

From the Editor

Finally! The first print edition of the Southern Skies newsletter. I hope you all enjoy this first attempt.

'Flat Chat' is only a working name for the newsletter. We are having a 'Name the Newsletter' contest to give the members a chance to pick the permanent name. If you have an idea for a name please send it via email it to Claire Koshar (ckoshar@southernskiesfcr.org) by December 15. The winner of the contest will receive a SSFCRC Grooming Table Cover!

As the newsletter grows we will be adding new features. Plans include advice columns - for owners AND dogs! A photo gallery will be included in each edition. If you would like to see your dog showcased in the photo gallery send digital photos via email. If you

have ideas for the newsletter please feel free to communicate these suggestions via email to Liz Mound (editor@southernskiesfcr.org). Feature articles written by club members are ALWAYS welcome and if you'd like to see a certain topic covered please let us know so we can find an expert to provide an article.

Don't forget to check the on-line newsletter. John Pfohler frequently updates the SSFCRC website (www.southernskiesfcrd.org) and has been doing a great job keeping the members informed about upcoming events.

That's all for now. Give your dogs a hug.

*Liz Mound
Newsletter Editor*

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Issue No.1 Vol.1

Fall 2004

FLAT



CHAT

SOUTHERN SKIES FLAT-COATED RETRIEVER CLUB

Notes From the President



How fortunate we are to share our devotion to our breed with fellow flat-coat enthusiasts. Wherever we go there is someone participating in a dog venue with a flat-coat. Those appealing and happy dogs are such good ambassadors for our breed.

Because of this, it is necessary that we share valid information with those who find themselves enchanted by the breed. Not everyone needs a dog that remains youthful well into old age. Sometimes, that youthfulness could be better described as a cheerful abandonment of normal good manners. Flat-coats do mature slowly. A male may not attain maturity, either physically or mentally, until at least his third birthday. Many people who are taken with the breed may not be prepared for the calm, firm training that develops a flat-coat puppy to his full potential.

It is important to understand why an individual might be interested in a flat-coat. Are they looking for a black golden? Is it because they like "uncommon breeds"? Do they have a sound understanding of the breed and its unique characteristics?

It is our responsibility, as owners and breeders to provide that insight to prospective flat-coat buyers. In that way, we can hope that our breed will remain the hands of those who appreciate the breed for what it is.

Our breed has been protected by caring and concerned owners and breeders. Let's continue in that tradition.

The best to you and your dogs!

*Claire Koshar
President
Southern Skies Flat-Coated Retriever Club*

Feature Article

The Making of a Champion, English-Style

The English morning was cool and overcast by my Florida standards but there was the old familiar sense of anticipation as we approached Richmond for its championship show.

There were the usual acres of parking and, in true major dog show form; none of them were near the rings. I gathered up chairs and jackets and show gear and prepared to hike. But, no, this was England and, here, even dog shows are terribly civilized. Along came a gentleman in a "trolley" (disguised as a golf cart) and offered us transportation to ringside. It was only then, seated at the flat-coat ring that I remembered that an English championship show was no walk in the park. An English flat-coat champion is a dog in which you can take enormous pride.

To "make up" a champion the dog needs to have won three Challenge Certificates under three different judges. These judges are accredited to judge Championship shows. At the Richmond Championship show the flat-coat entry was 181 dogs and bitches. There is one challenge certificate awarded in dogs and one in bitches. The classes

start with Minor Puppy and move according to age and experience to the Open class which is open to all dogs regardless of stature. It is not uncommon for several of the dogs competing to be full champions attempting to add to their show records. It is understandable that there is great satisfaction in winning any ribbon.

The class winners then return to the ring to compete or challenge each other similarly to our Winners Class. Imagine the difficulty of competing against the Best in Show winner of Westminster for your majors. That was often the case with dogs competing for the Challenge Certificate with CH Shargleam Blackcap, the winner of Best in Show at Crufts.

