

Chihuahua columns appearing in AKC Gazette — 2016–2020  
(March 2018 to June 2020 are reprints of previously published columns)

March 2016 *AKC Gazette* column  
Chihuahuas

**The Lost Art of Good Sportsmanship**

Hugging and the shaking of hands in the winner's circle gives a look of great sportsmanship. It's part of the "show"—but not all those greetings are heartfelt.

Has winning become so important that we have lost sight of why we are in the show ring in the first place? Do you remember when you first started showing dogs all those years ago, and how you loved the camaraderie garnered at the show site? Gone are those old days when everyone sat ringside watching the groups waiting for Best in Show, where the old-timers shared their jewels of wisdom with the "newbies."

I remember being in awe of those who had top dogs and being able to sit within hearing distance of those who knew a good dog and bred the best, while trying to catch a word or two of those gems they threw out there. It was a treasure chest of tried and true information.

Ah, the good old days, before the Internet and Facebook. Those were the days when you knew what you were hearing was fact, and when just being able to listen to the "chatting" of those excellent breeders, of all breeds, was the best learning experience one could receive.

Progress is progress, and there is always the good and bad to come. Information is at our fingertips. Internet bragging is at an all-time high, and everyone is an expert. Unfortunately more and more dog lovers are entering the show ring with a lot of misinformation. Previously, it took years to learn pertinent information from the bottom up. Today, however, we hear the lingo on Facebook one day, and become experts the next. And then when the dog we spent a fortune to purchase and had such high hopes for doesn't win first time out, we blame the judge, the handler, or a million other reasons for the loss. It can't be our handling skills or the fact that our little "darling" isn't up to standard.

Negative ringside comments have become the norm, and what is said behind closed doors has become vicious, while rumors begin and reputations are on the line.

Welcome to the new dog show world, where sportsmanship is losing to "win at all costs." Newbies get discouraged and leave the sport before they even get started. Showing dogs may look easy, but it takes years of study, work, and sheer determination. Those who stick with it really do find wonderful friendships among their peers, and people will come out of the woodwork for a dog in distress and drive hours to help a stranger's dog. So there is still the love of the dog that keeps us together.

Let's stop blaming and start doing. Let's get back to mentoring those new to the breed, to being happy for our fellow exhibitors who produce a great dog and beat us in the show ring. Let's see the judges pick the best of the best, and not someone they owe a favor for fear of not getting the next assignment. Let's get back to when dog shows were about the dogs and not about the wins. Let's become good sports again!

—*Virginia (Jenny) Hauber*

June 2016 *AKC Gazette* column  
Chihuahuas

### **Selection—The Future of the Chihuahua**

Our breed's parent club, the Chihuahua Club of America, and the American Kennel Club are guardians of the Chihuahua's *breed standard*. The breed standard is a blueprint of the breed's specific qualities such as *appearance, movement, and temperament*. It is our "word picture" of the appearance and behavior of an idealized Chihuahua. The breed standard is "the standard or model which breeders endeavor to achieve."

The basis of judging in conformation dog shows is *breed type*, which is the combination of characteristics that are typical of a particular breed. The judge looks at the entered dogs to discern the ones who most perfectly resemble her mental image of ideal breed type. The goal of the conformation show is to identify breeding stock for the future of the breed.

One of the biggest stumbling blocks to proper selection is allowing what we *like* to stand in the way of something that is equally correct and fully acceptable. These "likes" can be something we overly focus on, and sometimes they do not fall within the range of preference. Restricted vision serves as a detriment to the breeder and to our breed as a whole. If decisions during puppy selection are based entirely on a personal preference, we risk inaccurately interpreting the breed standard.

This can sometimes be seen in our show ring, with some Chihuahuas exhibiting such traits as extremely short muzzles and curly tails, both of which are incorrect according to the standard. Only when we select within the confines of our breed standard do we work to produce better dogs.

Selection of our puppies will influence the future of our breed and should not be taken lightly. The longer people breed and watch puppies grow and mature, the more proficient they will be in evaluating what stands before them.

If we are doing our job as breeders with the best possible intentions for the future of our breed, some very good dogs will be neutered or spayed, while those who are even better will be retained for future breeding.

It behooves all breeders to work in the best interest of the breed. *Selection* is what it's all about, and it's the key to breeding success. An inability to look at your dogs objectively can wreck your dreams for the future and derail years of hard work. Successful breeders who produce quality dogs year after year are consistent with their selection process. They maintain a picture of the type they are trying to produce and know the ingredients that make up that type.

Finally, your ability to select wisely will depend both on your in-depth knowledge of dogs in general and your breed-specific knowledge. Read your standard until you know it forward and backward, and understand what you are reading. Above all, think of the future of our breed when selecting your next show puppy.

