

change as they mature. Being able to sit at length and observe the litters, which are three weeks apart in age, get on their feet, begin to move, and then rapidly become little tornadoes storming around the yard in hot pursuit of the leader with the twig, provides advanced education in structure and movement. What fun to discover a side gait with purpose, reach, and drive typical of the breed! And what a disappointment to have one come joyfully to you looking like an eggbeater.

Then there's the evaluation of breed type. What Griff breeder hasn't wished they could put Fido's head on Gizmo's body, or Fili's coat on Sprout? So for future breeding the question becomes, can I live with that body if I keep the dramatic head? Or should I go for the cobby body, feeling I can breed a better head next time around? Most Brussels Griffon breeders would say that the head is easier to improve upon than the fronts, rears, and toplines. This may be true in generalities, but in specifics, there are head faults that are just as difficult to breed out as the structural issues—light eyes, for example, or wry mouths. Once accepted into a breeding program, they are there for generations to come.

I was happy to discover I had not lost the knack for telling a rough-coated puppy from a smooth-coated puppy early on. However, I confess the process is easier if there are both coats in the same litter, which was the case in both of mine. It is logical to look for beard growth to determine whether the puppy is rough or smooth, but one can tell much sooner by looking at the feet. Hair growing over the toenails is most certainly a rough coat, and the task is admittedly simpler if there are both coats for comparison.

Just as in human families, the siblings develop differently despite equal parentage and experiences, and it's such fun to discover the emerging traits. The troublemakers made themselves known first—in this case the smooth girls. There was a smooth girl in each litter. Then there is the noisy one, the smuggler, and the one that cares not if he dances in

his, or anyone else's, mess. We can't keep them all, and so the weeks of observation eventually lead to deciding who stays and who goes, and in some cases, who goes to a show home and who goes to a pet home. That's where I am now—and that's another column.

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Cavalier King Charles Spaniels

Our Book of Days

What's in a calendar? Well, it all depends on whose calendar you cite. The American Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club calendar is now in its sixth year, and are we proud? You bet!

First and foremost, 100 percent of its profits are sent to our Health and Rescue Trusts. No one involved in its production earns a nickel. The Club fronts the printing costs (thank you, ACKCSC) and the buyers make us a success. We now print 500 calendars, and even in this economy we sell out. After doing the math, we give about \$4,000 yearly to our Trusts.

Many have asked us who can submit photos. The answer: anyone! No one is required to belong to any club or organization, and we accept photos from all around the world. We have published pictures from as far as New Zealand, Australia, and Finland, although the majority come from the United States and Canada.

As anyone who knows us will tell you, we are extremely picky about our final selections. Our theme for some time has been "Beautiful Dogs in Beautiful Settings," and that is what we want. No people or other animal species. Someday we may change our philosophy, but so far we think it works for us.

Almost all photos are now submitted digitally, with very few via other media. We try to do a good job of letting people know that we print horizontally at 8 by 10 inches—so we need very high-resolution, horizontal photos that will allow us excellent-quality print reproduction. What you see on your com-

puter monitor is not what you necessarily will see in print. If the file is too small, the photo will pixelate when enlarged—not a good look.

As to who does the decision-making, I acknowledge that these are very subjective choices made by myself and Joanne Opel, who is the technical brains of the outfit, and wields a QuarkXPress software program with ease. We whittle the hundreds and hundreds of submissions down to about 25, talk endlessly to each other about the finalists, lament all the chair and table legs we see, and show our choices to many of our Cavalier friends to solicit their opinions. We do take care to have all four colors published, and for some reason tricolors are under-represented in submissions—so take lots of tri photos for 2013!

All we want are those very special photos that move us—interesting light or landscapes, but most especially the dogs themselves who immediately engage the viewer and bring us to tears or smiles. Those photos can be had in the Himalayas or in your own backyard. Expression is everything, and the less posing the better. We fill in many of our smaller spaces with photos that did not quite make the "month" for one reason or another, but were deemed worthy in other respects. We include photos of the big winners of the prior year, show dates for our member clubs, and apt literary quotations that we research to illustrate each monthly image.

If anyone has questions, or would like to discuss our calendar in terms of an individual breed club, please let me know. Information about this year's effort is available online at ackoc.org.

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Chihuahuas

A Dog With Heart—The "X Factor"

In celebration of the holiday season, let's be thankful for the "gift of love" we receive every day from these little dogs called Chihuahuas.

