

Lines From Linda

BY LINDA AYERS TURNER KNORR

Passionate Fans: Bulldog Club of America Team Works to Protect Their legacy

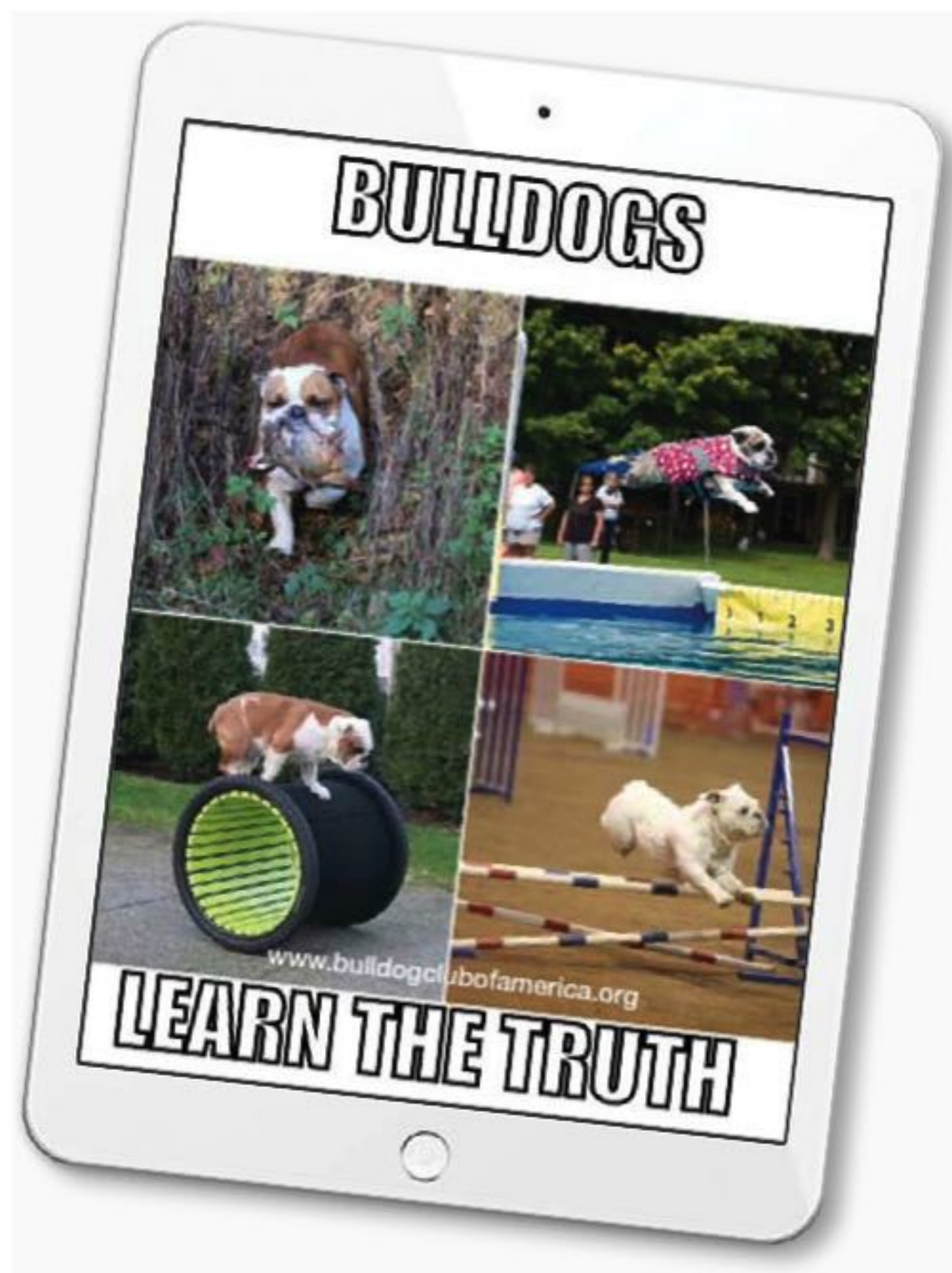


The Bulldog, the fourth most popular breed due to its kind character, and friendliness to dogs, cats, children and adults, has been under attack by the popular press. The source of these stories is a paper: "A Genetic Assessment of the English Bulldog" released on July 29, 2016 in the journal *Canine Genetics and Epidemiology* (Pedersen,