—Virginia (Jenny) Hauber (first appeared June 2013)

September 2016 *AKC Gazette* column  
Chihuahuas

### **The Male Chihuahua**

No one wants to keep their male puppies. Everyone wants “girls, girls, girls” in their litters. Why keep a male for your breeding program when you can use a top sire? Buyers for our pet-quality puppies are also looking for females. No, they don’t want a male, and they give all the cliché reasons.

Well, I’m here to tell you how much I love and enjoy my males. I can’t imagine life without several of these fabulous creatures running around. There is no fighting among males who live peacefully in a “pack” atmosphere. Once in awhile there could be a little jealousy when not selected to be bred to a particular bitch, but that is rare at my home. Instead they give the “lucky dog” a high five when they return to the pack.

If you have a quality male, the way to be sure of his quality is using him as a stud in your breeding program. I believe a male needs to be bred at least three times to three different bitches to determine his worthiness as a good sire. It takes time to establish a great stud dog. So going to a top dog or keeping your own stud dog is up to each individual. If establishing a “line” most likely you will want to keep several males of your own to integrate into your program.

These little boys can easily be house trained, but the invention of the “belly band” has alleviated much of the fear of letting our stud dogs run loose in the house. These little guys are much more loving and willing to please than their female counterparts, and they don’t blow their coat during the show season, which makes them more competitive than the female during a full show year.

Several years ago a friend of mine wanted a female pet-quality puppy from my breeding program. I didn’t have one, so they decided to try a male. We always have extra males, right? Just the other day the owner said to me, “I would never have believed I could love my boy more than any of the females I have owned”—a true testament to the wonderful loving heart these dogs possess. Yep, another happy owner of the male Chihuahua.

How many times have we tried to tell a prospective pet buyer that the male is more loving than the female? If they’ve never owned a male, it’s hard for them to believe this, and they think we are just trying to pass off our males. Well, many times that could be the case, but how sad that they are not willing to experience the special bond that is created with these little boys.

I am always drawn to my males first. I know how big their heart is and how much love we will share together. They are not distracted by being a mommy and protecting their get. They are happy, loving little creatures who should be in every home.

So next time you are looking for a dog, consider a sweet and loving male. You’ll be happy you did. Try it, You’ll like it!

—*Virginia (Jenny) Hauber*

December 2016 *AKC Gazette* column  
Chihuahuas

### **It's Been a Great Show**

It's been a pleasure and an honor to write about one of the most wonderful creatures I've been fortunate to know and love, the Chihuahua. Throughout my lifetime I have owned and loved many dogs. Working, herding, hound, terrier, sporting, non-sporting, toy breeds, and mutts have all been a part of my education into the world of dogs.

It wasn't until I became involved in the dog show world that I gained an in-depth knowledge of the dog. When trying to choose a dog to participate in the show world, I wanted a dog who was easy to transport, easy to groom, and didn't have many health issues. I owned Australian Shepherds at the time, but that was before they were AKC accepted, and the breed was not eligible to compete in the show ring. I thought the long-coat Chihuahua looked like a tiny Aussie with a tail, so I decided that was going to be my breed.

Little did I know how much I would come to love this breed. Smart beyond my expectations, willing to do anything a big dog would, and possessing a loyalty second to none. The long-coats were my joy for years, and one day I decided to try a different breed. Toy Fox Terriers had just been AKC approved, and I considered this breed. Having read their standard, I realized just how different it was from the Chihuahua standard and felt maybe this could be a conflict. Then one day, my friend had a lovely smooth-coat Chihuahua male available. The light bulb went on, and I decided this was to be my "new breed." Lucky for me, my new little boy, Mr. Lucky, was an absolute dream to show, as he floated around the ring as if he had wings. This began my love of the smooth-coat Chihuahua.

Either long or smooth coat, the Chihuahua has brought me so many years of joy and excellence. *Puppies, puppies, puppies*—is there anything that makes a person smile more? The joy of breeding and raising a puppy to adulthood and participation in the show ring is a special kind of thrill. I reached a personal goal of winning Best Bred-by in Show at the Regional CCA specialty last October, during CCA national specialty week. As a breeder, this was the pinnacle of my show career.

It was also this past year that I bred my first "tiny" two-pound Chihuahua, whom I chose to keep as my pet. She has taught me the joys of buying fancy doggy totes and shopping the Internet for those special "outfits" that come in XXS. It just feels fun. It has come to that place for me to slow down on breeding for the show ring and to take myself and my dog world a little less seriously.

