

Kids and Dogs

By Vera Blaine

When my daughter Susan was twelve years old she heard of a new club in the county called “Pups ‘N Pals” 4-H Club for children to learn caring for and training their dogs. There was one obstacle before she could join the dog club, she had to be a member of a local 4-H Club.

It did not take long for her to talk me into volunteering to start a club in the neighborhood and soon we had a small group doing projects. She and her black miniature poodle were members of Pups N’ Pals with about twenty or more kids and their dogs. Boys and girls, ages eight through eighteen, brought their dogs of all breeds and sizes to the County Fairgrounds once a week for obedience training.

Although the dogs had never had any training before these classes and were accustomed to roaming the neighborhoods before there were leash laws, they all caught on fast. Each child held the leash, the dog walked obediently on the left and learned the commands of “sit”, “stay”, and more.

One dear little boy, Richard, tried so hard but never gave up on his small Chihuahua. It seems his dog was difficult to train. The few big German Shepherds were easier to train by their young handlers.

Occasionally, the club had a costume party, that is, the dogs were in costume. Nancy Johnson, who owned a big, black Labrador, dressed him with a fluffy pink tutu and garlands on his head. The kids and well trained, costumed dogs paraded around the arena.

I spent many hours in the bleachers watching the youngsters and enjoyed seeing how they progressed. The highlight of each year was the time when county-wide obedience trials were held at the Fairgrounds. Youngsters came from the surrounding counties to compete, and there could be as many as 40 children and 40 dogs competing in the different classes. You would think this would be a recipe for confusion, noise, and even a dogfight or two, but, no, there was perfect order. Every dog stayed obediently with his master until the time came to enter the ring. I will never forget those obedience trials which brought out the best in every kid and dog.

Several times Pups N’ Pals members qualified for State Trials held at the State Fair in Pueblo. Here, too, my daughter and her friend were tough competitors. One time Debbie won State Champion and Susan was Reserve Champion.