



# PATRONAGE CRONYISM & SELECTIVE HEARING

BY LISA DUBÉ-FORMAN

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Pure and simple; the state of affairs for what appears to be a majority of AKC Judges is grim and frustrating. For many, it is reminiscent of the Len Brumby days of patronage advancements, a time that many judges are familiar with or were on the periphery — all because of the judges pool central tendency for advanced age. I do not wish to be disrespectful or scornful, but just restating a fact.

There are numerous articles written by judges and sports commentators in the popular dog magazines expressing their views — a sport based mostly on sentiment — of disappointment, annoyance, dissatisfaction and overall grievances on two topics. Mainly, the current Judges Approval Process and the role of the Executive Field Representative’s approval or disapproval over judges quality of selection in the show ring and the risks and hell that may quickly follow if we disappoint them.

So many articles, in fact, one scarcely can pick up an industry magazine without reading one. These are not the expressions of a deluded pack of crybabies or narcissists.

Imagine the odds of having that many egomaniac independent contractors in one organization? If that were the case then AKC must accept the lion’s share of the blame because they allegedly nurtured, encouraged and advanced a great many of these individuals. Now, judges are biting the hand that feeds them.

Nevertheless, the AKC seemingly does not care. The recent Judges Standard newsletter is a media vehicle which betrays the magnitude of the AKC Board of Directors selective hearing. Their publication omits any comments on the meaty issues that the multitudes are protesting. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the American Kennel Club is a cronyistic sovereignty that tunes out an essential segment’s legitimate complaints while it entertains and favors a chosen few or the enormously charmed.

For those who regularly read my articles, they know that I have written extensively on these subjects. However, in recent months I have focused on other topics appealing to the masses that have an impact on the backbone of our sport; breeders and fanciers still running dogs. A few peo-

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ple have questioned me about why I have not continued to comment or asked if I would write another article on the hapless state of all-breed judging and the general lack of quality of exhibits at dog shows. The answer is twofold, but the frankest version is that sometimes it is so despairing. I and so many esteemed colleagues write on these very issues while continually receiving feedback and letters of support, however, nothing changes. Once again the AKC Board seemingly does not care. They will not devote any substantial care until such time that the sleeping giant, the AKC Delegate Body, wakes up, exercises its prerogatives, and institutes changes. What the board apparently cares about is their own 'here and now' and how it affects them and their cronies. One of our sport's longest serving dog show judges and the one and only premier judges advocate, Colonel Wallace Pedé, has been at this for thirty years battling tirelessly with AKC on a multitude of front lines. Although there are some who do not see eye to eye with the Colonel, the truth remains that he and the Senior Conformation Judges Association (SCJA) have done an enormous amount of

good for judges. They have successfully lobbied the AKC over the many years to set in motion necessary changes to otherwise absurd, ineffectual, archaic policies such as repealing the ban on judge's solicitation. I cannot help to digress here by adding that I will not soon forget the few notable dog show judges running around squawking like "Chicken Little." After preaching and throwing their hands up into the air that disaster was imminent, one or more publicly threatened to or did create a blacklist. Such list reputedly barred any judge who dared to advertise or solicit from judging at the blacklist author's kennel club shows, including others within their sphere of influence. Such tremendous hype about nothing. I can only ponder why now they do not put equal energy into demanding immediate relief from this inequitable, repressive and regressive Judges Approval Process or the policy of having an Executive Field Representative criticizing and questioning the decisions of an AKC Judge?

The second part of my answer to the aforesaid question is that I am still unclear as to what my next step will be. Insofar as judging additional breeds, if the reader recalls, I had a memorable experience similar to that of other judges in my additional breeds application process. What does a credible, competent, knowledgeable dog authority

and judge do in my position? There is no assurance that I would not face another biased, unforgettable, repeat performance by the Judges Review Committee, no matter if I lessen the number of breeds for which I apply. I have sought advice from several highly respected mentors and judges who admitted that they most likely would not continue or pursue other breeds until such time that an evolutionary change was implemented in the Judges Approval Process. I will ponder their thoughts as well while simultaneously being deeply saddened that a talented, proficient dog expert, such as myself, is oppressed while judges from foreign countries with nearly half my number of decades experience are judging multiple groups.

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Lisa Dubé Forman  
Ballyhara Irish Wolfhounds and AKC Judge  
lisa@lisadubeforman.com



**Instead of obedience school, I bought him a smart phone."**