

Linda McCutcheon

We started our love affair with the West Highland White Terrier in 1974; whew, how time goes by. My husband Frank and I had a German Shepherd Dog that thought he was a lap dog, but he quickly outgrew our laps. We decided we should look for a smaller dog that actually would fit on our laps, in addition to our "big baby". I had researched various breeds, and found the Westie was so charming. One day while shopping in the mall, over Mother's Day weekend, we passed the local pet store. There was the cutest Westie, begging us to pick her up. Frank looked at me and said, "Would you like her for your Mother's Day gift?" Of course, I said yes. We brought our little bundle of energy home.

At this point, I realized she would require regular grooming, and I wanted to learn how to trim myself. I wanted to learn all I could in order to properly care for my new Westie pup. I contacted the AKC and found there was a regional Westie Club in our area, the West Highland White Terrier Club of Delaware Valley. I contacted the secretary, and went to my first meeting. This club was filled with talented, knowledgeable people. They had many programs, puppy matches, grooming seminars, holiday dinners, so many ways to learn as much or as little as you wanted. I brought my little girl along to as many programs as possible and eventually to a puppy match. She would never be a top winning dog, but we had fun together and I learned so much.

I developed a friendship with Dr. W. H. Sterg O'Dell. Sterg was a long-time dog fancier, an AKC licensed Poodle judge, who breed and showed Toy and Standard Poodles, and in addition, imported and bred Westies. He travelled to England every year and had friendships with Miss F. Cooke, (Famecheck), and Mrs. J. Beer (Whitebriar). He brought several dogs back with him over the years. Sterg had what I would call a "show kennel", something which was common years gone by. He never let a puppy go until it was over a year old, wanting to be sure he didn't miss an "ugly duckling turned swan"

When my first Westie was spayed, he let me have one of his Famecheck girls, on a handshake. We bred her to his Ch. Kemyell Krackerjack (Whitebriar). This produced three puppies, one female, two males. I had agreed to give him two puppies back. He allowed me to keep the female, her name was Ch. Country Girl Scooter Pie, my first homebred bitch. I put on most of her points, and she finished at the Northern Ohio Specialty, Judge Anne Rogers Clark, under the guidance of Margery Good. Her brother, Ch. Stergo Bronco Billy won WD/BOW at Montgomery County under Judge John Marvin, handled by Margery Good. Just prior to finishing his championship, the third puppy, Stergo Dirty Harry died of heartworm, a tragic blow.

When it came time to breed our "star", Joanne Glodek approved her, and Scooter Pie was bred to Ch Mac- Ken-Char's Irish Navigator several times, and they never failed to produce wonderful puppies. These included Ch. Country Boy Irish Shawnessy, Ch. Country Girl Irish Brandy, and Ch. Country Girl Irish Emerald. Irish Emerald was bred back to Ch. Stergo Bronco Billy which produced my beloved Ch. Country Girl Christine, Best in Sweepstakes at Montgomery County under Margaret McAndrews. Christine linebred back on the Famecheck side produced a wonderful little dog, BISS Ch. Country Boy Rootin Tootin (Rudi). I never expected to have a special, but he kept winning and I kept going. I had never traveled much before Rudi, but I went on the road as much as I was able. At eight months he went Best in Sweeps and BOW at the National Roving in Duluth, MN. I met my good friend, Marty Cary (Emerald Acres) there; she had WB and we were both on cloud 9. Rudi finished with either WD or BOW at three specialities and was Best in Sweeps four times, . He retired with 6 Specialty Best of Breed and had multiple Group placements, owner/handled, with limited advertising.

Traveling across the country brought with it the opportunity for me to meet many wonderful people along the way, people I probably wouldn't know if I stayed in one area of the country. Over the years, I have tried to educate myself by attending as many seminars as I could, whether it be on breeding, grooming, genetic health issues, whatever. I don't ever feel I want to stop learning new things. I have learned so much over the years from so many different people, too many to name. But even if friendships drift a bit over the years, I still keep the memories close to my heart.

Probably one downfall to this wonderful sport is the competitive drive within many of us, and it can be difficult to maintain longtime friendships without any cracks. But the thing we all have in common is our love for the breed and the goal for all of us is to breed the best we can. I started out from humble beginnings, and I truly appreciate the people who helped me along the way. I have tried over the years to share my experiences, and hope to pass on my knowledge to any who are willing to learn.