DEFINING
THE CAVALIER

by STEPHANIE ABRAHAM

With thanks to the American Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club for permission to rework my article from its website, www.ackcsc.org.

The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel is a breed rich in history, allied with the royals in England as they were passionately championed by King Charles I and Charles II. His exact origins are not known, but he descends from the toy spaniels favoured by the English courtiers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He is pictured in the paintings of many an old master—Titian, Gainsborough, Van Dyck, among others. Known familiarly as a toy "Comforter" spaniel, the Cavalier was never bred to be anything other than a small, beloved gentle pet, a lap dog to be sure, but also sporting in nature in that he could run "all day behind a horse" and enjoy a day's activities outside the palace walls. "In 1486 Dame Juliana Berners wrote a monograph called 'The Boke of St. Albans' where she included in a list of dog breeds 'small ladyes puppees that beare awaye the flees…' The palace physician to Queen Elizabeth I (reigned 1558-1603) called these small Spaniels 'delicate, neat and pretty kind of dogs, called the Spaniel comforter… These dogs are… pretty, proper and fine and sought for to satisfy the delicateness of dainty dames'." (De Canibus Britannicus, 1570).[1] These breed characteristics endure to this day and indeed are essential to a sound and happy Cavalier. The breed was almost lost in the early 20th century when the popularity of the close relative, the English Toy Spaniel, threatened to eclipse him. But a dedicated group of fanciers rescued him from obscurity in the late 1920s and 30s and the Cavalier is now the most popular toy dog in Britain.

Bred in all 4 colors—Blenheim (rich chestnut and white), Ruby, Black & Tan and Tricolor (black & white with tan points)—the Cavalier suits most esthetic tastes. One of the physical hallmarks of the breed is his 'royal' appearance, with large, dark, soulful eyes and glamorous feathering and silky smooth coat. In the show ring, NO trimming is allowed, as it is considered essential that the breed be left in its natural state without artifice. Easy to groom, he requires only bathing and regular brushing. According to the