Pooch, & Liu, 2016). Dr. Niles Pedersen's study theorizes that the Bulldog is lacking in genetic diversity which may minimize the ability to breed healthier dogs.

The Bulldog also has its passionate fans as the mascots of universities such as my own alma mater the University of Georgia, the Citadel, Yale, Georgetown, Gonzaga, Butler and Gardner Webb just to name a few. However, no group is more passionate about the breed than the Bulldog Club of America (BCA). The BCA immediately engaged its Communications Committee under the leadership of Annette Nobles to investigate the paper and to counteract the adverse press.

Annette Nobles developed a team comprised of geneticists: Dr. Michael Hughes, a long-time Bulldogger and Dr. Peter Photos, a French Bulldogger to analyze the paper. Annette and fellow committee member, breeder/judge Cindy Stansell,



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then organized the findings into a position paper. This position paper can be found on BCA's website.

This team discovered that the study was based on a small pool of Bulldogs that are specifically bred for exotic colors that are disqualified under the standard. They also found numerous studies that put the Bulldog in the mid-range of AKC breeds for genetic diversity. (So if the Bulldog at the mid-range of diversity should not be breed, then the breeds that are lower are even more in jeopardy!) They also found that the health problems cited were not based on scientific information but on anecdotal

information such as blogs. The BCA found that contrary to the information in the paper, the average age of the Bulldog has increased and that BCA members, by health screening their dogs for a number of health issues, are producing healthier dogs than ever before.

The BCA team has been proactive in promoting the true characteristics of the Bulldog by working with AKC Vice President of Public Relations and Communications, Brandi Hunter and Dr. Jerry Klein, AKC Chief Veterinarian. Robin Stansell, former AKC Vice President and breeder judge, was the BCA's spokesperson with various news media.

Elizabeth Hugo-Milam developed memes (images with captions meant to be shared online) and short videos featuring seniors (Bulldogs over 12) and Bulldogs active in companion sports.

Bob Newcomb, BCA's AKC delegate, along with Cindy Stansell (the Finnish Spitz Club of America's AKC Delegate) spoke to the delegate committees about the media attacks on purebred dogs and the Bulldog specifically. They suggested that the AKC develop a public relations response team that can quickly work with any parent club under attack. They also suggested that each parent club assess their



Bulldog Club of America
AKC Delegate Bob Newcomb and
UGA Bulldawg Dr. Nancy Rose Newcomb

