

Lines From Linda ⁶⁷

As the entries paraded in front of the judge, anatomy and movement were of greatest importance! The panel of experts for this event was not headed by my father, all-breed judge Roy L. Ayers, Sr., but instead my brother, Roy L. Ayers, Jr. drew top billing. There were participants from all fifty states.



For years the father and son team traveled around the country admiring the winners selected by one another. However, the younger Judge Roy Ayers was selecting the winner in the Miss USA Pageant. In other words, Roy, Jr.'s winner wore a crown!

As he attempts to fulfill our late father's life long dream of seeing his son following in his footsteps, it is with great pride that I relinquish my column this month to my brother, Roy Ayers, Jr.

Linda Ayers Turner Knorr

*By nature
our guest
columnist
admires
beauty in all
forms.*



*Now that we
have your
attention, kindly
turn to page
70 for
INSIDE THE
INSTITUTE, by
Roy Ayers, Jr.*

INSIDE THE INSTITUTE

BY ROY L. AYERS, JR.

THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB INSTITUTE FOR JUDGES



I recently had the pleasure of attending the AKC Institute for Judges with forty or so equally devoted fanciers of our beloved sport. The institute, held in the Chicago suburb of Elk Grove Village, afforded all of us a full week to immerse ourselves in the mutual goal of enhancing our skills for judging purebred dogs. Our guides for this once-in-a-lifetime expedition were comprised of a virtual who's who of the dog world. Leading authorities from the American Kennel Club, including board staff members, field representatives, and some of the top judges in the world prepared an agenda that didn't experience a glitch, or allow for one boring moment.

I believe this was the sixth institute to be conducted thus far, and its evolvement represents a dream which is a product of two great men with vision.

Dr. Robert J. Berndt and Dr. Jim Edwards have a dream. They and their remarkable staff are working very hard to create an environment where breeders and exhibitors remain focused upon the origin of their respective breeds, while demonstrating 100% adherence to the rules. Further, the institute stresses that an individual empowered with the important responsibilities of judging should focus upon the positive qualities of the dogs in the ring. Judges should render efficient, objective decisions while encouraging both winners and losers through the means of a positive show experience. This portrays the mission of the institute. It has been stated that experience is the best teacher. Assuming the truth in that statement, the institute experience is second to none. A treasure vault worth of experience was represented on the agenda.

Allow me to elaborate. I found it remarkable that Dr. Robert J. Berndt, our AKC Chairman of the Board spent the entire week not only as a keynote speaker, but as an active

participant and instructor. With the pressures of his agenda, it makes quite a statement for him to place such emphasis on this project. During his opening remarks we learned about his plans for the future expansion of the institute format. Soon to come will be a three-tiered approach...

- Basic Training - Institute 101
- Intermediate
- Mentor Level Training

I, for one, intend to return if accepted.

Also, computer software systems proposed for installation by year-end 1996 could increase registration efficiency and accuracy to 100%. Additionally, the proposed revamping of AKC office facilities (including proposals for a field training facility) will represent cost-effective planning. The institute is a testament to Dr. Berndt's hands-on, well-thought-out leadership.

The mastermind of the program is Dr. Jim Edwards. He is a walking educator. He is the kind of guy who reminds you of your all time favorite college professor. The one who you stood in line early to register for his class, and never cut even when a cute girl wanted to have a picnic. He is the cohesive bond that puts it

all together.

We were charmed by one of the grandest ladies in the sport, Dorothy MacDonald. She helped set the tone for the week by pointing out that in order to effectively appraise pure bred dogs one must first search for an understanding of "the essence and soul of the breed." One must examine the "function" of the breed at ground zero. "Breeds are really a reflection of the people who developed them." She stated much more eloquently than this writer ever could that "The true challenge of a breeder, or a judge, is to continue to enhance the true characteristics of each breed... not to alter the standard to accommodate the requirements of a changing society!! Think about it!"

We were treated to the insights of Mr. Thomas Conway. This man is a true American with strong opinions, which, in my opinion, are widely shared by pure bred enthusiasts. Mr. Conway divides dog fanciers into three basic categories:

1. Purists (He is clearly a purist.)
2. Ego Expanders
3. Spectator Sport Enthusiasts

Perhaps you are in one of the above categories, but think about a few of Mr. Conway's

L. to R: Melbourne Downing,
Dorothy McDonald, Dorothy Welsh,
Dr. Robert Berndt, Mari-Beth
O'Neill, Ronald Rella



improve. The institute participants were fortunate to not only enjoy his amazing wit, but gain insight from his years of experience. Although it would not be possible to summarize Mr. Sabella's many thoughts in this article, I will attempt to simplify some of the philosophies he shared with us.

- Avoid fault judging.
- Judge for overall balance.
- Look for positive qualities.
- Seek proper type – certain characteristics make a superior specimen stand out

It takes more skill to determine balance and proportion than to look for standard text book faults. The interesting thing about these rules is, while they appear simplistic, few have mastered them on the level of Frank Sabella. One more thing, no one has more fun doing it.

