

Snow over Ormond Beach

by: Vivian Grice

I had waited for this weekend for two years; yet, others had waited much longer. There was so much riding on the outcome of the period January 8-11, 2010. The Boykin Spaniel would be making its debut in the American Kennel Club and competing for points and championships. Two show clusters had the fate of the “firsts” in their hands: Ormond Beach, FL, and Tallmadge, OH.

For a time it seemed that those of us who traveled to Florida had actually ended up in Ohio anyway from the type of weather we endured. Destination Daytona was a wonderful site for a dog show, but the weather was hard on all of us, especially on the dogs who had been groomed, thinned, and trimmed to the nines and didn’t really have the hair a Boykin Spaniel was intended to have.

Last May, I “borrowed” a puppy from Patricia Watts. Woody is adorable, friendly, and basically sweet and willing to please. He also is incredibly strong and capable of knocking a full-grown man flat on his back. His first show experience last October provided some insight on what I would be facing putting him in the conformation ring. Then in early November he was sent to bird dog school in North Carolina for a few weeks.

Allie meanwhile had been pushed into somewhat of a back seat. She was still the love of my life, but last summer she started producing milk after her heat cycle. This went on for weeks, and I almost drove our vet crazy trying to find some way to resolve it. Then in the fall, it happened again. About two weeks before entries for Florida were due; the vet put her on eight days of medication. The milk dried up, but Allie blew her coat. We were seriously in need of hair extensions, a weave, or some kind of miracle.

Right after Christmas, Woody had returned to Aiken, Allie’s hair was everywhere but her body, and our only child was facing surgery the day before we were scheduled to leave. Thankfully, everything seemed to come together at the last minute so that we were able to arrive in Ormond Beach on January 7th.

The morning of the first show, everyone was extremely tense. All of us wanted to win the first Best of Breed and the first points. The Boykin’s in Florida were scheduled for 10:30 a.m. with approximately 26 dogs in front of them. The Boykin’s in Ohio were scheduled for 11:30 a.m. and were the first breed to enter their ring. Earlier that morning, it finally dawned on me that I had two dogs to show and no one to hold the extra dog while I was showing the first one. Pat had ridden down with me, but she had three dogs of her own and another for the Judy’s. Her handler had already put her to work wrangling dogs back and forth from his van to the show site. So between a fast transfer of crates and the generosity of some Chow Chow owner who happened to be standing around, Woody and Allie made their debut.

Woody stood up on his hind feet and gave his best bear imitation. By virtue of being the only puppy in competition, he won the first blue ribbon in AKC competition. Then, he managed to defeat the other dog and win one point. Allie, who had been given a thorough “gussing up”, did not fare as well with the bitch points for that day going to Peaches who then defeated Woody in Best of Breed. The time was shortly after 11:15 a.m., so Hollow Creek’s Peaches became the first Boykin Spaniel Best of Breed in the AKC.

The next day, we were being judged

by Terry Stacy, who was an expert on spaniels. That was intimidating to say the least. That Saturday was the coldest day of the weekend, and we had had snow flurries that morning. Wind was whipping around the corners of the pavilion. I left my pajama bottoms on, put on dress slacks that were big enough to go over them, found a jacket that would button over all of that, and wore my overcoat and felt hat during the classes. Allie was miserable and pouting so I didn’t even bother fluffing her up. Woody actually behaved better that day; however, Cooper won Winners Dog. Allie defeated all the other bitches and won a four point major! However did that happen? Then she and Cooper competed for Best of Breed, and Cooper won. So that gave cute little Cooper a major, too.

Our final day in Florida began with bad news that Pat’s mother had been hospitalized. While debating whether to stay or start for home, she received word that her mother had stabilized and was not in immediate danger. On with the show. We were back in the ring. Michele Billings was our judge. Woody ultimately won breed that day and a four point major so now the little stinker has five points. I had absolutely no strength left that day to take him into the breed competition so the travelers from South Carolina packed up and managed to arrive back home at a decent hour.

So what’s next for us? Hopefully a championship will come the way of both Allie and Woody, but the competition will become more difficult as time passes. Allie needs to resolve her “female” health issues while Woody has to work on some manners and begin a second career in agility this summer.

See photos on page 3.



In Memory of Sam - January 21, 2010



This is the hardest good-bye for me to write. Our beloved Boykin Spaniel, Sam, died on Monday, January 18th. He was 15 years old and had battled lymphoma for over 18 months.

