



## **The Spuds Mackenzie Story: Nearly 25 Years in the Making**

For a Champion Bull Terrier that never placed at Silverwood the legend of Honey Tree Evil Eye (aka Spuds Mackenzie) eclipses just about any other in Bull Terrier lore. And judging from the ongoing popularity of the beer commercials and the collectability of Spuds merchandise, you'd have to think this Bull Terrier is one of the most popular dogs in TV history, making the breed one of the most recognizable in our lifetime.

Even though the beer company pulled the plug on the Spuds Mackenzie "Official Party Animal" ad campaign almost 20 years ago now, due to pressure from anti-alcohol special interest groups, and the real "Spuds" passed away four years later, as we owners know, you can't take a Bull Terrier out in public even today without at least one comment like "Look, it's Spuds Mackenzie!"

Possibly even more successful as a beer sales icon, Budweiser drew in huge revenues selling Spuds-related merchandise, most of which is easily found on eBay these days. From glass wear and eyewear, to outerwear and footwear, the beer company generated a large number of promotional items. And perhaps, as we will see in talking to the breeders of Honey Tree Evil Eye, it may have been their lack of attention to merchandising detail that led to the campaign's downfall.

But before there was Spuds and the wildly popular "Spudettes," the three women who often accompanied Spuds in "his" antics, there was a litter of puppies born to Dick and Peggy Selk of North Riverside, Illinois.

According to Peggy, Honey Tree Evil Eye, aka Spuds, call name Easy, had a litter mate that was all white and was expected to be the "better" dog. So, when a prospective couple came to see the puppies, they settled on the black-eyed girl, and went about taking her to Champion, in 6 months, Peggy said.

We coached them at first and they joined the Fort Dearborn Bull Terrier Club and not long after there was a big show in Chicago, with an advertisement including a drawing of a Bull Terrier with a black eye. At that time she said the beer company was already working the dog-centric ad campaign, but had been considering many alternatives,

including painting an eye patch on a dog. (Readers may remember Pete, the famous painted-eye dog from the original Little Rascals serial.)

Well, Peggy continued, one thing led to another, the ad agency contacted the Dearborn club president and Easy and her owners soon found themselves in their first photography session.

“Easy was a very unique bull terrier,” Peggy said, “she was very mellow and low key. The owners sometimes used a yo-yo in the ring to get her to spark up, and show. The kids would dress her up in dog clothes and even wheel her around the neighborhood in a baby buggy.”

So, in this first photo shoot Peggy said Easy wore a dunce cap on her head for a while, and sat calmly through a long session, convincing the agency that this dog would probably put up with the kind of nonsense they had in store for their soon-to-be chief marketing officer.

Peggy recalled that during the first year of the campaign there was a poster that blanketed colleges, and within 6 months, product sales skyrocketed. “It got pretty crazy for a couple of years after that,” Peggy said.

All good things must come to an end, and here’s that part of the story.

Intense merchandising of Spuds paraphernalia marked the height of the craze, and at some point imported, knock-off t-shirts with the Spuds image began entering the states, in kids and youth sizes. Accusations were made that the company was targeting minors. Instead of fighting to keep the campaign alive, Peggy said the company opted to end the project and the rest is history.

Maybe, though, the final chapter in this saga is yet to be written.

The Selks still marvel at the Spuds Mackenzie phenomenon. Peggy said two years ago an autograph from herself and Dick was auctioned off on eBay. “We signed a menu at a dog show and later we were told it showed up on eBay, framed. It sold for \$45! Who would have thought ...”

So the story lives on.

The Bull Terrier Club of Dallas sincerely appreciates help from Ty Whitehair in generating this story and the time spent with Peggy Selk. Good luck to them in their future Bull Terrier travels.

Contribute your personal experiences with Spuds Mackenzie and photos of your favorite Spuds merchandise to *Bully Times* and the Bull Terrier Club of Dallas website.