

The enthusiasm of Gene's "clan" for the breed was infectious to all as they gathered each year to talk dogs, plan dinner reservations, and hold cocktail parties in their respective rooms.

With a wry sense of humor and Gene as the instigator, his clan was the first to award a "Tippy Toe" trophy to the handler exhibiting the least graceful moments in the ring. That tradition, in addition to the "Velvet Elvis" award (begun at the '95 NSS), continues.

Having begun as a single-day event, the breed's 50th national-specialty show, to take place in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, at the Eisenhower Convention Center, will run for seven days next month, May 5–11, ending with another tradition, the annual awards banquet. True to the GSP spirit of humor, the Tippy Toe and Velvet Elvis awards will be announced at the banquet, along with the other prestigious awards of accomplishment for the year.

Gene died of a heart attack in 1999, but with each national specialty his spirit and that of his GSP clan live on, because those of us fortunate to know him will be there to explain and carry those traditions forward in a manner that would make Gene proud.

And who knows what new tradition may take root at the 50th NSS.

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German Shorthaired Pointer Club of America website: gspca.org

Curly-Coated Retrievers

No Time Wasted

As there are now more Curlies taking part in the AKC field events, I thought I would share some ideas about training in the field.

A good foundation in obedience training is a must. Start early with the pup, teaching *come*, *sit*, *wait*, *hold*, *give*, and *finish* (both on the left side of the handler and on the right side). While pup is learning all of this, remember that many of these commands will flow over to other performance activities.

The other day I observed the owner

of a Flat-Coated Retriever making good use of her long wait in the holding blind. She had him perform different obedience exercises while waiting. They were just the different finishes and a short recall, but he was learning instead of becoming bored.

I spoke with this handler later, and she told me that she always has her dog sit as he leaves the blind and starts to walk beside her to the line. (The *line* is the spot from which the dog leaves the side of the handler as he goes off to retrieve the bird.)

If when starting fieldwork you encounter a problem never before heard of, do not give up. I certainly have had many ups and downs with my Curlies over the years. My first Curly whom I trained for field activities did not have a good obedience foundation, and she got away with tearing off with whatever she retrieved, causing a lot of wasted time. Not only should I have had a long line on her to prevent this, but I should have stopped the field activities and concentrated on basic obedience work until she was more mature and reliable.

With my now-mature Curly, she decided when new to fieldwork to take her bird or bumper back to her "lair" (the car or motor home). I stopped any formal fieldwork right then for a few months and concentrated on a reliable return to me with whatever she retrieved.

I now have a new challenge with my young Curly-Coated Retriever. She is actually too avid in her water work at this point. At a very young age it was evident that she would like to swim and never come out. She is now *always* on a long line while in the water, but all swimming has been stopped. At this time, I am concentrating on her obedience work, and she will attend her first obedience seminar in a few days. I decided that there was no good reason to keep repeating her lack of improvement and stop wasting time there. Hopefully, concentrating on basic obedience activities will flow over to improved water work.

In a future column I shall report on her progress with water retrieving.

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Flat-Coated Retrievers

Controlling Your Ever-Friendly Flat-Coat

Flat-Coats are social, friendly, and full of joy all their lives, and we love them for that. However, the very enthusiasm we love them for can cause problems, both for them and for us. We want our dogs to be affectionate with ourselves and with others, but jumping up and other body contact can be dangerous, especially when an adult or a child is caught off-balance or is on a stairway, on snow or ice, or carrying a shotgun on a hunt.

When a Flat-Coat makes physical contact—whether jumping up, leaning, or bumping with the nose, shoulder, or rump—he feels approved of. Therefore, correcting these behaviors is difficult, when the dog already feels rewarded.

Preventing these behaviors is far more successful. Flat-Coats have to be trained to wait to be petted or touched instead being allowed to make physical contact themselves.

With a litter of puppies, we keep moving and call to them to follow until we put their food down or throw toys. If we stood still, they would all be jumping up. While they are very young, we get down on their level to pet them and be affectionate. When we separate one puppy from the others, we teach the puppy to sit and wait (if he's to be strictly a pet, obedience, or hunting dog) or stand and wait (for the future show dog—four feet on the ground, head up) for a biscuit or a treat.

The puppy doesn't need to be treated for every sit or stand, but he should know that he will not get anything he wants until he does what *you* want. If this is done by the adults in the new family and also with the children (we have worked with children as young as 1½ years), the puppy will