BISS Grand Champion

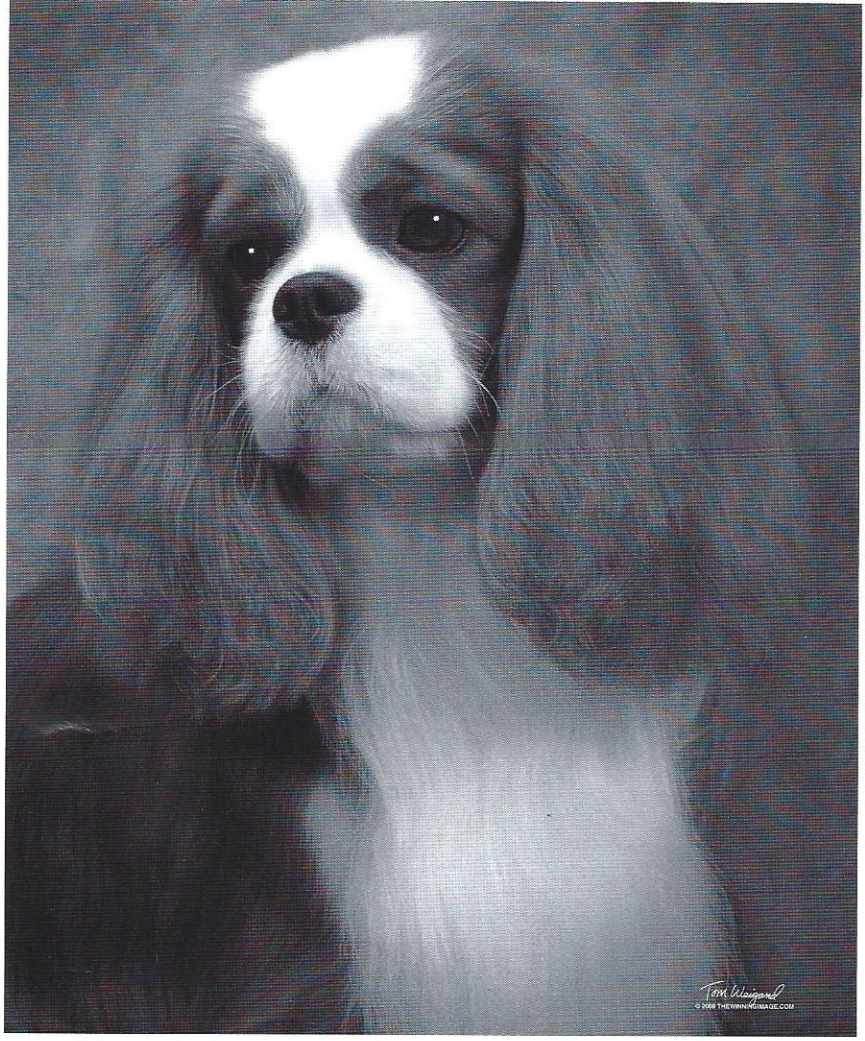
TEGS LET'S HAVE A PARTY

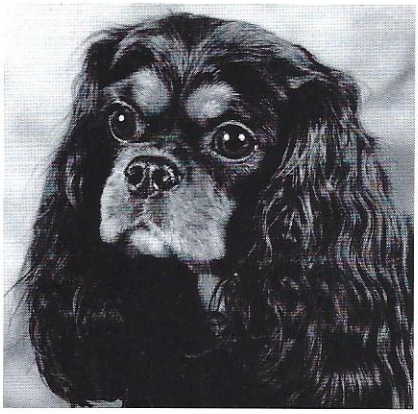
Solo

Sincere thank you

to Ruth Zimmerman for recognizing Solo in tough competition as well as breeder
dge Steve Hayden who awarded Solo BOV at the Michigan Progressive Toy Specialty.

OWNED/PRESENTED BY: Jennifer Snyder • www.marelto.com
CO-OWNED BY: Sylvia Farkas • **BRED BY:** Gerry & Tammy Desjardins





breed Standard, the Cavalier should be between 12"-13" at the shoulder and weigh between 13-18 pounds. Some leeway is permissible.

The Cavalier is a happy, gentle dog—not at all aggressive with either dogs or man. Indeed, many owners assert that "you cannot have just one!" If you visit a Cavalier breeder friend and add your own Cavalier to the mix for a few hours, chances are excellent that they will all play together and get along fine. The Cavalier is biddable and very trainable—not only as a household pet, but also as a Therapy, Obedience and Agility dog. Remember, though, that he is an active dog, quite swift afoot and cannot always be relied upon to come when he is called if he is chasing a butterfly or following the flight of a bird. For most owners, a fenced yard and/or a leash is a 'must have.'

As with all breeds of dogs, the Cavalier does have some breed-specific health considerations. Owners should be vigilant for mitral valve disease of the heart, congenital eye conditions including retinal problems and cataracts, slipping patellas, hip dysplasia and SM (syringomyelia, a serious neurological condition). Cavaliers can be screened for all these health concerns and the majority live comfortably into double digits. I have had Cavaliers since 1988 and the earliest I lost one to illness was 9 years old, taken by an autoimmune disease. My oldest will turn 16 in June and when tested last year, was still heart murmur free. Responsible breeders health test their breeding animals and will supply the puppy buyer with veterinary specialist certifications when possible. Cavaliers are most commonly screened for heart problems, slipping patellas and inherited eye conditions. Other testing may be more problematic due to inherent costs or what a breeder might regard as risk to the dog (general anesthesia, for example, in the case of an MRI to diagnose syringomyelia).

The watchword for the Cavalier might be "natural." He is naturally sweet and gentle, never artificially trimmed and—by nature—perennially happy and delighted to do almost anything his owner desires. He is really a "dog for all reasons," and those of us who love them wouldn't have him any other way. ■

[1] *From my article in Dog World, 2013.*

JUDGING THE CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL

by DR. JOHN V. IOIA

Kavalor's Just Jack of Bar-Jon CGC, RN, RA, APDT1 Jack visits nursing facilities and hospitals and we are working on his TDX—the people just love him. While he didn't work out for conformation, he is my BFF and goes everywhere with me, including the beach and kayaking.

I had the great fortune to be a guest at the first Cavalier King Charles Spaniel National Specialty. It was hosted by the ACKCSC in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania on May 2, 1997. The entry of 188 held many exceptional specimens but what captivated me was the demeanor of the dogs. Particularly in the Specials Class, all the exhibits seemed to be wagging in unison. I had never experienced such a happy breed of dog. This simple trait of a "Tail in constant motion" gives ample indication why the Cavalier is such a joy to own, breed, show and judge. A judge will often be met by a sniff, a lick, dancing front paws or even a bit of chatter. We ask new judges not to dismiss this as amateur handling but to understand it as a trait that breeders treasure and encourage.