I have had such exciting experiences and made some wonderful friendships these past 20-plus years in the show world and wouldn't trade them for anything. I have bred, loved, and buried some wonderful little dogs that will always hold a special place in my heart. While I don't believe we ever really retire, I have decided to take a step back and watch those wonderful younger breeders carry on in the best interest of this fabulous breed we all love, the Chihuahua.

I thank those who helped me get started, with a special thank-you to my sister who recently passed away, Courtney Ours Roberts, of Coryrex Pugs. Courtney talked me into getting involved in this crazy dog show world and was instrumental in finding a

quality breeder who would place a beautiful show dog with a “newbie.” Thank you, Sis, it’s been a journey.

Thanks to all my readers through these years. I hope my words have been beneficial to you in some way. Keep your dogs safe and your hearts full.

—*Virginia (Jenny) Hauber*

March 2017 *AKC Gazette* column  
Chihuahuas

### **I'm Back**

I have accepted the responsibility of writing columns for *Gazette* again. This position requires feedback and input from the readers of articles that I submit. In the past when I wrote articles I would hear from persons other than Chihuahua enthusiasts, which I consider a very positive thing to have happen. If any reader would like to have me write about a specific topic, I would be happy to give it a try.

By way of introduction for those who do not know me, I actively bred, showed, and thoroughly enjoyed my associations with the Chihuahua breed. My history in the breed begins in 1957. I purchased a smooth Chihuahua puppy bitch in that year. I knew nothing about responsible breeding or a breed standard. I bred several litters of puppies, which were all sold to be family pets.

In the early 1960s I saw the movie *Big Red*. This movie had a dog show scene in it. This scene was imprinted in my mind. I knew someday I wanted to go to a dog show and eventually compete. In 1968 I went to my first dog show at Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I entered a longhaired Dachshund in this show. I really did not understand what I had won, but I had won WB, BW, and BOS. I was a young parent at this time and was enrolled in grad school. I decided no matter how much I loved the dog show scene I just could not afford to pursue this passion. I bred a few litters of Dachshunds, along with an occasional litter of Chihuahuas. I continued to go to dog shows in my geographic area as a spectator. I knew eventually I would rejoin the sport of showing dogs.

It was not until the early 1980s that I could justify getting serious about showing dogs. I purchased a long-coated Chihuahua from Mary Lyddon. This bitch came with strings attached. Mary's daughter, Terri, had to finish this bitch. Once she was finished she came to live with us. I bred this bitch several times. I got single puppies that were nearly all males. I don't have a record of exactly when I attend the first national specialty of the Chihuahua Club of America, but it was about this same time.

As I grew in the sport of dog shows I experienced some successes in the show ring. Others encouraged me to apply to judge. I accepted some invitations to judge matches and continued to ponder the thought of becoming an AKC-approved judge. I judged my first assignment as an AKC judge with the Chihuahua Club of Michigan in May 1992. Since that time, I have judged many specialties for the breed and have had the honor of judging the national specialty of the Chihuahua Club of America twice. One year Bev Lehnig had an overload at our national. I was asked to judge the puppy classes at this specialty.

I have continued to study and educate myself about a variety of breeds. At this particular time I am approved to judge the Toy Group, the Non-Sporting Group, the Terrier Group, and all but two hound breeds. Once I finish the Hound Group, there will be no more applications.

In 2013 I was faced with a very difficult decision. I was too busy judging to breed, plan litters, whelp puppies, and exhibit my own dogs. I could have hired a handler, but the competitive nature in me had no interest in using a handler. I had never kept more than three or four bitches at any given time. The opportunity was mine to place my

remaining dogs with a reputable breeder in Minnesota. I miss my dogs every day, but I cannot second-guess my decision.

The two dogs I feel most proud to have bred are Ch. Mar-Rich's Minute Man and Ch. Mar-Rich and Mina's Rumor Has It. Minute Man (Rebel) never proved himself to be a dominant sire; however, Rumor Has It (Clay) was recognized by the Chihuahua Club of America for being an outstanding sire. I am very grateful for the friendships that are mine as a result of breeding and showing dogs.

—*Richard Miller*

### **Is He a Champion, or a Special, or a Stud Dog?**

My humble opinion tells me there is a vast difference between a dog who holds a championship certificate, and one who is truly a special or a worthy stud dog. Having made this statement, the obvious question is, what is the difference?

We all know that dogs compete for championship points with other dogs or bitches of their breed. We know further that exhibitors know which judges might forgive a specific departure from the breed standard. There is also the “created” major, when dogs of much lesser quality are entered simply to make up the numbers necessary for a major win to be possible.

