

Getting “Hooked” at Mashomack

PART 4 - BY KUNI Y. SMITH

Lake Halcyon

IT WAS A COLD AND GREY WINTER DAY AT MASHOMACK HUNT CLUB IN UPSTATE NEW YORK. RECENT SNOW FALL HAD PUT OVER TWO FEET OF SNOW ON THE GROUND AND MOST OF IT WAS STILL THERE. AN EGG SHELL CRUST HAD FORMED ON THE TOP LAYER MAKING THE GOING VERY DIFFICULT AS EACH STEP QUICKLY BROKE THROUGH RESISTANCE AND SUNK INTO THE POWDER BELOW.

Dan Lussen was working with my American Cocker, “Puppie,” today for his first real walkup. Dan’s training of “Puppie” had progressed enough to have him ready

and “steady” enough to go out along with his lab, Sarah, hunting pheasants.

In no time at all, I was exhausted! It was so difficult to walk through the deep snow. The more tired I got, however, the wider the smile on my face as I watched Sarah and Puppie work the field. Puppie was so intent on keeping pace with Sarah. He bounded through the snow leaping upwards with each stride. His stamina was incredible. He would not stop. Being small was not going to be a handicap for him!

At one point, Dan shot and dropped a pheasant just behind a barbed wire fence. Puppie raced right towards the bird and the fence! My heart stopped! “It’s OK,” said Dan. “Don’t worry.” Puppie had spotted a hole in middle of the fence and jumped right through, grabbed the bird



Puppie with his hunting partner.



Dan and his dog Sarah and Puppie

and came back through the same hole in the fence!

After several soothing "Good Boys" from Dan, Puppie was sent off again, and again he bounded and bounded through the snow. I could not believe his stamina! Soon another flush, another shot but this time the bird dropped far away in the other corn field. Dan called Puppie and Sarah back and said that we would pick it up on our way back.

About 20 minutes later we passed that corn field. "Dead! Dead!" called Dan as he sent Puppie in. I was sure he would not be able to find it. But, sure enough, out bounded this little guy, bird in mouth! As he dropped his retrieve and looked up at Dan to get his congratulatory words, he seemed to have such a smile on him.

Back in the club house, in front of a warming fire, I was asked by friends how "Puppie" did. "Very, very, well," said Dan. "I think you have an honest to goodness hunting dog here." I was so happy and proud to hear those words! I was cold, I was tired, but watching "Puppie" today, I saw everything come together. I was hooked!



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