

# The Start of the North American Coton Association

*by Sandra Bearden, Founding Member*

At the beginning of my involvement with the Coton de Tulear breed, there were very few show events in the USA for Cotons. Our breed was exhibited in American Rare Breed Association (ARBA) and States Kennel Club. Both of these venues usually required extensive travel for Coton exhibitors. Judges evaluated Cotons according to the FCI Breed Standard by these organizations. My first United Kennel Club (UKC) show was in Colorado. I soon learned of all the UKC shows in Texas. I immediately started following these shows. They were larger conformation events and much more organized. I was hooked and started encouraging other Coton breeders to show in UKC.



**Sandra Bearden with Multi-Champion SanDee's U' Rock Me**

In 2008, UKC decided to revamp their Breed Standards to reflect and preserve the origins of each UKC-recognized breed. Their Coton de Tulear Breed Standard completely eliminated weight. I began getting complaints from other Coton exhibitors, so I decided to call UKC. At that time, UKC informed me that if Coton breeders wanted any control over our breed's UKC Standard, we would need to form a club. This was the start. Now NACA's Charter for UKC National Coton de Tulear Breed Club status mandates that we preserve the breed as found in its native land.

I began to contact other Coton breeders and soon we had a large enough coalition to begin the formation of a club. The Charter Members decided at that time that our main goals would be:

- (1) Reflect the tenets of the FCI Standard (the first Coton de Tulear Breed Standard in existence) to preserve the Coton's original purpose and characteristics for the welfare and improvement of the breed and to avoid changes based on purely personal breeding preferences in regards to coat color, size, etc.
- (2) To have a club that is transparent and free of politics. All of us agreed that we should not have "dog secrets."
- (3) Promote better breeding practices without mandating, and instead, to provide education and encourage NACA Member Breeders to do health testing specifically relevant to the Coton de Tulear breed.

I think, that for the most part, we have succeeded in these endeavors. The NACA remains true to the Coton in trying to uphold the general purpose and health of the breed. In my mind, this is a very important part of our club.

We started the NACA with a preliminary status, pursuant to certain objectives for "UKC parent club status". Initially, we were recognized as a provisional conformation breed club in 2009. Finally in April, 2015, the NACA was granted UKC status as their National (Parent) Coton de Tulear Breed Club. It has been a hard road, but in the end was worth it!



**Multi-Champion SandDee's Tumbleweed Griffin**