




10-1-1996

National Championship

Open House

The School's Open House on September 21 was a huge success. About 10,000 people came to New Bolton Center to see what the School was all about!

Students, staff and faculty had worked very hard again setting up exhibits showing clinical care at NBC and at VHUP, research projects, and information about food safety and toxic plants. New this year was a M.A.S.H. tent staffed by clinicians and students to take care of repairs of stuffed animals. These patients ranged from little rabbits to a giant whale. Unlike at our two hospitals, here the owners assisted in the procedures. The youngsters were properly garbed in gowns, hats, masks and gloves and provided cheerful guidance to the surgeons.

The six-horse Percheron hitch was very popular as were the Llama obstacles course, the police dog demonstration and a canine puissance. 



National Championship

A canine athlete and her human handler brought a national championship to Philadelphia. FC-AFC Candlewood's Bit O'Bunny, handled by her owner, Henry S. McNeil, Jr., garnered the ultimate crown in retriever field trialing: the 1996 National Amateur Field Trial Championship.

Babe, as the 5-year old black Labrador retriever is called, was the only female and one of the youngest of the ten finalists in a field of 85 as she went into the deciding series of the week-long competition in Stowe, VT in June.

"She was just brilliant," said Hank McNeil. "She performed flawlessly throughout the difficult competition." During the seven day trial Babe ran 10 series. The dogs had to do land and water retrieves of increasing difficulty and were judged on the precision exhibited to complete these. After each series dogs were eliminated until only ten remained, the top retrievers in the country. Babe emerged victorious to claim the sterling silver trophy.

Field trialing is team work between dog and handler. Babe and McNeil train several days a week at Winslow Farms, his land restoration project in New Jersey. He has reclaimed former quarry properties and is in the process of transforming the quarries into ponds and the more than 700 acres into grasslands.

McNeil obtained Babe at the age of 2 — from a friend in the Midwest. "Her talent was awesome, but her behavior in competition was not as impressive," he said. "It took 18 months, two different trainers and myself before she became this dominant force. She is a smart and athletic and spectacular when she is motivated." Babe is a Center City house dog.

On the way to the NAFC title, Babe earned 30 points in the Open Class in 16 East Coast competitions. She scored high in the '95 Open, won a Doubleheader and was '95 High Point Open Bitch.

Babe has passed her talent to her offspring. Three of her four living pups have already garnered more than 100

Derby points. Babe's medical needs are met by the doctors at VHUP. She has been here for routine checks, used the Emergency Service and has had minor surgery. 