

DUTCH WINS LADY, LOSES TO CLEO

February 3, 2004

His official registry name is Allen's Moose River Dutch, I am referring to our new Christmas pup. When we named him six weeks ago we had no idea the name may have been a misnomer. We since have mused out loud that "Rowdy" might have been more appropriate.

There has arisen a mutual admiration affiliation between him and the better half of the household. He's the first hunting dog we have ever owned that has real rapport with her. It is due in part and true to the breed's description as a "people dog that thrives on human companionship." He is a Wirehaired Pointing Griffon.

The Griff is an old breed whose origin has been lost in the "mist of antiquity." The present Griffons were refined by a Dutch sportsman and hunter named Korthal, who lived from 1851 to 1896.

The first of the breed arrived in this country in 1887 and were registered as Russian Setters. Their use and acceptance was established years earlier throughout Europe.

A versatile gun dog, they are known to excel on all manner of upland game. Natural pointers and retrievers, it's said they require little formal training. They are close working dogs suited for the foot hunter, with a persistent and methodical hunting pattern. The coat is coarsely wirehaired allowing them to forage through briars and underbrush in search for game. Excellent swimmers, they are good dogs for the occasional waterfowl hunter.

Males stand from 22 to 24 inches at the shoulder, with females slightly smaller. With an intense need to be near people, they do not do well in a kennel atmosphere. That trait has become all too self evident in our Dutch. It is extended to our grandchildren and strangers also.

Because of extenuating circumstances in the home where he was born, he was brought into our household a little earlier than I would have preferred. Nonetheless, he has learned to adjust very quickly and is fully housebroken at 12 weeks. I have never had a dog so quick to learn or eager to please. He can be trusted in the yard and comes when called by name.

Our old dog, Lady, who is 11, quickly accepted him and he has given her new life. They constantly make off with each other's treasures and it's a constant test of wits as to which one has the upper hand. It has helped the old dog's acceptance of him by her having to be included in the treats given to him as rewards for good behavior.

He is pointing naturally a pheasant feather twitched at the end of a fly rod line. His great joy is exploring every nook and cranny in our wood pile, searching, no doubt, for the source of those intriguing scents left by the resident mice and squirrels. The birds and red squirrels keep him somewhat interested at the feeders visible through the windows.

The only member of our household who has not succumbed to his charms is our resident cat, Cleo. It's a Mexican standoff with Cleo seemingly holding the upper hand. They are adjusting somewhat, but totally on her terms.

The first two weeks were the hardest getting up at least twice during the night and taking him outside in the bitter cold to do his duty. I am past that hurdle now and each

day it's easier to enjoy him more. I am looking forward to this fall when I can get out and work him on game.

You may recall at the onset of this piece some expressed skepticism about his given name. That is because he does everything with total abandon and intensity of purpose. Reserved he is not! When he trounces an old shoe or sock, it's in total earnest. The same goes for rebuking the old dog for coveting one of his prizes. The same gusto is displayed when he finally runs out of steam and vaults into or beside his chosen victim, where he relaxes and is asleep immediately.

Since I feel somewhat guilty extolling the virtues of this most recent in a long line of dogs, I may have to assuage my guilt by sharing my experience with some of my last canine companions; some good, some not but all interesting.