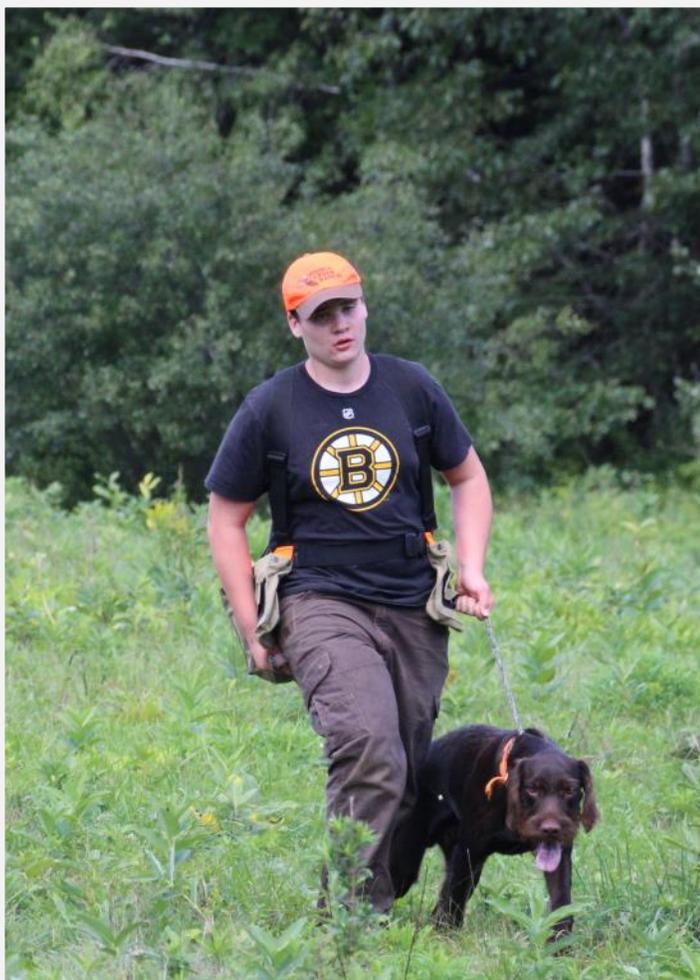




# MERRIMACK VALLEY NAVHDA NEWS

[www.mvnavhda.com](http://www.mvnavhda.com)

Sept—October 2015



**A RISING GENERATION:** Hearty congratulations to Noah Forman and Gage and to Jaclyn Silva and Gallie for earning 112 points in MVNAVHDA's Fall Natural Ability test. Outstanding work! We are so happy with your progress and look forward to seeing your future progress!

**VERSATILE CHAMPION CONGRATULATIONS** to Ben Merrill and "April" and Joanna Korte and "Kaiser" for passing the Invitational Test and becoming Versatile Champions. Well done!

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Hello everyone,

It's hard to believe that the training and testing season is done for this year already! How do you thank so many outstanding volunteers that put in their time helping at all the Merrimack Valley's events but to say "Thank you" for all your hard work and dedicated efforts. We have so many helpers at every event that no job was left undone. This year has been another spectacular year. We accommodated many handlers in the Spring and a double test in the Fall. I have had many new members express their gratitude for the enjoyable training and testing experiences they had. This is due to all the volunteers that help when needed.

Our "Youth Event" was also a huge success thanks to NAVHDA that gave us this opportunity to bring a little part of our world to the youth. All the participants including the parents, dog owners and the dogs had a blast!

I'm spending some time down in Florida this week to visit with my dad and step mom before hunting season starts. Enjoy your time hunting with your dogs—they earned it. It's their time now!

Good luck and happy hunting!

