

A Blind Retrieve

by Teresa L. Bezenar

The journey began, September 2004, as a trip to our local library. I brought home several books describing and illustrating various hunting dogs. What breed would best fit our lifestyle and with the two dogs we already have? After a telephone call to Bob Farris of Cedarwood Gun Dogs, the decision was made. We wanted a Pudelpointer. February 2005 our name was added to the long waiting list for a puppy from Cedarwood Gun Dogs.

"The" telephone call from Bob Farris came on July 20, 2005: my husband's birthday and our anniversary. Our puppy would be ready the following week. What an exciting present for us to receive!

We decided to drive out and pick her up, so the planning for trip began. We would be leaving in less than a week. I was so excited, I made our new girl a patchwork quilt and matching pillow for her trip home with us. Maps were purchased, a route was chosen. Our copy of "The Training and Care of the Versatile Hunting Dog" arrived; we were ready. We knew where we were going and we had our "Green Book", what more did we need?

Thus, *The Blind Retrieve* began at 5:00 am on a Thursday morning from Anoka, MN. This retrieve would not be made in a field or out of a boat, but in a Ford F250 Super Crew with two dogs in the backseat and towing a Coleman travel trailer. This retrieve would take our family from Minnesota, thru North Dakota, Montana, and Idaho.

During the long hours of traveling, I began to read NAVHDA's Aims Programs and Test Rules. I kept asking myself, "What have we gotten ourselves into? What do we know about training a dog to NAVHDA's standards? We are driving almost fifteen hundred miles one way to buy a bearded dog we have never seen. We do not know anything about the breed other than the research we did. We already have two dogs, how will they get along? How many times will the puppy potty on me on the way home? I never really appreciated a dog with a beard." Even with all these thoughts and concerns, we traveled onward.

By Friday afternoon, we were in Idaho Falls, Idaho. My husband called Bob Farris to inquire if he would be home for the evening. We were extremely far ahead of schedule, as originally we were not expected until Sunday. We would have to hurry, as Bob had plans for the evening.

Then the real driving began. While I was speeding down the interstate, my husband chewed off most of his fingernails; I'm still not sure if it was because of excitement and anticipation, or my driving. When we arrived, we found Bob to be a very gracious host, who welcomed us into his home. He gave us a quick tour, and introduced us to his family of dogs.

Soon, we met the new girl in our life. I really did not know what to think, I was slightly overwhelmed. We soon came to realize what a special little pup she was. This was probably after Bob gave her a swim in his pool. We also realized how much one-on-one time she was given during the extra week she stayed with the Farris. With her new collar (with name tag) in place, pleasantries and business concluded, it was time to head for home. We even had Bob sign our "Green Book".

Two hours into the trip, I turned to my husband with a sigh of satisfaction, because our little girl was incredibly cute, whiskers and all. During the trip home we were tempted to telephone Bob Farris and tell him how we had started calling him "Grandpa Bob" because it became obvious how much he had spoiled our girl during her extra week with him. And, our new girl, Autumn Lyn, did not potty on me, not even once on the trip home.

This goes to show our *Blind Retrieve* was not only enjoyable but also memorable. What a family adventure. If asked "Would you do it again?" We could only reply "Yes, in a heartbeat. When do we leave and who's driving?"