So let's think of this for a minute. For a flat-coated retriever championship the dog must win what would be equivalent to winning Winners Dog or Winners Bitch three times under three different judges at a show comparable in numbers to our National Specialty. Most of the classes that I watched had two and three times the dogs that we would need for a major. The dog certificate and the bitch certificate were awarded as well as the Reserves to those dogs and finally the Best of Breed was selected. A

Challenge Certificate is hard won and reason for celebration. And so, after this daunting competition is a flat-coat then entitled to a CH in front of his name? No. He is a Show Champion (SH-CH). To be a full Champion (CH) a flat-coated retriever needs to have earned certification under two judges that he is a Show Dog Qualifier. He has been taken out on an actual shooting day and under normal shooting conditions must prove that he is biddable, and steady to gunfire. He will make several retrieves and deliver them gently to hand. He will be absolutely silent in his work and there will be no damage to the birds. This accomplished, the dog's credentials are complete and he is entitled forever after to be called Champion.

I rode home honored to be in the presence of CH Belsud Brown Guinness, a beautiful liver flat-coated retriever and his breeder and owner Mary Grimes. But it was my evening with him in the field where I really understood the full worth of a full champion. I think of his quiet steady demeanor, his swift retrieves and his gentleness and remember a beautiful dog doing what he was bred to do. Every inch a champion from the heart out.

*Claire Koshar
Summerhill Flat-Coated Retrievers*



Member Focus

Alison Schultz is the Recording Secretary for the SSFCRC club. Her job is to record the legal minutes of the business of the club. She communicates with the membership and let everyone know what is going on in the club. Alison welcomes any ideas on how to better communicate with the members of the SSFCRC. Her email address is: alschult@mail.ucf.edu

Alison shares her home in Orlando with two Flat-coats and a great Guy. Yes his name really is Guy! She is loved by her flat-coat boys Gauge (U-CD CH Wingmaster's Genesis CD WC CGC) 4, and



almost 2 year old Hunter (CH Wingmaster's History Repeats). Hunter and Gauge are actively training in field work (Gauge has several UKC Started legs). The boys are also training for competition obedience where Gauge is getting ready for Open and Hunter for Novice. Alison has tried a little tracking with the boys and would like to find more people interested in track-

ing. Hunter and Gauge also enjoy agility when Mom can find the extra time.

Alison has been in flat-coats for about 13 years. When she saw her first flat-coat it was love at first sight. After doing research on the breed she met with PJ Lacette at a pet fair for a formal introduction to the breed. PJ introduced Alison to field training and helped her learn about throwing bumpers and getting started in flat coats. She got her first flat-coat, Dylan (Wingmaster Bertschire's Dylan), shortly thereafter. Although he never finished any titles he was her best

friend, and close companion during many life changes. She lost him to cancer at age 9.

Alison is grateful to all those that have helped her with her dogs. She hopes that she can help others enjoy life with this breed that is such a big part of her life.

Photo: Alison with Hunter (r) and Gauge (l).

Club News

- The Treasurer will be mailing dues notices in November to all members. Please make sure your address is current and dues are paid on time.

- Members are getting together on Sundays for informal field training sessions. Please check the website for dates, times and locations. Suggestions for training locations are welcome!

- The FCRC will be sponsoring a booth at the Eukanuba Invitational Show January 15/16, 2005 in Tampa. The SSFCRC has been asked to host the FCRC booth. We are looking for volunteers to take a shift greeting visitors to the booth.

- The SSFCRC will be hosting a WC/WCX test on Saturday February 19, 2005 at Wayne Gey's Golden Oaks Ranch in Montverde, FL. Pre-entries only. Check the SSFCRC website for more information.

- The SSFCRC will be putting together a State Basket for the 2005 Specialty in Perry, Georgia. The basket will be raffled at the Silent Auction. We are looking for ideas for items to include in the basket.

- The SSFCRC has been asked to coordinate and staff the Hospitality portion of the 2006 National Specialty in St. Louis, MO. More info to come.