

ized them. Descendants of the 17th-century Medicis, for example, were known to favor these delightful little dogs, and when Catherine and Marie de Medici both married French kings, they ensured that the toy spaniel would remain a fixture not only in Italy, but across Europe.

Fragonard and Manet (France), Verbockhoven (Belgium), Verschuur (Holland), and many other artists depicted toy spaniels in the late 18th and 19th centuries across the European continent. In the U.S., there were also numerous 19th-century depictions of toy spaniels that are clearly Cavalierlike in form, ranging from the work of notable artists like John Singer Sargent to those whose pieces were more accessible to the general public.

A lithograph of 1846–7 from the Kellogg Brothers, in Hartford, Connecticut, shows two Victorian ladies and their household pets—a quirky cat and a very recognizable Blenheim Cavalier.

And so there remain accessible to us today reminders of the popularity that our Cavalier toy spaniels and their antecedents have enjoyed over centuries. Discovering that vintage micro-mosaic brooch in an auction catalog just reinforced the notion. It is no wonder that the Italian jewelers of the 1800s would include in their mosaics the little spaniels who were the favorites of the wealthy leisure classes, hoping to win their patronage. Little did they know that their wares would still be attracting Cavalier lovers nearly 200 years later. —Stephanie Abraham, landmarks.properties@snet.net

American Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club website: ackcsc.org

Chihuahuas

Entering the Show Dog World of the Chihuahua

You've been to the shows and seen the darling little creatures prancing around the ring. What fun to see, and it certainly doesn't seem too hard—"just walk the dog around in a circle."

Well, I remember riding a transport from the hotel to the show grounds and sitting beside a Border Collie owner who showed her dog in obedience. Being true to her breed, the owner's hair was half white, as if to have a full white collar on the top, and the rest was dark, like the body of the Border.

Of course I noticed it immediately, but I never remarked on the unusual hair. Dog people can be "unusual." Like all dog folks do, we struck up a conversation, and she told me what she did and asked what breed I was showing, and in what aspect of the sport. Proudly, I told her that I showed Chihuahuas in the conformation ring. She quickly came back with, "Oh, you're lucky, you don't have to do anything but walk around the ring." I bit my tongue but returned with, "You obviously don't know much about showing conformation."

Big dog or little dog, we work hard in those few minutes we are in the show ring. We've spent thousands of hours training for this day. No one walks into the show ring expecting to lose, but lose we do. Unfortunately, losing is a fine art, and to lose graciously is not an easy task. Most newcomers enter the show ring with great expectations. When they lose to a seasoned handler, bystanders will tell them that it was the handler the judge always chooses. But in actuality, the handler has trained for years and honed his craft to perfection and is perhaps a professional. Others in the ring will range from new exhibitors to somewhat seasoned and very seasoned show people. The seasoned handlers may not handle others people's dogs, but they love the sport and love showing their own dogs. This is the owner-handler. The AKC is now offering an owner-handler BIS award for those wanting to compete there.

Getting into the show world takes patience, stamina, and above all, realistic expectations. The sport is costly, so beginning with the best dog possible is suggested. This will alleviate a lot of

disappointments down the road.

Take your time when purchasing a dog for the show ring, and do your homework to find quality breeders. Go to dog shows, and talk to exhibitors once they've finished showing their dog. They will be happy to talk about dogs! It's their life and rarely do they think about much else.

Once you have your new bundle of joy, search out a conformation training class. Most local kennel clubs can help you with this and answer many questions. Be sure your breeder can be counted on as a mentor to help you though your first year.

First-time jitters are normal. In fact, they last for a few years, but one day you'll notice that you handle very well, your dogs love the ring, and you have a whole new group of wonderful friends. You still lose, but often you win, too. You realize that losing is part of any sport, and that you, too, graciously congratulate the winner, then kiss your dog and prepare for the next show.

—Virginia (Jenny) Hauber, wynjynchis@yahoo.com

Chihuahua Club of America website: chihuahuaclubofamerica.com

Chinese Cresteds

Consider the Older Dog

In the last year or so, I've noticed an interesting trend: More than half of the calls that we've gotten from people looking for a Chinese Crested have requested an older dog of anywhere from 10 months to 5 years. This is certainly a change from the calls we used to get, where the caller wanted a puppy "as young as possible." Older dogs used to be next to impossible to even give away. What has caused this change?

People live busy lives. It's very time consuming to raise a young puppy. An older dog is probably (hopefully!) housebroken, has some basic training (trained to be in a crate, walk on lead, to know *wait* and *leave it*, and so on), has all his current shots, has been socialized, and may even have earned some AKC titles. The older dog is also