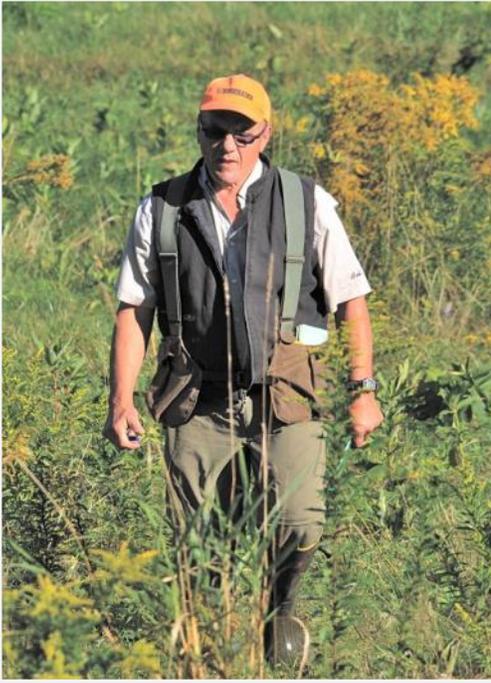
Carol T.



**Carol Trahan**

Chapter President





**Bob Fee**

Director of Testing

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Dear volunteers,

Thank you all very, very much for all the hard work you put in to help our Fall test be the great success it was. It is amazing to me, and a great relief, to know that all I have to do is ask for volunteers and you all show up and know exactly what to do! I don't have to explain a thing and, as a matter of fact, you usually end up running the show yourselves---Perfect.

Everything went very smoothly, especially the dual test on Saturday. You received many kudos from the judges.

A specially thank you to Jim Titus for his hard work the past couple of years serving all of us great lunches and dinners. We're going to miss you, Jim!

Thanks again. You're all great and the Chapter could not do it without you!

Best regards,

Bob





**Joanna Korte**  
**Test Secretary**

Hello Everyone,

We had a busy Fall Test this year; a total of 18 Natural Ability, 2 Utility Preparatory, and 10 Utility dogs. We ran a full double test on Saturday. It was very well run thanks to all of the volunteers.

For those considering running your dog in either a Natural Ability, Utility Preparatory or Utility test in 2016, please remember to send in your test entries and fees to be postmarked no sooner than Feb. 15, 2016. That is the earliest we can accept your test entry. Any time after Feb. 15, 2016 is good.

Now on to the happiest part of the year. Hunting with our dogs! Easier times and lots of fun. Good luck to everyone and safe hunting!

Thank you,  
Joanna



## TO THE POINT:

The “pre-season” is almost over. Soon we’ll be celebrating the rites of fall.

Thanks to the folks who sent in pictures and articles to fill out this issue.



Chris Pope fills us in on those little “fighter jets” called Snipe. He gives us some really good tips on how to find them, but don’t ask him where his “honey hole” is. (He may send you on the proverbial “snipe hunt”!) A fun read. Thanks Chris.

Joanna Korte reflects in a nice article on the “Persistence” that was needed to get to the International. Phil and Sherri Thayer sent in pictures of their Brittany pups that got their Junior AKC Hunter titles—at 7 months. Last but certainly not least, thanks again to Moishe Ragieme who provided us with pictures of water day and other events. I slipped in a piece from the Pudelpointer Chronicles—a trip down memory lane to a place where we’ve all been...and will most likely end up again.

Folks, when the season opens, please remember to take plenty of pictures and, send us a few pics from wherever you are hunting. (*GPS coordinates are optional.*) Merrimack Valley Chapter has a very nice “tradition” of sending in unique photos and a few comments and stories “from the hunt”. You know, pictures and remarks from the Great North Woods, from Maine, From Massachusetts, from Canada, the Dakotas, Montana,... well, you get the idea. It’s soon time to share!

Wishing you good hunting and safe travels.

## Den

Editor

Members may contact Den at  
MVNAVHDA.editor@gmail.com



**Merrimack Valley Youth Event: On September 19th, it all came together.**



**Look for the article in Versatile Hunting Dog Magazine!**

# Youth Day (Continued)



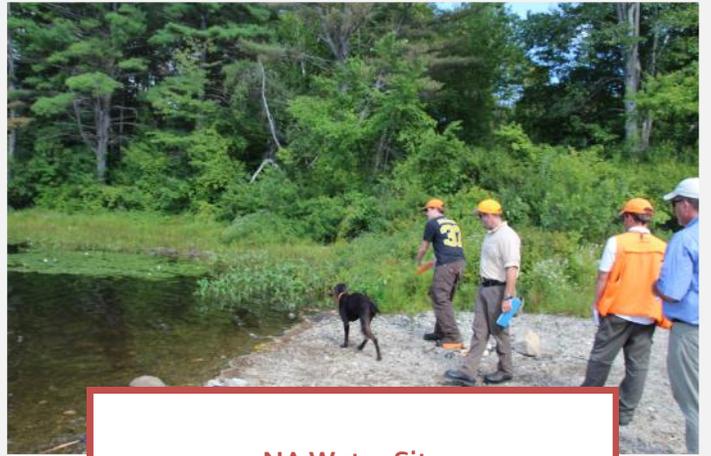
## Youth Day (Continued)



