

The next meeting is...

March 21 @ 7:00

At the Country Inn & Suites in Elgin

(Across the parking lot from Jimmy's Charhouse—Meeting will be catered by Jimmy's)

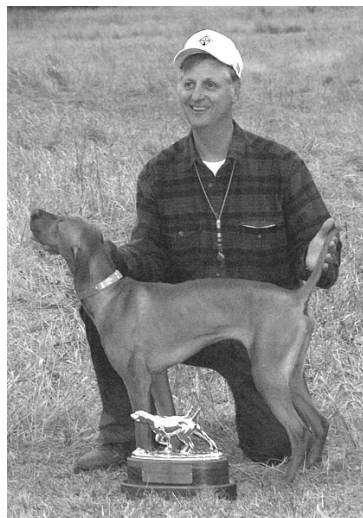
RSVP to Cathy Gallagher at siennepointe@dls.net

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American Field Registered Event

"Let's keep them litters nominated!" - Hank Rozanek

Rodney Albin, Standing Secretary Nomination forms and rules available at www.vizslclubofillinois.org/mvff.htm



2006 Winner: Saginaw Diamond Dan Owned by: Mark Johnson Bred by: Barry Peterson



The Vizsla Club of Illinois, Inc

March 2007

BULLETIN

A bimonthly newsletter for the members and friends of the VCOI

Remember

Remember the thrill as a toddler of seeing Santa's gifts under the tree on Christmas morning? Or remember the first time you could ride the two-wheel bike down the sidewalk without toppling over?

These are life's precious memories, but they pale in comparison to the thrill of finishing our first show dog. Who knew? Who knew the long learning curve we would travel from start to finish - training not only this lovely Vizsla, but also ourselves in the skill of presenting in the show ring? Who knew how far we would travel and how many new friends and mentors we would meet?

We are thrilled to have our very first champion, but even more grateful for the knowledge and new acquaintances we have acquired along the way. Our special thanks to Joan Krum as my teacher, Pat Muller who brushed up my techniques, and Sandi Lyon who has mentored me.



CH REBEL ROUSER RAMBLIN ROSE

Ch. Rebel Rouser Ramblin Rose, JH is a Vizsla filled with spunk and spirit. Betty Rozanek, her breeder was certain she would be a great show dog because she was so naughty! She wasn't going to be a champion if she didn't become one by my hand, so we went far and wide and discovered the strangest things. Sometimes the dog's performance didn't matter, but my hair style and shoes became an issue!



Sometimes my dog was too fat sometimes too thin sometimes, I thought, she was too perfect! But on January 21, 2007, Eugene Blake granted her the final point at the Des Moines Kennel Club dog show and we proudly floated home with our new AKC champion!

Rose is not only titled as a champion, but she easily earned her Junior Hunter title at a year of age. She is a marvelous hunter and proudly accompanies us to retrieve the birds. She is first and foremost a Vizsla with instinct.

Rosie is a delight to live with and has a wonderful sense of humor. She can attempt to command control of our skidster by perching high in the seat - or steal the peanuts from the corner of Bob's table when he turns the other way. She is our best bed-hogger, sofa tester, and towel-stealer. We are proud of her accomplishments, her fine temperament and look forward to sharing her wonderful future. Rosie will be bred to Ch Renaissance Lord Of Th'Dance. Look for us again in the field and in the show ring!

Bob and Rae Ann Jones

Place Postage Here

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Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not constitute endorsement by the editorial staff, the VCOI or it's Board of Directors. The VCOI endorses the efforts of the VCA and the OFA to eliminate hip dysplasia in dogs, and encourages it's members to use only normal breeding stock. Advertising Rates Per Issue: Half Page \$10.00 Quarter Page \$5.00 Business Card \$2.50 Color ads, any size, will require a price quote before printing. Ads are limited to one half page per family per issue. Editor may limit advertising due to space limitations. All ads must be paid in full before printing and contain the full OFA rating of the sire and the dam. Copies of the OFA certificate must be sent with the ad. Deadline for submission to the Bulletin is on the first of each even numbered month. Deadlines are non-negotiable! Cover stories are limited to one per family membership in a 12 month period. Color covers are available, please ask the editor for a price quote to cover additional printing costs. All brags, articles, and submissions must be submitted in writing either through the minutes or directly to the Editor. All photos submitted to the Bulletin must include a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope. Photos without return postage will remain the property of the VCOI. Exception to the cover photo, which will be returned at the VCOI's expense. Digital photos are preferred.