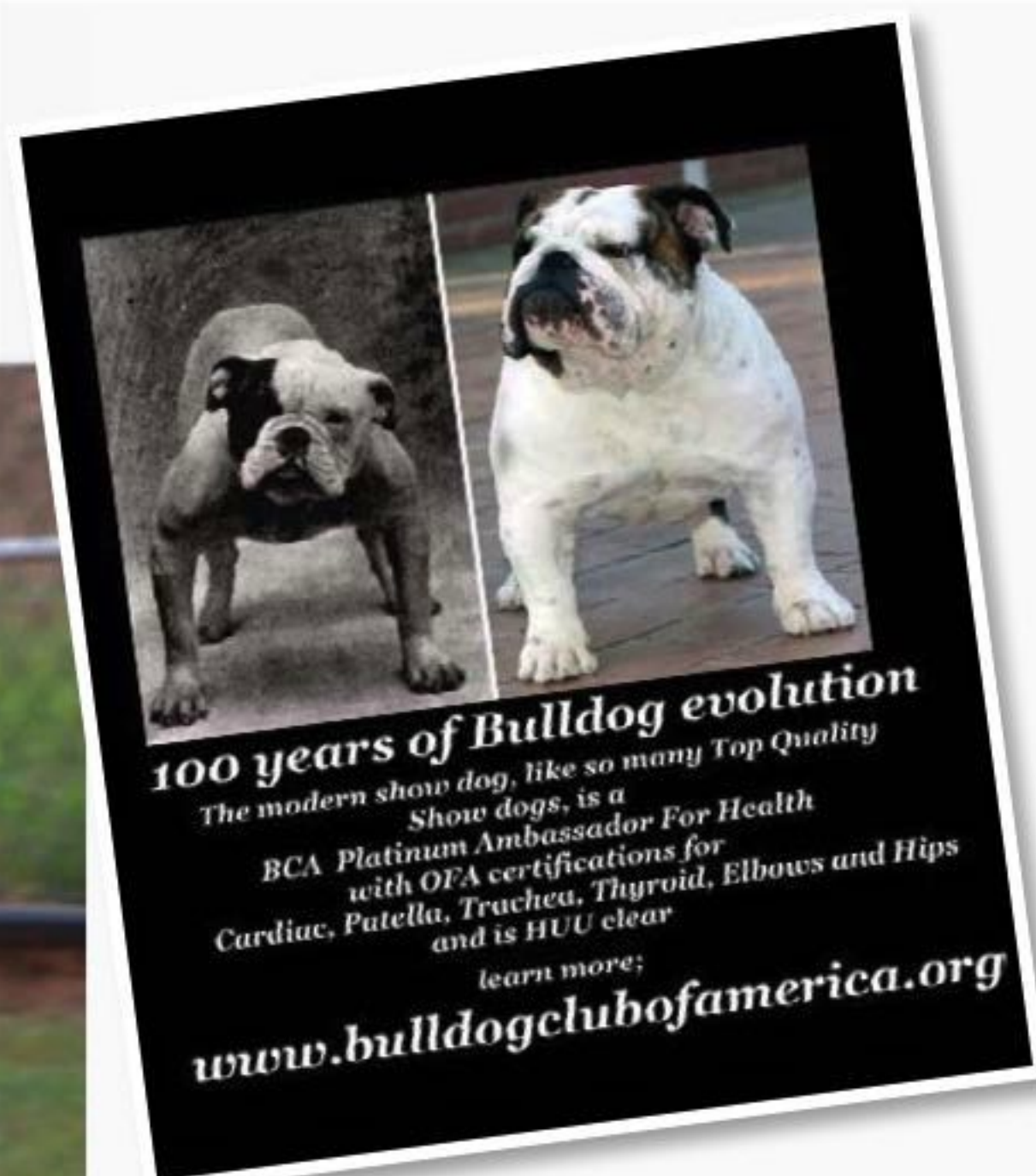


Robin and Cindy Stansell with Ch. Rocyn's
Hot'Lanta are big cheerleaders for their breed.

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membership to have a team in place of qualified and diverse talents: geneticists, veterinarians, lawyers, writers and PR professionals.

Dr. Pedersen is advancing the idea that breeds should be crossbred for health reasons. The person who has bred "Uga", the University of Georgia's mascot, just announced that he would be crossbreeding now because his dogs have been plagued with health issues. The BCA, especially UGA Alumna Dr. Nancy Rose Newcomb (a veterinarian and long-time Bulldogger) has offered both assistance in analyzing potential

breeding animals and acquisition of healthy dogs.

In light of these press attacks, the BCA will need the tenacity of their beloved breed to educate the public on how to choose a Bulldog that is healthy as well as loving.

The Bulldog Club of America and their team of experts are working hard to guarantee the future of the Bulldog. Do your part to guide naysayers to their website. It is one of the best I have ever seen! We must protect this magnificent symbol of winners. ■