

PBGVCA NATIONAL, SACRAMENTO 27-29 APRIL

Since the first PBGV Club of America National in 1987, just a few from abroad have been invited to judge the Regular classes - notably John Miller in San Antonio 1992 and New Orleans 2001, also Gunnar Nymann in Elk Grove in 2004. Only three judges from England have had the honour of presiding over the Regular classes. At San Rafael, California in 1989, when I judged the Sweepstakes, Nick Frost took centre stage, awarding BOB to Wakelyns Javelot. At Kansas City the following year Mildred Seiffert found her BOB in Jomil Zenobia. And 1999 in Charlotte, Sandy Mackenzie gave BOB to Ch Tacoa Sonnets As R Promises.

I was therefore honoured to be invited to judge this year's National at Sacramento, California. With a predominance of PBGVs living on the east coast or in the mid-west, west coast entries are always traditionally lower, but this year saw a welcome total all time high of 97. This included classes much as we hold here, such as Stud Dog, Brood Bitch, Brace and Team and, even a Pack Class.

Bitten by the bug, having attended the World Congress at Rhode Island last year, John Walton-Haddon joined Jenna and me on our flight to San Francisco and on by bus to Petaluma, where Valerie Link's aunt, Pat Ross, met us to take us to her home in Sonoma. Having stayed with Pat many times over the years, the last time in 1999, it was a welcome return for Jenna and me. The next two days saw us sampling local cheeses in The Cheese Factory and wines at nearby vineyards though, to our surprise, most now charge \$5 for wine tasting. However, being astute and thrifty English people, \$5 between four of us for sampling 5 wines went a surprisingly long way and one winery even gave us a complimentary free wine tasting voucher for another nearby.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to revisit some of the Napa Valley vineyards as, judging at the National on the last day, meant having to avoid exhibitors and so forego many of the events laid on beforehand, including The Nose Knows. This was an evening of wine education, tasting and dinner with a humorous canine twist. Bottles on sale went under the special Chateau PBGV label, included Charoedonnay, Cabunny Swerve 'n Run, Zoonfandel and Rustic Riesling. The event was in support of the PBGVCA Health and Rescue Foundation. It was a tremendous success with about 89 attending. One of the main attractions was an original painting by nationally known wildlife artist Stella Stevens, who I was pleased to meet afterwards. This raised \$1,250. As well as sales of the commemorative wine with special labels, decorated PBGV glasses also went well and an astonishing figure in excess of \$10,000 was raised to support health related efforts. The event represented Nancy Dorsey's final contribution as a foundation board member, which I am sure will be a hard to match.



Judge Linda Skerritt with Robyn Wallis, Suzanne Douglass & David Dodge and Best of Winners Rokeena Beau Dessin

I also, sadly, had to miss the Breeders' Symposium, mounted by Dr Jean Metzler, reproductive vet, as this took place while photos were being taken after judging. But, exhibitors or no exhibitors, I was determined not to miss the Amazing AI, who entertained nearly 100 people with his performance, just going to prove that with time and determination you can teach a PBGV to obey commands. With countless changes of props and costumes, AI put on a spell-binding show, including skate-boarding, towing a coal mine truck and loading it with the coal, performing a Mexican dance and getting into bed and rolling up into his blanket. The treat for everyone watching was to see AI's personality come through and, for the entire forty minutes, everyone was enthralled as he performed to music. He usually appears at hospitals, day care centres and in front of children but, to finally perform for like-minded PBGV owners, who know what patience and tenacity is needed to encourage a PBGV to carry out even the simplest tasks, was a high point for his trainers Janet Hopper and Steve Lopez.

I also attended an interesting talk, accompanied by presentation, given by Dr Mark Neff, researcher in dog genetics at the Centre for Veterinary Genetics at UC Davis. Over 40 people listened as he explained in simple terms that genetics is all about understanding differences. The dog, which is a single species with tremendous diversity in type, size, shape and behaviour, gives an ideal opportunity to see how differences have developed. Moreover, the four Griffons Vendéens give an exciting

opportunity to look more closely at emerging breed differences in these closely related cousins.

During the three days, and while Regional and Sweepstakes judging took place, 19 dogs were tested at an eye clinic, 13 or so had cardiac screenings and a similar number thyroid. Ten DNA blood samples were collected to add to the existing databank and 30 DNA cheek swabs for the OFA/CHIC (Canine Health Information Centre) DNA bank.



