



by Linda Ayers Turner Knorr

# Mentors & Memories

## Time Flies When We're Having Fun

Do you have a trusted advisor who has made an impact on your life, influenced your opinions and who you will always remember as a best friend? Mentors are gifts to be treasured!

My father, Roy Ayers was an AKC All-Breed Judge. His mentor was Mr. J. J. Duncan.

*Reminiscing in the Ayers Attic* has long been a monthly feature article in the newsletter of the Atlanta Kennel Club. The column's author Hazel Ayers is my mother. As an active member of the Georgia club for more than half a century she has a wealth of memories to share and today's future leaders of the dog world are more than eager to learn from her lifetime of experiences.

Founded in 1900 the Atlanta Kennel Club will soon be celebrating one hundred two years. Another Georgia group, the Collie Club of Georgia, is proud of its fifty-two year history. For years Jimmy Duncan and Roy Ayers guided both clubs each serving as President for multiple terms.

Deeply rooted in each of those organizations my life was molded and influenced by literally growing up among the families of those kennel clubs.

Holiday memories are especially vivid because of the parties I remember. Beautiful Southern ladies dressed in glittering evening attire for their special occasions and the charming men would remind you of Rhett Butler. Members of both clubs love to celebrate and that they have always done so

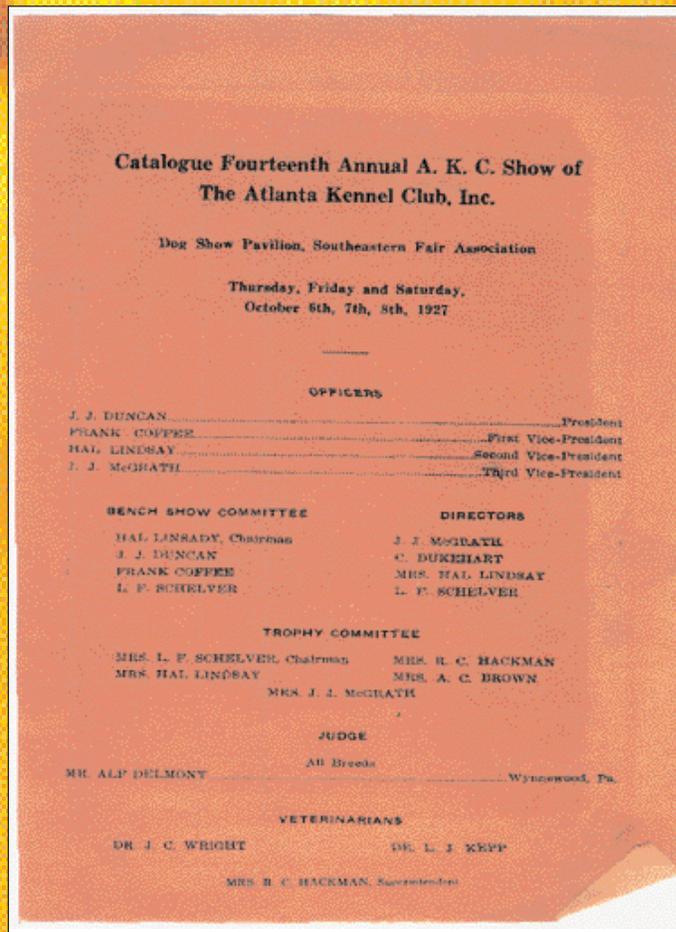
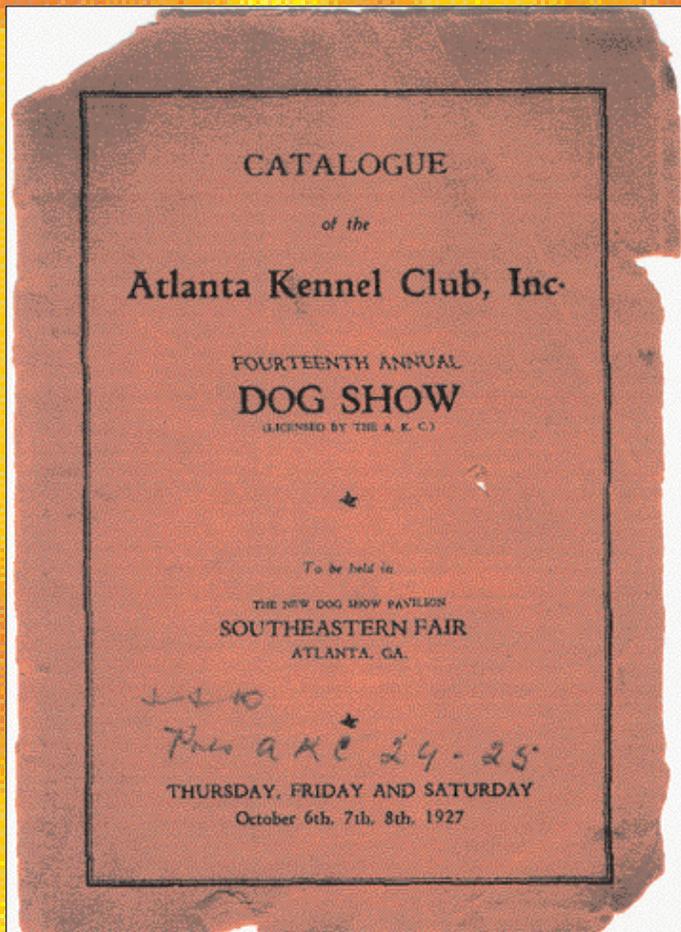