All of these variables (the list could easily be expanded) make it possible for dogs to accumulate the necessary points and major wins to hold a championship certificate. Many of these dogs who hold a championship certificate should never be considered specials.

A fair question is, what makes a dog a special? My first “kneejerk” answer to this inquiry would be that of charisma. Dogs who are truly of special quality have an aura about themselves. They know they are damn good, and they are in the ring to prove it. They are much more than bold and/or self-confident. Many truly special animals tend to have the “walk on water” persona. These specials are usually expertly handled, but they appear only to need a small amount of coaching to win on a consistent basis in group competitions.

A Chihuahua who is of this quality is not constantly distracted by what is happening in the show ring. This tiny member of the canine family is not frustrated by a judge walking up and taking a very thorough look at his/her front assembly, topline, set of tail, and rear assembly. I have on several occasions had such an entry challenge me with a warning bark; I love this attitude. A truly worthy special for our breed does not slink away from the judge nor require the handler to have a death-grip on the entry.

When dogs are gaited again, this special Chihuahua has a “get out of my way” kind of attitude. This little canine exudes an attitude that says, “I only have a few seconds to show you my stuff, and I plan to do just that!” The group ring is often quite noisy with whistles, loud clapping, and so on. This special Chihuahua loves to hear all of this excitement.

I have been shown some dogs and bitches who have all of these qualities but also have significant departures from the animal described in our breed standard. A true special has all of the qualities described above, coupled with near-perfection as described in our breed standard. For my eye, this near-perfection includes balance (this includes matching front and rear angulations and proportions), condition, typical head with very expressive eyes and ears, correct bite, pleasing movement, and a correct tail that finishes the image.

When a stud dog who fits this description is being campaigned, there is a *huge* temptation to want to breed a bitch to him. This might be a very wise thing to consider; however, we all know that some dogs who are big winners do not prove themselves as sires. Careful and thoughtful breeding must be behind a stud dog for him to be a wise choice. If the stud dog being considered has no careful and thoughtful breeding behind



him, and your bitch also lacks in careful and thoughtful breeding, considering breeding to this dog in my opinion is more like a crapshoot. When we do our research of lines of dogs that are consistently in the limelight, we very quickly see how wise the breeders of these dogs really are. You will find an occasional outcross, but most often a stud dog who consistently reproduces himself is the product of careful line-breeding, often for generations.

In summary I hope my readers will have gained insight into my thoughts. A winning special of great quality can be a wise choice as a stud. However, I recommend that persons considering such a breeding would do careful study first and see several of his get from a variety of bitches. Many dogs hold a championship certificate; this does not make a canine a special or a top-producing stud dog.

—*Richard Miller*

September 2017 *AKC Gazette* column  
Chihuahuas

### **Twenty-Five Years**

Recently in the mail I received a certificate from AKC for having been an approved judge for 25 years. I thought perhaps some reflections on these years might prove interesting to readers of this column.

The first time I stood in the ring and judged the Chihuahua was in May of 1992 at the Michigan Chihuahua specialty. That was one of the more humbling experiences I have had as a judge. I had some “I will never” mindsets that just did not work from me as I stood in that ring. I resolved to do my own thing since I have to look at my reflection in the mirror after I judge. It is my bias that we who judge should attempt to please no one but ourselves.

When I first began to show dogs in 1968, the Chihuahuas I saw were for the most part smooth coats. An occasional long coat would be entered, but the long coats lacked good type at this time in my opinion. I was drawn to the long-coated variety and set out to find a bitch who had decent type and pedigree. Like most who set out on such a venture, I was destined to have more disappointments than successes. My first long-coat developed a reverse scissors bite and was decidedly long in body. She was spayed and placed as a pet.

I began to breed litters of puppies. Most of the litters were single male puppies. I think I recall having 17 male puppies before a bitch puppy appeared in a litter.

I began attending the national specialty of the breed in the late 1970s/early '80s. I met Mary Lyddon, mother of Terri, at one of these specialty shows. She offered to sell me a bitch puppy, but Terri had to finish it before I could take her home. I agreed to these terms; Terri finished the bitch, and she came to live with us. She contributed to my long list of male puppies and usually had only one puppy per litter. She was finally spayed and placed in a pet home.

When I reflect on my early days in the show ring, I recall most exhibitors were down on their knees posing their dogs. I really did not like this method, but I joined the ranks of others down on my knees. When I was training a puppy at home, I often baited my puppy like I had observed exhibitors in other breeds doing. I decided I was going to break away from the “down on your knees” method of showing a dog. I also felt a Chihuahua needed to be brave enough to walk into the show ring rather than to be carried into the ring.