Bulletin Covers

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If your dog has completed a prefix title (CH, FC, AFC, CT, MACH etc.) and you want to reserve a cover, contact Amy at amyndobes@sbcglobal.net

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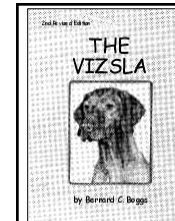
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2007 Training Day—June 9th

Do you & your dog want to hunt but don't know how? The VCOI Training Day is a great opportunity to introduce your dog to birds & to prepare for the Hunt Test on June 10th. All pointing breeds are welcome. We will work with your dogs and try to solve your issues. WE NEED HELP FOR THIS EVENT! Bird planters, gunners, secretary, trainers, demos & food. Contact Mark with your ideas.

Don't forget—YOU CAN SIGN UP FOR SUNDAY'S HUNT TEST UNTIL 3:00PM ON SAT!

Contact Mark Spurgeon at crimonskyvizslas@t6b.com or 815-547-9027 for more info.

Looking for Volunteers to Work at the Chicagoland Family Pet Show—March 16-18

Once again, we are going to have an exhibit booth at this year's Chicagoland Pet Show, March 16, 17, and 18, 2007! This is year the show is moving location to the new Renaissance Convention Center in Schaumburg, Illinois off of Meacham Road near Route 53. We are in Booth 927, near the Frisbee and Dancing Dog Ring! J There are many fun-filled attractions such as the Ultimate Air Dogs jumping competition, Dancing with Dogs competitions, demonstrations, Frisbee Dog performances, a Purebred Cat Show, Bird Show, Cutest Pet Photo Contest, Parade of Breeds (Dogs), and much more!!! There is lots of great shopping, training information, and fun interaction at our booth with fellow VCOI members! You can bring your dog, too! We set up several crates in the booth and you are allowed to walk the dog

on leash at the show. If you are interested in volunteering to work a couple hour shift or all day, one of the days, please e-mail Cathy Gallagher at siennapointe@dls.net and let her know what days and times might work for you. Your primary role will be to answer questions that the public has about the Vizsla Breed and to provide handouts and information. We have several tables set up and you can bring your photo albums. We also have a nice big poster board with pictures of our Club members' dogs doing a variety of "jobs"! We emphasize the Versatility of the Vizsla Dog! **The Pet Expo is open Friday, March 16th from 2PM to 7PM, on Saturday, the 17th from 9AM to 7PM, and Sunday, the 18th from 10AM to 5PM.**



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SPECIAL EVENTS

March 11 — 2 UKC Obedience Trials (For more info on UKC obedience, see www.ukcdogs.com)

March 24 — 2 APDT Rally Trials (For more info on APDT Rally, see www.apdt.com)

March 25—CPE Agility Trial (For more info on CPE Agility, see www.k9cpe.com)

April 7 & 8—Seminar on "The Brave New World of Dog Training" with Dr. Roger Abrantes. Roger Abrantes has a PhD in Evolutionary Biology & Ethology, & is the author of many books including "Dog Language" & "The Evolution of Canine Social Behavior."

For the latest dates & times for classes, run throughs, playgroups & other events, please check our schedule at www.foryourcanine.com or call us at 847-671-6844.

VCOI Awards Banquet and Membership Meeting Saturday, January 20, 2007 Fisherman's Inn

President Cathy Gallagher was not in attendance so Vice President Dennis Nowak ran the meeting.

Call to Order

- 8:07pm by Dennis Nowak

Approval of Minutes

- Larry Lykowski approved the minutes as written and Brad Lepoudre seconded the motion. (There were copies of the minutes on each table for the membership to review)

President's Report

- Dennis Nowak reported for Cathy Gallagher that we have two new co-editors for the bulletin: Amy Wukotich and Cathy Gallagher. He also announced the new officers of the club which are as follows:

Jim Gingrich President

Dennis Nowak Vice President

Jodi Cieslak Secretary

Cheryl Lykowski Treasurer

Secretary's Report

- Jodi Cieslak reported that there was nothing to report at this time.

