

“Here, this one has a spot on his head; the judges will like that.” With those words, Joyce Powell placed a 4-day old Brittany puppy in my hands. I told her I didn’t care about judges’ opinions; all I wanted was a good hunting dog. She just smiled. It would take some time for me to learn what she knew already: This pup and I would end up doing a lot more together than just hunting.

Jane and I lived only about 15 minutes from Ed and Joyce Powell and Ed and I had been hunting together for several years when I decided to get my own hunting dog. I liked his Brittanys, especially his old male, Shoni (FC Cinnabar’s Shoshone War Chief). The litter we were looking at was not sired by Shoni, but by one of his sons, a dog they called Slash (NGDC/DC/AFC Magnum’s Masked Man). “Is Slash as good as his sire?” I asked Ed. He assured me Slash was a pretty good dog and had actually won the National Gun Dog Championship not once but twice. To be honest, I thought Ed was exaggerating. But, I had hunted with Shoni, and with Washie (CH Shoshoni Washakie Siskkidee), the dam of the litter, so figured this pup would be a good hunter as well.

Living as close to the Powells as we did gave us a chance to visit the pup and his siblings every few days. We watched him grow and I bonded with him almost immediately. He was both sociable and adventurous. He loved to make paths in Joyce’s daylily beds, and pretty well destroyed them as he grew bigger. The instinct to hit the cover was apparent early.

This was my very first pure-bred dog, so picking a name for him became something of an obsession. After many attempts (including “Shoney’s Big Boy”, which only got groans from everyone), I finally came up with a name that incorporated his sire, dam, and grandsire: Masked Shoshoni War Chief.

We brought him home around Memorial Day and he and I spent the first summer doing practically everything together. Ed kept a littermate and we would get together often to train the puppies. Finally, hunting season came around. Chief was not a finely-tuned hunting dog during that first season, but I distinctly recall him pointing his first wild pheasant. I think Ed was as thrilled as I was when I put that bird in the bag.

Hunting season ended too soon, and I knew I wanted to be able to do something more with Chief during the off-season. Ed told me about hunt tests, so I did that until he finished his JH. The problem was, I had reached the limit of my talent as a trainer and knew I needed the help of a professional. Ed told me about several possible trainers and I finally settled on Bob Burchett. I told Bob when I delivered Chief to him that I didn’t want one of those “crazy run-off field trial dogs.” I just wanted a good hunting dog. Fortunately, Bob recognized that Chief had more to offer than just that and was successful in finally talking me into letting him enter Chief in some field trials. I agreed, despite some reservations. Ed and Joyce had nominated the litter for the futurity, so I considered it a favor to them more than anything else. Thus began a love affair with field trials and watching good dogs do what they are intended to do.

Ed turned out not only to be my mentor in training dogs hunting, he also gave me a lot of guidance and support in showing dogs. He taught me some grooming techniques and sponsored my membership in the local kennel club, where I took lessons in conformation handling. My first time at an actual show was almost a disaster, however. Brittanys were the first breed on the program, and I had the lowest number on my armband, so I had to enter the ring first. The judge went over Chief and had me take him around the ring. Halfway around, the lead slipped out of my hand. I yelled “Whoa!” and he stopped and turned to look back up at me to see what had happened. I was mortified, but bent over to retrieve the lead. In so doing, I stepped on his back foot and he let out a big yell. Needless to say, we didn’t win that day! I distinctly remember thinking to myself, however, that at least things have to get better from there.

Fortunately, they did.

In loving memory of a great dog.

Ken Windom