We all have a breed to which we particularly relate. I was born and raised in the Conrad Collie Kennels in Atlanta, Georgia. Until I went to college, I was convinced I was conceived because Dad needed a kennel boy to help my sister, Linda. Atlanta was rural in those years and so my best friends were champion Collies. My mother, Hazel Ayers, says Linda and I teathed on Collie ears. This is why I made a point to seek out Dorothy Welsh. She is widely regarded as a Collie expert (not to limit her in any way) and I have observed her for many years. I had the pleasure of judging a superior group of Collies under her guidance and critique. The institute affords one the opportunity to judge many various breeds in a simulated show-ring situation. Clearly, one of the highlights for me was my time in the ring

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principals before deciding.

- The promotion of dogs, purely to generate income is troublesome.
- Learn the standard and to thy own self be true.

Now where are you?

Mr. Conway defines judges as arbitrators who make determinations based upon the standard only, not personal likes or dislikes.

Simply stated, he displays an approachable, confident demeanor while maintaining the businesslike proficiency of a humble master. It is no wonder he finished champions in eight breeds.

Just in case you live in a vacuum, let me

introduce you to Mrs. James Edward Clark. Unless you have won the Garden three times, and returned as "Judge of the Year" to render a Best in Show decision on those same hallowed grounds, you might not want to argue with her. I chose to listen, and learn. She strongly believes that evaluation of breeding stock is only part of a judge's job. Mrs. Clark states that effective interaction with the people associated with the sport is equally important. Mentored by a diverse group of greats (Alva Rosenburg, Percy Roberts and Billy Kendrick), she credits them with much of her success and encourages new breeders, exhibitors and judges to align themselves with a qualified mentor. Having personally trained under Roy L. Ayers, Sr., I can reinforce that advice as rock solid. Mrs. Clark suggests coming to a show mentally and physically prepared, and reminds us not to forget our common sense and good humor. It is obvious that she is not just preaching, but effectively practicing.

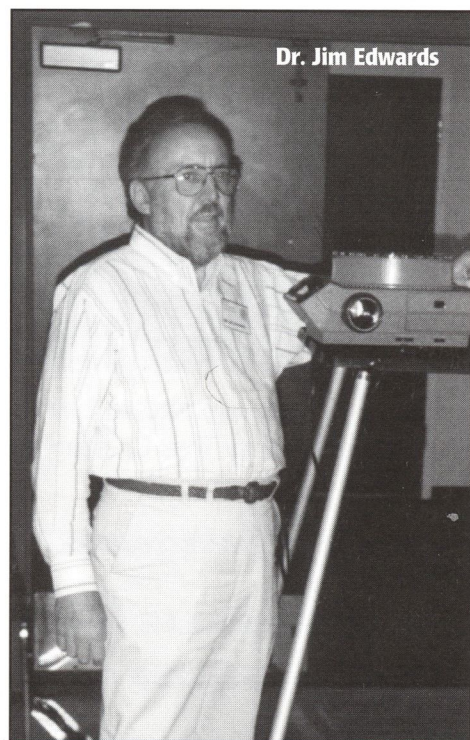
We spent quality time with Joyce Hogi. This woman is a prototype AKC public relations dream. If I had a problem worthy of her time, she would listen and solve it. Her effective style of communication is indicative of why the AKC is what it is. My guess is she takes little credit, but deserves a great deal. She is eloquent, charming and informal. As director of event operations, Joyce serves as a liaison between exhibitors and judges. Try those shoes on for about one day and get back to me.

If you are having a particularly tough day at your next show and you happen upon Mr. Frank Sabella, I suggest your day may