As time passed my efforts were met with successes. My first homebred champion was Ch. Lyddon's Arctic Blast. He was born by C-section one dreadfully cold winter night. When I got into the car to begin my trip home, the weatherman on the radio said, “We have just been delivered an Arctic blast.” The weatherman named my puppy. Blast was a wolf sable long-coat. He was the only puppy of that color I ever had.

By this time smooth coated Chihuahuas in the show ring still excelled over the long coated variety. However, the long coats seemed to be improving steadily. I remember a long coated bitch was awarded BIS at one of our nationals. Handlers of our breed were beginning to stand and bait their dogs in the show ring. This change came about gradually. Today it is seldom that we see even very young puppies being shown with handlers down on their knees.

Comparing 1992 to 2017 reveals marked changes in many aspects of the breed. Probably the most marked change is in the quality of the long-coated variety. The long-coat of today is very equal to the smooth-coat. Rear assemblies had improved to the point we see few of what I would call crippled dogs in the show ring. Presentation of our breed has improved both in showing methods and in grooming. The Chihuahua should always appear natural rather than sculptured in the show ring. We have come a very long way. Those that are still breeding litters of puppies need to keep on course of continued improvement in breed type and soundness.

—*Richard Miller*

December 2017 *AKC Gazette* column  
Chihuahuas

### **Just a Hoot**

Quite some time ago I judged a significant entry of our breed. The following day another judge had a similar number to judge. I saw one of the exhibitors several months after the assignment. This person said to me, “I could follow everything you did in the ring. I could predict your winners nearly 100 percent.” I was feeling good about these comments, when a comment like the following was made by this same person: The exhibitor said, “I could not follow the judge the second day, and predicting the winners was like tossing a coin.” I still felt good until the following statement was made: “The judge the second day is such a hoot in the show ring. Showing dogs to this judge is always a fun experience.”

These quotes are not verbatim, but they are very similar to the comments made to me.

I wanted to ask which of us the two judges awarding championship points meant the most. Do points coming from a breeder judge that is easily followed and predictable in his/her choice of winners carry more significance? Or are points awarded by a judge who is difficult to follow, but a “hoot” in the show ring has the same importance to exhibitors?

When I was actively showing dogs, I always entered under judges whom I felt knew our breed standard. The opinions of these judges were much valued by me as I worked toward a championship certificate. Once the certificate was awarded, I felt that the animal was a sound candidate for my breeding program. Judging and awarding championship points should equate to selection of breeding stock for exhibitors. I did not even consider how much fun it was to be in the ring of judge XYZ. For me, I wanted the money I invested to enter shows to be well spent on judges who really knew my breed.

Early on in my exhibiting career I kept track of which judges awarded the single point and the majors. I wrote this kind of information on the back of a championship certificate. For some unknown reason I ceased doing this, even though I found the information of much value.

I don't ever recall thinking that a particular win was awarded under a judge who was a “hoot” to whom to show. If this ever happened (I don't recall that it ever did), I would have felt the point was of less merit.

I have to ask the question of readers, and I would appreciate email responses to [mrichchi@laharpe.us](mailto:mrichchi@laharpe.us). The question is: Do you value wins under judges who really know the standard and are predictable more? Do you ever enter a show based on how much fun the judge is in the show ring while judging?

Finally, I have yet another question. That question is about reading articles in the *Gazette*. I often ask other judges if they read the *Gazette* now that it is not hard copy. More often the response from others is that they seldom if ever read *Gazette* articles. Please consider sending me an e-mail to allow me to know if you seldom, always, or sometimes read these articles.

—Richard Miller

March 2018 *AKC Gazette* column  
Chihuahuas

### **Golden Oldies—Old Dogs Rule!**

What defines a senior pet? Chihuahuas are among the longest-lived breeds, and many are still bouncing around at 15, with others living to 20 or more years of age. The important thing to remember is that every dog is an individual, so the age at which they begin to show physical or mental decline can vary.

Most of us have some retired show dogs whom we would like to place in loving homes. We know some lucky new owner can discover these wonderful gifts of the dog world. So the next time you are contacted for a puppy, why not suggest Old Faithful, and tell the perspective new owner all the wonderful things an older dog can bring to their life?

Here are some points you might mention to help these “golden oldies” find a forever home.

*They are a known quantity.* You know their personality and that they are not going to get any bigger. What you see is what you get.

*They are restful.* If you want a pet to hang out with you while you watch TV or read a book, a senior is the way to go.

*They aren't necessarily inactive.* They love to go for walks, bring back a ball, or follow you around the yard as you plant your flowers—and they won't dig them up.

*They are usually housetrained.* They've lived in a home and know the drill, whether it's going outside to potty or using a puppy pad. Every once in awhile you may meet one who isn't housetrained, but older dogs can learn just as quickly as youngsters if you take them out consistently and on a schedule.