**Celebrating the holidays at the Atlanta Kennel Club. Hazel, Roy and a very young Linda Ayers (your author).**

well. From Halloween, Christmas, New Years and through the spring and summer picnics I have such great memories.

In 1961 Roy Ayers made the following introduction to Atlanta Kennel Club members. "One of our best known and most loved members is J. J. Duncan.

*First, of course, he was born in Scotland. In 1909 he immigrated to Winnipeg in Manitoba, Canada. His first job in Canada was as steward in the Manitoba Athletic Club. There is where he became interested in dogs, as the manager of the club had a kennel of Collies and*



**Boston Terriers.**

After leaving the club, he started exhibiting dogs as a hobby. These dogs were Collies and Boston Terriers.

Mr. Duncan was an active member of kennel clubs in Winnipeg. He held the office as President of the Western Collie Club of Canada for two years. In 1922 he came to Atlanta to accept a position with the Georgia Power Company. He soon joined the Atlanta Kennel Club and in 1924 was elected its president, holding the office through 1928. Through 1947 he held some official office of the kennel club. In 1927 Mr. Duncan's kennel consisted of Collies, Boston Terriers, and Yorkshire Terriers.

In 1931 Mr. Duncan was appointed a Specialty Judge for the Collie Club of America. He was also recognized as a Specialty Judge of Boston Terriers.

In 1941 he decided to limit his breeding to Smooth Fox Terriers. The three Smooths he has finished are Ch. Melanie, Ch. Coming Victory and Ch. Little Sport.

In 1948 he received one of 25 copies of Will Judy's 1927 book, *Men and Things* that Mr. Judy sent out as tokens of friendship. With the book Judy wrote requesting that it be willed to a grandchild, J. J. having twin grandchildren

soon received another copy with this insertion: 'To the other of the 1947 twins, upon the death of his grandfather Duncan, and with the fond hope, he in later years may be a courteous, well bred, fair and sportsmanlike as his old granddad, J. J. Will Judy, Chicago, 1948.'

Here are some other unrelated facts about our good friend. He has been judging all breeds for the past 25 years, and receives 10 to 12 invitations to judge monthly. His family shares his doggy interests; he is the third oldest subscriber to Dog World Magazine. His small compact, and functional kennel can house five dogs in comfort. All equipment is neatly stored in a chest of drawers beside which stands his grooming table. When asked his opinion of the Atlanta Kennel Club, as it stands today, Mr. Duncan said, 'I feel that the Atlanta Kennel Club consists of an active group of membership, with real leadership, which has encouraged the new members and always, the novice exhibition.'

