

Colt the Boykin Spaniel - A Talented Breed

I was thrilled to read your last newsletter and hear things are looking up and you are back on your feet. You have certainly suffered and I have certainly thought of you often. Although I certainly have not had the loss you've experienced, in the period of 16 months, I've had 3 titanium plates put in my neck to replace discs, (after a car accident) a total knee replacement, a carpal tunnel surgery, and the latest, a total reconstruction on my left wrist which involved removing bone and re-attaching tendons. I fortunately have had great outcomes and healing has been a challenge raising a Boykin ('bowling ball' at 53 pounds) and dealing with the 'pulling' issue on-leash-and my fear of him jumping into a pond. Dogs can't jump into ponds in Florida, no matter how many ducks there may be. It only takes one gator.

I've also been blessed with a wonderful trainer who like me, has had the cervical issues, and practically lost his voice, permanently, from the same type of surgery. Colt is a registered support animal, and we are now working with him to have him certified as a medical alert animal. I also have issues with sudden syncope episodes and falling. Three episodes last year in-between surgeries landed me in the hospital with injuries requiring facial suturing, iron infusions and monitoring. He and I will also work with another trainer who specializes in training Colt to alert others if I have a fall and am unable to communicate, and she also teaches the dog to bring a phone. Every time I think he's the smartest dog ever at almost 2, I re-read a newsletter from you and realize I am just blessed to have come across this wonderful breed when I read about and see all the talent that abounds.

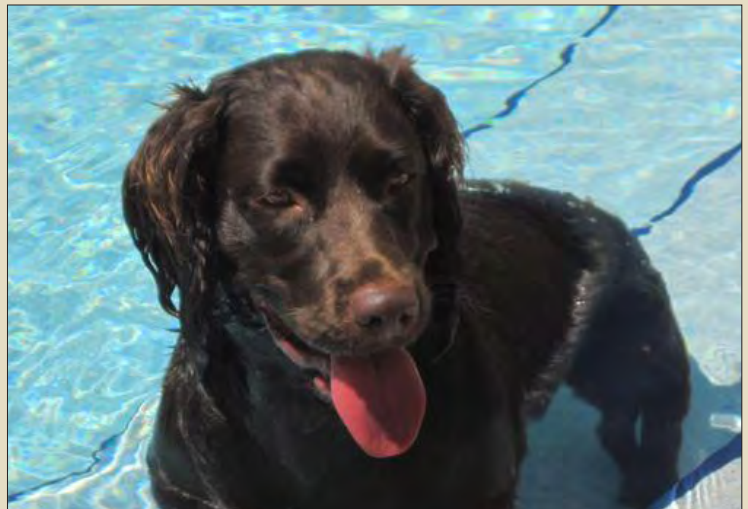
I was also happy to read the article from another owner who uses an

e-collar, which we resorted to as a last recourse in a positive training manner to help with the pulling issue. I physically could not afford to have him pull on me-at all. I enrolled him in a new class (out of town and mostly for the social aspect)and talked to the person who was running the class (I won't call this person a trainer) and I was verbally assaulted for using an e-collar. She repeatedly called it a 'shock' collar when I kept insisting that he has never received a shock, only a vibration-of which I tried out first and personally know that it is extremely annoying and sudden, but not painful. She continued to assault me and I realized she was never going to open her mind, could not understand my limitations and issues, and was going to stay in her 'box'. The e-collar has been the perfect and only device that has given Colt and I a new relationship built on trust and love and gentle correction only as needed. And, he doesn't connect the correction with me, just the negative behavior. He is so happy to get the positive (yes! or a fave treat) that a simple 'beep' sound, immediately alerts him to 'look at me' and see what I need him to do. I would not have been able to keep him and raise him without the understanding trainers I've met who think outside the box. Clickers? Please. Yes, they work, for certain behaviors, and when the dog can hear them! They are amazing, but not for us. I couldn't use gentle leader without being dragged. Colt is a strong, low to the ground, 53 pounds of muscle. I must have gotten the moose of the litter. Gentle Leader, my foot.