*They are wise in the way of the world.* Older animals are observant, and they know how to learn, either by watching other animals in the family or from picking up on your cues. Watching them and seeing what they know and how they apply it to their new life is fascinating.

*They come with a senior discount.* An older dog may be as young as 3 years old, but they will come with a reduced price and be just as loving to their new family as a puppy.

*They bring the gift of love and joy.* The older dog usually fits easily into a home because they are already experienced at living with other animals and people. They may have many good years ahead to bring happiness to a loving family.

Some people say that older dogs are grateful because they know you have given them a second chance at being that “special” dog. True or not, they will bring happiness and joy to any home.

Adopting an older dog can bring more benefits than one may realize. So next time you are contacted for a puppy, don't forget about your “golden oldie.”

You can teach an old dog new tricks!

—Virginia (Jenny) Hauber, 2015

June 2018 *AKC Gazette* column  
Chihuahuas

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So next time you are looking for a dog, consider a sweet and loving male. You’ll be happy you did. Try it, You’ll like it!

—*Virginia (Jenny) Hauber (2016)*

(September 2018 *AKC Gazette*—no Chihuahua column)  
(December 2018 *AKC Gazette*—no Chihuahua column)

March 2019 *AKC Gazette* (rerun from March 2015 issue)  
Chihuahuas

### **Why You Aren't Winning in the Show Ring**

You went to see a dog show and thought it would be a great family hobby. You decided to look on line for a show dog to purchase. Hey, that was easy! You walk in the ring with your beautiful little Chihuahua expecting that “blue ribbon” or purple ribbon for points. What? You didn't win?

Well, that's not surprising. I've heard it over and over again of all the show dogs purchased that weren't really show dogs. There are many breeders who count on the buyer who doesn't do their homework. These breeders brag about champion lines and how many champions they have bred, how many champions are in a pedigree and show you lots of photos of beautiful Chihuahuas. The Internet is full of these breeders.

Then, after several thousand dollars spent on non-show dogs, you realize you might need to do something different. You start doing your homework. You contact the parent club and ask for references of quality breeders. You spend time studying the Chihuahua standard and what it means. You go to shows and study the dogs and see what the winning dogs have to offer. You make contact with their owners and breeders and establish some quality groundwork. You might choose to join an online group of mentors. Yes, this all takes time. Patience is the key to all success in the show dog world. So many people just keep running in circles trying to get that great show dog but forget that anything worthwhile takes time, energy and effort.

A show dog is a good example of the AKC standard of that breed that has been developed by the breed's parent club. This is a blueprint of what your show dog should look like. Unfortunately, most people have much more to learn about dogs in general. How is a dog put together? How does it move? What was it created for? The dog has *many* parts. All these parts must come together to culminate into one dog, a dog that is “put together” well. Then there is the fact that no dog is perfect. So we need to pick and choose those things that we personally can accept or cannot accept in the dog that we select for the show ring and possible breeding program.

Don't take the easy road. Don't keep spinning your wheels and spending your money on dogs who aren't worthy of a championship. Find a mentor, someone who has been breeding top dogs for generations. Nothing beats the years of experience of top breeders. You can read everything but with experience behind you, you will always be more knowledgeable.

Dog shows are a great family hobby. But any hobby is more fun and rewarding when you excel. This sport of dogs can be expensive and time consuming. If you are going to participate, get smart, get informed, and get going!

—*Virginia (Jenny) Hauber, 2015*

June 2019 *AKC Gazette* (rerun from December 2013 issue)  
Chihuahuas

### **Entering the Show Dog World of the Chihuahua**

You've been to the shows and seen the darling little creatures prancing around the ring. What fun to see, and it certainly doesn't seem too hard—"just walk the dog around in a circle."

Well, I remember riding a transport from the hotel to the show grounds and sitting beside a Border Collie owner who showed her dog in obedience. Being true to her breed, her hair was half white, as if to have a full white collar on the top, and the rest was dark like the body of the Border. Of course I noticed it immediately, but I never remarked on the unusual hair. Dog people are "unusual." Like all dog folks do, we struck up a conversation and she told me what she did and asked what breed I was showing and what sport. Proudly, I told her I showed Chihuahuas in the conformation ring. She quickly came back with her statement saying, "Oh, you're lucky, you don't have to do anything but walk around the ring." I bit my tongue but returned with a quick, "You obviously don't know much about showing conformation."