Mr. Duncan's speech to the members that night 40 years ago was the following: "Madam President and Doggie Friends of the Atlanta Kennel Club.

Roy Ayers asked me to come to this meeting to talk to you about some of the

shows I have judged this year. Also to talk about some of my experiences in the show ring.

At first, I declined, as I would rather sit at the banquet table and enjoy the evening, as I do not always get the chance to attend many of the regular monthly meetings of the Atlanta Kennel Club.

However, Roy was successful in changing my decision, so here I am to talk to you about some of the shows I have judged this year.

My first assignment in 1961 was on the Florida Circuit on January 12th and 13th. The West Palm Beach show first, followed by the Ft. Lauderdale.

The West Palm Beach show was the worst show I had ever judged. It was an outside ring, it rained all day, and I had to stop judging four times on account of hard rain.

There were no catalogs; the handlers didn't know the numbers of their dogs. Catalogs had to be brought in by special plane, which cost \$65.00 and did not arrive until 5:00 pm. The show was over at 6:00 pm.

After judging all day I rode over to Ft. Lauderdale with Billy Lang. It rained hard most of the way and a heavy fog

developed which made driving bad.

The Ft. Lauderdale show was a classy show. There were 551 entries. Competition was very keen on several breeds. Group judging was held at 7:50 pm. Just prior to the group judging a very good demonstration was put on by the K9 Drill Team of Jacksonville. This was really the best drill team I have ever witnessed. A good credit to any good dog show.

January 29th found me up at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I enjoyed this show very much. There were 1,055 dogs and 8,000 paid admission to the show. Eight judging rings, four on each side of the auditorium. There was ample space between the rings for the dogs and handlers. No one without a dog was allowed in this space. Uniformed employees were stationed at each entrance to hold out anyone who did not have a dog.

My next show was the Westminster Kennel Club in New York on February 13th and 14th. I did not fly to New York as usual, but rode the train, the Silver Comet. As the train approached Richmond, Virginia one of the coaches jumped the tracks on a trestle bridge over the St. James River. We had a three hour wait until the car was put back on the track and we were five hours late arriving in New York.

This was my first time to judge at Madison Square Garden. There were 45 judges to judge 2,500 dogs.

There were 192 Poodles, 112 Dachshunds, 110 Collies, 94 Boxers, 74 Dobermans and 73 Great Danes.

This was a benched show. All dogs made a great showing and the aisles were crowded.

Group judging the last night of the show was very impressive. There were 28 newspapermen to cover the show, which finished at 11:00 p.m. A Toy Poodle went Best In Show.

On February 26th, I judged the Kansas City, Missouri show. Had to ride the Kansas City Special train to this show on account of planes being grounded due to rain and fog.

