

Spring Showtime



Michael Scott

As temperatures are rising and trees are beginning to show signs of new life, we are all beginning our new show season with a hectic show schedule.

Westminster was another year of terrific grooming and benching organization thanks to the hard work and long hours of PHA members. These members sat in the grooming area to assist handlers from all over the country as they arrived at Madison Square Garden. Rick Krieger, Norman Grenier, Fred Olson, Tim Thomas and Paul Levesque were familiar faces seen day in and out.

I am pleased to learn that PHA members in the Northeast are bouncing around ideas and working to generate money to promote a sense of brotherhood and make the PHA more visible and viable at dog shows. Keep working on new ideas and acting on old ones. It is so important.

On a very solemn note, I cannot complete my message without addressing the passing of a friend of so many of us involved in the sport of dogs. Andrew Doyle recently passed away, and we offer our prayers and deepest sympathy to both his family and assistant Katie Shepard. His life was taken too soon, and he will be missed.

Michael E. Scott
President, PHA

Economy Affects Handlers

Over the last year, the economy in the United States has taken quite a hit. As people deal with the loss of homes, jobs and businesses, professional handlers and breed clubs are experiencing a decline in their own industry.

According to data from the American Kennel Club's 2008 Annual Report, the number of annual all-breed shows is down nearly 9 percent since 2004, with specialty shows down more than 6 percent. "For the clubs in our area the cost of everything, including judges, venues and hotels, is increasing," says PHA member Dee Hanna of Nampa, Idaho. "It's getting too costly, and with enrollment down 200 to 300 dogs per show, entry fees are raised and people just can't afford it."

Dog show entries have been on the decline for the last few years. Bobby Christiansen of MB-F Inc. reports that entries have continued to fall in 2009.

"Fewer people are attending the small, two-day shows and are going to larger three- and four-day shows, presumably to get more bang for their dog show bucks," says PHA member Michael Brantley of Lubbock, Texas.

"The economy worries me because people aren't willing to spend the money," Hanna says. "As handlers, we have to make sure the owners are comfortable spending the money that is necessary to advance their dogs. We need to make sure that owners understand there are reasons for professional handlers. Without us, dogs just aren't as groomed, finished or polished. They must know that winning is the bottom line, and their chances of winning are nowhere near the same without a professional handler."

"We're not at a critical level just yet," says PHA member Jo Ann Charnik of Severn, Md. "We have to remember

the connections we've made with the clubs in our area and work together to make shows as affordable as possible for everyone." ■

Rising to the Top

By PHA Member Jo Ann Charnik

There's no getting around it, times are tough. We are all feeling the crunch of a recession. As with most sporting events, dog show entries have dropped as well as the number of clients wanting to have their dogs shown.

Service industries such as grooming shops and boarding kennels are seeing fewer customers and a longer wait between groomings. People are putting off vacations and hoping for times to turn around. Dog show handlers are no exception. During hard times such as this, the cream of the crop rises to the top.

PHA members are dedicated, experienced individuals who have been closely scrutinized and challenged to meet high standards before acceptance into the Professional Handlers' Association. We are longtime handlers who have gone through tough times before. Members have also built reputations within the industry, and we are heavily involved with the kennel clubs and breed clubs in our zones that plan and execute dog shows. We volunteer our time and energy to work with newcomers and educate the public through clinics and demonstrations. Members also work to thwart anti-dog legislation and partner with rescues to promote responsible dog ownership. It


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is much more than a business endeavor; it is passion and love that prompts each of us to always give 110 percent.

We, as professionals, are working hard to maintain the high standards that the Professional Handlers' Association has become known for. During these times, future clients should look to longtime professionals who have proven track records and who care for this sport beyond a profession. PHA members have proper facilities, staff and ethical business practices. We are not about to take shortcuts to counter lower income during times of economic financial stress.

PHA handlers can feel lucky to have longtime clients who, regardless of how tough things get, feel that supporting dog shows and furthering the breeds they love is of the utmost importance. Every client is important in a business sense. They are an integral part of preserving the sport that allows professionals and novice handlers to compete equally while serving as a venue for families to share the wonderful experience of dog shows.

Yes, times are tough, and we have all cinched our belts a little tighter, but in the end I believe the true professionals of this sport shall weather this storm and rise to the top. 


