

Judge Helen Franklin

How long have you been judging the breed? How many times a year do you judge German Shepherds?

I began judging Futurities and Matches in the 70's and was licensed in the late 70's or early 80's. I judge as often as I am able or I am asked to judge. As of 2008, I have been a member of the German Shepherd Dog Club of America for 43 years, and a founder of The Award of Excellence.

Are you an active breeder of German Shepherd Dogs? Do you have a kennel name?

My kennel name was Von Saar and my last litter is now 12 years old. I have retired from breeding and exhibiting. Things now ache as you bend over the whelping box and the body objects to running around the ring or dragging crates.

How long have you been in the breed? When and how did you get started?

Way back in the 60's, my husband and I decided to get a "good" German Shepherd. We bought and read the books, visited several breeders with litters and one day attended a puppy match. I fell in love with male in the 2-4 class and followed his breeder as she left the ring. I asked if he was for sale and she said "no" but I have his litter mates at home and a bitch that looks just like him. The litter was out of Ch. Ulk Wikingerblut and a strong bitch line. She did go on to win points now and then but never finished. I bred her to Ch Gallant of Arbywood and she produced Von Saar's first Champion and two other pointed dogs. The showing hook was set, but the real forever attachment was the deep adoring respect and admiration for the breed and all the wonderful things that German Shepherds are...a gift from G-d.

Do you judge both all-breeds and specialties. If so, which do you prefer?

I am licensed for German Shepherds only but have judged other breeds at matches. I prefer Specialties and especially when they are in conjunction with a Futurity where there are many dogs, exhibitors, and goings-on of good homemade food and good camaraderie.

Do you have a color preference?

No. Since color is cosmetic and easily changed by breeding, it is amongst the last on my list.

Do you find it harder to judge solid blacks ? If so, why?

It is not more difficult to judge blacks, but generally speaking, winning blacks are usually better than other conformation dogs because faults are more difficult to disguise.

When judging the dog, do you also judge the handler? Please elaborate if possible.

No....I am not licensed to judge people, only dogs. I care less who handles, who the breeder is, or who owns the dog! I believe I have established a good reputation in that area and your invitation to judge so many Nationals is an indication of same. In addition, I judge the "dog" itself and have seen great quality in all ages including youngsters. Some puppies I've chosen are, my 1st 6-9 Puppy Bitch and Reserve Winners Bitch at the U.S. Nationals (over gorgeous older bitches) later went, Grand Victrix Winsomes Fettucini v Cypress. My 1st 9-12 Puppy Bitch at the Nationals and later she went, Grand Victrix Kridler's Ruby of Highland Acres; my BIF Dog who later went, AOE Grand Victor Mar Haven's Color Guard; my BOS Futurity Bitch (to Color Guard) from the Junior Puppy Bitch Class later went, AOE Grand Victrix Inflight's Heaven Only Knows; my Nationals Futurity Victor later went, AOE Grand Victor Survival's Tuff Decision. I gave a very young puppy a major, Pinebeach's Stars and Stripes and he later went Winner's Dog at the Nationals.

What importance do you place on missing teeth?

We have a standard that dictates what we do with missing teeth. If I have two dogs and one has a missing tooth but is superior otherwise, missing tooth wins.

Please discuss temperament in the ring today. Has it improved? Declined? Please explain. Having judged three U.S. Nationals and one Canadian, I can see a definite improvement in temperament. Since temperament is #1 on my list of importance I pay particular attention.

Do you prefer a dog to be shown on a loose lead?

Always, always, always. Check the Specials class at the 2006 U.S. Nationals.

How would you rate the following in sequence of importance? (On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best).

Coming/Going: 4

Sidegait: 8

Temperament: 10 I approach and talk to the dog without direct challenging eye contact. I am the "friendly stranger in the park, as in real life."

Teeth: 3

Coat: 4

Pasterns, hocks, feet: 5

Pigment: 2

Structure: 9

Shoulder/Reach: 7

Attitude: 10 * A great attitude makes a great show dog but there are great dogs that due to poor training or bad experiences, hate the show ring. Good puppy experiences are so important for future show attitude. Shows for youngsters must always be lots fun and without corrections. Run out of any ring where the judge is tough on puppies. Puppies should be talked to and shown only love by the judge...always.

In your opinion should double handling be allowed? Please explain.

Yes, but it should never interfere with either the judging or the spectators.

Do you feel more emphasis should be put on the total package, and less on movement?

Movement is part of the total package, you can't have one without the other....as the song goes. These are herding/working dogs and in order for them to accomplish what they are bred to do, they must be structured correctly.

Do you have a pet peeve about anything owners or handlers do concerning the showing of dogs? (Do you have any suggestions for owners or handlers regarding anything they should NEVER do when showing under you?)

I dislike dirty coats on dogs with unclean mouths, ears and long nails. Grooming is important. I dislike handlers that don't follow instructions especially when they attempt to cover-up the dog in front of them. I dislike handlers that place a thumb over a missing tooth. I really dislike handlers that attempt to use ANY kind of intimidation with the judge and I usually spit them out for lunch. (I have a Judge Judy attitude...no nonsense but that does not preclude having fun. Sometimes handlers and I have a good laugh, in the ring.)

Do you have any suggestions for owners or handlers regarding anything they should ALWAYS do when showing under you?

Have your dog trained not to RACE around the ring but perform on a loose lead at a moderate gate. I dislike a speeding train.

Do you have any advice for people who are relatively new to showing and/or breeding?

Invest your time before you invest your money. Be sure when evaluating the breeder you purchase a dog from one that has credentials. In other words, don't tell me what you

know, show me what you've done. Learning is a life-long process and very few start at the top. Just love your dog, good or bad, win or lose, that's the most important thing of all.

Any final comments?

Anyone who selects a German Shepherd as their breed, is a genius.