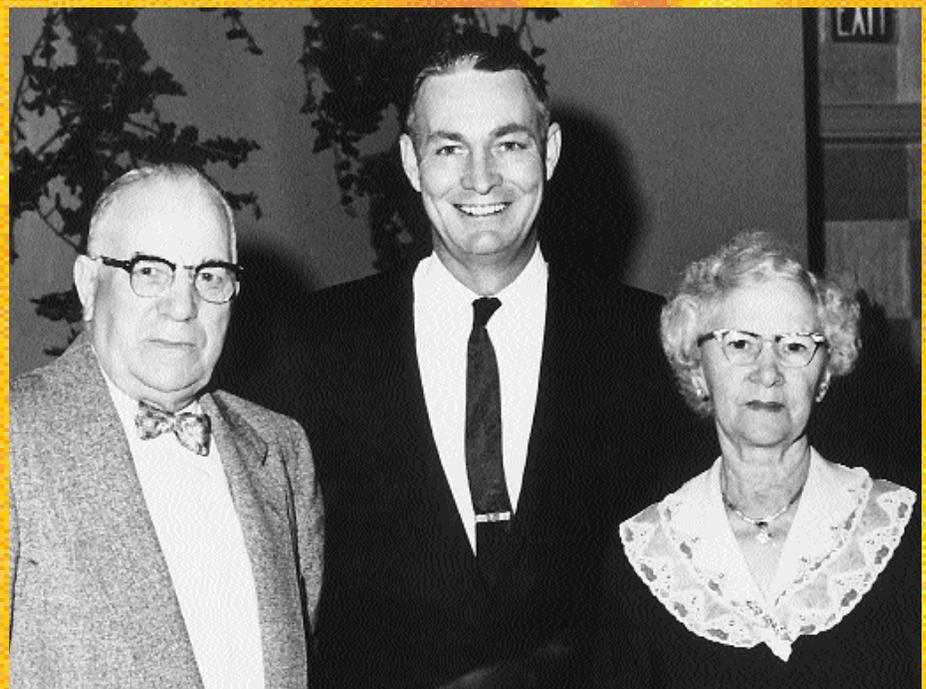
On the way out of Birmingham, Alabama we had a torrential rain of seven inches in seven hours. Because of high water covering the tracks, after leaving Birmingham, they had to run a special engine ahead of the regular train to find out if the rails were safe and all in place.

The Kansas City Show is a nice show. There was a banquet the night before the show. 350 fanciers attended this banquet.

They had 1,420 dogs entered and 56



**Mrs. Almand Carroll, Judge Mr. Al Vary, Handler Clara Alford. Ch. Chik T'Sun of Caversham owned by Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Venable. Mr. Roy L. Ayers, Atlanta Kennel Club President on October 10, 1959.**



**Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Duncan and Roy Ayers.**

professional handlers. Group judging in the evening was a classy affair. Will Judy was Master of Ceremonies.

The Parade of Champions is an outstanding event at this show. Every Champion is presented in the ring under floodlights with special organ music to represent the country where the champi-

on came from.

March 14th found me at Hanover, Wilmington, North Carolina. This is a small show. 286 dogs entered. This show was held outside on the campus grounds. The weather was good for an outside show. The Kennel Club gave a banquet the night before the show to



**Left to right: Dr. Richard F. Greathouse, Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Duncan and Mr. and Mrs. Roy Ayers**



**C. C. Venable presenting the Group One Trophy to Atlanta Kennel Club member Mike Leathers known to you today as Mrs. Michele Billings.**

*honor the judges and handlers.*

*Sunday, March 18th I judged at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. This show was held at the State Farm Building. This is the building where Arthur Godfrey holds all his famous horse shows. This is a benched show and there was ample*

*room on the ground floor for all the benching of 1,262 dogs. There were 18 judging rings. After the show finished, there was a dinner at the downtown Elks Club.*

*Next I went to Dallas, Texas on March 26th. This show was held at the Texas*

*State Fair. This was one of the hardest shows I have ever judged. My assignment was 252 dogs in Class competition, two variety groups, all the team and brace judging, then the Best in Show. I started in the ring at 8:30 am and finished at 9:30 pm without a break in judging. This was the last and largest show in the Texas Circuit totaling 990 dogs. Some of the other Texas shows had entries down 100 dogs.*

*During the afternoon there was a terrific thunder and hailstorm, just at the time I was judging a Schipperke Specialty Show. I had 27 entries. All the dogs were scared to death. They couldn't stand the thunder and the heavy hailstones. Many autos had their tops bent with the storm. I had only three dogs that weren't frightened.*

*One of my best friends, Roy Ayers, was also judging at this show. He was judging a Collie Specialty and drew a wonderful entry. Roy was judging in the next ring so I could see the high class of Collies he had. I could hardly keep up with my own ring. I was so interested in what he was doing and what dog he was putting up.*

*On April 2nd I judged the Western Reserve Kennel Club Show in Cleveland, Ohio. This show was held in the Cleveland Public Auditorium. It was a benched show, with 18 rings and 18 judges with 1,165 dogs. The Best in Show was judged at 6:00 pm. There were 72 professional handlers.*

