IN THE BEGINNING
Creating the Boykin Spaniel Registry

By KATHARINE “KITTY” DUVAL BEARD

IT IS ACTUALLY MIND BOGGLING to look back thirty-eight years and realize what the work done in the beginning days of the Society, accomplished. And work it was!! Meeting upon meeting, letters, and forms to and from Boykin owners, national registries, artists wanting to get on the bandwagon, and on and on. ¶ In reviewing minutes and Newsletters from those days it is simply amazing to see how much energy was expended in such a short amount of time. But the Founders succeeded beyond their wildest dreams and the Boykin spaniel breed now has a registry of its own and is a recognized breed by national dog registries. The breed is now showing at the Westminster Dog show, which is not something the Founders thought might be interested in the breed. This letter included a questionnaire; would they be willing to pay $10.00 to join, did they presently have a Boykin or had they owned one in the past, were they a breeder or had they been and did they own bitches or dogs. It left a place for them to include names of others who might be interested in joining in this effort.

The primary reasons for the founding of The Boykin Spaniel Society were: to promote the breeding of purebred Boykin spaniels, establish standards of the breed, encourage sportsmanlike competition in field trials, and establish a Boykin spaniel registry. In反射, the Society has more than accomplished its objectives.

In the spring of 1977, Peter McKoy, a local Camden veterinarian, raised in nearby Sumter, SC, contacted a few of L. W. “Whit” Boykin’s (the founder of the Boykin spaniel breed), descendants. He expressed to them his concerns about what he was seeing in his veterinary practice. What was being called a Boykin spaniel was becoming very “loose”. He suggested a few of them meet with him to discuss what could be done. The rest is history.

It goes without saying that Whit Boykin may have started the Boykin spaniel breed but Dr. McKoy, without any doubt, saved it and set it on the path to becoming a legitimate established breed. Among those related to Whit Boykin and were the Founders of the BSS were grandparents, L. W. “Whit” Boykin, II and his wife, Alice Shoolbred and Dr. W. Baynard Boykin and his wife Matilda “Tillie” Sweet, all of Boykin, SC, great-grandson, Henry E. Beard, III and his wife Katharine “Kitty” DuVal of Camden and great-great nephew, Edmund “Beaver” Hardy of Columbia, SC. An aside is that Kitty Beard was also related to Whit Boykin and even though she and Henry live in Camden now, they both grew up in Boykin.

All of the Founders had grown up with Boykins as pets and hunted the breed and a majority had been breeders. But, the one Founder who never owned or hunted a Boykin was Dr. McKoy, (the founder of the Boykin spaniel breed), descendants. The first meetings of the founders was held at Millway, the home of Alice and Whit Boykin. Others who aided the founders in establishing the Society were Christie F. Gordon-Creed (now Tauscher) of Camden, Margaret Rowland (now Plowden) of Wedgefield, SC, Dr. Eddie DuRant of Sumter, SC and Ann and John Chappell of Leesville, SC. T. Alexander “Alex” Beard served as the attorney in those early days, free of charge. His also a great-grandson of Whit Boykin and Henry Beard’s brother.

To show how old fashioned the world was in the 1970’s, making this effort even more arduous, the original correspondence, all minutes, newsletters, etc. were typed by Kitty Beard with a manual Royal typewriter on a card table in Henry and Kitty’s guest room. A letter was sent July 5, 1977 to those on a mailing list for the Boykin–Caney yearly picnic and others who the Founders thought might be interested in the breed. This letter included a questionnaire; would they be willing to pay $10.00 to join, did they presently have a Boykin or had they owned one in the past, were they a breeder or had they ever been and did they own bitches or dogs. It left a place for them to include names of others who might be interested in joining in this effort.

From the minutes of the September 20, 1977 meeting: $1,870.00 had been collected in membership dues, $198.83 paid out in expenses including reimbursing Whit Boykin, Baynard Boykin, Henry Beard and Peter McKoy $15.00 each for their contribution of $35.00 to get the project started, leaving $10.00 each for their membership dues. Also, approved was the purchase of a three drawer fireproof filing cabinet and other materials necessary to keep records. The Newsletter that went out October 10, 1977 reported, “We have a total of approximately 200 members.” The Society was well on its way.

