

Missouri Hunting Spaniel Club

Spring 2008 Newsletter



Letter From the President

Well we are off and running in 2008. The Spring Hunt Test is in the planning stage and I hope to have more information in the near future. There are other clubs getting ready to run their Spring Hunt Tests so if you can, try to support those clubs and participate when possible.

We need to continue to promote the Club and find new members. If anyone has any suggestions on promoting the Club, feel free to email the membership and let us know what we can do to help out. If you meet someone with a spaniel and they want to learn how to hunt with their dog or would like to train with someone, invite them along to train with you.

So far, we have had 5 people pay their 2008 dues. Please send in your dues at your earliest convenience.

If anyone would like to be on the Hunt Test Committee please let me know so I will know how to complete the Hunt Test application.

If we can find good cover to plant some birds, we will try to have a training day in SW Missouri. I know some of you got together a few weeks back. I hope all went well and some training goals were accomplished. I am looking forward to seeing those that can make it to the Spring Hunt Test.

Sincerely,

Tim Baker
President

Spring 2008 Hunt Test

MHSC is hosting Spring Hunt Tests at Horse Creek Ranch on April 26th and April 27th near Galena, Missouri. Hunt test information and premium can be downloaded from our website at <http://missourihuntingspanielclub.com/hunttestinfo.aspx>.

Featured Article:

Florida Snipe Hunt by Terrance a.k.a. Terry Pierce

This winter while most at home were fighting the battle of the bulge (ing) snowdrifts I was "forced" to spend some recuperative time in Navarre, Florida. I felt really bad, sitting in the sun, soaking in vitamin D and a tasty mixture derived from the blue agave plant, whilst my friends up north were huddling around the warm glow of a "fireplace" on DVD. But, as the saying goes, "Someone has to do it". I want to assure you that my thoughts were always with you up there in the cold North, unless they were clouded by Margaritas. (Just kidding.)

OK, enough of the "salt in the wound". My story is about a proposed outing of 'strict' dog training. Though in hindsight should have been called an aimless stroll through an overgrown patch of sand with my dogs.

The dogs were a field as I carried my favorite whistle loosely in my mouth and dangled a couple of well-worn bumpers in my hand. To the untrained eye, it 'could' have been construed as practice period, but I'm sure that no canine enthusiast would have been deceived. I find that many legitimate training sessions turn into woolgathering expeditions when distracted by Mother Nature.

The dogs (Pirate, 7-year-old English Springer spaniel and Daisy, 2-year-old English Cocker) were not fooled by this masquerade. Completely ignoring me, they free hunted this relatively new environment with all its fresh sights, smells, sounds and textures.

We "borrow" an undeveloped acre or two along US Highway 98 in the Northwest Florida Panhandle. This lush semi-tropical, semi-arid property is filled with southern flora, including the ever-present palmetto and juvenile long needle pine, which tend to look like bushy green sentinels. Treacherous blackberry plants abound (no, not the wireless phone and e-mail devise). Their tentacles grab and deeply scratch the top of

sandal-clad feet. (I must remember to bring my boots.) During the flowering and fruit-bearing season the blackberry provides a delicious snack and are easy to find, if bare footed.

My favorite southern botanical is an inconspicuous and innocuous sage-like plant. I do not know it's local or Latin name. The blossoms on this scraggly blue/green bush are a delicate violet/pink/white color about ¼" across and shaped like a tiny pitcher plant flower. Rolling their leaves in your hands produces a very soft sage fragrance. A wet dog's natural, and some say unpleasant, odor is diminished or at least camouflaged when they scour an area filled with these perfumed plants.

On my walk I hear the sound of the many small frogs croaking from some unseen swampy basin. I am easily mesmerized listening to the wind whistling through the palmettos accompanying this song of the toads; until I am jerked rudely back into the 'here and now' by an F-15 Eagle (produced in St Louis, thank you very much) at full throttle just over the treetops. The noise is sudden and much worse than an AC/DC concert at the 'acoustically incorrect' old St Louis Arena. (If you were not deaf the next day, then you lied about being at the rock show.) Unconcerned, the frogs and dogs continue their missions undisturbed, while I am more than a little surprised and shaken.