*The quality of the dogs at this show was very good. The worst part of the show was that it snowed all day. We had eight inches of snow.*

*The day before the all-breed show I attended a Dachshund Specialty Show. There were 120 dogs entered in this Specialty Show.*

*Pine Bluff, Arkansas was the next stop on April 15th. This show was a small show held without the connection of any other circuit. 249 dogs were entered.*

*After this show, Mrs. Duncan and I stopped over in Memphis, Tennessee with our son and his family. We had a luncheon with Mrs. Marie Hunter at the Old Coach House. She wished to be remembered to all the members of the Atlanta Kennel Club. As you all know, Memphis is Marie's home, but she still misses the good times she had in Atlanta.*

*On Sunday, April 2nd, I judged the show at the State Fair Grounds in Lincoln, Nebraska. This could be called a real "classy" show, as all the club members are officials of the city government of Lincoln. This club will not sign up with any of the other Kennel Clubs in the State of Nebraska. The total entry was 398*

dogs. There were only eight professional handlers from other states.

Before judging the Best in Show, I was called into the ring and presented by the Governor of Nebraska with a certificate that I was duly made an Admiral of the Great Navy of the State of Nebraska.

My next show will be in St. Louis this weekend. On June 4th, there will be Cincinnati, Ohio and on June 11th, St. Paul, Minnesota.

After the St. Paul show, Mrs. Duncan and I will cross over to Canada where we expect to have an extended summer vacation.

Doggie friends, as I look back to my early dogs in dogom I think particularly of the day I joined the Atlanta Kennel Club in 1922. This meeting was held in the Ansley Hotel. There were 21 members at the meeting and Leo Schelver was the President.

You have come a long way, as I believe today you have about 300 members in the Atlanta Kennel Club and Mrs. Duncan and I are proud to be honorary members of this Atlanta Kennel Club.

Just as a comparison, at the time we joined the Atlanta Kennel Club the population of Atlanta was 240,000. Today, Atlanta has passed the 1,000,000 mark and still growing.

Being able to look back with satisfaction at the progress made since I first started in the dog game and more especially when I see a new exhibition moved by the success of their first blue ribbons.

I am convinced that real true honest showing of dogs builds up and develops sportsmanship.

As you study some of the well known and experienced dog lovers and talk to them, you will always find that the best decisions come with calmness to guide you with any of your doggie problems.

This is my 50th year dealing in dogs and out of the 50, 39 of them have been spent right here in Atlanta.

Being one of the 50 All-Breed Judges, my schedule calls for me to go from coast to coast. Everywhere I go many an exhibitor will tell me that he had exhibited dogs at the Atlanta Kennel Club and how much they have enjoyed the show."

Writing my ShowSight series on this past year's Top Dogs, their owners, breeders and handlers has been fun.

My mother reminisced with me about other greats of the past and gave me the following letter from her files.

In this letter to Author Ben Brown in 1963, J. J. Duncan's personality is shown through his writing.



**Guest Judge Show Superintendent Edgar Moss, Caroline Duncan, Roy and Hazel Ayers and J. J. Duncan.**



**The Duncans and the Ayers with their sons.**

April 22, 1963

Dear Ben Brown:

My interest in dogs began many years ago, in 1909, when I was steward of the Winnipeg Athletic Club in Canada.

Manager of the club, an Irishman by the name of John Mahoney was a purebred dog fancier and I caught the bug from him.

A thing, which was easy enough for

me to do for throughout the years, I have come to the conclusion that anyone who doesn't know dogs and really love them is missing half of life.

