

Uno's Year in Review

Get highlights from the 2008 Westminster-winning Beagle's year on top and on the road.

By Eve Adamson

After Uno officially took his place as the first-ever Beagle to win Best in Show at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in February 2008, the end of the 3-year-old Beagle's long road to the top marked the beginning of another role: canine ambassador to the world.

"We've never had a response to a Westminster winner like the response we've had to Uno," says David Frei, director of communications for the Westminster Kennel Club and TV commentator for the show. "He's been a wonderful participant during every bit of it, and he always believes the applause is for him."

It usually is. Uno has had an incredibly busy year, starting the morning after his big win, when he did the morning-show circuit. Later that week, he helped ring the bell to open the NASDAQ stock exchange, and Time magazine, Newsweek, and even Sports Illustrated reported his big win.

Some dogs would be happy to retire, put their paws up, and maybe sire a few good puppies. Not Uno. He spent most of 2008 on the road — with David Frei at the other end of his leash.

"As it turns out, I have become his valet, secretary, and traveling companion," says Frei, "Depending on his schedule, sometimes he lives with me for a couple of weeks in my apartment in New York City." Like Miss America, Uno's duty, it seems, has been to publicize worthy causes, entertain his fans, and just let people bask in his celebrity.

Uno flies exclusively on Midwest Airlines in his own seat in the cabin. Once, in St. Louis, the computer selected "Uno Frei" for additional screening. "The TSA folks were amused by this," Frei says. "Nonetheless, rules are rules. They took him out to be wanded and patted down. They also took pictures and made a copy of his boarding pass for their Wall of Fame."

Some of the year's highlights included a visit with President George W. Bush in the White House Rose Garden, a ride on a float in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, hobnobbing with that other world-famous Beagle, Snoopy, at Knott's Berry Farm in Southern California, and throwing out the first pitch at Busch Stadium in St. Louis and at Miller Park in Milwaukee.

"He did just what you would expect," Frei says. "He fetched the ball, ran around in circles on the infield, then reined in by a long leash, brought the ball back to the catcher. The crowds loved him."

Frei also took Uno through the therapy dog certification process, and he is now the co-celebrity "spokesdog" for Angel On a Leash, Westminster's therapy dog charity. Uno has visited Ronald McDonald Houses in Milwaukee, St. Louis, Los Angeles, and New York.

The night before the 2009 Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, Uno flipped the switch at the Empire State Building, turning on the purple and gold lights that celebrate the show.

Finally, on February 10, 2009, Uno passed on his tri-colored mantle to the next Best in Show winner — who certainly has big paws to fill. Now retired, Uno will watch America's new top dog from the 200-acre working ranch in Austin, Texas, where he lives with owner Caroline Dowell.

Eve Adamson is a DOG FANCY contributing editor.

For more on the 2009 Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, check out the May 2009 issue of DOG FANCY.