

Winnie MacKay: The Personal Side

For 31 years she has been Phi Delta Theta's cook, confidante, and handywoman. Winnie MacKay has truly been an invaluable asset to the brotherhood. But how many people actually know what secret life she leads when she goes home at night? How many people wonder how such an energetic and vital part of our fraternity spends her free time?

Well, for the past 15 years, Winnie has devoted much of her free time to the breeding, care, and showing of pedigree rabbits. She deals specifically with a breed called Havana rabbits. According to Winnie, she raises three different kinds of Havanas: blacks, blues, and chocolates. Each type is so named because of its color. The scale on which Winnie tends these cute, furry pets is incredible; she owns nearly 60 blacks, 20 blues, and 15 chocolates. However, the majority are breeders and not kept for show.

The shows are what make it all worthwhile for Winnie. In a year when she can devote her time to it, she attends between 35 and 40 shows, 18 of which are New York state shows; the rest are in other states and even Canada. According to Winnie, she would travel "anywhere from 15 minutes to eight hours" to attend a show with her beloved rabbits. She normally enters 10 to 12 rabbits in any given show, where they are judged on a multitude of qualities.

Over the years, Winnie has accumulated several awards for the quality of her rabbits. She is currently first in New York state in black Havanas with her prize rabbit, Charlie. She has also won fifth place in the nation for Havanas overall (1,100 rabbits were entered) with one simply called BW1. The majority of Winnie's rabbits go by a series of letters and numbers instead of names because, as Winnie says, when you have that many, you can't name them all. Of course, her first-prize rabbit was named simply Phi.

After finding out that Winnie has such interesting hobbies, one must wonder why she does it. Well, for one thing, Winnie just likes rabbits. She's always had them, and this is just an extension of her interest in them. "They're just a lot of fun," she says. "Besides, this is what keeps my sanity if I have to work at Phi Delt for 31 years."

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