# “SHOTS” FROM THE FALL TEST



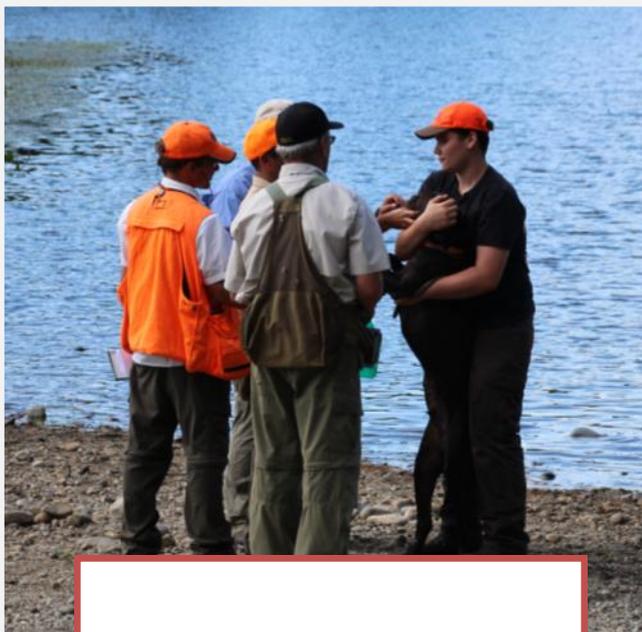
Noah Forman (16) and Gage in NA



NA Water Site

What Noah’s Mom said reflects the strength and passion of the upcoming generation: *“From my perspective, I’d say, I can’t think of anything that makes Noah happier than being with his dogs. The energy, patience and love he has put into training Gage really came through in the Natural Ability testing. He is truly passionate about this sport.”*

True enough. Young handlers are such a pleasure to watch! Den



OK, let’s count teeth.....



Gus taking a “heartfelt” break before the NA Test.

## More "Shots" from the Fall Test



Watching the NA testing.



A great man headed for AZ. We'll miss you both Jim Titus! Wishing you success!



# Water Day Photos courtesy of Moishe Ragieme



Moishe Ragieme

*Many thanks to Moishe for his continuing support of the MVNAVHDA NEWS.*



## PERSISTENCE

by Joanna Korte



On my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday John and I picked up our first GSP puppy. He was named "Northern Exposure Kaiser". What a cute little guy, with long velvet ears that we weren't sure he could ever grow into. Well, he has grown into the ears. At 84 pounds, he is now a big guy.

My husband John and I both tested him in Natural Ability as a pup, so we could each get some experience

testing in the NAVHDA system. Kaiser got two Prize ones, each at 112 points. So far, so good.

Next was training for the Utility Test. That was a different story from Natural Ability. For you that know me, you also know that Kaiser wasn't the easiest dog to have as a first time handler. The big hard head didn't want to heel. Blaine Carter actually gave Kaiser the first "zero" in heeling of his judging career! Kai was great in any of the desire related testing (duck search, field search), but he wasn't so keen on obedience related aspects of the UT. Roy Ames, who also judged the test that same day, did say to me "You have to test that dog again" I was encouraged.

It was really John and I, the handlers, who were green, we were definitely still on the learning curve with only a year or two of experience. When we got a second GSP, Falcon On Point (Oli), we decided to divide and conquer and train one dog each, John got Oli and I got Kaiser.



We did a lot of training in the house over the winter. After heeling; forwards, backwards, even to music (spicing things up), I was finally able to make Kaiser understand that I was the boss. Training is about the only thing I remember doing this spring and summer.



I have to thank Dave Trahan and many of my fellow Merrimack Valley and NES NAVHDA members as you helped with Kaiser's training, being my brace mates in the field and helping to find water for blind retrieves.



