
LINES FROM LINDA

JOSEPH E. GREGORY

PERSONALITY PERSONIFIED

1928-2022

BY LINDA AYERS TURNER KNORR



With a hop, skip, and a jump, and a smile on his face, Joe Gregory delighted dog show exhibitors, as his love for our sport, the dogs, and the people shined through in his dynamic personality. To know him was to love him.



Forever the Handsome Gentleman...
Joe celebrating Morris & Essex 2021.
photos courtesy of Jean Edwards

George Alston, another of the dog world's great legends, had this to say as we reminisced about Joe:

"Joe Gregory was a great man; a true Southern Gentleman. He loved dogs and the sport of dogs, but most of all Joe loved people. Joe was a great handler with the softest hands I had ever seen showing a Boxer. You see, I first met Joe when I was 12. I was showing my Boxer, Barmers Talisman, in the classes. I was losing. My folks were going to hire a professional handler because they thought he was too strong for me. I was just getting over complications from Polio. Joe went to my folks and said, "Let me help George. I think he will be just fine." Joe taught me how to show a Boxer with a "SOFT" hand. He taught me how to think in the ring; how to compete with the pro handlers. In those days, there were usually 10 or 12 handlers in the Open Dog Class and it took 37 males to make a major. With Joe's help and guidance, I finished "Boomer" about six months later at the American Boxer Club specialty the day before The Garden. I was showing Boomer in Specials under Mr. Wagner of Mazelaine fame. I was then 14. He made it between Larry Downey with "Spark Plug" and me with Boomer. Joe was in the ring also. Joe kept telling me to do this and do that, and it lasted about 30 minutes between the two of us. Spark Plug won. Two days later, before Juniors, Joe found me to talk to me. He had heard that the other kids were making fun of my southern accent and he told me he used to have the same problem when he started as a handler. He told me not to let it bother me and to go in there and win. He said I was good enough. I did win Best Junior. It was 1954. From then on, Joe was always helping me and advising me. After I graduated from high school, I had an offer to work for Lina Basquette. I asked Joe, and he thought it was a good idea. Later, I went to work for Jane Kamp (Forsyth) and Joe just laughed and said, "It will be different, but go for it and learn more."

Later, when Joe became a Judge and I started handling, our friendship was still there. I never entered any dog under Joe because of our friendship, and I only showed under him in Groups and BIS; won some and lost some.

Joe was a great judge. He was always helping young folks and new people in the sport. More people with the knowledge should do the same thing.

When I retired from handling, it was Joe who encouraged me to do more teaching, which I did. Joe always said he could tell my students when they showed under him. Mary Ann and I send love to his son and daughter, Joey and Evalyn.

Joe Gregory was a great man and I will miss him!"

—George Alston

LINES FROM LINDA: REMEMBERING JOSEPH E. GREGORY



Atlanta Kennel Club 1963: Judge Melbourne Downing awarding Best in Show to Ch. Treceder's Painted Lady, owned by Donald E. and Mary E. Smith, and handled by Joe Gregory. Atlanta Kennel Club President Roy L. Ayers (my father) presenting Silver Service. Joe repeated this BIS win on the following day, April 12 and 13, 1963.

Photos by Bill Evans

Clint Harris was also a Kentuckian remembered as an icon. Barbie Johnson, Clint's daughter, shared these memories:

"In looking back over my childhood, the memories of spending time with my dad, Clint Harris, flood in. During my elementary school years, I watched my dad train dogs in obedience at our home, and when he started training classes, I often assisted him with setting up the floor mats and so forth. Soon dad started handling dogs more often at conformation shows. I was taken along often, and I started hearing the names of other handlers and meeting many of those who were dad's closest friends. Many, perhaps most, of those handlers are gone. A couple of names stand out in my mind: Dr. Richard Greathouse and Joe Gregory. I got to see Joe showing Boxers at the local Kentucky shows, and hear her dad talk about the shows and his friends who showed dogs that lived in Louisville. I remember as a young girl how magical dog shows were—everyone was dressed up, sporting their PHA pins. Dad and Joe Gregory were the young, handsome fellows who were at the shows. As a young preteen girl, it wasn't lost on me how much they were admired by everyone for their looks and their skills in the ring. As time went on, Joe started judging, as did my dad. I'd ask dad how Joe was now and then, and found out they'd remained friends and talked frequently. Then, toward the end of dad's life, Joe would check on dad at the hospital. I answered one of those calls and realized that Joe sounded the same, very kind and full of fun, and he had a sincere concern for dad. Dad passed away in 2018. I met up with Joe and Evalyn at the Lexington show in September of 2019. He was genuinely glad to see me and chat. Still handsome and full of energy. Now, Joe has joined dad and all of the icons from the dog world who have gone on. The loss will be felt strongly by all who admired Joe Gregory. I'm so glad that I got to visit with him in 2019.

My heart goes out to Joe's son, Joseph, and his daughter, Evalyn. The dog world has lost another legend."