Big dog or little dog, we work hard in those few minutes we are in the show ring. We've spent thousands of hours training for this day. No one walks into the show ring expecting to lose, but lose we do. Unfortunately, losing is a fine art, and to lose graciously is not an easy task. Most newcomers enter the show ring with great expectations. When they lose to a seasoned handler, bystanders will tell them that it was the handler the judge always chooses. But in actuality, the handler has trained for years and honed his craft to perfection. He/She is a professional. Others in the ring will range from new, somewhat seasoned, and seasoned show people. They don't handler others people's dogs but love the sport and love showing their own dogs. This is the owner/handler. AKC is now offering an owner-handler BIS award for those wanting to compete there.

Getting into the show world takes patience, stamina, and above all, realistic expectations. The sport is costly, so beginning with the best dog possible is suggested. This will alleviate a lot of disappointments down the road.

Take your time when purchasing a dog for the show ring, and do your homework to find quality breeders. Go to dog shows, and talk to exhibitors once they've finished showing their dog. They will be happy to talk about dogs! It's their life and rarely do they think about much else.

Once you have your new bundle of joy, search out a conformation training class. Most local kennel clubs can help you with this and answer many questions. Be sure your breeder can be counted on as a mentor to help you through your first year.

First-time jitters are normal. In fact, they last for a few years but one day you'll notice that you handle very well, your dogs love the ring, and you have a whole new group of wonderful friends. You still lose, but you win too. You realize that losing is part of any sport, and that you too graciously congratulate the winner, then kiss your dog and prepare for the next show.

—Virginia (Jenny) Hauber, 2013



(September 2019 *AKC Gazette*—no Chihuahua column)

December 2019 *AKC Gazette* (rerun from March 2012 issue)  
Chihuahuas

Evelyn Piano Behrens wrote the following advice for the *Gazette* in 2012, and her good insights for Chihuahua owners are worth revisiting.

### **The Good “Tiger Mom”**

By now you have probably heard the term “tiger mom.” It is sometimes used to describe an overbearing mother who pushes her child to achieve, and examples of such often sound cruel and heartless. Those who take pride in the label, however, define it as encouraging outstanding behavior. Their view is that it builds the child’s self confidence, enabling the child to face challenges with an optimism that she or he is capable of great things.

Consider being a good “tiger mom” to your Chihuahua, beginning as early as possible.

Training for the show ring cannot start soon enough. The Chihuahua who enters the ring happy, with tail up and moving confidently, instantly has an edge over the shy, unsure, tail-down, apprehensive dog. (Remember our standard, which mentions the breed’s “terrierlike” qualities.) If that same dog is rock-solid for the table exam, the edge can be significant.

Expose your puppy to new environments, new people, and new surfaces to walk on. Buy a piece of mat material (a ridged stair-tread works well), and attach a strip of duct tape across it. Give the pup a treat for walking on this unfamiliar surface.

Bring your puppy to a variety of places, such as pet-supply stores, training centers, and fun matches. At each new place, have different kinds of people, both male and female, hold your puppy. Have each person continue holding the pup until it’s clear that she is relaxed with her new friend.

Find treats and toys that the puppy really likes, and use them only for training. Set u she might not enjoy some aspects of grooming. Have other people approach her on the table and “play judge.”

While this may sound like all the other training tips you’ve heard, the key is in being a “tiger mom”—you, the owner-handler, must be consistent, strict, and disciplined.

I got my first Chihuahua after 20 years of training and showing Shiba Inu. My first few attempts to train my Chihuahua to self-stack didn’t seem to have an effect. I figured the little dog couldn’t see the bait, so although getting up and down wasn’t easy for me, I began getting on my knees and trying to hand-stack him.

A very tall Chi exhibitor soon told me that not only could Chihuahuas be taught to self-stack, they can make for a very dramatic picture when you the only one in the ring with a self-stacked dog and everyone else is on their knees trying to hold their dog together. Since then, I have taught all my Chihuahuas how to self-stack. I might have to bend at the waist quite a bit, but they can see and smell the bait quite well.

Stop making excuses for your dog’s incorrect behavior. (“She’s shy” ... “It’s his first show” ... “Another dog scared her.”) Keep practicing until the desired outcome is consistent and reliable.

—*Evelyn Piano Behrens, 2012*

March 2020 *AKC Gazette* (rerun from March 2016 issue)  
Chihuahuas

### **The Lost Art of Good Sportsmanship**

Hugging and the shaking of hands in the winner's circle gives a look of great sportsmanship. It's part of the "show"—but not all those greetings are heartfelt.

Has winning become so important that we have lost sight of why we are in the show ring in the first place? Do you remember when you first started showing dogs all those years ago, and how you loved the camaraderie garnered at the show site? Gone are those old days when everyone sat ringside watching the groups waiting for Best in Show, where the oldtimers shared their jewels of wisdom with the "newbies."