Most of us have owned other breeds,

but in time we finally found our way to this fabulous little creature known as the Chihuahua. Once owned by one of these little dogs, you will never be without one in your home. The more the merrier!

It was proven that the world's fastest racehorse, Secretariat, had a heart significantly larger than that of the average horse. He passed this trait to his offspring, and it became known as the "X factor." Today we call this having "heart." Although Secretariat's heart was not weighed at the time of his death, the hearts of his offspring later measured to be more than twice the size of the average horse's.

It is the nature of all dogs to love and bring joy to their family's lives. Chihuahuas, although they are the smallest of dogs, resemble the great horse Secretariat in that they too have the biggest "heart." They were developed for companionship, and these little dogs take their job seriously.

At Christmas our Chihuahuas are the theme of our cards as they pose proudly for the camera, donning a red hat with a white, fluffy ball, knowing that ball will soon be their play-toy. They generously offer to help wrap Christmas gifts and decorate the tree. They especially enjoy helping to take down the tree, even if it's not quite yet time.

They possess such angelic little faces, surely they must be angels sent from above. We reward these big-hearted little dogs with jewelry, fur coats, velvet bedding, and just about anything their hearts desire. We let them eat with us, sleep with us, and go out on the town with us.

Their diminutive size makes us feel protective toward them, and macho men have been known to turn into baby-talking boys in their presence. Their "mommies" keep them in their every thought as if they were one of their own children. Talk about "man's (or woman's) best friend!"

These little dogs are so in tune with to our thoughts, we sometimes think they must possess a human gene. They appear to feel our feelings, and at times when we are sad, you can literally see

tears running down their faces. We immediately cheer up because we don't want our little dogs to be sad. They know exactly how to make us laugh with their fun-loving antics and always just when we need a heartfelt smile. When these "energized" angels find a sunny spot, they may lie there for hours, absorbing the sun as if they were recharging their batteries. Surely this gives them their special ability to spread sunshine in every room in the house.

The Chihuahua is the ultimate in giving and receiving love. Could they, too, possess that "X factor"?

Christmas is a time to remember others by showing our love through giving and receiving. Every day is Christmas in a Chihuahua's heart.

Merry Christmas, everyone! —
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Chinese Cresteds

The Size Issue

I recently had the pleasure of presenting a seminar on Chinese Cresteds for a group of aspiring judges. The seminar was scheduled for 7:00 A.M., so I knew these students were serious. As I worked through the material, I was impressed with their knowledge of structure and movement and how quickly they seemed to be picking up the subtle nuances that make "Crestedness." I was excited to have such a stellar group of individuals who would, undoubtedly, be judging our breed in the near future.

Following the seminar, we adjourned to the ring where Cresteds were being judged. I was increasingly impressed by the insightful questions that were asked and the ability that these folks had to pick out the superior dogs. The one thing that seemed to bother them most surprised me: size. They were very concerned about being able to choose dogs that were consistent with our standard of 11–13 inches. They argued about which dogs were the right size. They were confused (as many of us are from time to time) by the statement "Dogs that are slightly larger or smaller may be given full consideration."

These students of the breed tended to view the dogs as larger than they actually were. The 11-inch dogs seemed right to them. The 12-inch dogs were a little big. And the -inch, or slightly larger, threw them for a loop. For them, these were obviously too big. Many of these dogs were ones I knew and have had my hands on, so I knew they were within our standard. I counseled these very knowledgeable judging candidates to do more hands-on training and learn to estimate size more accurately—which I know they will do. I look forward to watching them judge.

The point here is, if this group of people who were obviously well informed and knowledgeable about our breed still had trouble with the size issue, what about would-be judges who are less competent? Obviously, more education is necessary on this area of our standard. I suggest more hands-on experience, both in seminars and as part of the students' individual study. Most exhibitors are only too happy to let you go over their dogs.

I think size, in our breed, confounds many judges because we have such a discrepancy in our non-disqualifying limits. How much is *slightly*? A quarter of an inch? An inch? The judge gets to make that decision, within reason. I think the more important words from our standard that we should focus on are *fine-boned, elegant and graceful*. To me, these characteristics are more important than the actual height of the dog—again, within reason. I would much rather have a dog who is 10 inches or 14 inches that has appropriate bone and is structurally sound and can move, than a 12-inch dog that doesn't have much else going for him.

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Havanese

Our guest columnist this month is Stanley Kovak, chair of the Health Survey subcommittee of the HCA Health Committee. He is a practicing physician and Havanese owner and breeder. He shows his dogs himself. He lives near Chicago and also