—Barbie Harris Johnson



Joe Gregory handling Ch. Treceder's Painted Lady on the way to his first BIS of the weekend, under Judge Melbourne Downing. Hazel Ayers (my mother) presenting Silver Tray.



April 16, 1960: Atlanta Kennel Club, Judge Dr. A. A. Mitten awarding Best Working Dog to Doberman Pinscher, handled by Joe Gregory.



Friends Roy Ayers and Joe Gregory celebrating Joe's back-to-back BIS wins, April 12,13, 1963.

Houston and Toddie Clark, two of my favorite friends and one of the dog world's most popular judging couples, recalled the following stories:

"Joe was indeed a 'one of a kind' kind of guy and the only adult we know who had rather have an ice cream cone than a thick, juicy steak. He was well-known for his 'sweet tooth' and many club members throughout the country would bring him their home-made goodies to the shows when he was on the panel.

Everyone liked Joe, and he was an all-around neat guy. Plus, he was respected for his breed knowledge. Additionally, you never saw Joe without a smile on his face.

We knew Joe as a professional handler as well as a professional judge, and we also know his lovely daughter, Evalyn. Sharon, our youngest child, was a friend of Evalyn's, and went home with the Gregorys from a dog show when they were in their early teens. She has fond memories of her visit and friendship with Evalyn and the Gregorys.

Before we all had cable TV and the Internet, Joe told us about his huge outdoor "big dish" that brought him channels from all over the world. He said he could watch the pre-show set-ups and the talking that didn't go out on TV. He added that he stays healthy by playing basketball and jogging.

In our younger years, we bred Miniature Pinschers and we won the breed early-on at the Garden one year. Joe was still handling at the time and offered us a blank check for her—and we turned him down. (With four children at home, that was a hard decision.) As she was to have been our foundation bitch, we bred her to the famous "Little Daddy" who was owned and handled by E.W. Tipton, a well-known AKC judge. As luck would have it, she died at the vet's office delivering her first litter. Sad. Joe was unforgettable there as well.

Our love and prayers go out to Joey and Evalyn and to their family members."

—Houston and Toddie Clark

LINES FROM LINDA: REMEMBERING JOSEPH E. GREGORY



Proud father Joe Gregory surrounded by his daughter, Evalyn, and son, Joseph - February 2016. photo courtesy of NorCal Bulldogger



Great Genes... Father and Son having fun at The Garden.



Smiles say it all; I snapped this photo of Joe and Evalyn in Louisville a few years ago.

Back in the day, when I was a very young junior showing our family's Conrad Collies and traveling to dog shows with my parents, Roy and Hazel Ayers, Daddy would set up next to the young, professional handlers, Joe Gregory and Burr Long. That made me very happy. Those days have been the topics of conversation among old-timers for decades.

I will always remember having lunch with Clint Harris, Col. Wally Pede, and Joe when the subject came up about me as a youngster. I thought Joe was so handsome, and I compared him to the movie star, Cary Grant; a heartthrob in those days. At that time, *Dog News* was a very thin red and white magazine. The advertisements were perhaps 1" by 2" and, of course, everything was black and white. There were stacks of them in our attic. I would go up there and cut out tiny photos of young handler Joe Gregory and put them in my little red wallet, also filled with pictures of my family and grammar school classmates. That tale was also a topic

of conversation when Joe took his son, Joseph, and me out for dinner in New York a few years ago. Oh, what fun we had laughing that night!

Gregory's marriage to Mamie Spears Reynolds, whose mother once owned the Hope Diamond, produced two amazing children, Joseph and Evalyn. The couple's varied interests took them around the world.

Joseph, called "Joey" to many of us who have known him all his life, is the President and Founder of the Hope Diamond Collection where, in 1999, he launched a global fragrance called FABLE. Joseph is a noted author and publisher of two books, *The Hope Diamond* and *Queen of Diamonds*. He is a noted historian and designer, and a highly sought-after motivational speaker. His works are in the Library of Congress. Presently, he and his partner, Charles Rapp, reside in Nashville, Tennessee, where Joseph is also an image consultant to the music industry.

Evalyn grew up travelling with her parents to dog shows when they exhibited. At age ten, she began showing. With her mother, she co-owned a Brussels Griffon that still holds the title as top-winning smooth-coated Brussel Griffon of all time; with Evalyn on the other end of the leash. Fast forward... Evalyn is currently a favorite among judges at highly esteemed dog shows, including Morris & Essex, Westminster, The Kennel Club of Philadelphia, and so many, many others. Her father beamed with pride when he was able to watch his beautiful young daughter following in his footsteps as a judge.

A primary passion of Joe's was basketball. Joe and Mamie were the first owners of the ABA Kentucky Colonels in the late 1960s. My family's courtside seats in the Atlanta Omni for the NBA's Atlanta Hawks games were right beside the Gregorys.

JOSEPH E. GREGORY led an enviable life doing the things he loved most and sharing them with his wife, Mamie, and his two very successful children, Joseph and Evalyn. His legacy will live on through them.

Joe has made a positive impact on the sport of purebred dogs and he will be immensely missed. His dynamic personality will remain in the hearts of those who loved him forever. ■