There are many excellent articles on judging this Royal Breed. I struggled over what new approach to take. The Cavalier is defined by its beautiful head and its gentle, welcoming and affectionate personality. Otherwise, it's a fairly generic dog.

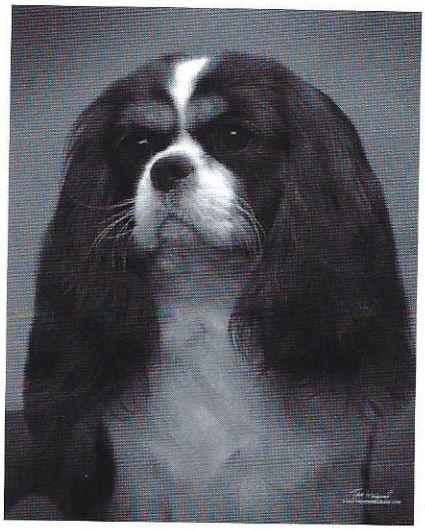
The Cavalier should give a first impression of grace and elegance, gay temperament with royal dignity and yet maintain the same fearlessness and sporting character of its larger cousins. The natural silky coat must never appear trimmed or sculpted.

The correct Cavalier is a small well-balanced dog of 13-18 lbs. and 12"-13" height that approached squareness, but the measurement from point of shoulder to point of buttock is slightly longer than the height at the withers. Also, the distance from withers to elbow equals that from elbow to ground. Substance and bone are moderate and in proportion to size. A proper Cavalier should not be weedy, coarse, too large or too small. Be aware of size. There's a tendency toward bigger dogs, which will make the correct size dog appear small but in all things quality is the bottom line.

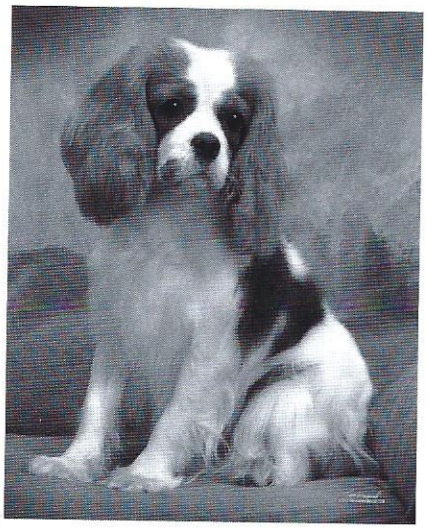
Correct head type is an essential element of this breed and makes its first impression. Here is where knowledge of breed history and origin is important. The short nose, deep stop and globular head of the English Toy Spaniel is the antithesis of the Cavalier. The Cavalier must have a soft melting expression and this is the result of a flat appearing skull, the frontal placement of large round eyes with slight cushioning and framed by high-set ears. The eyes must be large, round, dark brown, lustrous and welcoming. Light eyes, prominent eyes or eyes surrounded by white are a serious fault as they detract from the expression. "All of the trust and gentleness of the Cavalier's soul is communicated through its lustrous, limpid eyes."

Ears and ear set are very important and often misjudged. Ears should be set high and not too close together with

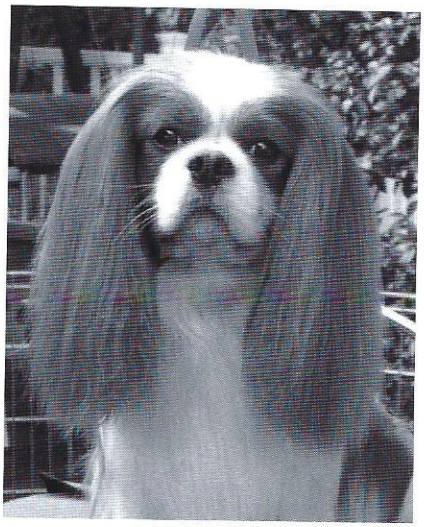
Some examples of typical Cavalier heads and expression, all demonstrating lovely heads:



A lovely young female head in repose.



A young female alert.



An alert male.

long leathers and silky hair. Cavaliers can "use" their ears when alert, stiffening the leathers and fanning them forward to frame the face. This will also raise the ears to a straight line across the topskull. When at ease the ears may relax and make an otherwise correct skull appear rounded.

