

# BREEDER CONVERSATIONS

WITH MARY-FRANCES MAKICHEN

## WHAT PART, IF ANY, DO YOU THINK EXHIBITING DOGS HAS IN A BREEDING PROGRAM AND WHY?

### **Cindy Huggins Courtlore Cavaliers**

Ideally showing and breeding go hand in hand. The show ring is the only place we have for showcasing what our individual breeding program is producing. Often dog shows are the only time you can see dogs from other parts of the country. This is the opportunity to see what consistency a particular dog or breeder is producing. On the other hand exhibiting dogs has evolved into a competition for the sake of winning, not showcasing a breeding program. Often we get so caught up in winning that we lose our objectivity. There is a difference between breeding and a breeding

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program. Always breeding to the “flavor of the moment” or a winning dog is not a breeding program. A breeding program must have goals and a clear plan of how to achieve those goals.

If a breeder shows their dogs with an open mind, then dog shows can be a valuable tool for honestly evaluating your dog's qualities with other breeder's dogs. Whether I am watching or showing, I try to honestly evaluate the strengths of those dogs against my own. We all know that with perseverance we can make a champion of most dogs. Also we have all known great winning dogs that were never able to pass along their qualities.

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### **Stephanie Abraham Trefoil Cavaliers**

When we breed a litter my husband and I are hoping to keep something for

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ourselves, a puppy that represents the epitome of our idea of breed type. To that end, it has to have it “all.” It must have a melting expression, excellent bite, correct coat, and quintessential happy Cavalier temperament. There must be enough bone and substance to allow the mature dog to “go all day behind a horse.” It must have adequate angulation and balance front and rear, a fine topline and proper tail carriage, and be soundly made all over. No weedy ones here!

While we like attractive markings as well as the next one, I would forgive a mantle coat or a less than well broken coat in favor of everything underneath if the puppy was lovely. And we will not compromise on temperament, believing it to be the hallmark of the breed.

The show ring teaches us how the pup reacts to strange environments and hands, and is an indication of his adaptability to new situations. Hopefully, we respect the opinion of the judge if we cared to enter under him/her—but sometimes

we just chalk up wins and losses to the vagaries of subjective opinions on the day. Consistent success is nice, but not the most important measure of quality in our eyes.

While I would like to think that our own ideas of perfection might steal the show here in the East, that is not necessarily the case. To that end, we breed to satisfy ourselves, and are very happy when our own ideas and those of judges coincide. But I hardly think that either the notions of judges, or our own perceptions, are without flaw—so we just breed the best to the best and hope for the best (as the horsemen say). We will probably always have a dog or two about the house that sports a title in our eyes only.

### **Carla Mathies Creekside Cavaliers**

Exhibiting is an essential element and in my situation, the “driving force” behind my breeding program. At this stage of my life, exhibiting my own dogs is a hobby that offers an outlet for my competitive drive and an opportunity to socialize with life-long friends. I can “play” a little or a lot according to what my personal life dictates. I also believe judges (I'm an AKC licensed judge too) and breeders alike need the continuing education of the dog show and its related activities like exhibiting to help them achieve expertise in their chosen breed(s).

We should remind ourselves of the true reason why participating at dog shows began—for breeders to take their best dogs and compare them with

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the best of others in an ongoing effort to select THE BEST breeding stock. If one is truly dedicated to the sport of purebred dogs, better breeding will always be the “driving force” as one seeks dog show and club awards (i.e. the

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ACKCSC ROM award) The resulting championship titles and records achieved are rewarding, but their true value is not in the “snob factor”, but in the fact that they prove your breeding stock has been compared with other dogs by people who know the breed and have been found to be good representations of their breed, of good temperament and intelligence. In essence, exhibiting at dog shows should and does encourage breeders to breed better dogs.