

More Than "Just A Pretty Face"

as printed in AKC Gazette, Jun 98 Miniature Pinscher Breed Column, courtesy of: Faith Gordon).

Westminster: What an exciting show for exhibitors and spectators! I had a party at my house to celebrate the occasion, and we all cheered at the TV as the Toy Group came in the ring. I was squirming in my seat to see who had won Best of Breed in Min Pins. I had my official list of the top-10 Min Pins in my hand and . . . wait! The Min Pin in the group, a red bitch handled by Kim Pastella, was not listed in the top 10. Where did she come from?

Ch. Sunsprite Absolutely Sable, also known as Abbey, is making a return to the show ring after a year at home. Here is her story:

Abbey came as a puppy from Marcia Tucker (of Sunsprite) to Pastella. Pastella, who usually has a Boxer at the end of her lead, hails from three generations of dog handlers and is no stranger to the group ring at Westminster, having twice handled a Boxer to win the Working Group there. Pastella's grandfather, Chic Ceccarini, won the group in 1986 with a Boxer. Her mother, Loretta Ceccarini Parolisi, also shows Boxers.

A few days after her Westminster win, I spoke to Pastella when our paths crossed at Rich Stadium in Buffalo, N.Y., home of the Buffalo Bills. (Football has not "gone to the dogs," but the stadium has opened its doors to dog shows.) I asked her, "How does it feel to win at the Garden, and where did this bitch come from, as she was not in the current top 10? "

Pastella said that Abbey had finished her championship at a young age. Although they had planned on campaigning her as a special when she matured, she ended up at home as the pet of Pastella's grandfather Chic. For over a year, while he was bedridden with a long-term illness, Abbey was a "comforting bed bug" and his constant companion. Until his passing at the age of 92, Abbey hardly left his side.

Pastella indicated that although the atmosphere of the Garden is always exciting, her win this year with Abbey was an especially emotional experience for her. She knew how wonderful it would have been if her granddad could have seen his beloved companion go Best of Breed at Westminster.

But somehow, listening to Pastella, I have to suspect that he was there with his "girls" the whole time. Later the same day, I was able to catch up with AKC judge Robert Moore at the Orchard Park, N.Y. show. Moore has judged Min Pins for more than 30 years, and I knew I could count on him for an interesting bit of Miniature Pinscher lore. With that ever-present twinkle in his eye, he said he would share some Min Pin history with me.

Back in the 1940s, Moore was acquainted with Hank and Muddy Hearn of Memphis, Tenn., who worked for handler Johnny Banks. They bought a red Min Pin male, named White Court Sir Socko, who developed a white spot on his side from a distemper shot and could not be shown.

The Hearn's then purchased a female, Tejas Triple Troubles, but they could not get Socko and Troubles to breed. So Troubles was bred to another male and producing one champion from that breeding.

At the age of 12, Socko had never sired a litter of puppies, and the 7 year-old Troubles had produced only the one litter.

One day, while Hank was at the post office and Muddy was working in the kennel, their elderly yard helper ran into the office hollering, "Miss Muddy! Miss Muddy! You got to come quick! There is something awful wrong with Socko and Troubles in the kitchen!"

Well, this "something awful" resulted in one litter that produced Ch. Mudhen Acres Red Snapper (known as "Slats"), who went on to sire Ch. Mudhen Acres Happy Heart. As the Hearn's were getting on in years, "Happy Heart" was given to Ann Dutton of Sanbrook, and is in the pedigrees behind many of the champion Min Pins of today, stemming from the early days of the Sanbrook lineage.