

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dr. Gerard C. Penta

From time to time one comes across a generalized criticism of judges and their associations by the editorial staff of *Dog News*. These comments seem to expose a negative bias toward judges and their organizations. Most often these jabs are either so obviously off base, or so preposterous, that few would take them seriously. Indeed, their greatest value seems to be comedic. A couple of paraphrased examples may illustrate this point. One, I am told, was prompted by a couple of sweepstakes judges who were not properly attired, which led to the generalization that too many judges are not properly attired and the judges associations should do something about it. The show photos in this very same magazine demonstrate how contrary to fact this claim is, not to mention that sweepstakes judges may not be, and may never intend to be, AKC-approved judges. Another example of a preposterous anti-judge statement is the pronouncement that only former handlers should be allowed to charge a judging fee. See what I mean about the comedic value of outrageous statements? Only a few judge-hating extremists would take that one seriously.

Now, not all of the anti-judge statements emanating from this source are so outlandish as to render themselves innocuous. In the editorial column of the October 26, 2007 issue of *Dog News*, while rightly decrying the AKC Board's permissiveness in approving the proposal to allow an applicant to be approved for a full group on the first application, the writer claims that the board and staff, "...cave into the demands of the applicants and the judges' organizations. Both of whom only want more and more breeds, whether or not the people applying have the proper backgrounds and experience." He goes on to write, "It's gotten to the point now where there are those who think the best solution in these matters is to give people whatever breeds they want and do away with any requirements whatsoever." And finally, "What difference does it make what past experience or ability to perform as a judge they have?"

To address the latter point first, this extremely permissive open-door view of judging approval is not something new. Indeed it raised its ugly head five years ago. Contrary to what some may think, the authors of these proposed changes in the judging-approval policy were members of an AKC Board committee. Fortunately for our sport more level-headed members on the AKC Board did not approve these irresponsible proposals. By the way, it was this

situation that led ADSJ to get involved with AKC Board elections. Unfortunately, we were not successful and the supporters of this open-door policy are still on the board. So it has not just "gotten to the point now" as stated in the *Dog News* editorial, but rather, this has been the agenda of a few people on the AKC Board for quite some time. The writer's comments suggests that it is the judges and their organizations that are responsible if such nonsense is to become policy. Of course, those who are actually behind this ultra permissiveness would like nothing more than to accomplish their purpose while creating the impression that they are just giving in to the judges and their organizations.

Don't you believe it.

For the sake of clearly demarcating where the ADSJ stands on these issues, permit me to quote from a letter I wrote on behalf of the ADSJ Board of Directors to Mr. James P. Crowley, dated March 5, 2003. This letter was in response to the AKC Board's request for comments regarding the changes it was considering to the procedures and policies for the approval of judges. The first change would have removed any evaluation of one's judging performance, while the second would provide for granting approval for a full group on the first application. Our responses were numbered to correspond to the changes under consideration.

1. Eliminating the breed observation reports without providing an alternative means of evaluating judging performance is a very serious mistake. Without an evaluation component as part of the approval process we are concerned that the judging ranks will be flooded with judges racing through the groups at 13 breeds per application, regardless of whether or not they are doing a satisfactory job in their most recently approved breeds. This will lower the overall quality of dog judging in America.

2. No matter how knowledgeable a person may be about the breeds in a particular group they should not be given an entire group on the first application. We believe there is an important distinction between knowledge of a breed and the ability to apply that knowledge as a judge. A new judge, no matter how knowledgeable, is still a new judge. AKC ought to evaluate the performance of each new judge before granting the judge approval for an entire group. An accelerated process (less than one year) could be considered for the very knowledgeable applicant."

The next time you read something like judges and their organizations "only want more and more breeds, whether or not the people applying have the proper backgrounds and experience" with no concern for their "ability to perform as a judge", you must ask

yourself, "Is this writer truly ignorant of the actual agents behind such ideas, or is he complicit in the plan to achieve these objectives while laying blame for them on the judges, or is he simply a good-intentioned useful instrument of those on the AKC Board who still hope to discard any requirement of preparation or evaluation when it comes to judging approval?"

For the record then: The ADSJ takes the position that in dog show judging, as in any field, advancement should be based on relevant preparation and evaluation of performance.