Treasurer's Report

- Cheryl Lykowski reported that the club is solvent. She also informed the membership that on each table there are complimentary copies of *Bird Dog & Retriever News*, as well as post cards for free trial subscription offers. These items were donated to the club by fellow VCOI club member and vizsla owner Dennis Guldan, the Publisher of *Bird Dog and Retriever News*. The Club wishes to thank Dennis for his most generous donation of sample magazine issues as well as free trial subscription offers to *Bird Dog & Retriever News*.

Cheryl also stated that the 2006 Tax Materials were delivered to our CPA, Jay Harris, earlier this month. He notified her this past week that he is ready to complete the VCOI 2006 Tax Return as soon as the IRS issues the 2006 tax form for our return. (Form 990-EZ - Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax)

Calendar Report -

Linda Busch reported the distribution numbers and also informed us that there are still some calendars available for purchase. Lisa Starbuck thanked Linda Busch, Tim Starbuck and all of her volunteers that helped make this years calendar and photo contest a success. She informed the membership that she would be stepping down from being the Calendar Chairperson for

2008. Cindy Lepoudre volunteered to take this position for the club.

February Hunt Test Report -

Patti Nowak reported that she is the secretary and that Cindy Lepoudre is the Chairperson. Patti also informed the membership that they would be running two courses at the test and that they still need volunteers to help run this event. Dan Cieslak offered to bird plant.

March Field Trial Report -

Jim Gingrich reported that things are going well for this event. He is the Secretary and this should be a fun event! He has the judges and is waiting for final AKC approval. Jim asked Jeff Engelsman to coordinate the judges dinner and he agreed. Mark Spurgeon let us know that the food concessions will be open for lunch and breakfast all three days, so please support them.

Chicagoland Family Pet Show Report -

It was reported that we need volunteers to help man the booth at this event. If you are interested, please contact Cathy Gallagher. Please note that it is at a new location in Schaumburg this year. The date/time are as follows:

Friday March 16, 2pm-7pm

Saturday March 17, 9am-7pm

Sunday March 18, 10am-5pm

June Hunt Test and Training Day Report -

Patti Nowak reported that we still need a secretary and chair for this event. Cindy Lepoudre offered to be a co-chair. Mark Spurgeon is going to head up the training day again and needs volunteers to gun, train, marshal, etc.

Specialty Show Report -

Cheryl Lykowski reported on behalf of Kathy Harmer that AKC has approved date for 2007 VCOI Specialty Show and Sweepstakes (July 14, 2007, Boone County Fairgrounds) in conjunction with Kishwaukee Kennel Club. Dr. Michael Walsh is the judge for the Sweep (Puppy Vizslas and Veteran Vizslas). She also stated that there is a sign-up sheet being passed around for the 2007 VCOI Specialty Trophy Donations. The Club greatly appreciates all Trophy Donations as the Trophies are a significant expense, which the Club would have to pay for if not for Trophy Donations.

2007 Double Bubble Report -

Jodi Cieslak reported that she would be the

chairperson again. She also informed the membership that she is in need of many volunteers to help run this event. Amy Wukotich volunteered to help out with the agility demo.

Misc/New Business -

Jim Gingrich reminded the membership to get your dogs DNA swabs sent in if you are planning on running in the Walking Nationals up in Portage WI. The VCA now requires DNA for any entered national event.

Dennis Nowak reported that our January Judges Seminar went well. We had a total of 19 people from several states. Dennis also informed the membership that AKC is having a Hunt Test Advisory Committee to revise some of the hunt test rules. ACK really wants to tighten up the judging and in the future it will be harder to earn your JH, SH and MH titles. The VCA is being represented by Denny Keeton. Please voice your concerns and questions to him.

Gun Raffle - Dennis Nowak raffled off the gun that he donated to the VCOI. Mike Esparaza of Illinois was the lucky winner. He is a co-worker of Mark Spurgeon. The raffle proceeds went to Brian Hesgard and his family. They were in attendance to accept the gift.

