

Red's Big Win

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It seems so long ago that it was February. For most people, that means only old snow and Valentine's Day. For many of us it means only one thing: Westminster television coverage, as we root for our friends and favorites in this canine "Run for the Roses."

Ch. Winter's The Red Pony, this year's Miniature Pinscher Best of Breed Winner at Westminster, had a rather auspicious start in life, as told by his breeder-owner Katie Winters of Salinas, Calif., our guest writer for this month.

I hate to admit it, but the fact remains that Red's conception was planned and executed by Ch. Winter Wardance and Ch. Winters Song with no input from me. I witnessed the breeding in a state of dismay and was definitely the uninvited guest present at their nuptial bliss.

When Red was 8 weeks old, I sold him for a nominal fee to a pet home. The buyers also owned an older Australian Shepherd bitch. As the sale was made, I thought to myself, "This puppy is too pretty to let go," but by then I felt I just couldn't change my mind. Well, fortunately for me, upon arrival at his new home, Red commenced to terrorize the timid Aussie bitch. The new owners tried hard to make the dogs adjust to each other, but Red's high spirits and nonstop activity sunk the older bitch into a state of depression, and she quit eating. Red lasted a week before the new owners decided he had to go. With eternal gratitude, I returned their money and welcomed him back home.

I decided the puppy needed a name. Because I live in Salinas, Calif., the birthplace and hometown of John Steinbeck, the title of his book *The Red Pony* seemed appropriate for my prancing, red Min Pin puppy.

Red had a successful puppy show career, finishing his championship at 9 months with a Group 1 and several Group placements. He was the Puppy Sweepstakes winner at the 1999 MPCA National Specialty in Florida. Red has at least two Westminster breed winners in his immediate past. In 1996, his grandmother, who I am fortunate to own, Ch. Seville's Unchained Melody, won Best of Breed. I fully intended to accompany her to New York myself, but a month before I had the misfortune of losing my balance and falling off my bicycle, ending up with a compound fracture and broken leg and ankle. Needless to say, I didn't make it to the Garden that year.

Since beginning this show career at age 6 months, Red has experienced 10 different handlers. To the credit of both the dog and the handlers, Red remained relatively unperturbed by this. At Westminster, Red was piloted to Best of Breed by his newest handler and friend, Pam Dzuik. His future plans are to play out his show career with Pam and Eddie Dzuik on the East Coast -; all the while knowing that he is sorely missed and loved by his mother on the West Coast.