Just a Dog

Submitted by PHA Member Carol Green

From time to time people tell me, "Lighten up, it's just a dog," or, "That's a lot of money for just a dog." They don't understand the distance traveled, time spent, or costs involved for just a dog. Some of my proudest moments have come about with just a dog. Many hours have passed with my only company being just a dog, and not once have I felt slighted. Some of my saddest moments were brought about by just a dog. In those days of darkness, the gentle touch of just a dog provided comfort and purpose to overcome the day.

"Just a dog" brings into my life the very essence of friendship, trust, and pure unbridled joy. Just a dog brings out the compassion and patience that makes me a better person. Because of just a dog, I will rise early, take long walks and look longingly to the future.

For me and folks like me, he's not just a dog. He's an embodiment of all the hopes and dreams of the future, the fond memories of the past, and the pure joy of the moment. Just a dog evokes what's good in me and diverts my thoughts away from myself and the worries of the day.

I hope that someday people can understand he's not "just a dog." He's the thing that gives me humanity and keeps me from being "just a man or woman." The next time you hear the phrase "just a dog," smile, because they "just don't understand." 

Request for Articles

Carol Green requests that PHA members send her articles for the next issue of *The PHA Reporter*. Please send them to her at mamag4evr@yahoo.com.

One More Dog


Submitted By PHA Member Deanna Hanna

One dog is no trouble, and two are so funny,
The third one is easy, the fourth one's a honey.
The fifth is delightful, the sixth one's a breeze,
You find you can live with a houseful with ease.
So how 'bout another? Would you really dare?
They're really quite easy, but, oh Lord, the hair!

With dogs on the sofa and dogs on the bed,
And crates in the kitchen, it's no bother you said.
They're really no trouble, their manners are great,
What's just one more dog and one more little crate?
The sofas are hairy, the windows are crusty,
The floor is all footprints, the furniture's dusty.
The housekeeping suffers but what do you care?
Who minds a few nose prints and a little more hair?

So let's keep a puppy, you can always find room,
And a little more time for the dust cloth and broom.
There's hardly a limit to the dogs you can add,
The thought of a cutback sure makes you feel sad.
Each one is special, so useful, so funny,
The food bill grows larger, you owe the vet money.
Your folks never visit, few friends come to stay,
Except other dog folks who live the same way.
Our lawn has now died, and our shrubs are dead too,
The weekends are busy, you're off with your crew.
There's dog food and vitamins, training and shots,
And entries, and travel, and motels, which cost lots.

"Is it worth it?" you wonder? Are you caught in a trap?
Then that favorite comes up and climbs in your lap.
His look says you're special, and you know that you will,
Keep all the critters in spite of the bill.
Some just for showing, and some just to breed,
And some just for loving, they all fill a need.
Winter is a hassle, but the dogs love it true,
And they must have their walks tho' you're numb and blue.
Late evening is awful, you scream and you shout,
At the dogs on the sofa who refuse to go out.
The dogs and the dog shows, the travel, the thrills,
The work and the worry, the pressure, the fills.

The whole thing seems worth it, the dogs are your life,
They're charming and funny and offset the strife.
Your lifestyle has changed, things just won't be the same,
Yes those dogs are addictive, and so is the dog game! 

To China For Chows

By PHA Member Michael Brantley

Judging the Sweepstakes last May at China Kennel Club's (CKC) first Chow Specialty in Beijing was an experience and honor that my wife, Linda, and I will never forget. In addition to judging, Linda and I were given the privilege of conducting an in-depth, three-day seminar on Chows. The chance to experience the culture and history of this ancient and beautiful country, and to be a part of the rebirth of the Chow as a breed in his native land, was truly exciting.

The day after arriving, we met with officers of the CKC to tour their offices. We found them to be professional and dedicated to the sport and promotion of purebred dogs. They are doing a good job putting together shows and events similar to the American Kennel Club, and producing a world-class magazine for pet owners.

Although the sport is still in its infancy there, the dogs stand among the best, thanks to the care of their breeders and handlers. They were well-presented, had good temperaments and were qualified to compete anywhere in the world.

