc: kdr252@netwurx.net

Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2006 12:53 PM

Subject: Re English Cocker History

Dear Larry:

I met you at Dominique's field trial this fall. We began to discuss the history of the field Cocker. I am very interested in what you remember and know. I had to leave to drive home to North Dakota and you gave me your email address.

I've cc'd this email to Kate Romanski who is the Secretary of The English Cocker Spaniel Club of America. She has also written a two volume history of the breed.

So, would you mind telling me again how you got into English Cockers? I know it had to do with your college professor.

Best,
Vicky Thomas

Spam
Not spam
Forget previous vote