Cheryl Lykowski reported that she has organized the awards banquet for the past 5 years now. She thinks it is time for someone else to organize this event - especially in the area of providing "entertainment" - the Lykowski family is "spent" on ideas (hence this year's "White Elephant" Gift exchange!! It is not a difficult job - just requires some organization skills, and the "entertainment" portion can be really fun. If anyone is interested, please talk to her, show would be glad to "mentor" any interested person.

At this time the meeting was paused to have our White Elephant Gift Exchange.

Next Meeting Date -

Jim Gingrich announced that he would like to have the next meeting at Jimmy's Charhouse and the date is March 21, 2007

Adjourn -

The meeting was adjourned at 9:26pm by Patti Nowak, and Brad Lepoudre seconded the motion.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jodi Cieslak

VCOI Secretary

VCOI President's Message — March 2007

If you have not sent in your entries to the spring field trial which will be held March 10 & 11 at Des Plaines Wild Life Area, do so right away. We have over 100 entries already. With the Midwest Futurity running on the Friday before the trial, derby entries are really strong. It should be a great trial.

This is my first time as field trial secretary. The learning curve was a bit steep but thanks to the hard work of Gina Ordonez and Michel Berner just about everything you need to automate the paperwork is on the VCOI home page. There is also a wonderful check list which helps you complete all the steps necessary. I added a mailing list data base which will be passed along to succeeding secretaries. If I can print mailing labels from it anyone can.

Over the past few months I have participated on an ad hoc committee for the VCA. We are compiling recommendations for the VCA Board to consider concerning the role of the VCA Field Trial Advisory Committee. I am very excited about the work the committee has done. If the recommendations are adopted by the

Board I think the field community of the VCA will see some exciting new developments. There is also an effort underway, headed by Julie LaRue to identify 6 permanent sites for the nationals. That effort will certainly move us in the right direction.

An agenda topic for our next meeting will be VCOI Board Committees. Most of the organizations I am working with have board committees and they greatly add to the efficiency of the organization. Please be thinking about what jobs people do today and what committees would make sense to establish in the future.

Please send me an email with any other topics you would like to discuss at our next meeting.

I am excited about the opportunity to be more involved with the VCOI. Thank you for the opportunity and I look forward to meeting more of the members over the next few months.

Jim

In Memory FC AFC Bo Knows Birds

January 21, 1992 ~ February 2, 2007

Submitted by Jim Gingrich



Bo last competed in May, 1998 at the age of 6. I had a career change that did not leave time for a family and field trials so at his peak, Bo changed careers also and became a

hunting dog. Those of you who were not active in the sport in the mid 1990's probably never heard of him. In his day, he was quite a dog.

I did not buy Bo. I bought his litter mate and Jim Busch gave him to me the day I went to pick up my pick of the litter dog. "A bit too big and a bit too much white", Jim said. Linda and Jim called him El Gordo, because he ate like a horse and was a chubby boy. I don't think to this day, anyone has given me a better present.

Jim and I started training the pick of the litter and El Gordo, now named Bo Knows Birds. It did not take long to send the pick of the litter down the road and fall in love with Bo. Some dogs just get it early and Bo did just that. Right from the start he showed great promise.

In 1993, David and Debbie Lee were driving to California to attend the nationals. They agreed to take my 9 month old puppy along. He won the warm up trial the weekend before the nationals, but the temperature climbed and that was not good for a big dog. Yet, at 9 months of age, he took third in his first nationals.

In March, 1993 Bo ran in the Midwest Vizsla Field Futurity. As I was unsaddling my horse at the end of the stake, the judges

wanted a run-off. Bo ran well, but finished 1st Runner-Up. Not bad for a 14 month old puppy. That same weekend Bo won both puppy stakes and the open derby.

In October, 1993 my oldest son Brian accompanied me to the nationals in Ohio. While I was running a gun dog, they announced the winner of the Derby Classic, Bo Knows Birds.

Bo stayed on top of the Top Ten Puppy/Derby for a long time. I can't remember how many points he achieved, but the system was different back then and not comparable to today's.

