

BREED COLUMNS

This column first appeared in the October 2021 AKC Gazette and is reproduced here with permission. To read or download the Gazette, visit akc.org/pubs/Gazette.



SPORTING GROUP

heads together to confirm this was the first solid liver (and a bitch, no less) to go Best of Breed at the breed's national.

The other first was the addition of a Maturity class option for the 2020 Futurity nominees. With judges nominated and voted on three years prior, the decision was made that if the same individual selected to judge the 2020 Futurity is available, they would also judge the Maturity. This was a win-win situation for all.

With a regional specialty held prior to the national specialty, the "family reunion," as it has come to be known, started earlier for some than others. But it didn't take long for the stragglers to get there and begin a nose count to take stock of who was there and who were "new family additions." While most services at the host hotel were limited, the "family" took it in stride and made it just as much fun as previous nationals.

It all began at the 1995 national in Allentown, Pennsylvania. How the site was selected is known to a few, but "Elvis" got his start there at the evening barbeque raffle. He was prominently displayed on the table of raffle items, and as the raffle progressed, many executed a feint only to pick up something else, and it soon became a source of laughter. As the evening progressed, anticipation grew as to who would eventually wind up with

Elvis. Then Ann Keegan's number was called, and as only Annie can do, she sashays up to the raffle table. She ponders the remaining items, reaching in one direction, then another, until she gleefully scoops up Elvis, holds him close, and heads back with her prize. The only thing more priceless was the look on her husband's face as the realization sunk in: Elvis was going home with them!

The rest of the story ... Annie loved Elvis, and upon returning home, she replaced their children's pictures above the fireplace with the velvet Elvis, where he stayed until the following national specialty. Thus, another tradition begins. The next person chosen by the current bearer would be someone who personified the generosity, love, fun, and laughter of the national-specialty family, with the understanding that Elvis had to be displayed in a prominent place in their home for a year. Each year the back of the painting is signed by previous individuals chosen for the honor to display Elvis in their home for a year. This year Barbara and Don Schwartz were chosen to take Elvis home with them to Colorado. This brings Elvis full circle back to his genesis at the 1995 national specialty in Allentown.

Next year we are off to Estes Park, Colorado, for the national, so Elvis won't have far to travel!

—Patte Titus,

chexsie@mac.com

German Shorthaired Pointer Club of America

Curly-Coated Retrievers

Jenny Dickinson is our columnist once again, and for this issue she has written a thoughtful column about tracking. I like her new approach, especially as today, sites for tracking tests and land to practice on with our dogs may not be very easy to find. Many years ago, I was very fortunate to have a tracking judge teach me the high points about tracking. Jenny, however, shares some very good ideas that can be used when practicing on small areas of land as well as the larger areas that some of us are more familiar with. Jenny's thoughts follow.

IT'S THE NOSE

I continue to marvel at the scenting ability of Curlies. I recently ordered several cans of cat food from Chewy and left them in the garage. My young Curly promptly discovered them, got several cans out of the shrink-wrapped cases, and opened them with his teeth. These are no longer accessible (I think!), but his determination to get at food he

was able to detect through plastic and cardboard impressed me.

This reminded me of a game I teach puppies in preparation for the scent-discrimination exercise they will later learn in Utility, and for other scenting activities such as tracking. Curlies are so brilliant at using their noses that they take to it immediately. I first learned this game from trainer Esther Zimmerman. Whether you want to track, do obedience, or do nose work, you might want to try it. It



BREED COLUMNS

SPORTING GROUP

is also a good game if you are stuck at home during a pandemic!

I call the game "Find mine," which is my Utility command. You will need a number of identical metal boxes. An easy source is the boxes designed to hold holiday gift cards. (The reason I choose metal boxes is that your dog may decide to retrieve a box, so plastic would not hold up.) You will also need tongs. Put one box aside and mark it with a dot of nail polish or a marker. This will be the one to hold *your* scent. Make sure to handle all the others with tongs.

Put a piece of meat in the marked box. Put that box between your hands and heat it up so you have hot scent on that box. Put pup behind a barrier so that he cannot watch you place the boxes on the floor. In an excited voice, tell him not to peek! Build expectation. Using the tongs, set three boxes eight or so inches apart, and have the one with your scent among them.

Now, ceremoniously release pup to the pile, saying "find mine!" He will naturally investigate the boxes. When he hesitates or makes *any* indication of interest at the marked box, say "hooray!" and rush to open the box and let him get the treat. You are *not* expecting certainty on his part. At this point, you just want him to see that this is a fun game with a worthy payoff.

Stick with just a few boxes until pup shows you that he understands the goal. As with *all* our teaching, we want our dogs to feel pride and confidence in their actions. If he shoots directly to the correct box, he is a Curly! Now add more boxes with your tongs until you have a ridiculous number! Your Curly will embrace the challenge with alacrity and enthusiasm! —J.D.

Thank you so much, Jenny, for sharing a very informative column.

—Ann Shinkle,

annshinkle@aol.com

Curly-Coated Retriever Club of America

Golden Retrievers

THE HEALING POWER OF GOLD

In my last two columns you learned about Courthouse Dogs (facility dogs), Golden Retrievers trained to comfort domestic and sexual abuse victims, both children and adults, when they are testifying in the courtroom. This month, we'll travel across the Atlantic Ocean to Tuscany, Italy, to meet a facility-trained Golden named Paddy. Paddy works with women who live with their children in shelters to escape extreme situations of domestic violence.

Paddy's owner and handler, Patricia Dubois Zanini, the wife of Italy's former ambassador

to Ireland, is a dog trainer and handler for Dog4Life (Dog4Lifetoscana.com), a non-profit organization for animal mediation and for dogs working as support for victims of domestic violence.

"Domestic violence is a huge problem in this country," Patricia said. "These abused women contact shelters to escape their abusers. An organization called Friendly Paws, a pilot program of Dogs4Life, provides safe places for them to go.

"Women entering shelters have no trust, feel no empowerment, and suffer from economic, mental, emotional and physical abuse. Paddy's job is to alleviate the stress of their situation, to show them that they are trustworthy and that it is possible to have a healthy parenthood outside of the 'logic' of fear. Paddy's behavior, his trusting ways, his needs to be cuddled, and his gentle way of approaching human beings are integral to the success of the Friendly Paws program."

Paddy and Patricia's "trainee" Golden puppy, 6-month-old Love, visit the shelters once a week, spending time with the victims, their children, then a last session with the mother and child together.

"This is a long process," she said. "One young mother showed no interest or feelings for several weeks and would not assist in our sessions. During one of our visits, she was

sitting in her chair, crying, and not tending to her screaming baby. As I was soothing the infant, I noticed Paddy moving very slowly toward the young mother, then put his head very delicately in her lap. Suddenly she embraced him in a big hug and spoke softly to him, asking 'Will you be my dog? Will you help me?'

"After that, she was always there when we came, ready to work with Paddy and always thinking about his needs."

Patricia explained that the Dog4Life program also teaches the women basic dog-training methods. "Having control of the dog translates into feelings of empowerment and control over their life. They progress to teaching Paddy tricks and enjoy lots of cuddle sessions," she said. "It took me four years to teach him 'no sofa,' and five minutes to allow him to jump on it!"

"This is a long process," Patricia said, "from 10 to 12 months, at least one day a week. But with Paddy's help, when the cycle is complete, the trustworthy, healthy and empowering relationship he has fostered is a treasure for these women and their children."

Patricia firmly believes in the incredible resources of dogs in the healing process for women victims of domestic violence. Her motto: "When God ran out of wings for angels, He started to dispense wagging tails!"

