

LOOKING BACK TO THE FUTURE

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In 2005 Hovawart Club of America will be celebrating its 10th anniversary as a Club. At times I enjoy looking back at what happened ten years ago, compare it to the growth of the Club today and project where it will take us in the future. I have pulled out the first issues of the newsletter and would like to share with you what was going on back then. Most of you may not know this, but the newsletter preceeds the Club with more than a year. Hovawart Club of America was officially established in 1995 when we adopted our By-Laws and the first officials were instated. However, more than a year before that the foundation for the Club was laid down by volunteer work by engaged Hovawart owners who were getting together across the country. One of the first things they did was to start a newsletter, *The Hovawart*, that later became the official newsletter of HCA.

Inga-Lill and I were the editors of *The Hovawart* for the first seven years. It is with very nostalgic feelings that I look at the first issues of the newsletter. They are all in black and white, the first two even without pictures. Issue number three has several black and white scanned pictures, but the technology in those days were lightyears behind today's software and desktop capability. I remember my frustrations when printing issue number three which was 12 pages and had three graphic images and four Clip Art cartoons. My computer was a top of the line IBM with 20 MB hard drive. I had an impressive 1 MB of RAM and my processor was considered very fast (25 Megahertz). In those days no one had yet heard of Pentium, let alone all the generations of it to come later. When I created the newsletter I had to split it up on four different files since I was running out of RAM memory. The first page, which contained a picture of a Hovawart, took about 10 minutes to load into the computer. Still, it was a labor of love and we did it to bring Hovawart owners around the country together.

In the very first newsletter, dated December 1993, we optimistically announced that Hovawart Club of America had been formed. However, three paragraphs later we admitted that the club was small and *"a group of three has volunteered to be the first informal officials and get the organization going"*. The truth was we were the only three and we were indeed informal. Beth Lynch was the "informal secretary" and Inga-Lill and I were the editors of the newsletter. We proclaimed our purpose as *"to increase communication between hovawart owners around the country. The means to achieve that include this newsletter you are holding in your hand"*. The first newsletter was mainly a presentation of who we were, what we wanted to do, and a request for feedback from other Hovawart owners in the country.

The second issue of the newsletter was published in April 1994. The big news was that Palm Beach Hovawart had folded and we had rescued the remaining 14 dogs. We were Beth Lynch (who was the major force behind the rescue) and Inga-Lill and myself. Palm Beach Hovawart was only the second US Hovawart kennel at the time. The very first one was owned by Nancy Gyes in San Jose, California. She had been breeding hovawarts for a couple of years and she also had contacts with several German Clubs.

By 1994 she was starting to scale back and focused instead her efforts on other breeds and onto competing nationally in agility. Palm Beach Hovawart was founded in 1989 by Brian Vaughan who had fallen in love with the breed and decided to import dogs for breeding from Germany. The Hovawart newsletter described what happened:

"Tragically, he [Brian] would not live to see the end of his project. An unknown assailant shot and killed Brian in early 1992 during a suspected robbery attempt. Palm Beach Hovawart continued under the leadership of Brian's partner Jeff Lippe. Between 1992 and 1994 33 dogs were sold to owners all over the country."

By the spring of 1994 it was clear that Jeff Lippe was not able to continue Brian Vaughan's dream and there was also growing concern about the quality of the dogs from Palm Beach Hovawart. Beth Lynch talked Jeff into turning over the remaining dogs to a newly formed limited partnership called "Guardian of the Manor, Ltd.". Beth was in charge of GOM and arranged for the transfer of the dogs from Florida to temporary quarters in Poolsville, Maryland. Suddenly we were in the possession of 14 hovawarts who had been retired from breeding and now needed new homes. We were asking the readers of the newsletter if they had any interest in adopting dogs or if they knew of anyone looking for a hovawart. Twelve of the fourteen dogs were females and the ages ranged from 2-4 years. These were very uncertain times. I remember the anxiety we all felt. There were considerable costs involved, buying out Jeff Lippe, and we did not know if there were enough Hovawart enthusiasts in the US to find homes for all the dogs. Some of that anxiety was evident in the third issue of the newsletter.

By the time the third issue of the newsletter was published in June 1994 things had gone from bad to worse. We now knew that almost all the dogs from Palm Beach Hovawart had hip problems. Beth Lynch wrote:

Every dog in the kennel was X-rayed. Ono, the sire of every litter except one, had his X-rays examined by three independent veterinarians, all of whom concluded that his hips were "just terrible", "the worst I've ever seen".

Only three of the fourteen dogs from Palm Beach Hovawart had a "Good" reading. All of Ono's pups in the kennel had severe hip dysplasia. Outside the rescued kennel only two of Ono's offspring had been X-rayed, but none of them had normal hips. The rest of the newsletter was filled with detailed biographies of each of the dogs in an effort to find people willing to adopt them. It was hard, but in the end we were able to place all fourteen dogs. Inga-Lill and I adopted one of them, Ester von den Kämpen. We renamed her Dixie and she lived to be almost fifteen years. The newsletter also included a letter from Sandy who adopted Ono, the leading male stud of the kennel. It showed how the love of the breed surpassed any problems with the hips. She started her letter:

"What can I say except that I'M IN LOVE! Being with Ono is more than I ever hoped it could be."

The last four pages of the June 1994 newsletter were devoted to an article about the science behind hip dysplasia. When reading it today, ten years later, it still feels

relevant and not much of the science has changed since then. We may reprint it in the future if the newsletter editor agrees.

That is all for now in this "retro" review. In future issues of the newsletter I will come back and review again what happened about ten years ago. I do enjoy looking back to the future...