As soon as Spring came in 1994, I started the breaking process. In the fall, Bo chased about every bird he found. After field trial season Bo and I hunted a lot, and we hunted using field trial rules. The Spring of 1995 was a different story. Bo finished both his FC and AFC titles in two trials, winning at both Illinois and Cleveland.

Last year as I watched Bo trot around the farm I wondered how many placements and points he won over his career. The AKC was quite happy to take my money and answer my question. Bo had enough points to earn a FC title twice and one point short of enough points for an AFC title four times. In total, Bo earned 87 points and 75 placements in his 6 year career.

The Gingrich family will miss Bo, especially me. We have memories of ribbons and trophies, of game bags full of roosters, of his unmistakable bark. We will miss Bo, but we will never forget him.

Bo, thanks for all the memories.

What is the Field Trial Clubs of Illinois?

The Field Trial Clubs of Illinois (FTCI) first met on January 19th, 1964 near Chillicothe, Illinois where 41 field trailers representing 24 different field trial clubs were present. In the early days of its existence the FTCI established a grounds foundation and an insurance program which continue today. These two programs have put thousands of dollars into field trial site improvements and have provided an avenue for member clubs to attain group liability insurance coverage that may not be affordable to smaller organizations.

The FTCI holds two meetings a year: An annual membership meeting in early January and a membership meeting combined with the Dog of the Year (DOTY) awards banquet in July. Additionally the FTCI has hosted a Winners Classic since 1969. A Continental Breed Winners Classic was added in 1994.

The FTCI officers and board of directors (9) represent a cross section of sporting dog breed including: English Pointers, Setters, Brittney's, German Shorthaired Pointers, Wirehairs, Weims., and Vizslas. Member clubs number 41 today and include representation from the retriever, coon dog, beagle, and flushing breed worlds as well as pointing breed dog clubs.

Today the FTCI focuses considerable energy on maintaining solid relations with the ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES as it pertains to land use for sporting dog events. To that end relations between "the state" and the IDNR are as good and positive today as they have ever been. We are fortunate in Illinois, to count seven (7) sites that are designated, by law, as class field trial grounds which allows for horseback field trials.

As with many non for profit organizations the FTCI relies heavily upon volunteer resource support. The grounds fee revenues are kept separate and apart from dues and membership fees in order that 100% of these grounds funds can be plowed back into site improvements.

Over the years FTCI site investments have paid for the construction of buildings and parking lots in whole and in part. They have supplied resources to conduct mowing and site clean ups all over the state and have rehabilitated old structures so that trialers

could get out of the weather. Horse water tanks, wheelbarrows, fence mending and hydro axe mowing have improved the east grounds at Des Plaines in the last six months alone. In 2005-2006 over \$10,000 was donated to grounds development in Illinois. The FTCI is currently working on two major projects which would establish new barn structures on the Jim Edgar Panther Creek site and at the Pyramid State Park grounds. These projects are moving forward in an environment where state budget deficits afford zero funds for this type of site improvement.

The FTCI is your legislative interface with state lawmakers as well as the IDNR. The FTCI is active with the ILLINOIS FEDERATION OF OUTDOOR RESOURCES, the ILLINOIS SPORTSMANS CAUCUS and related organizations that have impact on field trialing in this state. Additionally the FTCI works hard to insure that the legacy of field trialing is carried forward by sponsoring various youth field trial events including the annual junior handler's award recognition. The youth program is strongly supported by Erin Kennels and the Nestle Purina Corporation in conjunction with the FTCI.

In 2006 there were about 100 weekend field trials, hunt tests, and sporting events held by retriever, beagle, coon dog and pointing breed people on State of Illinois lands. Scheduling of these events involved FTCI coordination on a site by site basis with the IDNR maintaining final permit control and authorization.

As a volunteer organization the FTCI can use your support. There are annual meetings and work parties at the Des Plaines Fish and Wildlife area. This site is heavily used by the VCOI. Membership meetings are held twice a year and attendance and involvement on current issues is needed. The Continental Breed Winners Classic will be held in February and ALL qualifying dogs are encouraged to enter. There are many areas where support and expertise is needed and I look forward to your phone call extending an interest in being involved in FTCI activities. There is a great personal reward in giving back to our sport...give it a try.

