

# NZDJJA

## Mentoring

by Lavina Diamanti

The journey of student dog judge is an interesting one with lots of lessons learned along the way. Some good and some we never want to repeat! As we travel this road we meet many knowledgeable judges, some whom we admire and hold in high esteem. If we are lucky, sometimes they share with us some of the lessons they have learned along their journey. If we are really lucky, we have a mentor who teaches and guides us with valuable advice, hopefully delivered in a manner so we never forget it. We have those pieces of advice tucked away in our sub-conscious to bring out when we are judging. One that always sticks in my mind is "No good dog can be a bad colour".

I asked some of our judges to share with us some of the advice they received during their judging journey. Some of these are gold! Betsy Litt told Ray Greer, "Don't try and play your friends. It is too hard. It's easier to just judge the dogs."

Maree McKenzie's mentor was Dawn Clark. She always said to her, "Even though you may be an All Breeds Judge, you can never stop learning."

Carole Tipler told me, "Probably the most significant advice from my mentor was that I should never lose sight of the function of my chosen breed and if I choose to breed, then I must always breed hounds capable of bringing home my supper as well as excel in the show ring."

"It has to be fair and more importantly, be seen to be fair". Jack Charters to Sharon Rennie.

Giselle Fletcher was advised, "Stick with the type you like!"

Diane Riley's mother, Roselin O'Keefe had a great influence on her with both breeding and judging. She advised, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water, look for breed virtues/type first, then pick the soundest out of those with the best type – in other words, don't fault judge!"

Paul Robinson's long-time mentor was Bill Chambers, a gundog man both in the field and showing. His advice was, "Always go with your instincts, a quick decision is a good decision and treat all exhibitors with equal respect."

Eddie Croad advised Lee Greer, "Don't follow the dogs around, stay in one position or you'll be tired by the end of the day."

Dawn Clark advised Bruce Anderson, "If you make a mistake, make it quick – In other words, don't take ages and still make the same mistake!"

The advice Carla Peck received from her mentor Val Beggs was, "Don't get distracted by the decoration, see the structure under the spotting, markings, colour or whatever the case might be."

The late Neilmar Fraser gave Martin Hewitt some sound advice when he was starting out. "When judging dogs never forget that Form follows Function. Ensure you know what the breed was originally used for and how that use determines the conformation, colour, temperament and movement of the breed."

"She also called me out at a training night for having my hands in my pockets. Unless I was going over the dog or gesturing I had to have my hands behind my back. I was told "If it's good enough for the Duke of Edinburgh it's good enough for you".

Sometimes the best advice we hear comes from those who are not judges. Cathy Wallace shared with me "The first one that comes to mind is from my Husband John. The last thing he always said to me when I left to go to a judging appointment – don't put up any unsound dogs. I have always remembered it and even though he isn't there now I can still hear his words of advice"

My own mentor, Barbara Donnelly, told me "It doesn't matter who owns the dog, even if it is your worst enemy, if it is the best dog there, put it up!"

Many thanks to all those who have shared these glimpses with us.

## National Board

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## Important Dates

20 March	Theory Exams
24 June	Annual Conference
21 & 22 June	Practical Examinations – Auckland
28 & 29 July	Practical Examinations – Christchurch