

March 2017 AKC *Gazette* column

### **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