



Sandy Hesse, owner of Countrymanor Cavaliers of Dakota Dunes holds two Cavalier King Charles puppies. Hesse shows and sells this loveable breed.

photo by Kim Fickett

Love for dogs turns hobby into something more

By Kim Fickett

What began as a hobby has evolved into an unexpected business venture for Sandy Hesse, owner of Countrymanor Cavaliers of Dakota Dunes. Countrymanor Cavaliers breeds Cavalier King Charles puppies for sale and trains them for dog shows.

"When my kids were 13 and 15, I decided I needed a hobby since they were getting older," said Hesse. "I got a standard poodle female show puppy and I showed standard poodles for about seven years. Then I decided life was too short to blow dry a dog for five hours. It was about that same time the Cavaliers were accepted into the AKC (American Kennel Club) and I saw my first Cavalier in the show ring. It was then that I knew I had to have one."

Hesse said it was the breeds' head, size and "big brown melting eyes" that drew her in.

The business all began with two dogs from Eagle, NE. Fourteen years later,

Hesse's 25 dogs used for showing and breeding have a five-acre tract of land to call their own, including a 22 by 55-foot dog room.

"I first got a male show dog and then got a female show dog and finished both of them to their AKC and Canadian championships," said Hesse. "I had my first litter and it was such a fantastic litter that I kept three of the dogs. They all went on to become AKC champions and it evolved from there."

Hesse said learning the ins and outs of the trade has not always been easy.

"(I learned to do this) by trial and error," said Hesse. "I got a mentor named Barbara Hill who is from Omaha and began talking to people."

"Barbara's been a great help because she's been in the breed for 30 years and has also judged Cavaliers in CKCSC USA," she said.

"She reinforced that what I was seeing in puppy potential is what she was seeing also. We pretty much had the same idea but it's always nice to have that confirmed

by another person."

Hesse said she attends one to two shows each month and will typically travel anywhere from three to five hours. Some of the most recent shows Hesse attended included shows in St. Joseph, MO, Des Moines, IA and St. Cloud, MN. On occasion, Hesse has traveled outside the region to attend the Anniversary Show at the Blenheim Palace in England and a club show in Scotland. Hesse said she also tries to attend nationals every year.

"I just love the dogs and love working with them and enjoy training and placing puppies," said Hesse. "I retired over six months ago as a social worker for the State of Iowa after 34 years and was doing adoption work for the last few years there. Doing puppy adoptions is a little similar but not as hectic."

Hesse and her husband Jay have two children, Mi-

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chael and Sonja, and five grandchildren. She grew up in Sioux City and is a graduate of Heelan High School. Hesse graduated from Iowa State University in 1973 with a bachelor of science degree in sociology and a minor in psychology and family environment.

She is a member of two national Cavalier groups and the local Sioux Valley Kennel Club.

"I love being with the dogs," said Hesse. "They have such a joy for living and they always make me feel special."