The adage of "Examine them on the table but judge them on the ground" could never be truer. Don't expect an exhibit to wag on the table, although they may. Use the table to check bites, ear leather, inspect layback of shoulder and reinforce opinions made from observation on the ground. Approach the dog with a light heart and hand, cradle the head with both hands, gently check the bite, feel the topskull and origin of ear, ear leather and move on to neck and shoulder. One more point, a scissors bite is preferred but a level or slightly undershot bite in a young dog could be overlooked as many correct by 18-24 months and don't make checking a bite a test of strength. A heavy hand has ruined many a good toy dog.

A perfect neck has a slight muscular arch at its crest and is of sufficient length to allow the head to be carried proudly. The neck should slope gracefully into well laidback shoulders. Upright shoulders will promote a steeper head carriage, a shortened stride and an incorrect gait. There is a growing tendency toward upright shoulders and some shortened upper arms.

A well-balanced dog should appear square but is slightly longer than tall. The breed should never appear long and low nor should they be up on leg. Long backs/short legs are becoming too common. The chest should be moderately deep and reach the elbows with a slight swell. Cavaliers are short coupled, meaning that there is a short distance from the last rib to the hip or loin. Hindquarters should come down from a good broad pelvis, very slightly sloped to give an attractive tail carriage.

Topline is level, end of discussion. The tail is a projection of the spine and should be level with the topline, carried between 2 and 4 o'clock, with 3 being ideal. Please be aware that males in particular will posture and flag when excited but drop the tail back to natural when relaxed.

Cavaliers come in four lovely flavors; Blenheim with rich chestnut markings on a clear pearly white ground,

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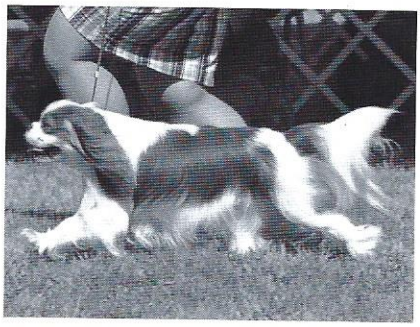
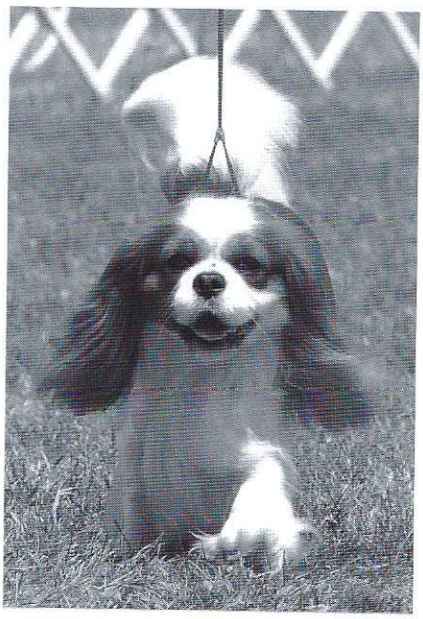
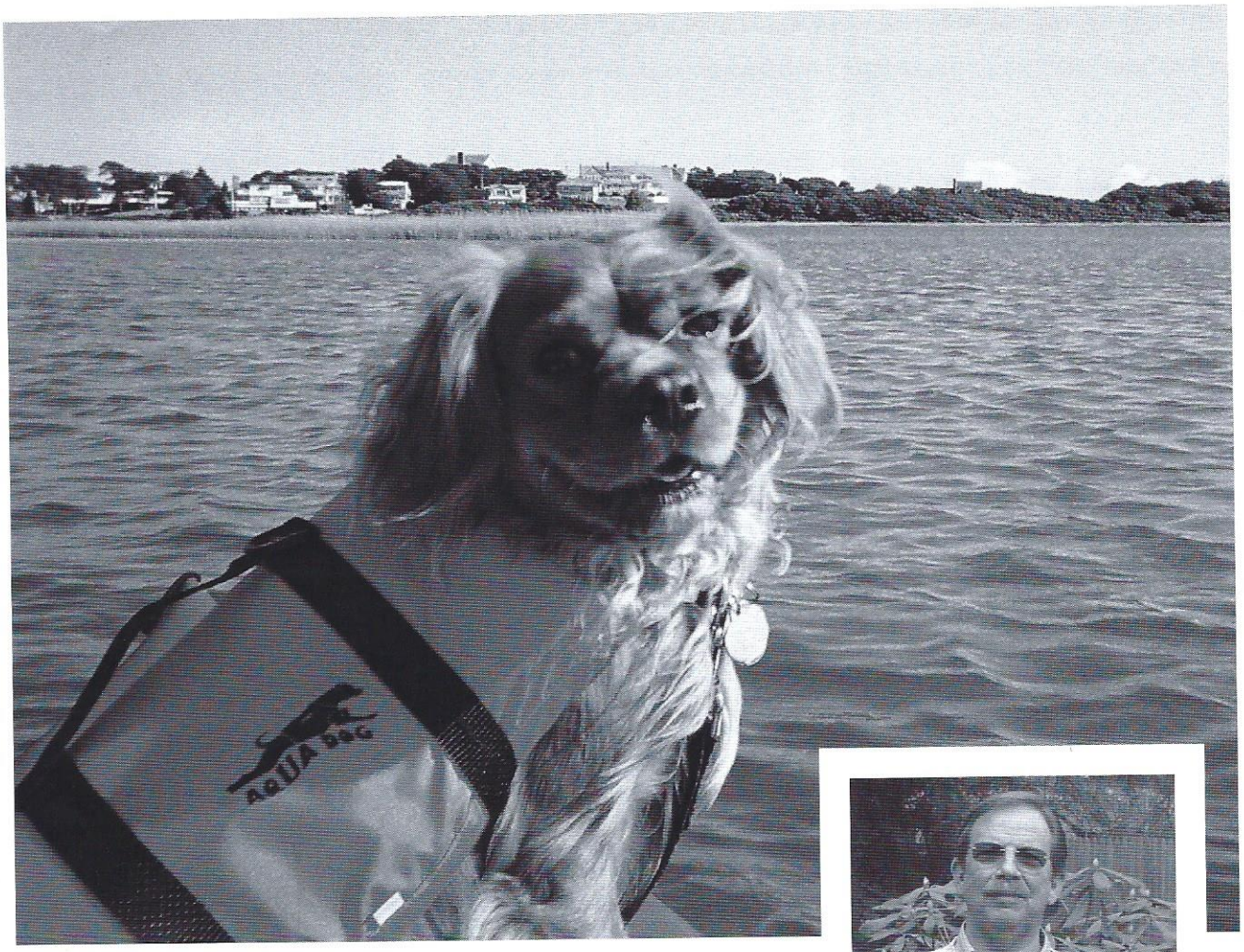