In those days, way back yonder, my interest centered in Collies and Boston Terriers. I raised them, and matched them in competition for championship points. Don't know that I ever set the world on fire as a handler, but I did get a



**What Greats do you spot in this Atlanta Kennel Club celebration in the early 50s?**



**Four Atlanta Kennel Club Presidents. Front row: Christine and Charles C. Venable (70s), Hazel and Roy Ayers (50's and 60s). Back row: E. L. "Abby" and Frances Abercrombie (60s), Montez and J. B. Harp (50s).**

*big kick out of it every time I went into the ring.*

*I became President of the Collie Club of Western Canada. Then in 1922 business interests took me to Atlanta as one of the division superintendents of the*

*Georgia Power Company, and I became a member of the Atlanta Kennel Club. This terminated in my being elected an honorary life member.*

*There have been many honors conferred upon me because of being closely*

*identified with dogs. Also, I am a member of the Robert Burns Club of Atlanta, a rather high brow group, but bless their hearts every last one of them love their dogs as much as I do.*

*Other honors to come my way include: "Admiral of The Great Navy, State of Nebraska"; "Arkansas Travelers"; "Kentucky Colonel"; "Ambassador of Goodwill, City of Louisville."*

*Throughout the years I have found that there is something about dogs and those who truly love them that binds man like Freemasonry.*

*It was November 23, 1930 that I received my license as an All-Breed Judge from the American Kennel Club. I am one of 40 who hold that title today.*

*To give you a behind the headlines glimpse of myself, James John Duncan, I started life as a stonemason in Turiff, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, something over 75 years ago. Let me add that I am entirely content to spend my sunset years among the folk where I now live.*

*Throughout the years, many of the good ones have come under my hand in the show ring.*

*Such names as Nornay Saddler, the Smooth Fox Terrier. Then there was the immortal Boxer, Bag Away. That superb Bulldog, Frosty Snowman. The eye-filling English Setter, Rockfalls Colonel, who was such a perfect mover both ways that he reminds you of a beautiful poem.*

*And that pigmy-giant of the show ring, Rebel Roc's Cassanova von Kurt (alias Little Daddy, the Min Pin) who racked up an abiding admiration in the hearts of all those who ever saw him.*

*But if you ask me to name the dog I regard as greatest of them all it is the "wee beastie" who wrapped up a world record of 126 Bests In Show wins which is apt to stand for sometime to come. Int. Ch. Chik T'Sun of Caversham, the Pekingese, known around the fireside as "Gossie." This diminutive K-9 weighs at ten pounds, stands nine inches high, has a conformation and balance that few of them ever have. It clicks to a "T" with the standard as set forth by the American Kennel Club. Always he is in magnificent coat. And he moves about the ring with the courage of a lion. Today at the advanced age of nine he can go into the ring and win hands down. That's for sure! So, my pick is Int. Ch. Chik T'Sun of Caversham.*

*Sincerely,  
James J. Duncan*

*My parents traveled all over the world for Daddy's All-Breed judging assignments. My home was within a few*

miles of theirs.

I loved taking care of their dogs especially during Mother's holiday baking season. Her famous fruitcake cookies have always been my favorite. Mother's consist mostly of toasted Georgia pecans with just enough batter to make them stick together. While I was at my parent's home playing with the dogs I was literally gobbling up those cookies. This is true! I would leave their house, drive half way home and turn around returning for just a few more cookies. I can relate to drug addicts, since I am that way about Mother's cookies.

The first dog in history to win 100 All-Breed Bests in Show, Ch. Chik T'Sun of Caversham's owners, Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Venable were also members of the Atlanta Kennel Club. After church on Christmas Eve our family always went to Charlie and Christine Venable's for dinner and their opening of gifts.

Their first home on Gresham Avenue was famous all over the State of Georgia. The Venables decorated like Macys in New York years before holiday decorations became commonplace.

Santa was seated in an antique sleigh pulled by life-size authentic-looking reindeer with real antlers. The Carolers were life-size beautifully dressed mannequins whose music was enchanting. The centerpiece of their yard was the most beautiful manger scene and also so real-looking. Cars lined up for miles just to pass and enjoy the Venables' lights. I loved to sit on the living room sofa with a very special little dog on my lap. "Gossie" known to most as Ch. Chik T'Sun of Caversham and I sat beside the life-sized moving Santa Claus that really laughed a loud "Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas!" We watched through the windows at hundreds of people who were thrilled by the Venables' elaborate display.