I remember being in awe of those who had top dogs and being able to sit within hearing distance of those who knew a good dog and bred the best, while trying to catch a word or two of those gems they threw out there. It was a treasure chest of tried and true information.

Ah, the good old days, before the Internet and Facebook. Those were the days when you knew what you were hearing was fact, and when just being able to listen to the "chatting" of those excellent breeders, of all breeds, was the best learning experience one could receive.

Progress is progress, and there is always the good and bad to come. Information is at our fingertips. Internet bragging is at an all-time high, and everyone is an expert. Unfortunately more and more dog lovers are entering the show ring with a lot of misinformation. Previously, it took years to learn pertinent information from the bottom up. Today, however, we hear the lingo on Facebook one day, and become experts the next. And then when the dog we spent a fortune to purchase and had such high hopes for doesn't win first time out, we blame the judge, the handler, or a million other reasons for the loss. It can't be our handling skills or the fact that our little "darling" isn't up to standard.

Negative ringside comments have become the norm, and what is said behind closed doors has become vicious, while rumors begin and reputations are on the line.

Welcome to the new dog show world, where sportsmanship is losing to "win at all costs." Newbies get discouraged and leave the sport before they even get started. Showing dogs may look easy, but it takes years of study, work, and sheer determination. Those who stick with it really do find wonderful friendships among their peers, and people will come out of the woodwork for a dog in distress and drive hours to help a stranger's dog. So there is still the love of the dog that keeps us together.

Let's stop blaming and start doing. Let's get back to mentoring those new to the breed, to being happy for our fellow exhibitors who produce a great dog and beat us in the show ring. Let's see the judges pick the best of the best, and not someone they owe a favor for fear of not getting the next assignment. Let's get back to when dog shows were about the dogs and not about the wins. Let's become good sports again!

—*Virginia (Jenny) Hauber, 2016*

June 2020 AKC Gazette (rerun from June 2014 issue)  
Chihuahuas

### **The Dog Breeder: Idealism vs. Realism**

*People are creators. But I doubt that many realize this. We are not meant to go out into the world and find flawless things; we are not meant to sit down and have flawless things fall in our laps. But we are creators. We can create a beautiful thing out of what we have. The problem with idealistic people is that they see themselves as receivers instead of creators, and they end up hunting for the flaw in everything in order to measure it up to their ideals. When you see yourself as a creator, you can look at a chunk of marble and see an angel in it. Then you “carve until you have set that angel free.” —C. JoyBell C.*

We all know the statement “There’s no perfect dog.” If we believe this, why do we expect to breed our perfect dog? Idealism is the behavior or thought based on a conception of things as they should be, or as they wish them to be, with a tendency to be imaginary or visionary. Realism, on the other hand, is the behavior or thought based on a conception of things as they are, regardless of how one wants them to be, with a tendency to be practical and pragmatic.

Many new to the breeding process suffer from idealism. Although this is not a bad thing, one must have some realistic expectations when dealing with possibilities beyond our control.

The genetics of dogs can be a huge handicap. Humans have 46 chromosomes (23 pairs), as compared to a dog’s 78 chromosomes (39 pairs). The arrangement or sequence of the genes of the chromosomes is astounding. So you see, when dealing with living beings, we are at the mercy of genetics.

Awareness of the intricate patterns of heredity is a good way to begin to realize why traits don’t always fall into predictable dominant-recessive patterns. The varying degrees of dominance, polygenes, and environment will affect the outcome of your planned breedings.

Since there are no perfect dogs, we need to set realistic goals, those long-term goals that will eliminate undesired traits and strengthen the desirable. Study the genetic diversity of your breed, and accept that undesirable recessives will crop up when you least expect them.

Ask those who have been successfully breeding for years, and they’ll tell you of their early idealism and the puppy or puppies they wish they had kept. Their idealism got in the way and set their breeding program back another year or more. To expect to accomplish one’s goal in one generation is unrealistic.

Remember, there is an element of art to dog breeding. Successful breeders acquire skills by experience, study, and observation, as well as a bit of intuition. The best geneticists in the world can’t predict what will happen when two dogs are mated, no matter how hard we strive for genetic reliability and consistency. Every generation is different and presents a unique set of flaws.

There truly is no formula for success. So sprinkle that idealism with a little realism, and carve until you set your angel free.

—Virginia (Jenny) Hauber, 2014

Put a table in your house and put the puppy on the table a few times a day. Feed the puppy on the table, and give her treats while she's on it. Be sure to avoid doing grooming on this table—the puppy needs to learn that *good* things happen on the table, and