Mark N. Johnson
President, FTCI

Jim and Linda Busch to Receive FTCI Distinguished Senior Award

The Board of Directors of the Field Trial Clubs of Illinois voted unanimously to recognize Jim and Linda Busch at this summer's DOTY Awards dinner and banquet with the Distinguished Senior Award to recognize their contributions to the field trial community in Illinois.

Other award recipients at this summer's DOTY dinner will include Larry Edwards (40 year FTCI member and past president

of the FTCI and many Pointer clubs), Sportsman of the Year will go to Jim Fornear, and Honor Roll will go to Mary Jo Trimble. These are prestigious awards that are presented to folks who have a real legacy in the dog world in Illinois. The summer meeting and banquet is on July 28th in Jacksonville (on the Southwest side of Springfield).

Lessons Learned Along the Way (In Pursuit of Our Holy Grail - Qualifying 3 AKC Master Hunters) By Marty Sanford

Roy and I were total amateurs. We had never had a bird dog before, much less trained it to hunt birds. Fortunately we were blessed with Brick, our first bird dog, a Vizsla who was not only extremely intelligent but had all the instincts to hunt. We just needed to train him in the skills required to pass the AKC hunt tests. He was a forgiving dog and forgave us our training and handling errors. As we worked with him we made mistakes and we learned from them so his brother Kirby, and our Finnish import bitch Riika benefited.

Since we were starting at ground zero with our knowledge we read books, watched training videos, talked to other owners of hunting dogs and professional trainers and then decided to work our way up the ladder. In getting started, we found that **Qualify! A Guide to Successful Handling in AKC Pointing Breed Hunting Tests** by Mark Powell and the AKC pamphlet of **Regulations for AKC Hunting Tests for Pointing Breeds** provided valuable information about hunt tests for pointing breeds. We decided that we not only wanted to train our boy but to have demonstrable proof of his abilities in the form of an AKC recognized title. The first step toward the title was training our pointing dog for the Junior Hunt Test.

In order to pass a Junior level hunt test your dog has to demonstrate hunting ability. He has to find and point a bird and hold the point long enough for the handler to get within reasonable shotgun range. He has to display reasonable obedience to commands, like “come” and “heel”. Your dog must demonstrate that he is not gun shy when you flush the bird and shoot your blank pistol. Your dog has to pass four hunt tests to qualify as a Junior Hunter. Getting through the next levels requires a lot of training time and persistence, so many people stop once they have a JH title.

In order to pass the Senior Hunt Test your dog has to do all of the above and also be steady to wing and shot, retrieve a shot bird and honor the other dog on point. At this level your dog also has to stop when a bird flushes, but it can be commanded to stop. The bird that is retrieved should be fit for human consumption. You can verbally “Whoa” your dog in an honoring situation. You need to realize that honoring is a skill that takes practice. It can be very hard for a dog to stop hunting and stand still to watch another dog get to have all the fun, like retrieving the bird. Four successful Senior tests beyond a JH title are required to become a Senior Hunter. Otherwise it would need to qualify at five Senior tests.

To pass a Master Hunt Test your dog has to do everything the Senior level dog does but do it without much vocal intervention by the handler. Basically your dog has to demonstrate that it is a complete hunting companion. To be recognized as a Master Hunter your dog has to qualify at five Master level tests if it has an SH title, six tests if it doesn’t.

What follows are some of the lessons we learned along the way.

Lesson 1 – “Whoa” is the most valuable word in your dog’s vocabulary.

When Brick was about 3 months old Roy got some tips from a professional trainer who insisted we train him in the “Whoa” command. It means **stop right away and don’t move**. The importance of this command became apparent when Roy saw an excellent hunting dog get sprayed by a skunk because it would not “Whoa”.

We wanted Brick to stop and hold position on command, on point, when birds flushed, when exciting things were happening, whenever we said “Whoa”. “Whoa” became part of our everyday experience and vocabulary and the early training proved invaluable down the line. It helped him to start holding his point longer in preparation for the Junior level hunt tests. We practiced “Whoa” in the park by our chasing the resident flock of Canada geese and having Brick stop and hold position when they flew off. We were less successful at teaching him that the dried deposits the geese left littering the park were not green popcorn.