Eglin Air Force Base's reservation and bombing range are just north of our house and the Gulf of Mexico. Most visitors are initially concerned about the jet and bomber's nightly practice bombing runs, especially when the 500-pound "big boys" come out to play.

At the sand lot the sun is now low and reddish as it highlights the pups emerging from one cluster of plants to disappear into another. I shift a dummy into my throwing hand; signaling Pie "The Game is afoot". Forgetting all else, he concentrates on the bumper. He is beautiful as he comes to his highest state of alert (second only to fresh pheasant scent on a new fallen snow). His short stub of a tail is now invisible in his excitement. Pirate sits, watching, trying to anticipate the direction of the toss. He is cheating of course, trying to get a jump on the prey. Running like an Olympic athlete he dashes to the fall of the mock bird. In a flash he is back, dummy in hand (mouth) waiting for a pat on the head and

the next toss and the next toss, etc. I believe he would play "the game" until his body collapsed.

Elsewhere, Daisy is hunting on her own behalf. Oh, she will play "the game", but she prefers to follow her nose. Seeking out small birds is a pleasant diversion for her. Tracking the bird's scent and a short chase after a flush is among Daisy's favorite things.

That late afternoon she did not see the short flight of a rather unusual (to me) bird that she had spooked in her labors. I brought her under control and directed her to the bird's approximate location and positioned myself to have the best view of the flush. To my surprise it was a snipe or a woodcock (later confirmed by "Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America.") It quickly flew out of sight in the gathering dusk. It was only the third I've ever seen. It was a rather surreal, mystical and wonderful moment for me.

Following my four legged friends has always been great exercise and relaxation. Being in their company is always a blessing. I never know what adventure may unfold as I follow behind.

It is not always a big expensive expedition to exotic places, with field champion dogs, handsome guns and well-stocked fields that offer up the most affectionate recollections. Sometimes it is just be a short ramble through an over grown patch of sand with my beloved spaniels. The shortest and simplest journey may provide the best, longest and fondest memories.

Spring 2008 Election and Club Issues

At our January meeting conducted through a series of e-mails the following items and votes were cast (summarized and provided by Tim Baker - Thanks!).

Hunt Test Judging Seminar

Should we host one?

Yes: Chris Zell, Lisa Zell, Mark Nix, Paul Dorsey, Matthew Vernau and Ruth Zane, David Sanford, Richard Driggs

No: Ray Takmajian

Dog Handlers Seminar

Should we host one?

Yes: Chris Zell, Lisa Zell, Mark Nix, Ray Takmajian, Richard Driggs

Remaining members neutral/abstain

Events Per Year:

How many should we host?

Chris, Lisa - two events preferably 1 Hunt Test and 1 Field Trial

Mark Nix - 2 HT and a Field Trial

Richard Driggs - Hunt Tests and move towards Field Trials

Ray - interested and would help

Final decision not reached

Hunt Test Location

Should they be held in one location or alternated?

Alternate locations:

Yes: Chris, Lisa, Mark, Paul, Richard

No:

Ray - Closer to St. Louis.

Remainder of attendees neutral / abstain

2008 Officers

President: Tim Baker

Vice President: Chris Zell

Secretary: Tim Baker

Treasurer: David Sanford

Upcoming Hunt Test Judging Seminar

MHSC has received preliminary approval from AKC Performance Events to host a spaniel hunt test judging seminar on June 28th, 2008 in Columbia, Missouri. We have been told that Tom Meyer will be presenting the seminar. Mr. Meyer is an accomplished field trialer and national championship judge. His insights are sure to benefit attendees looking to improve their understanding of spaniel performance. A flier will be developed soon to officially announce the event.