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20/12/91

Dear Bob

Many thanks for your letter and the information regarding Government provisions for the sport of Field Trialing in America. I don't think the information will of any help as it is only the National Parks issue that I am at present dealing with, but it will be no harm to show them that other Governments do help the Sport.

I'm glad to see that you are settled into your wintering grounds and hope that you have a good time there for the winter. Sorry for the delay with the young dogs papers but I had the wrong dog transferred into your name and now have to persuade the IKC to give the the right ones for your pup. I must admit that I have been procrastinating!

As I already told you Furl won six 1st Excellents in All Breed competition this year in Ireland and that makes her the top winning dog in the country this year. I'm very proud of her and hope that she will pass it onto the next generation. Time will tell!!

At present I am breeding a bit more than usual, but the Japanese are paying huge money for English Setters and almost every new face that appears at Trials has a pie coloured dog. If we don't start to produce plenty of young reds that can compete with the best of the foreigners then I think that the breed could go into a decline here. We have lost a lot of the stalwarts of the breed such as Jack Nash and so far suitable replacements have not come forward. To be perfectly honest it is worrying. Even in the Club the standard of the people has deteriorated and of course that is reflected in the dogs. I'm not the most popular as I am considered too much of a purist and wish to have nothing to do with people who keep setters for show or are happy owning mediocre working dogs. You are well aware that the standard of the dogs reflects greatly the standard of the people who owns them. Brilliant dogs are made to look foolish by stupid people. Unfortunate but true! Where we really fall down is in the absence of Pro' trainers or amateurs who are really committed. I have seen some really good young dogs in the recent past, that are not reaching the full potential because of the inadequacies of their trainers. By God, I really have been rattling on! It is just that 15 years ago the breed was really flying here, we had good trainers and good dogs. The bloodlines are still there but the people got lost. I have just bred a litter from a 10 year old bitch belonging to a former field trialer, it is her first litter, he ran her till she was three years old with a lot of success, shot hard with her and she took to breaking to shot and she stopped winning - so he stopped trialing. I met

him at a funeral and inquired about her, asking were her progeny any good. He said I could breed her if I liked and so I ended up with three litters at the same time, the two I had planned and this one. The kennel is what you might call stuffed with dogs just now. In the dark short days of winter you begin to think that you've gone mad. I may only have doubts but Anne is certain!

I was in Lapland in September as I already told you. The beauty and wildness haunts me, it was such a lovely holiday hopefully I'll get back there some day.

I am presently doing a post-graduate course on Environmental Engineering, it is very interesting but it does soak up my spare time hence the belated reply to your letter.

Best Wishes for the New Year.

Ray.

ps. I'll send you the papers early in the new year.