

A long road to winning

It began long before the day in 1936 when at New York financier A. G. C. Sage's Plantation in Alabama Clyde Morton told Man Rand to breed the illustrious black- marked Luminary to The Ranger Girl, a daughter of Jack Harper's three-time Continental winner The Texas Ranger. But For an arbitrary starting point, that is a good one.

From the mating came Luminary's Jane, the dam of War Storm, which won the Free For All, Continental and National.

That was breeding royalty to royalty in the days of sportsmanship and plantation domination of the field trial enterprise.

They might have dreamed it, but could not have known that 71 years and 8 generations later a liver marked descendent his owners named Funseeker's Rebel would be making a distant chapter of field trial history.

We start considering in some detail the liver-marked Pointer's genetic roadmap – granite solid -- about mid-way, or, 36 years ago, with a few facts from the route to 2007, when he posed after defeating 109 entries at Chinquapin Farm, was runner-up over 100 in the celebrated Continental and stood with owners and connections on the steps of Ames Manor to be crowned National Champion.

These are the times I know facts about along that road, From the time two younger sisters to the great Oklahoma Flush were bred to royalty of the day. No fiction, no second hand.

In 1965, Kenneth L. Keesee of Holdenville, Oklahoma, took his relatively cold-blooded but superb hunting dog Baconrind's Sandy to Leesburg, Georgia, bred her to Paladin's Royal Flush and brought her home to whelp a premier litter of major field trial winners. Three placed in the American Field Quail Futurity, four became champions, including Oklahoma Flush, two females with great accomplishments for Hoyt Henley.

Mrs. Keesee made gravy for them every morning, raising them in a pen near her back door. K. L. walked the pastures with them and he would take one or the other to the coffee shop, styling it up on the corner sidewalk. As coming Derbies he took them to his friend John S. Gates. And as it's said, the rest is history.

Mr. Keesee repeated the breeding. But would hardly even talk of selling a pup, keeping them "till we look at them." He made an exception for two females which he let Lee West and me buy.

They became Barshoe Cuz and Whileaway Royal Ann, both to be championship producers. In 1971, Wesr not being a breeder but a developer, I shipped Cuz to Fred Arant's kennel in South Carolina and she

was bred to A Rambling Rebel. She whelped the litter of four at my Whileaway kennel near Stigler in eastern Oklahoma and they were raised here. In the 5-generations of Rebel's sire there are, of course, 30 places for names. Ten of them are filled with dogs whelped here, four others by dogs that produced here.

Tommy Long, who made an indelible record as trainer and scout for both John Gates was working here as they grew and he flawlessly yard worked the male. He was staunch and always happy. I ran him in the Oklahoma Puppy classic, short of age and range on Cov's big course. He would become Buckboard. A west Oklahoma dentist turned him down for a short three-figure price, and a division of our dogs sent him to other ownership and care of Bud Daugherty to become champion and Hall of Fame member. He twice appears in Funseeker's Rebel's five-generation pedigree.

About the same time, I drove Ann to Hoyle Eaton's in north Mississippi where she was bred to Riggins White Knight. There were 13 pups whelped in the same pen as Cuz' litter. She raised them all. One would become Greener Pastures, a large, fast, determined bird-finder which Long broke, the dam of Ch. Big Sky's Rebel and the female Gallery Gossip. Gossip was bred to Rebel Hawk to get Double Rebel Lady, edging closer up right to left in the pedigree of Funseeker's Rebel.

There is also another dash of Keesee breeding. K. L. drove a female he saved from the first Sandy litter, Flush's Royal Sally, to Leesburg, breeding at Cap'n Gates advise to then double Derby champion Flush's Country Squire. From this came The Texas Squire and a member of this pedigree. There enters one of the many truly great females in the list, Pinewood Gussie. She was bred to Edwin Brown's national champion Squire to get a champion female, David Suits' Texas Squire's Judy. Gussie produced five champions including the memorable Ch. Texas Silver Spur. In her advancing years, her owner, the late J R. Elliott, brought her here to be bred to Rebel's Final Hero. When he dropped the tailgate, the orange female hit the ground in charge, styled up, head high, bold, tail straight up. Her demeanor bespoke importance.

Also enter another major contributor in the person of Tony Terrell, trainer, handler, and teacher. His camp on the Packsaddle in the sandy shinnery country south of Arnett, is legend both for dogs, people and good times, including Funseeker's trainer Fred Dileo, who knocked the shinnery and learned so much, applied as he developed Funseeker, his sire, dam and grandsire. Lots of miles. Lots of championships won on the prairie where nature lives and thrills afield are unmatched.

Now a resident of Canton, Texas, semi-retired, Terrell, a sage bird dog man who understands how to develop a quality, true all age dog, horseman enough to do the job, willing to put out the effort it requires. Judy was in his string for Colorado sportsman Suitts and he engineered a mating to Buckboard, having seen the dog a lot traveling with the Daughertys. Among the litter was Greenbrier Buckboard Great grandsire of Funseeker, owned by Dr. Mike Furcolow of Boulder, Colorado.

Meantime, I purchased a female pup from D. Hoyle Eaton, a daughter of White Knight and an Arkansas Ranger female which became Swingin Thru. And would she swing. She won the Caddo puppy classic I so coveted and many another for K. L. Keese's son, Buddy. She stands among the all-time producers of winners.

By time to breed her I had brought a dog I had long wanted to the kennel. We were at the Continental, and Fred Arant said, John, do you still want Dan?" Of course I did.