Today I realize how blessed I was to have enjoyed this magnificent Peke as a playmate.

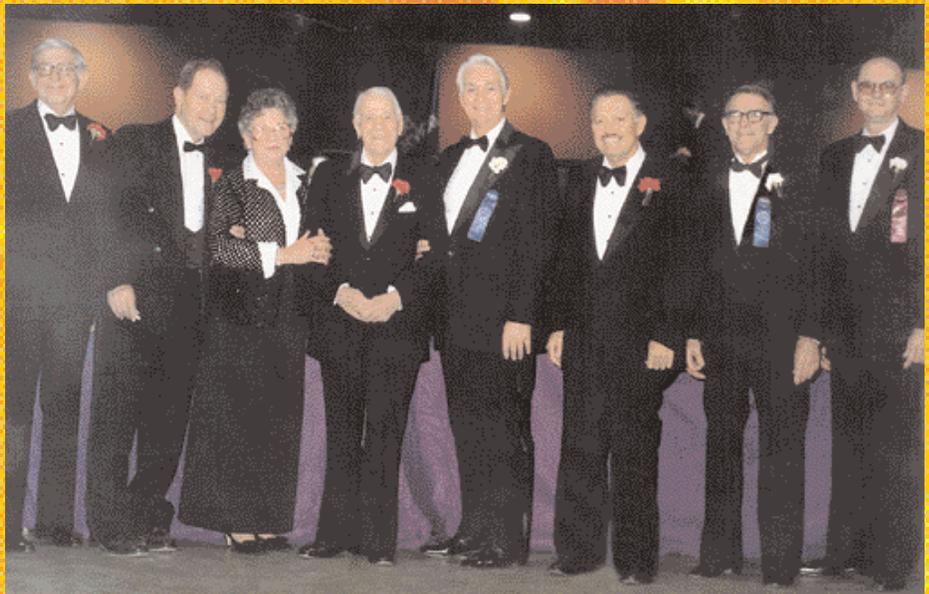
Charlie Venable also guided the Atlanta Kennel Club as President. When interviewed, he was often quoted naming Roy Ayers as his mentor.

Another Atlanta Kennel Club President and his wife sometimes dropped by the Venables on Christmas Eve. J. B. Harp held the club's top post in 1957. Hazel Ayers shared this story about J. B. and Montez Harp.

"There used to be a superstition among dog folks that if you entered a dog in advance, something was sure to happen! Of course that superstition like all other superstitions is nothing but superstition, however, J. B. Harp had forked over



**A hand-painted Ch. Chik T'Sun of Caversham on the tie of Charlie Venable beside his beautiful wife Christine.**



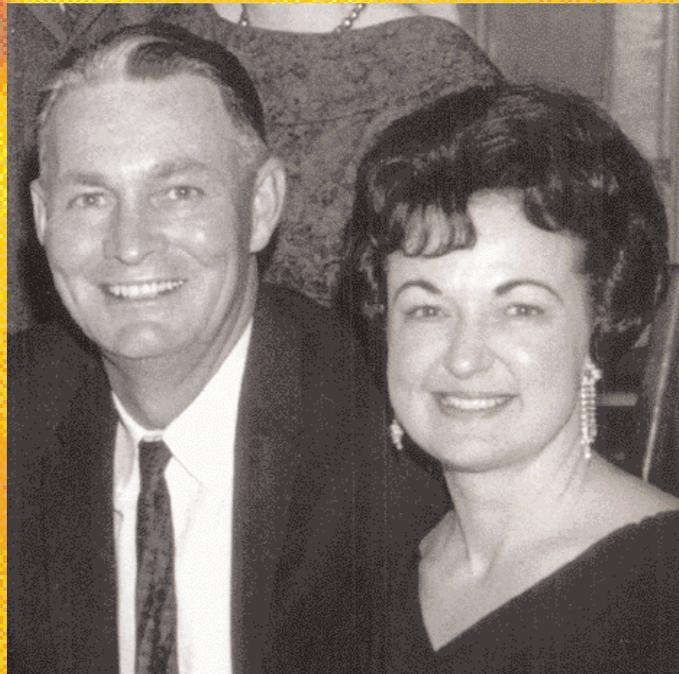
**The Atlanta Kennel Club's 100th Show. World Congress Center, Atlanta, Georgia, December 7, 1980. Mr. J. J. Duncan's last appearance at a dog show. Pictured with Mr. Duncan are other past Presidents of the Atlanta Kennel Club. Left to right: Herman Fellton, Bo Carroll, Frances Ambercrombie, J. J. Duncan, Roy Ayers, Charlie Venable, Norman Bowker and John Wise (President at the time).**