Lesson 2 - Just because it flies doesn’t mean it is a game bird.

Early on Brick demonstrated his natural hunting interest by pointing. He pointed songbirds, butterflies, planes and hot air balloons. So we took him to the field and introduced him to pigeons and quail. He quickly learned to discriminate between game birds and other flying objects. Even so, in an early hunt test he chased meadowlarks.

Lesson 3 - Just because it is a bird doesn’t mean it will fly.

In the hunt test, as a handler you are supposed to locate the bird your dog is pointing and get it to fly. There have been many funny instances of handlers running at birds, throwing a hat at them, kicking at them, cursing under their breath trying to get the bird to fly. Once I was handling one of our dogs in a Senior level hunt test. My brace mate’s dog went on point in front of a bush. John kicked and kicked at the bush and was frustrated as he watched the quail running back and forth. He couldn’t get the bird to come out. So he reminded his dog to “Whoa” and took a flying leap into the bush to try to flush the quail. Through all of this the dog had to hold his point and stay in one spot. Whoa is the most valuable command!

Lesson 4 – Finding the bird your dog is pointing can be very challenging.

Not only does your dog have to locate a bird and point it, but you, the handler, have to find it to flush it. Sometimes when there is a good wind or heavy cover it can be a real challenge for a handler to find the bird. A command we taught our dogs was “Easy”. As a command “Easy” meant that **the dog should move very slowly one step at a time**. It proved useful on Brick’s first hunt test when he was pointing a quail about twenty yards away in thick grass and heavy wind conditions. Roy kicked and kicked and couldn’t find the bird. So he told Brick “Easy” to re-establish point and show him exactly where the quail was. After a number of “Easy” commands Roy found and flushed the quail and Brick qualified. The use of the “Easy” command proved its value that day and others.

Lesson 5 – Always trust your dog.

We will never forget the time in Brick’s third junior level hunt test when he went on a hard point in front of a clump of grass. Roy kicked all around the grass but no quail appeared. There was a feather resting on top of the grass. In frustration he said, “Brick, for crying out loud, you are pointing a feather” and he gave the clump one last almighty kick. Imagine his surprise as his foot flew up with the quail perched on his boot. The judge laughed and said, “Always trust your dog”.

Taking that advice to heart my husband learned to “trust our dog”. Brick was in a Senior level hunt test on a damp day with very light wind conditions. He was pointing in some very heavy cover. He had been relocated several times. Once again, Roy had kicked and swept the grass with his foot and still couldn’t rouse the bird. As he

took a step right in front of Brick’s nose both he and the gunner heard a squeak. The gunner said, “I think you stepped on it”. The quail was in a shallow depression and had decided it wasn’t in the mood to fly. So Roy had to ask the judge for permission to scoop the bird up and throw it. Brick qualified that day with compliments from the judges on his steadiness.

Lesson 6 – There are times when it is better to call the dog off point and hunt somewhere else.

Another judge at a hunt test told Roy the value of “No bird, let’s go!” This command involves calling the dog off point by wheeling around 180 degrees and getting the dog to hunt in a different direction and not backtrack . . . even though the dog knows there was a bird in front of it. This is useful in some of the following instances:

- no matter what you do the bird won’t fly,

- the bird is in a tangle of bushes or briars or a thicket of sumac, your dog has already done everything it needs to do to qualify for a Senior or Master level test and you don’t want it to get disqualified because of some sticky situation.

I was running Riika in one of her first Master level tests and she pointed a quail two feet in front of her nose in a thick clump of bushes just as the judge called time. The judge told me that I could either work the bird or call her off. Since she had done everything she needed to do to qualify I looked her right in the eyes and said, “No bird, let’s go!” Bless her heart she complied and qualified. I can’t stress how imperative it is to be able to call your dog off a point and not have a delayed chase.

Lesson 7 – Always look around before giving the “no bird, let’s go!” command”.