Friend Raymond Rucker chuckled that I had told him , "I just love Double Rebel Dan; he gets away almost every time." Power extraordinary.

When Swingin Thru, Liz, was bred to Dan there was a gorgeous liver-marked female, an all-out, gliding dog in the litter. Swing Along, solid young dog stake winner, later purchased by Suitts, she became one of the only females to produce three prairie champions. Terrell got her bred to Jumper Jim, his Buckboard -- Judy futurity winner, and from that came Furcolow's benchmark winner and meritorious sire Ch. Double Rebel Jack. Terrell then got Suitts to breed her to Buckboard to get Ch. Thunderclap, undoubtedly one of the fastest dogs ever, simply astonishing on the prairie. When Swing Along was sold to Stephen Harwood, she was again bred to Jumper Jim and got record-setting Ch. Rebel Wrangler. Jack and Thunderclap, Clyde, are in the pedigree we here consider along with a daughter of Swing Along, Comin Thru from her My Main Man litter.

After Dan was lost to heart worms, I wanted Rebel Hawk, but Fred was breeding him and wanted to keep him at Barnwell. We were at the South Carolina summer program. He told me Bob had been missing females. Fred also said they had treated him for some infection, but I could have him if I wanted to take him and try him. I figured the treatment had temporarily sterilized him. He was shipped in a few days. I took him to the vet and heart worm treatment started that day, the old arsenic shot series Fred so feared. He wrote saying not to treat him "just get what we can." He was already in treatment, heart worms endemic to the low country of South Carolina. Bob was often bred and never missed getting pups again. What a

wonderful dog he was, such sensitive eye. Kind. So handsome and fast in his youth.

Tommy Long still remembers in Detroit, where he lives playing golf for pasttime, the day on Blue Springs Plantation he and Joe Odom were working together preparing for the Continenta. He had Palariel Stormy Clown. Joe had Bob which was pulling a chain contraption. They called themselves “trying to slow him down.” Remembering “like it Wa yesterday, “In a while he came flying past me. I hollered at Joe, “your dog’s lost his chains.” Then, “oh, no he ain’t, I just thought so he was goin so fast.” Hawk’s major win was runnerup in the Continental, won by Buckboard.

On the top side of Funseeker’s pedigree, Hawk joins Buckboard and Double Rebel Dan , appearing three times twice, through his daughter, Double Rebel Lady, and Ch. Barshoe Brute, by Bob’s son, Mortlach, Also, on the dam’s side, Bob’s son Hawk’s Rex (sire of the magnificent Whippoorwill Rebel) appears. Both Brute, a hall of fame member, and Mortlach were whelped in the red house pen where Buckboard, Swing Along and others saw light of day.

A Rebel Funseeker is. He carries the genetics of three sons and one daughter of A Rambling Rebel, woven with the Gates and Eaton families of Pointers.

Rodney Aldridge is another without whom there would be no Funseeker’s Rebel. For a number of years he avidly bred and ran his dogs, insisting on speed and range. He bought a pup when Terry Flansberg bred Gallery Gossip to Rebel Hawk. Double Rebel Lady was small and ultra speedy. She was then bred To Ch. Barshoe Brute by Aldridge to get the many-times winning Brute’s Berta, in turn, breeding her to Ch. Double Rebel Jack to produce the dam of Funseeker’s sire, Ch. Double Rebel Sonny. Sonny, a main stay in the Dileo string, was owned by Furcolow and retired after the 03 prairie season and a convincing if unrewarded performance at the Madsen Ranch in the All America.

Of Funseeker’s pretty orange marked dam, I wrote after the ’97 All America:

The first dog on the drawing sheet for the 84th All America Prairie Championship was Funseeker’s Gem. Her hour came just before noon and her accomplishment raised the level of the stake to such a height that the performance hill for the remaining 33 would be near impossible to climb. None did. She was but a hair off perfect. Totally thrilling.

Gem’s four finds on grouse and prairie chicken set her apart. And an hour of speed and hunting in an enormous forward pattern was the equal of

this, one of the most challenging prairie courses a bird dog was ever sent across.

Forget the old saw that great female performers don't produce.

Though I have no first-hand knowledge of her background, a casual glance sees superiority on paper as well as in the field.

Immediately is seen that two more of the great females, Jerry's Runaway Bandit and Nell's Rambling On figure in her mix.

Bandit comes through her champion son, Bandit's Wildfire when she was bred to Ch. White Knight's Bullet

Nell appears twice, both through her Hall of Fame son, Guard Rail.

Another Rebel cross comes through the champion and producer Rail "Hawk, out of the producing daughter of Hawk's Rex by Rebel Hawk putting him as mentioned on top and bottom of the pedigree.

1971 Continental winner Virginia Pine, handled by George Clark for Tom Liesfeld is also there, continuing the Dixie plantation connection.

It requires oh so much effort from so many over so many years. Hours, miles, expense.

But in the final analysis it took the genial Miamians Frank and Mercy Fonseca to make the decision to breed Gem to Sonny, to keep the pup with Fred Dileo and constantly support him.

The barn red whelping house is still on the hill, but the pens around it have gone from more than 100 pointer inhabitants to four. Riff, a daughter of Rebel Echo Sis and Brute, her daughter, Sweet Magnolia, and two granddaughters. Tess' win of the Oklahoma puppy classic was the last I'll handle. The walking horses in the pasture are just watched and fed.