In our case, the 2015 Invitational had a happy ending. It was a very hard test to prepare for and to run in. I feel very fortunate to have had such a great experience and to have had such support from friends and family.

My favorite congratulations after the Invitational results were announced came from 11 year old Brennen Wade a Facebook message from his Mom's phone : "I knew you could do it" he said. I'm glad he knew, because I sure didn't!

It was a long journey with my dog, but the fun never stops. It's soon to be hunting season and I am so happy to be a part of the NAVHDA family and to have found the best sport to share with my best friends, especially our four legged friends.



## September Snipe- Pre-Season Action for Upland Hunters



Professional baseball has its "Grapefruit League", football and hockey players have their pre-seasons, so why shouldn't we bird hunters have our pre-season tune up? We do! It's called snipe season and here in NH it starts September 15. I don't really know any other snipe

hunters- just my regular group of hunting buddies. And we have only recently put serious effort into snipe. So we are the rookies. Like many woodcock and grouse hunters we used to occasionally run into snipe while we were hunting the real upland birds. When a snipe flushed we knew they weren't woodcock but by the time we realized they were snipe they were well out of range. Then a couple of years ago after three of us had retired, we got a little too anxious waiting for bird season to open on October 1<sup>st</sup>. We decided to do a pre-season run with the dogs and our shotguns in an area where we had frequently run into snipe. And what do you know...we got a couple of those sweet little birds. The following year we got a little more serious and hit another spot opening day and 4 of us took 8 snipe in about 2 hours-- just about the right amount of hunting time to give the pups a "shake-down cruise" and just enough so that we hunters were a little sore the next day. That field was loaded with birds and we left many behind. We assumed this was a large migrating flight.

Snipe hunting in September is very different than woodcock and grouse hunting. Where we find snipe is in wide open covert. It could be where a

beaver dam flooded an old field. It could be the open edge of a swampy area or stream. We have consistently found snipe in the middle of a huge hay field that was cut so short you could almost play golf on it. In that field there are wet spots and puddles when it has been rainy but only muddy areas when it is dry and we don't necessarily find the snipe near the mud or standing water. We snipe hunt one old field that used to be one of the nicest woodcock hunting spots we had until beavers got in there and dammed a stream that seriously flooded the field. The old field is about 900 yards long with a few clusters of apple trees and a stream surround-



ing more than half of it. Now 60-70% of the field is covered with water anywhere from an inch deep to a foot deep. The snipe have absolutely piled in there in the past two years. Another place to try is a cut cornfield with puddles or wet, muddy spots in it.

**Here are some more "rookie" observations we have had:**

When snipe flush they tend to take off straight, fast and go several hundred yards unlike woodcock which may settle back in 40-80 yards away. They do make a unique sound when flushing that is hard to describe (visit the Cornell site or download the free

“Merlin Bird ID” App on your phone and listen to it). Because the covert is more open you may still be able to see them land and then follow them up for another point.

On the other hand, in larger groups of flight birds, flushing onesies and twosies don’t seem to go as far before they settle back in more like woodcock.

It is wonderful to have some open more relaxed shooting before the real season starts to regain your timing and be able to shoot without having to duck under alders and force the swing of your shotgun through hop vines.

There is no pressure. If you don’t see a bird you don’t care because the main purpose is to get your pup out for an easy live workout.

We tend to use 8-shot through an open or skeet choke with the second barrel improved cylinder.

Below with the accompanying photographs is a description of habitat all from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.



### American Woodcock Habitat

Look for in forests, forest edges, old fields,

and wet meadows of eastern North America.

<http://www.allaboutbirds.org/>



### Wilson's Snipe Habitat

Live in muddy pond edges, damp fields, and other wet, open habitats. Typically these contain thick, low vegetation into which these well-camouflaged birds can disappear.

<http://www.allaboutbirds.org/>

The birds are slightly smaller and more streamlined than woodcock and are spectacular to eat. They taste very different than woodcock.

