

A DUTCH TREAT JOINS THE ALLEN HOUSEHOLD

January 27, 2004

How many of you dog owners out there have said to yourselves, “When this dog is gone there will be no more”? We have, many times over the last two years.

We had two old dogs, Winnie and Lady. They were 12 and 11 respectively when Winnie was laid to rest. It was one of the hardest decisions we ever had to make.

She was a miniature Schnauzer that we had raised from a pup. She was a bright, affectionate little growler who loved everyone. Her life and times were very good and she had a remarkable disposition for a breed known for its propensity to bark at every distraction.

Lady came to us a little over a year later, a stray, nondescript, that should have been named Lucky instead of Lady. Both dogs led full lives enjoying every day. They were excellent pets and family members. Their greatest pleasure was riding in the car or playing with the grandchildren.

I have always had an affinity for working and sporting breeds and these two were exceptions to that rule. They, like nearly all dogs, had plenty of hunting instinct, but lacked the nose to back it up. I gave up on them both when I knocked a partridge down in front of them and they failed to track it down.

Hunting dogs have been a part of my life since I was old enough to remember. My father and uncle imbued in me their interest in hunting gun dogs. Their preference was dogs that specialized in hunting rabbits, pheasants and partridge. Continuing the tradition, the past 12 years have been the only interim in a long life when they were not an integral part of it.

My good wife in her infinite wisdom sensed I would be much happier and more tractable if that all changed. We discussed this over a year and it did not take too much persuasion to get me in sync.

First of all, what type of dog would it be? I ruled out any type of hound, even though they were for years some of my favorites. They are, as a rule, harder to keep up with and more suited to someone much younger. That left breeds that were primarily bird dogs. I ruled out retrievers, such as a Lab, because I have not been a duck hunter for years and because the one we had once was literally a hair factory.

Of my all-time favorites, two were pointers. The first was an English and the other a German Shorthair. We discussed both breeds along with English Setters. Then we looked at all the other pointing breeds and read everything we could find about them.

We finally narrowed our choices down to three breeds. They were the Spinone Italiano, Drahthaar (German Wirehaired Pointer) and the Korhals (Wirehaired Pointing Griffon). Using the Internet we located breeders and learned more about the characteristics of all three breeds. Since a breeder was located in Essex County near Olmstedville, we checked out the Spinones first.

They are a large dog with excellent dispositions. There are few breeders in the U. S. and there were no pups immediately available. They have the reputation of being excellent hunters and boast that no one has ever been bitten by a Spinone.

The Drahthaars are the most popular of the three breeds we looked into. We did not locate any breeders nearby.

We finally decided on the griffon for several reasons, which I will go into in another column. After waiting over a year, we finally saw an ad for a litter of griffon pups in Parish. A quick trip there and after seeing the pups, we were hooked. We had five male pups to choose from and we made our choice that very day.

Since they originated in Holland, we searched in vain for a Dutch name we liked. Finally, it came down to just plain "Dutch." He is 12 weeks old, housebroken and already pointing.