The TRAINER (through another class) who put one on him, realized in 15 minutes that Colt was laughing his way around the classroom with it on. Not with his build. And this was at 9 months. He put Colt in a choker collar, and again, I think Colt would rather break his neck or pass out than give up on that squirrel or lizard. His instinct is just too strong, and the choker just gave him something to tug until it hurt. Again, not for us. I never would have considered the e-collar until I talked to someone who had a springer spaniel, and convinced me I owed it to myself and Colt to try it with a professional before giving him up. It has changed us so that I can take him unleashed to the beaches, to the river, and it keeps him OUT of any ponds with a potential for gators. It is a necessary tool to keep him safe, and both of us happy. It has opened up a whole new trust level for both of us. It is a tool that must be respected and taught to use by professionals who teach you how to use it as a positive reinforcement, and not as a negative. I've been fortunate to find those trainers.

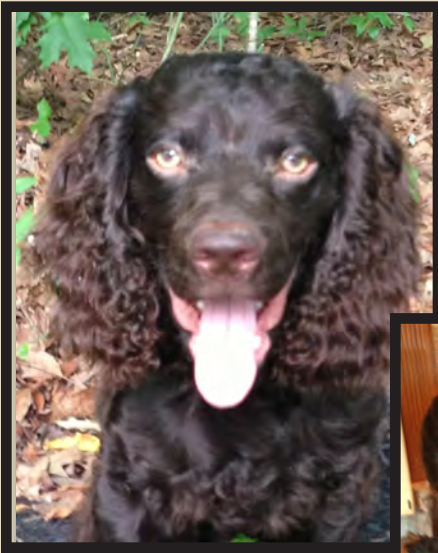
I look forward to having Colt at my side for as long as he'll stand me!

- Nancy & Colt Ulano, Stuart, FL

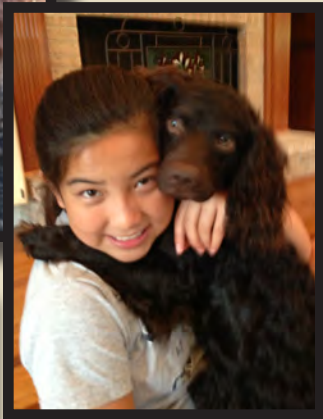


Colt, cooling off after a good run.

...More Waggin Tails



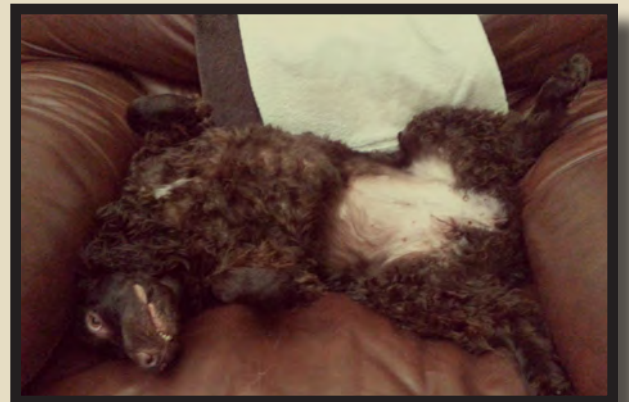
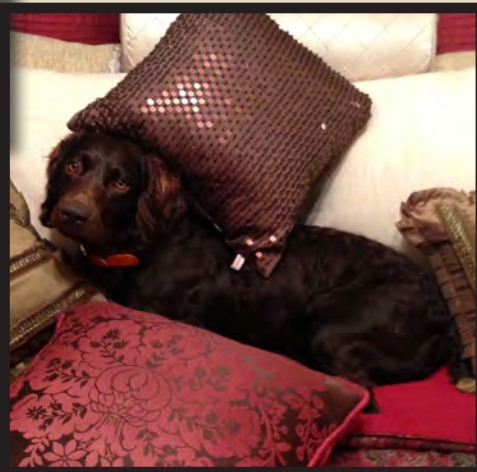
Left: Enzo at 5 months old,
Below: Anna & Enzo - Mike, Joyce, Austin & Anna MacKay of Oak Ridge, TN



Hollow Creek's Lou's On First, Winners Dog
- Regina Hairie of Saratoga Springs, NY



Above & Right: Hollow Creek's Chief in mom's pillows showing off!
Below: Chief for a head rest and Renegade for a lap cushion - Scottie Murray of Yulee, FL



Above: Lola's favorite spot...my chair.
- Dee Kern



Left: Hollow Creek's Colby and Will
- Jeffrey Harmon of Herndon, VA