Finally, regarding where to find good snipe coverts, I am lucky to have friends that are good at it and I tag along. If you find a good snipe hunting ground you must immediately utilize the standard “woodcock hunter operational and dog operational guidelines (acronym is WHOADOG.) I know all you old woodcock hunters know what WHOADOG is but for those new to the sport there will be a future article on this. Essentially, the two main things to know are- If another hunter hears you shooting in a woodcock covert (or in this case, a snipe covert) and asks you how the bird hunting is, you respond by saying,

“There are no birds in here we’re chasing rabbits.”  
Look him dead in the eye and don’t stutter or waver when you say this. The second is, always, I mean **al-ways** lie no matter what. Bird hunters fall for lies every time.

Take in a little snipe pre-season action and let me know how you make out. Enjoy. Be safe!

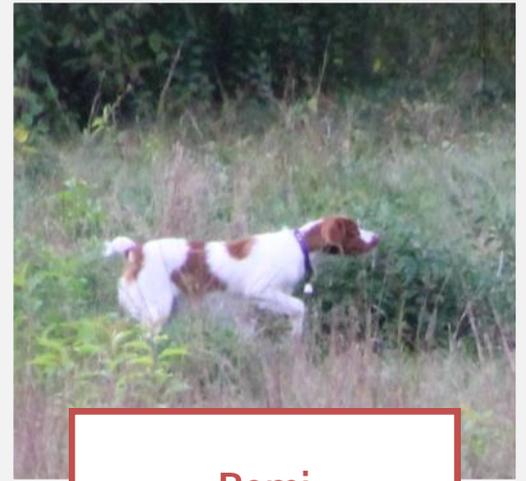
**FOLLOW-UP:**

Den- Since the deadline has been extended I thought I would give an update to the first few days of snipe season! Various combinations of four of us have hunted three days and taken 9 snipe. The hot weather is drying up any standing water in the fields so some rain would be nice. Oh...it's been a tad warm...87 on car thermometer at 12:30 yesterday. Lots of fun though and some good dog work with challenging retrieves.

Chris Pope and Gunny chase Snipe in “secret places”. If you come across them in September, expect them to look you in the eye and tell you that they are just “out training”.

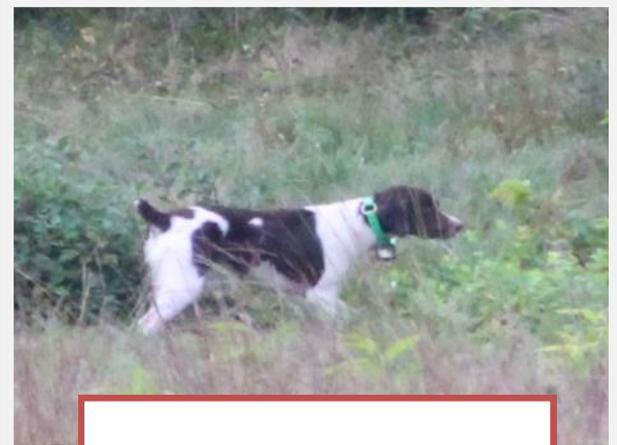


Unfortunately, the tracking device that the editor placed on Chris' vehicle fell off.