Judge Linda Skerritt with Carol Herr, Nancy Dorsey and Sandy Bustin, BOB Ch Crepu Visage Jolly Mon Sing and BOS Le Chasse & T Bustin's Civil Disobedience

Other than the English contingent, Jo Brickwell was there from Alaska, Gunnar Nymann, Holger Busk and Jan Jensen from Denmark and Robyn Wallis, Maree Mackenzie, Janet Beckman, Jamie Hubbard, Lorraine & Lance Gray from Australia. With the same entry for both the Regional, judged by Pat Gellerman and the National, which I judged, the main winners from each day were: BOB Regional - Donna Moore's Ch Gebeba Texas True Grit (Ch Gebeba Wave Runner ex Ch Gebeba Sand Piper), BOB National - Sandy Bustin, Nancy Dorsey and Gavin Robertson's Ch Crepu Visage

Jolly Mon Sing (Ch Jombri's Hot Shot Le Chasse ex Ch Bon Crepu Visage Odie). Best of Winners Regional - Nick Frost & Helen Goldberg's Dehra Amazona Bvlgari (Ch Afterglow Woody Woodpecker ex Ch Dehra Amazona Vegas), who also went BP on both days and Reserve Winners Dog at the National. Best of Winners National - Suzanne Douglass, David Dodge & Robyn Wallis' Rokeena Beau Dessin (Aus Ch Rokenna Alyons Amusement ex Am Ch Chouan Prêt à Porter). Best Opposite Sex Regional - Julie Lacey-Black's, J Hendricks & L C Hof's Ch Lacey's Hare Apparent (Ch Monkham's Famous Grouse ex Ch Lacey's U Got Some Splain' T'Do). Best Opposite Sex National, from a repeat of the mating that produced the BOB winner - Nancy Dorsey's Le Chasse & T. Bustin's Civil Disobedience.

On both days one of the Awards of Merit went to Susannah Cooper & Tony Maccianti's Ch Solettrader Ozzy Osbourne (Ch Willowbrae As You Like It JW ex Ch Afterglow Penelope Pitstop). Other Regional AOWs went to Linda Lewis' & Valerie Link's Ch Tangaer Idris (Ch Garwedd du Greffier du Roi at Tangaer ex Tangaer Emmanuelle) and Karen Prott-Clugston's Ch Jaren's Our Girl Friday (Ch Sojourn's Stand Back ex Ch JaDells Which Hazel of Jaren).

The remaining National AOMs went to Ch Gebeba Texas True Grit and Nancy Dorsey & Sandy Bustin's Ch Jombri's Hot Shot Le Chasse (Ch Nestor de Fin Renard ex Ch SoHapy After-Our Chardonnay). BV on both days went to Julie Shannon's

Ch Pepperhill's Valley Girl (Ch Pepperhill-Dehra Dazzle ex Ch Pepperhill Over the Rainbow).

The evening banquet saw people relaxing after the show and bidding competitively for the countless PBGV and canine items ably auctioned by President Jeff Pepper. Winding down after a hectic few days, afterwards we visited Old Town Sacramento, where we were able to experience Sacramento as it was at the time of the Gold Rush, see the original building where Wells Fargo started its pony express and watch paddle steamers on the 382 mile Sacramento River, the longest in California. Of special interest was a visit inside the State Capitol, a 19th-century granite building, modelled on the US Capitol and home to the California Legislature. We had hoped that Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger would come out to meet us but the doors to his office remained closed as he was too busy! On the way to San Francisco Airport, we renewed our acquaintance with the sea-lions off Pier 39, gazed over the Bay to the imposing Alcatraz and had an early lunch on Pier 39. Back at the airport, we met John Walton-Haddon and Valerie Link, who had taken her two PBGVs, Isobel and Epiphany, to be loaded onto the flight, to accompany her on her return visit to England.

There is no doubt about it, the National, which takes a tremendous amount of organisation by the host region, is a firm favourite with many PBGV owners as it gives the opportunity to combine visiting different areas of the States with spending time with a large gathering of our favourite breed. Next year's National is to be held in Nashville, Tennessee from 27-29 April. Judges there will be: Regional Sweeps Bobbe Jackson, Regular classes Anne Gallant, National Sweeps Valerie Link, Regular classes Barbara Pepper. Plans are already under way for a full programme of events so, for the opportunity to see different PBGVs in a welcoming atmosphere, combined with sightseeing, do think about going. I can guarantee you a wonderful time.

Linda Skerritt