In profile, the balance of the dog should be obvious, making an elegant picture from nose to end of tail in one flowing movement, with proud head carriage and good arch of neck, good reach and making good use of the hindquarters.



Coming at you, the front legs should also be straight and true; they should not be out at the elbows or exhibit paddling. This is typical happy Cavalier expression.



Tricolor with jet-black marking on a field of pearly white and rich tan marking over the eyes, on the cheeks, inside the ears and under the tail, Black and Tan and Ruby whole colored rich red. There is no color preference but heavy ticking on the broken colors is a fault as is white spots on Rubies and Black and Tans. Please keep in mind that the Cavalier is meant to be shown naturally, free stacked and the only trimming that is permitted is the hair growing between the pads of the underside of the foot. The Standard states that a trimmed dog is to be so severely penalized as to virtually eliminate it from competition. Judges are expected to respect and enforce this section of the Standard. Exhibits should be free stacked. Handlers should be reminded not to get down and pose their dog and this includes juniors.

The Cavalier should be moved on a loose lead and a medium trot, is free moving and elegant in action, exhibiting good reach and drive, covering ground while maintaining a level topline. Cavaliers do not single track at the trot, although there is some tendency to converge as speed increases. Coming at you the front legs should also be straight and true; they should not be out at the elbows or exhibit paddling. In profile the balance of the dog should be obvious, making an elegant picture from nose to end of tail in one flowing movement, with proud head carriage and good arch of neck, good reach and making good use of the hindquarters. Remember the tail is to be in constant motion. Enjoy the experience of this Royal Spaniel. ■

BIO

Dr. John Ioia and his wife Barbara have been involved in purebred dogs since 1971, first with Shih Tzu and now Cavaliers, breeding and showing in conformation, obedience and rally. John is licensed for all Toy Breeds, and about half the Terriers and Non-Sporting, Best in Show and Juniors. He received his PhD in Biochemistry from SUNY Downstate Medical Center and his MD from Albany Medical College. He is an Orthopedic Surgeon practicing in New York's Hudson Valley.

Jack's awards (Kavalor's Just Jack of Bar-Jon CGC, RN, RA, APDT1).