While “no bird, let’s go!” had proved useful in a number of hunt tests, we didn’t know was how important it was to look around before giving the command. During a Master test Riika needed to be called off a non-productive situation. Imagine Roy’s surprise when he wheeled around after giving the command and almost tripped over his brace mate’s dog on point. You could almost see the wheels going in Riika’s head as she thought “I have been given a command to run and hunt in this direction but I am also supposed to honor a pointing dog. What should I do??” She chose to hunt and was disqualified. Fortunately, Riika forgave him before Roy forgave himself.

Lesson 8 - You can’t train desire; it is innate and can be frustrating but worth every penny.

Trying to convince a dog that he must stop and honor a pointing dog when all he wants to do is hunt is a challenge unto itself. We started by making cardboard cutouts of dogs on point and set them up with a quail staked in front of the cutout. We would bring our dog in with the wind in his face so he learned there was a bird in front of that other dog. We would bring him in with the wind up his back so he learned that even if he couldn’t scent the bird that the other “dog” knew there was a bird there and he had to respect the other dog’s point and not steal it.

Frustratingly funny situations arose in the course of the training when Brick’s competitiveness and desire to hunt overcame him. He would race out and be hunting aggressively. When he saw Kirby on point he would deliberately turn his face, look the other way and keep on hunting. You could almost hear Brick say, “If I don’t see Kirby, he is not there, right??” It took time but he had to learn that whether he wanted to or not he had to honor the pointing dog. He also had to learn if the pointing dog’s bird was shot and landed two feet in front of his face to stand still and watch that other dog come in and retrieve the bird right out from under him. Yes, it did happen

in a hunt test. And yes, it subsequently became incorporated in our training drills.

Lesson 9 – There will be instances where you say, “Why did my dog do that?”

We were training Riika with a good friend to get her ready for a Master level test. We had Kirby who now had his MH working as her brace mate in thick, thigh high grass. Roy told him to find a quail that had avoided getting shot earlier. All of a sudden the bird popped up right in front of Kirby’s nose and landed a foot away from him. He pounced on it despite all his prior training. With the quail trapped between his paws he looked up at Roy with an “Oh no, what have I done?” expression on his face. Our friend sagely commented, “A dog is a dog, not a robot. Even the best trained dog will have times when he totally loses it.”

Lesson 10 - No matter how much you train there will always be a new situation that will come up in a hunt test to try both you and your dog.

As related above, the pursuit of mastery is a process not an event. If your dog makes a mistake learn from it, incorporate it in your training and forgive your dog. He will most certainly forgive you for your errors.

Other lessons learned along the way.

You meet all kinds of nice people at hunt tests who share their experiences, joys and woes with you. They congratulate you when you do qualify and commiserate with you when you don’t and your life is enriched by knowing them. Remember to thank the club that is putting on the hunt test for their efforts in organizing and staging the event.

Gunners don’t always hit the bird. In fact, many times gunners don’t hit the bird. But these generous souls volunteer their time and eventually a bird gets shot and your dog gets to retrieve it. Always let the gunners know you appreciate their efforts and remember to thank them when they do hit a bird.

The judges should also be given every consideration and thanked for their time and input. It is a hard job and they give it their best working for long hours.

Dogs don’t like to retrieve quail burger and they don’t like to retrieve molting birds. But they have to learn to retrieve whatever is out there whenever the command is given.

So will we do it again? You bet! Will we learn other things from the school of hard knocks? Of course! Why do we train all those days, run all those drills, spend our children’s inheritance on birds, motels, gas, entry fees and drive all those miles to hunt tests all over the Midwest? We do it for the love of our dogs of course. The reward is in seeing the smile on their faces when they get to go out into the field and do what they do best. It is truly a joy for any dog lover.

Marty and Roy Sanford (Finnrok Vizslas) make their home in Elizabeth, CO with the three Vizslas mentioned in this article. As a result of training and qualifying these three dogs, Roy recently became a hunt test judge and will be judging in several hunt tests this spring. Brick, Kirby and Riika are formally known as CH Pirok Tegla MH, CH Pirok Kirbi MH and CH Canine La Diva MH. The website is being worked on but Marty and Roy can be reached at randmsanford@netzero.com.

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