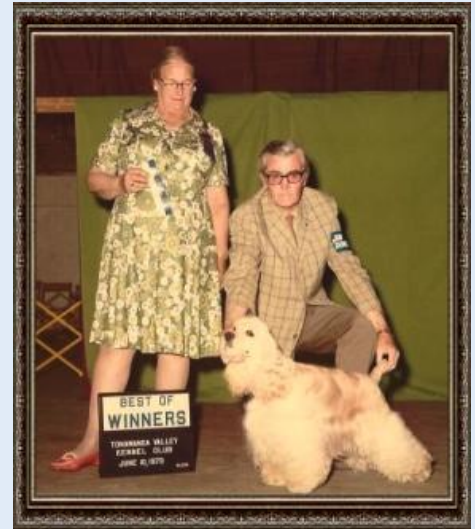


My Magnificent Obsession

by Frederick Wickert



Pudge on the first day I saw him



Pudge winning with a professional handler



Tae and Fred winning with some of his offspring



Tae and Fred winning with some of his offspring

My wife, Tae had her heart set on a white Toy Poodle. More than a year after the loss of Freckles, we discussed it rather frequently. I found an ad about some white Poodle puppies in Virginia, and I made arrangements to go see them one evening after Tae had gone to work.

I went to Virginia and purchased a Toy Poodle Puppy. When I returned to Maryland, I went to the home of a friend who was raising Cocker Spaniel show dogs. I bought a black and white parti-color Cocker Spaniel for myself.

A friend called me one day and invited me to go with her to a puppy match where she was going to show some of her puppies, and suggested that I bring mine along too. My puppy won his class and I was hooked. I eagerly began to learn all I could about the dogs and showing them. I soon learned that a woman about an hour drive from where I lived was one of the most outstanding breeders and handlers of American Cocker Spaniels. I also learned that she was considered the best there was in trimming the dogs.

Soon I purchased another parti-color puppy to show, from this woman. She helped me with my learning. That winter there was a big dog show in the armory in Washington, D.C. I took my wife with me to the show. She decided she wanted to try her hand.

In the spring one warm day, the Cocker Spaniel club I had joined was joining with another club to have a specialty match show. My show quality puppy was old enough to compete and showing him myself, I took him to the woman I bought him from for a trim.

While at the match, I saw the most beautiful Cocker Spaniel I had ever seen. I couldn't take my eyes off of him. A member of the club owned the dog. While she was in the ring with another dog, her son was holding him on a leash in the shade. I approached and pet the dog and talked to the boy.

When the mother returned and had some time away from the show ring, I spoke to her and told her how beautiful I thought the dog was. She told me who his sire was. The sire was one of the most famous dogs of all time and had been owned by the woman I bought my parti-color puppy from. The woman said, "Yes, it is a shame we have to part with him."

I couldn't believe my ears. I asked her if she really was going to sell him and she replied that she was. She said they had to because they needed to make room so they could breed some more for the future. I didn't say any more. I knew the dog was far more valuable than I could afford.

I couldn't take my eyes off the dog for the remainder of the afternoon. I took his picture and all the way home and for several days and nights, I could not get that dog out of my mind. I was obsessed with that magnificent dog.

I did some figuring and came up with the best offer I could manage. I wrote the woman a letter and told her I knew she could get much more money for the dog than I could offer. I named a sum, then offered unlimited free stud service and even offered her a choice of a litter when I used him the first time for my own breeding program. He was to be my foundation stud dog.

In a few days, I got a note from her saying she wanted to discuss it with me at the next Cocker club meeting. I was elated because my offer had not been rejected. When we met at the meeting, she told me she and her sister had discussed my offer. If I agreed to certain conditions, they were prepared to sell the dog to me.

First, she said the offer was too generous. They agreed to accept the amount of cash I had offered, but only wanted two free stud services. I was astonished at my good fortune and told her I knew she could get a lot more money than that. She just smiled and said, "sometimes knowing where the dog will go is more important than money."

I went to shows where he was entered. I went to one show in Philadelphia and I also had my parti-color entered with a professional handler. The dogs name was Pudge and the parti-color was named Lucky.

Toni, the woman I had purchased Pudge from was showing several dogs that day. Pudge had won his class and had to return to the ring later to compete against other winners. Toni handed his lead to me and asked me to hold on to him until she had to go back in the ring with him.

A friend with me, and I were hungry. There was a place in the building where they were selling some great looking bar-b-q pork sandwiches on a hard roll. I stood in a long line to buy two of them. One was for my friend and one for myself. My friend held Pudge on the lead while I stood in line.

When I returned with the sandwiches, my friend took one of them and handed me the lead. I took a bite of my sandwich and ate it. I turned to say something to my friend and Pudge reared up on his hind legs and snatched my sandwich out of my hand and ate it. I returned to stand in line again, and when half way to the window, they ran out of sandwiches. Pudge had put me on a diet.

Pudge produced many wonderful puppies for us. His puppies grew up to be some of the most winning Cocker Spaniels in the eastern half of the United States. I loved him dearly, and never could take my eyes off of him. I was obsessed with his beauty. Tae used to say she wished I would look at her the way I looked at that dog. I loved him so much.

As must happen with all dogs, Pudge grew old and died with a massive stroke. My magnificent obsession had passed from my life, but he lives on in my heart and memories.