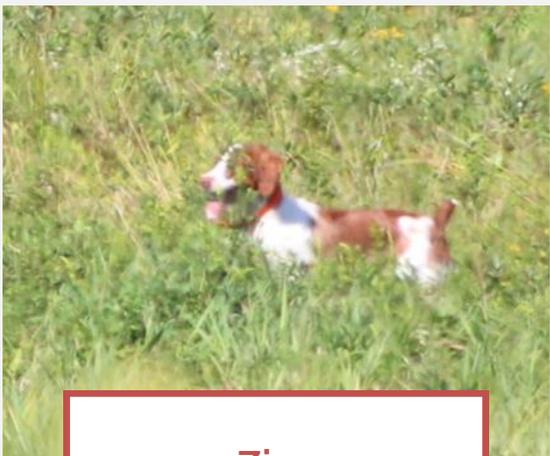


Remi

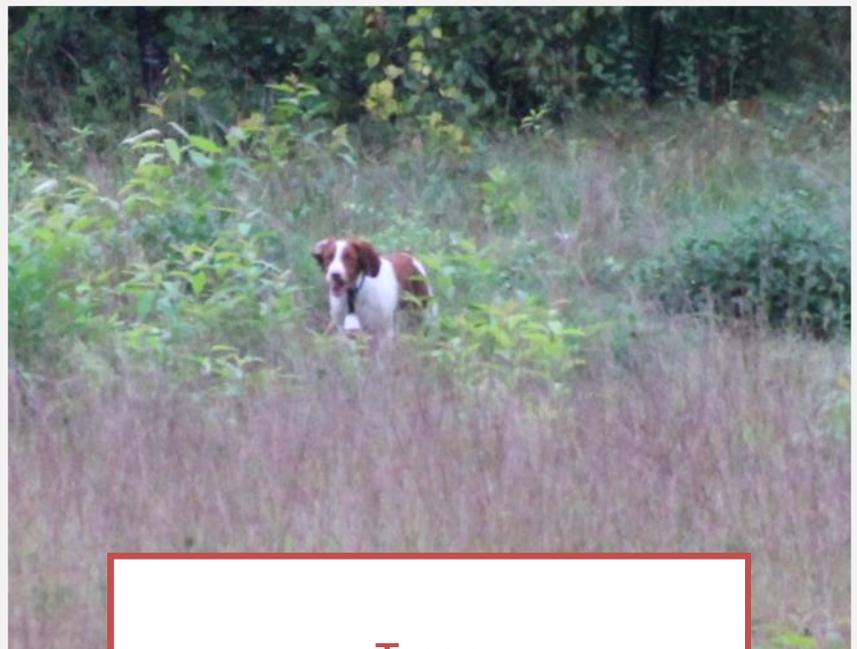
The three pups together with Phil & Sherri Thayer and Marianne Day are “Tyson”, “Ziva” and “Toph”, they each finished their AKC Junior Hunter titles at the double test held by NNEBC and Katahdin GSPC. “Toph” (107 pts), “Tyson” (110 pts) and another littermate “Remi” (110 pts) earned their natural ability titles at Sebasticook Chapter test this weekend all earning prize I at seven months. The other picture is Remi on point .



Toph



Ziva



Tyson

# ONE OF MY FAVORITE SIGNS.

(I WONDER HOW MANY WERE PRINTED UP?...DEN)

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# It Was She Who Chose Me

Courtesy of "The Pudelpointer Chronicles" blog —Dennis Swett



Many of us have owned dogs that were stepping stones to the dog we have today. They taught us something about ourselves, and perhaps a little bit ..or more.. about how to handle a dog.

One such dog was my "Kid", (Pheasant Ridge's Sydney's Kid): Late one winter, I was at a sportsman's show with my hunting buddy when we met a breeder that we both knew and (of course) we started to chat. Next thing I knew was the breeder said, "I'm moving West. You don't know anyone that wants a *runt* three-year-old Brittany do you?" ....my buddy and I both pointed to me.

I visited the kennel and saw the dog. She came over, said a hello in dog manner and hung around just enough to let me know that she was special. I hummed and hawed and said "Let me think about it." I drove home trying to talk myself out of it. I already had a large German short-hair at home who was getting along in years. I figured that he still had a few years in him.

In the fifties, my first dog was an American Cocker Spaniel. Oh, was he a hunter! The problem

was that I didn't know what I had or what to do about it! He would venture down to the alders by the brook that ran along the edge of our field. Occasionally, he would come back to the house with a muskrat—dead as a doornail. Looking back, I think he—"Ricky"— was into woodcock. At that young age, I didn't understand that I was attached to that dog in so many ways.

Decades later, the attachment was lingering in me and had its hooks in the little Brittany "Kid". I continued to wrestle over the matter when the phone rang and the breeder wanted to know what I decided. I told him where I was on the idea and he suggested that I take the dog and try her out for a while—see if she would fit into the house with the other (2) dogs.

The next day I was at his house and walked through the gate and into the dog yard. I stooped over and said, "Kid". She ran across the yard and leapt into my arms. It could have been collusion between Kid and the breeder, but I was already hooked. She chose me. Still, I was a little unsure about the "bond" as we drove out of the yard. Was it real?