Helpful Tips When Judging Abroad

- Be courteous and friendly. Remember that you not only represent yourself, but also your country.
- You will be asked your opinion inside and outside the ring, so make yourself accessible and helpful. People will want to learn as much as they can from you.
- Research the visiting country's judging system. It will more than likely not be what you are used to.
- Refresh yourself on the breeds you will be asked to judge to give the best, most-informed opinion you can.
- Be flexible with your travel plans. "Going with the flow" is essential when traveling abroad.
- Respect the culture you are in. Try the food, enjoy the scenery and take pleasure in the camaraderie of fellow dog people.



Members of the China Kennel Club welcomed U.S. Chow specialists, who are middle row, second from left, Linda Brantley, Betsy Dale, Michael Brantley, and Minnie and Paul Odenkirchen.

The sincerity of the breeders became evident at our seminar. I have never experienced a group of people more eager for information on a breed. Everyone enjoyed each others' company. Every meal was attended by nearly all the exhibitors. During the meal, the competition of the day was left behind, and everyone enjoyed their common interest in the breed.

The seminar covered many subjects including the breed's standard, grooming and presentation, breeding, whelping and raising puppies. The seminar was held at a beautiful pet resort on the outskirts of Beijing. The facilities enabled attendees from all over the world to enjoy the event.

We also were able to visit some of the Chow kennels in the area, and found them to be as nice as any we've seen. We found the show dogs to have good temperaments, as well as nearly all the dogs in the kennels. It is important for anyone thinking of placing a dog in competition in China to consider the quality of the dogs competing there. The next few years will build the foundation of the breed in China, and they will be adhering to the same, or higher, standards in U.S. breeding programs. An inferior dog cannot compare to the competition we witnessed there.

The hospitality of the China Kennel Club was incomparable, and the patience of our hosts in catering to end-

less shopping and sightseeing was deeply appreciated.

I would like to thank our friend Matthew Fan for interpreting for us, the China Kennel Club for hosting and, most of all, the sincere Chow lovers in China who attended and exhibited at the seminar and the shows.

Finally, while we were in Beijing, the terrible earthquake that has taken so many lives in China occurred. While we did not feel the effects where we were, our hearts and prayers go out to all those who did. 🙏



An exhibitor presents a Chow at the China Kennel Club Beijing Dog Show.

The PHA Welcomes Holly Leftwich

Holly Leftwich of Murrieta, Calif., is one of the newest members to join the Professional Handlers' Association.

Though Holly, who is 25 years old, may be one of the youngest PHA members, she has been handling dogs for over a decade.

Originally from Lubbock, Texas, Holly got her start in dog handling after meeting breeder-handler Michelle Badger. As a 13-year-old, Holly's love for

dogs convinced her mother to let her choose any breed for a pet. "I was drawn to Siberian Huskies," Leftwich says. "Through a search of breeders in our area we just happened to come across Michelle Badger."

Just 20 minutes outside of Lubbock in Wolforth, Texas, Badger runs Badger-den, a Siberian Husky and Finish Spitz breeding kennel. Leftwich decided to buy her new pet from

Badger. During the visit, Badger noticed Holly's enthusiasm and asked if she would be interested in learning to handle.

Holly began learning the sport under Badger's guidance, traveling with her to shows during summers.


At 19 years old, Holly became an apprentice for Michael Brantley of Dreamland Kennels in Lubbock, Texas. Brantley trained Holly to be an all-breed handler like himself

and his wife, Linda. During the apprenticeship, Brantley introduced Holly to the PHA, as both he and Linda are members.

"I was quick to recognize the amazing benefits of being a PHA member," Holly says. "Every member shares the same life passion and interest. I'm looking forward to wearing my pin and feeling that sense of community."

Holly has already seen much pro-

fessional success, handling a variety of breeds to major wins. Most notably, she handled AM/CAN CH Pikkinokka Badger Sir Barksalot ("Barkley") to Best of Breed at the 2007 and 2008 Finish Spitz National Specialties, and BIS/BISS CH Southports Ulysses S Grant ("Grant") to Best in Specialty Show at the 2008 Mastiff Club of America National Specialty.

"I handle because I love dogs," Holly says. "Handling gives me another way to interact with dogs and make them a major part of my life. My favorite feeling is the one I get when I work with them. They want to be with you and please you, and their enthusiasm and unconditional love is what continues to drive me." 



Holly Leftwich stacks "Grant," owned by Joe, Carla and Danielle Sanchez of Los Angeles. Grant took Best in Show at the 2008 Mt. Palomar Kennel Club Dog Show in Vista, Calif.

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