The group working on establishing the Society named themselves the Steering Committee for Organization that consisted of Peter McKoy, Whit Boykin, II, Baynard Boykin, Henry Beard, Edmund Hardy, and Margaret Rowland with Tillie Boykin serving as executive secretary and Kitty Beard as recording secretary. Their task was to: write and propose a Constitution and By-laws for the membership to vote on, incorporate the Society for tax purposes (this was done by Alex Beard), and decide on what approach would be used in collecting records.
for the registry and proceed with this. They also asked members to serve on the Board of Directors and held an election which brought an end to this committee’s work.

The Constitution and By-Laws were written and passed in 1977 and in the spring of 1978 the first board of directors was elected. Even though the majority of the founders were couples it was decided it was more appropriate for only one spouse to serve on the BOD’s at any one time. They were Mrs. Ethan Allen, Mrs. (Kitty) H. E. Beard, III, L. W. Boykin, II, W. Baynard Boykin, John P. Chappell, Eddie C. Durant, Sr., Philip R. Fidler, Benjamin Hagood, Edmund H. Hardy, Peter B. McKoy, and Herman A. Moore. Dr. McKoy served as Chairman, Edmund Hardy as Vice-Chairman and Kitty Beard as Secretary-Treasurer.

The board’s first meeting was held May 20, 1978 at the First National Bank in Camden. Kitty Beard asked the board if Tillie Boykin could assist her in acting as Treasurer which she had done on the Steering Committee. This was approved. Because many members of the Board of Directors lived too far away to attend frequent meetings it was decided to appoint an Executive Committee to continue the work begun on the breed standard and proceed with establishing a registry. Those appointed to the Executive Committee were Peter McKoy, Edmund Hardy, Philip Fidler, Herman Moore, John Chappell, Baynard Boykin, Whit Boykin, II, Alice Boykin, Tillie Boykin and Kitty Beard.

The Steering Committee had already obtained advice from the AKC and American Field on establishing standards and formulating a Registry. To set the breed standard questionnaires were sent out asking people to measure and describe their dog. There were 84 responses. In addition, those on the committee brought their dogs (12) and examined, weighed, and measured them.

From minutes of the committee: “The Executive Committee realized there was no way to roll back the clock and set a standard of a dog that existed 30-40 years ago. Even now there are differences of opinion of what the breed looked like among people who owned Boykins then. Because of this confusion and difference of opinion, the committee decided to take the Boykin spaniel as it exists today and come up with a composite which would be used to establish a Standard for the breed.”

The main reason the Executive Committee was able to reach a compromise and follow through with setting a breed standard was that they kept reminding each other a standard for the breed HAS to be established to guarantee the future of the Boykin spaniel. To convey what a tall order this was it took four hours for the committee to agree on the height and weight of the dog and bitch.

After the breed standard had been written it was voted on by the membership and adopted in January 1979. It was not recorded who contributed the most work on which projects but it goes without saying that Tillie Boykin hefted the most weight in the actual writing of the standards after the committee decided on the criteria.

The most difficult task accomplished in the beginning years was setting up the registry. It was decided to follow the American Field criteria in case the Society decided to go the national route and turn the registry over to them. This would require 100 dogs with four generations of pedigree. The Committee set out to select Foundation Stock for the Boykin Spaniel Registry. Foundation Stock applications were accepted between August 1, 1979 and August 1, 1980.

An application for Foundation Stock had to be written first and sent to every owner of a Boykin spaniel who could be located. Everyone who had served on the Steering Committee and on the Executive Committee was involved in this mammoth task. To actually study the applications for Foundation Stock, a committee was appointed. The Selection Committee for Foundation Stock consisted of Baynard Boykin, Whit Boykin, II, Edmund Hardy, Eddie DuRant and John Chappell. This group met quarterly to approve or deny foundation stock applications.

