

## VOL 26 NO 1

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dr. Gerard C. Penta

You know where the ADSJ stands regarding the current judging approval process. This virtual give-away program undermines the credibility of all those conscientious judges who have spent most of their adult lives preparing themselves to judge the breeds for which they are now approved. The current approval process is also an affront to the parent clubs as it flies in the face of their stated commitment to protect and preserve their breeds. Because of this, the silence of the parent clubs regarding the way judges are now approved to judge their breeds is puzzling. One wonders if they fully realize the probable impact of such low judging approval standards on their breeds. As to all-breed clubs, it may be understandable, yet nonetheless disturbing, that many all-breed clubs seem to welcome this open-door policy as it promises to provide more multiple group judges to cover their smaller shows, to say nothing of the downward pressure it will bring to bear on judging fees. Parent clubs, on the other hand, have different priorities having to do with the welfare and advancement of a single breed. The current approval process clearly dismisses such concerns as it rushes to pursue quantity over quality.

We have been arguing against this approval process since it was a proposal and well before it was adopted by the AKC board. At issue is the lack of demonstrated breed knowledge and at least some ability to sort out the quality dogs from a class of average and poor specimens.

Now the AKC board has come up with the Canine College, which to my recollection, was an idea first suggested in *Dog News* many years ago by the late all-breed judge, Denny Kodner. It could have been a great idea, but unfortunately in its present form it is not. Frankly, I am weary of having to criticize so much of what the AKC board comes up with regarding judges and judging. But if criticism is the first step toward improvement, at least I can hope my concerns will, one day, be seen as a contribution to a better end result. Criticism is necessary for the clarification of any problem.

The problem here is the granting of judging approvals by way of an educational format that lacks any requirement of hands-on experience, breed knowledge or judging competency. Using the Canine College course and some other passive, spectator type experiences, a candidate can accumulate a sufficient number of CEUs to be approved to judge a breed without ever having laid a hand on a representative of the breed. In breed seminars all around the country seminars are required to have a couple of live examples of the breed for attendees to examine. Better still is the pairing of seminar learning with a hands-on workshop on the breed where a number of dogs are examined, moved, critiqued and ranked. This greatly reinforces the classroom learning and is a far cry from sitting in your armchair watching a two-dimensional presentation on a breed.

The breed testing, which is now required to be administered via the Canine College, was also not very well conceived. It ignores the fact that many senior judges are not accustomed to working with computers and they were much better served using the paper and pencil tests of the past. Not being able to go back to an earlier question, combined with the immediate scoring of each question and the threat of punishment for failure, makes these breed tests unlike any other tests which were familiar to senior judges. These conditions create unnecessary stress on the test taker.

The chief component adding to the stress level is the threatening policy that if an applicant fails a breed test by missing one DQ question or any two questions, the applicant must wait six months before retaking the test and will lose their approval to judge the group. What kind of sense does this make when you also have a policy that allows someone to judge the group if they are approved for eighty percent of the entries in the group? What about the impact on clubs that may have already hired this judge for that lost group? Lost a group because you missed a couple of questions on an open book standard test? Really? This policy is clearly illogical, punitive and should be changed.

Finally, a word about the fee: When the paper test had to be produced and mailed by the AKC, then received and hand-scored by the Judges Department, the fee was \$25.00. Now that no paper, envelopes, postage, or secretarial time is involved, the fee has been raised to \$35.00. In most other contexts automation reduces costs. Can you see where the AKC is coming from? Can you begin to discern their true priorities?

Elements of the AKC board have been whining about the costs associated with the Judging Department for many years. From this narrow-minded perspective, they concluded that each subdivision of the AKC should generate sufficient income to sustain itself and, better yet, turn a profit. The Canine College is an attempt to turn the Judging Department into a cash cow. Now that it is "in the can" so to speak, the money making is automatic. No human involvement required! They must be so proud.

Keeping in mind the new priorities of the AKC and their apparent lack of concern for the breeds, the judges and the integrity of the dog show world in general, a simple suggestion might strike their fancy: **sell group judging approvals**. After all, it used to cost many thousands of dollars and take years to educate oneself to reach an entry level of judging proficiency in each breed before one could be approved to judge an entire group. Now that such proficiency is no longer the most important outcome of the approval process, many more judges can be created and even more money can be raked in, by simply selling group judging approvals.

If the board could only, with the same straight face that they passed the current approval process, announce that henceforth a simple pledge to continue to learn about one's new breeds, combined with a \$5,000.00 check made payable to the AKC, is all that is required to secure an additional group, the board's hopes for the Judges Department would be quickly realized. This new

approval process would represent a savings in both time and money to the applicant when compared to the quaint, old, stuffy system that valued competency. This would result in the further expansion of the judging population. Most importantly, it would be a financial boon for the AKC. This, more transparent version of the current open-door policy, would make the Judging Department a prized income stream for the AKC. Of course, there may still be some breed and group denials, as in the case of a bounced check.