He came into our lives 6 years ago. His first order of business was to lift his leg on every vertical surface in our backyard and his second was to show his teeth to every dog that came a little too close to him. But Sam had been through the wringer so his behavior was understandable. Dumped in a shelter at 9 years of age by a vengeful ex-husband. Adopted out but returned by a family just not ready for a dog and rescued from a scheduled euthanasia by his original owner - who brought him to us. Poor little guy. No wonder he felt he had a lot to prove. Within a month though, he had settled down and he ruled as the benevolent but undisputed alpha dog of our family for the rest of his time with us. And he attached himself to me like glue. I've never had a dog who loved me like Sam did. He was fine when I left for work but when I was in the house, he was always by my side. I told my husband Tom that Sam and I were kindred spirits. We liked to amble around on slow easy walks, were dedicated couch potatoes and we shared a great love of junk TV and iced coffee (actually, Sam only

liked the whipped cream).

We've often thought that our other Boykins who passed on have sent us their replacements but I think my Dad sent Sam. They were very much alike in personality - brave, quiet, faithful presences-old soldiers you could say. But Sam had his funny moments - I swear he could articulate the consonants "bl". When we would pick him up to carry him, he'd say "Blatta blatta blatta blatta blaaaah" or "bler bler bler" in a low grumble. And he loved our newest adopted Boykin, Molly. They would curl up side by side on the sofa and go to sleep spooning each other and he would submit to her constant face licking with patient resignation.

In his last year, Sam couldn't go up or down the stairs. I'd like to say that I was the diligent one, providing for Sam's every need, but it was actually Tom who got up with him 2 or 3 times a night to carry him downstairs and let him out in our backyard. And watching that grace, that loving spirit between the two of them, is something I miss already.

In the end, Sam's passing was as peaceful as anything I could have wished for. Two weeks before he died, I had taken him to the vet, concerned about his breathing. But his chest x-rays didn't look awful and he was still alert and walking and eating and interested in being with us and our vet didn't think it was his time to go. So I took him home and we spent the afternoon hanging out in the kitchen (his next favorite place to the couch) and I cooked and we watched TV and I gave him all kinds of tidbits. I told Tom when he got home from work that Sam and I had had such a good day together and I felt better knowing that I could make what time he had left with us warm and comfortable and full of good cooking smells and just kind of happy for

him. And his last day was exactly that. That morning, he ate well but seemed very quiet so we went back to the vet and again, we both felt that it wasn't his day to go. So we adjusted his meds a bit and I took him home. I moved his beds and quilts into the kitchen and turned on the TV to Real Housewives of Orange County (he liked blondes) and baked some cookies. And I sat on the floor with him and we watched NCIS and Antiques Roadshow. He wasn't interested in his dinner but he was happy to eat Havarti cheese, Flint River dog biscuits (thank you Ivey!) and freshly baked cookies and a few tiny bits of Ghiradelli's Pecan Pie Chocolate Squares. When it was time for bed, Tom carried Sam outside to do his business and when he brought him back in he laid him on the floor while he got a bottle of water from the refrigerator. When he went to pick him back up, Sam was dead. It was that fast and quiet. I think Sam knew how much I struggled with the thought of having to euthanize him and I believe he chose to go out on a great note after a good day and spare me having to make a hard choice. And Sam's death was a reflection of Sam's life. He went easily - with no fuss or bother, considerate and faithful to the end. And though I miss him to the core of my soul, I am comforted knowing that he had a good death in the place he loved, with the people and Boykins he loved. So Sam, my sweet old boy, go find my Dad and talk him to about your whipped cream habit and your love for TV blondes. Dad will understand- he had a thing for Martha Stewart. I know he'll take good care of you and love you until Tom and I catch up.

- Mary Hack, Hudson, New York

In Memory of Wiley - January 12, 2010

It is with a very, very sad heart that I'm writing to say that we lost our beloved Wiley last week. He was just two days shy of his 15th birthday. Our home will not be the same. There is an emptiness to it that I just can't put words to. We knew Wiley's mom, and watched him from the day he was born. He was such a wonderful gift, and we are thankful that God allowed us to have him as long as we did.

We are certainly not able to think about a new puppy today, and there is no way Wiley can be replaced. But, we love Boykins and will want to have another little guy join our family sometime soon.

- Nancy & Alexis