A dog had to be a year old by August 1, 1980 to apply as Foundation Stock. The Society began accepting applications on August 1, 1979. A detailed application of a description and measurements plus three photographs, front, right and left sides was submitted to the Selection Committee. In addition, on the back of the form the applicant included as
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much pedigree he/she had on the dog. Those dogs born
between August 1, 1979-1980 had to file extension forms
with the Society before August 1, 1980 to be judged at one
year old. If both parents were Foundation Stock the offspring
still had to be judged independently as Foundation Stock if
born before August 1, 1980. Only dogs born after August 1,
1980 with both dam and sire being Foundation Stock were
registered Boykin spaniels.

The Society’s goal was to have a minimum of 100 dogs as
Foundation Stock and they were wildly successful. The mem-
erbership was encouraged through Newsletters to get their appli-
cations in. It was repeatedly stressed that without your dog being
Foundation Stock there was no opportunity to have their offspring
be among the first registered Boykin spaniels. After it was all
said and done there were 677 Foundation Stock dogs/bitches.

During all of this process and shortly after the Registry came
into being the Society began to realize that a national registry
would not monitor the dogs being registered as they were
doing. Because the Society wanted to keep close tabs on the
development of the breed and track it’s “march” toward the
breed standard, the Board of Directors voted to keep the Boykin
Spaniel Registry, the official registry of the breed.

The popularity and sudden interest in the breed was the
result of an article in THE SOUTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE
MAGAZINE in 1975 about the Boykin spaniel by Mike Creel.
That is what precipitated some of the indiscriminate breeding
that Dr. McKoy was seeing in his office and inspired him to
contact descendants in the spring of 1977. Mr. Creel wrote an
article for OUTDOOR LIFE in 1980 that took the breed na-
tional on a grand scale.

In October, 1979 the Society had 400 members and by
October, 1981 there were 1,339 members as a result of Mike
Creel’s article in OUTDOOR LIFE. Mike Creel and Lynn Kelley
published the book, THE BOYKIN SPANIEL in 1997 and
published the revised edition in 2009 but this was after the
breed was well established and had been named the South
Carolina State Dog. Edmund Hardy headed up the effort to
get the breed named the South Carolina State Dog which was
a tremendous task in itself.

The first “Field Trial” was held in the spring of 1980 at
Edmund Hardy’s Rice Pond in Elgin, SC. There were sixty-one
dogs entered. This afforded Boykin owners to “meet and eat”
for the first time in one place to compare dogs who were being
called Boykin spaniels. According to the Newsletters in those
eyearly days Boykin spaniel pups were selling for $150.00 each.
The Society over the years has continued to grow and improve.
It shares the expense with breeders (who have their dogs)
x-rayed and DNA tested for genetics problems. In addition to
the National Field Trials there are now regional BSS sanctioned
Hunt Tests. The difference in a field trial, such as Nationals,
and a hunt test is that the dogs compete against a written
standard, not against other dogs or handlers.

Several concerns were voiced by those involved in starting
this venture. As Dr. Eddie DuRant informed the group if they
were successful they would have a “tiger by the tail” and once
the “Genie was out of the bottle” there would be no putting him
back. Among the concerns were; the Founders did not want the
Boykin to lose notoriety of being a companionable gun dog. In
other words they did not want the breed to end up being bred
only to participate in field trials so they would be valued as
breeding stock to sell puppies. They wanted them to continue
as house pets and retrievers as they had in the past. The other
thing the Founders did not want them to be was show dogs. So
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So the Society has been “almost” totally successful and that
is the best that can be hoped for. Unfortunately, there will
always people who want to profit “off of a good thing” and that
has been true in this instance. With the good ALWAYS comes
the bad so buyers are continually encouraged to check out their
breeders carefully before purchasing a Boykin.

When it is all said and done though, the Society has more
than accomplished what they set out to do. We now have over
31,000 registered Boykin spaniels in all states and many foreign
countries. The boards that followed the earlier boards have
consistently tried to build on the early days to make improve-
ments on what was first done. This has only been through hard
work and dedication to the “little brown dog” that doesn’t “rock
the boat” that Whit Boykin envisioned around the turn of the
20th century when Alex White sent him Dumpy.