this perfectly good \$4.25 entry fee early in 1953 to enter a Pekingese, Wanda Starr, in a Portsmouth, Virginia show for November 22nd. Wanda was seven years old and that's getting along for a show dog. J. B. felt that if they didn't finish her pretty soon they might as well quit trying!

On November 11th they groomed her with all the knowledge they possessed, which was considerable, and put her to bed feeling gratified that she was in good shape. That was about 11 o'clock. At 1 a.m. Wanda woke J. B. up barking in a way that made him know something was



**In 1953 the Atlanta Kennel Club had over 200 members. Only three of those members remain active today: Mrs. Roy L. (Hazel) Ayers, Mrs. Earl L. (Mae) Downing and Mrs. Herman (Judy) Felton.**



**Roy and Hazel Ayers.**



**Reminiscing at the Atlanta Kennel Club's 100th. Hazel Ayers as radiant as in the early 50s.**

wrong. J. B. crawled out of bed and went back into the kitchen to check on Wanda. In a few seconds he was back shaking Montez, his wife out of a deep sleep. "Wake up, Montez!", he pleaded. "Something awful has happened to Wanda!! She must have been trying to catch a mouse and ran into a chair leg. Her right eye is entirely out of the socket!"

They called the Vet and he was there in ten minutes in his pajamas. "There isn't time to take her to the hospital," he said. "Seconds are precious in a case like this. We must keep those nerve fibers alive which means that eyeball can't be out of its socket too long if we want to save it! We'll operate on her here on the kitchen table!" And they did. The Vet asked Montez to focus

the eye in putting it back to be sure it was right.

"She's entered in a show next Sunday week. RECKON???" For a moment the Vet looked at her as if she was weak-minded! Nevertheless. "We'll see" he replied.

Well, three days later they took the stitches out. The eye looked pretty good. On scheduled time Wanda went into the show ring at Portsmouth.

Dogs with visible blemishes were dismissed from the competition. The judge went over Wanda carefully. Clearly he was impressed with her and awarded the little Peke Best-Of-Opposite-Sex. It meant Wanda's championship too! The only comment the judge made was: "Well, your dog certainly has a lovely pair of eyes!"

In 1953 the Atlanta Kennel Club had over 200 members. Only three of those members remain active today: Mrs. Roy L. (Hazel) Ayers, Mrs. Earl L. (Mae) Downing, and Mrs. Herman (Judy) Felton.

Ch. Chik T'Sun of Caversham retired with his Best In Show win at the Westminster Kennel Club Show in February 1960.

Ten years Mr. Duncan's junior, Caroline Duncan, was always dressed for a party. I remember her with so much love. No matter when you might drop by her home you would find her looking like she was ready for a special occasion. The Duncan's had a gift for making my brother and I feel exceptional as they always insisted we sit with them at dog shows or parties or wherever we might be together.

When she passed away before him, Mr. Duncan was so sad. My parents and I would visit him at the retirement home where he lived his final days. We always took him lots of dog magazines. He loved getting them and he was always ready to leave with us to go to a show if only we could take him.

From February 18, 1886 until February 2, 1983 the life of J. J. Duncan began and ended in the month of February. His final ring appearance was at the 100th Atlanta Kennel Club Dog Show on December 7, 1980.

I will always remember these special mentors and Christmas Eves with family friends... How times flies when we're having fun!