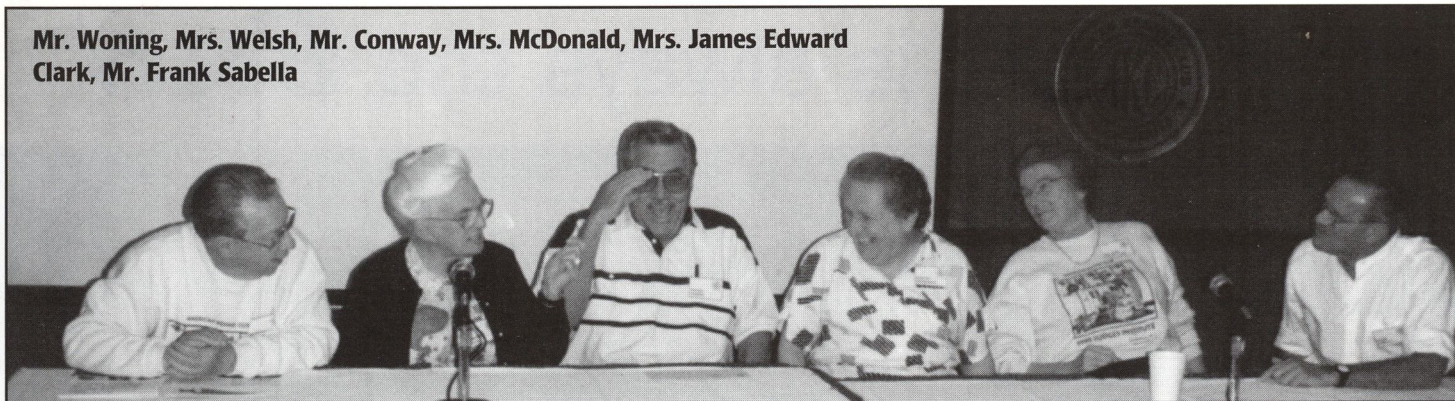
Tom Conway



Dr. Jim Edwards



Mr. Woning, Mrs. Welsh, Mr. Conway, Mrs. McDonald, Mrs. James Edward Clark, Mr. Frank Sabella



with Mrs. Welsh. If you want to play effective football, look for Don Schula. I like to judge Collies, so I made a beeline for her. In common to her talents as a judge, the wisdom she imparts regarding everyday show situation "what ifs" is invaluable. We were all touched by her and fortunate to study under her watchful eye.

By now you may begin to notice a few common themes shared consistently among the elite judges. We were graced by the presence of Mr. Melbourne Downing, who summed it all up beautifully. He believes that true type is functional because it is always completely sound. He believes that first impressions are generally accurate in evaluating overall balance. He says to focus on the uniqueness of the breed immediately. "He that looks too long is bound to be wrong," stated Mr. Downing. He further stresses, "Remain uniform and consistent and treat all dogs fairly. Have the courage to withhold awards if necessary. Never make a judgement that could harm the breed." From a judge's standpoint, these are words to live by.

Mr. Downing, Esquire, performed a hands-on practicum for judges on record keeping, how to correspond with clubs to avoid any confusion, and tax advice. He shared wonderful stories with us as only he, in his eloquent, humorous style, could relate. As the AKC's

only all-breed judge who is the son of an all-breed judge, he is nothing short of a national treasure to the sport of pure bred dogs.

If you are a judge, or a judge wannabe, you will find yourself under the scrutinizing eye of Mari-Beth O'Neill. And rightfully so. Everyone who registers an entry in any AKC sanctioned event owes her a debt of gratitude. She is the true line of defense which assures us all of judging quality control. Mari-Beth shoulders the awesome responsibility of reviewing all judging applications. Of course, she was on hand to lend a helping hand. Mari-Beth takes her job seriously, and she is a reflection of the high standards that the AKC demands in all judges. She was always available and thoroughly explained the new rules and guidelines now in effect for judges.

Assisting Dr. Edwards in the orchestration of this magnificent program were Ronald N. Rella and Anne Hier. They act as Associate Directors for the AKC's Judging and Research Development Department. Both are devoted to the betterment of the judging profession and, in my opinion, were in many ways the glue that held the week-long event together.

While it is impossible to convey the many facets of the agenda included in the institute, one thing really impressed me. I came away with newfound respect for the AKC executive field staff. These are the men and women you

see at nearly every single all-breed show in the United States of America. They travel an average of twenty-five days per month. They carry the banner of the AKC. They are mediators, innovators, consultants and friends. They are walking encyclopediae of the AKC rules and

breed standards and they are always there to give an assist when needed. They are truly the hardest-working people in the dog business. And, as if they need more responsibilities, they now act as official advisors to new breed first-time judging applicants.

The next time you spot one of these truly "rare breeds," thank them for what they do for all of us! Representing the AKC field staff this time around were Delores Burkholder, Kay Radcliff, Anne D. Savory and Mr. Robert H. Slay. By the way, they are a part of a staff of sixteen persons. It is amazing that so few could accomplish so much!

Delivering our farewell address was none other than Mr. Walter F. Goodman, "Mr. Montgomery County," whose accomplishments in the sport are an inspiration to all.

In summary, I came away with three primary thoughts to carry along throughout my career in dogs.

1. Not everyone always agrees. If it weren't for objectivity, there would be no need for shows. If everyone agreed, no one would have any fun.
2. The AKC is the finest governing body in the world of sports today. There are no strikes or contract disputes because it is made up of real people who have been there and find solutions instead of making excuses.
3. Judging is a privilege not to be abused.

I was lucky enough to be born into the world of dogs. It is a big part of my life. The institute has inspired me to redouble my efforts to give something back to the sport that has given me so much. By the way, I had to catch a plane back to Washington, D.C. and missed the final awards ceremony. If anyone sees Dr. Edwards, ask him to send my diploma! I want to give it to my mother in memory of my father, the late all-breed judge, Mr. Roy L. Ayers, Sr. — my true inspiration.

Roy L. Ayers, Jr.

Walter Goodman, Dr. Berndt, Mari-Beth O'Neill, Ann Savoray, Bob Slay

