

Taffy Morris, show dogs and judging an interview

by Lavina Diamanti

Bill (Taffy) and Sheila Morris were recently inducted into the NZKC Breeders Hall of Fame, acknowledging their life time commitment and success breeding dogs under the Taff kennel name. Bill is an All Breeds judge who has completed assignments across the globe. I asked him some questions about judging and show dogs.

Q. How do think your success in breeding has influenced your ability as a judge and vice versa?

A. It made me very aware of how difficult it was to breed a top show dog.

Q. Is there one judging assignment that stands out for you over all the others? if so, why?

A. Yes, Madras India. My co-judge Mr Kobiachi was from Japan. He spoke no English and I spoke no Japanese. We spent two weeks together travelling from one end of India to the other, with so many happenings – funny and otherwise. We stayed at the Madras Club, an élite establishment originally built by the English Raj. I had a chauffeur and an older Indian retainer to look after me. It was approx. 2:00am on the morning of the show when I was awakened by my minder saying – “Mr Morris, I do believe you are not very well”. That was true. A doctor was called and arrived quickly. The doctor was a gem! I remember her asking me if I could touch my toes, no sooner had my fingers reached my ankles when she speared me with a needle so long I think she must have brought it with her on a trailer! I slept until 7a.m. My minder managed to get me ready for the show, I judged until mid-day and when we stopped for lunch I became aware I was at the show. I still have no recollection of having judged any dogs that morning. Lesson learnt, only eat and drink at the hotel/Club you are staying at. I have judged in India on many occasions since and have always had wonderful and interesting, happy times.

Q. Of the thousands of dogs you have judged, is there one dog that stands out?

A. Definitely yes. One time in Canada, I was judging Gundogs, a strong group. A Springer Spaniel handled by a very tall man came into the ring, I shall not forget the impression made, a handsome Springer, a top handler and they flowed around the ring with drive. The Springer was superbly presented with a head and body equal to the presentation – an above average dog, top quality group winner.

Q. Do you think the judges’ decisions influence the direction a breed takes.

A. Yes, but not necessarily the right direction.

Q. We never see you handling dogs in the ring. Why is that?

A. I have not handled a dog at a show since some time in the ‘70’s. I am adamant regarding all breed judges handling dogs at shows, I strongly object to this procedure as I do believe they intimidate aspiring judges. It will be said by current judges as “rubbish”, it may be unintentional however its factual, aspiring judges are examined by AB judges as they progress to all breeds.

Q. You and Sheila have bred numerous top winning dogs including three National Dog Show Best in Show winners. Is there one dog that stands out as the greatest of them all?

A. There are more than one – each with their special qualities. Sundancer for his effortless movement and amazing apricot colour, GR. CH. El Blanco of Taff - for his great showmanship and unflappable temperament. Alblac – so short in back and magnificent head, GR.CH. Comedy Star of Taff who would throw everything he had at the show ring, Fancy of Taff (Foxy) BIS National at 8 months, more recently Mikki – Devils Crusade of Taff the first Supreme Specialty Grand Champion and right now Grand Ch. I Had a Dream of Taff (Monty) with Sundancer’s effortless movement and glamour. Each in their own way very special show dogs and a pleasure to own.

Q. What advice would you give to judges who are currently on their journey to All Breeds.

A. The advice given me by Mick McDermott, then President of NZKC “You will make mistakes – do it quick and start out the same way that you mean to finish”.

Important Dates

21 March 2017	Theory Examination
15 & 16 July 2017	Auckland Practical Exams
22 & 23 July 2017	Wellington Practical Exams (if required)
29 & 30 July 2017	Christchurch Practical Exams