A few hours later, I was visiting a friend who was in Hospice care. Somehow, Kid got out of



Born to be Wild

the vehicle and started running. There was lots of traffic nearby. She wouldn't respond to



others who were calling her. I knelt and called her name. She came like a shot and almost crawled inside my jacket. It was a relief and a "sign" for me. Things were looking up!

There was a problem however at the *Swetthaus*. Both my wife AND Kid felt like they were the reigning queen. Syl would exert her influence, (and so I learned later) Kid would go and pee in her closet. ("So there! Take that!") To make a long story short, we got through that contest, but my wife never liked the dog. Lucky for me, because she wouldn't "spoil" Kid.

Time went on, and she became more and more "mine" — or perhaps I became more and more "hers".

When she would point a bird, there wasn't much "Style". She was like a wind-up toy that finally used up all its spring. She would just stop. If you weren't paying attention, you'd miss it. It didn't take too much to teach her something, but if you put pressure on her, she'd do the Brittany thing of acting like you were killing her.

When my brother died, she provided comfort and companionship in the woods. When my shorthair passed away, she filled a void that had been growing from his "canine cognitive disorder" Kid would visit my aged parents next-door, and let them make of her. She played that card *very* well.

Kid was a canoe-sized Brittany. I would put her in my canoe and paddle from shore. She would put her feet on the gunnel and because of her "tiny" size, there were never concerns about tipping over. (*She hated to swim, but she would in a "Kid emergency".*) My life was such a commotion at the time that I never bothered to correct that. I paid for it more than once! She was a pleasure to hunt with alone. Words were not necessary.

My wife didn't like her riding in the front seat



(*think "dog hair"*). But somehow she did anyway when we were alone. I kept her groomed with a "puppy cut" so the "hair issue" wasn't too bad. It made her more or less a "wash and wear" dog.

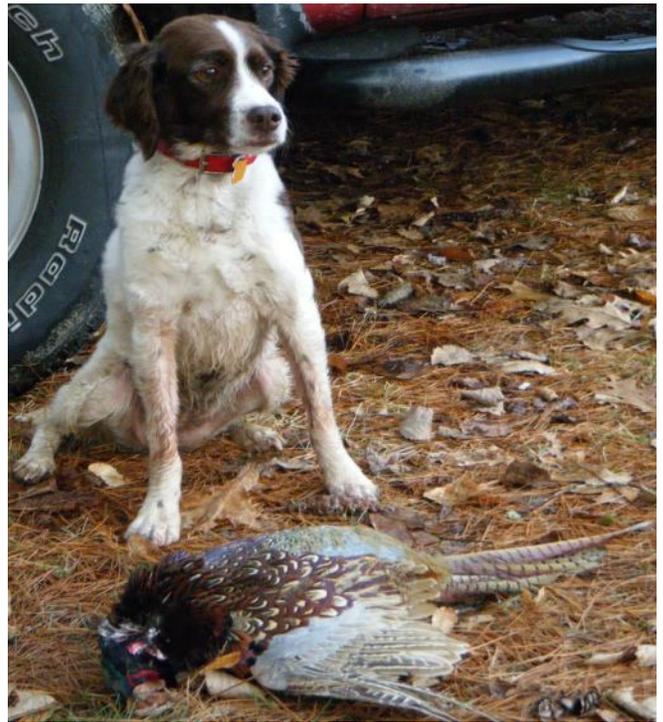
Yes, she taught me a lot about myself, and some things about dogs.

One day, I returned from a business trip and she was lying in her bed, ill. She would vomit and

looked distressed. I put her in the car and took her to the vet's office where we ran several tests. The results came back and verified the vet's preliminary thoughts. Her kidney s were failing her. We reviewed the options available and they were dismal. I held her in my arms and could feel her wanting to go. (*"Just let me go boss".*)

Later, at the vet's office, I held her with my hand over her heart. I had to be with her at the end. We had "said our goodbyes" in the truck—*if a man and dog can do such a thing*. Unable to speak, and barely able to breathe, I felt her (big) heart slow and finally stop in her little body.

They let me out the side door. I was sobbing like a schoolgirl whose heart had been broken. It was pitiful. However, in spite of the sorrow I was glad that she had been a gift in my life, and that it was she who chose me. #



Last pheasant around Christmas

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Quietly Heading to the Rainbow Bridge

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