

Reminiscing

With the 2019 ESAA recently concluding in Saint Charles, IL, those of us who love English Setters are very fortunate that it was shown live by AKC.TV. If you were sitting at home (like me), you were able to watch and admire the dogs in Veteran Sweeps, Top 20, the Versatility Showcase; the Futurity, the Maturity, 4-6 month Puppy, the Stud Dog and Brood Bitch classes; the wonderful dog and bitch classes; Juniors, and Best of Breed. And, if you missed any of the event, replays are available. Thank you so much to AKC.TV for showing and recording this event.

Many congratulations to all of the dogs, breeders, owners, and handlers competing. You all looked wonderful and did a fantastic job in the ring. Thank you, also, to everyone who worked on putting this event together.

Of course, seeing so many terrific dogs on display at a national put me in mind of past national specialties and great dogs of the past. I recently had a chance to see some old video of Ch. Guys 'N Dolls Shalimar Duke showing at the Santa Barbara Kennel Club in 1969 (a little before my time with English Setters) and I had to marvel at him in the ring. Seeing a ring full of gorgeous English Setters from 50 years ago was wonderful. I think it's hard to compare dogs from different eras, especially when you're only looking at a 30-second clip of a few dogs from one show, but I was impressed by the size of some of the dogs in the video; and I thought many of them had very beautiful heads. It's nice to know that many of the dogs in that video are in our bloodlines today, especially Shalimar Duke.

The first time I saw a dog at a specialty that took my breath away, it was Ch. Goodtime's Silk Teddy at the ESAA National Specialty in Atlanta in 1990. That was the first national I attended. I had a pet English Setter at that time but I was thinking about getting a puppy to show. I was meticulously taking notes in my catalog through every class about which dogs I liked. Suddenly this ball of energy seemed to explode into the ring in the form of a dog – and there was Silk Teddy, being handled by Bruce Schultz. She took my breath away. I couldn't have told you anything about her conformation but she was an amazing show dog. She won BOB at the national specialty three years in a row. There were so many terrific dogs being shown that day – which I would come to appreciate later – but she had some kind of spark that seemed to make everyone else disappear – at least to this novice.

I was still learning about dog shows and attending local shows when I met Betty and Elizabeth Sunta of S-Troop. The Suntas (mother and daughter) enjoyed great success breeding and showing from the bred-by class in the 1980s and '90s. They also lived fairly close to me. I can remember watching a beautiful orange belton puppy they were showing back then by Tang – Ch. Gonna Wanna Win. I had another one of those “Ah ha!” moments and it seemed like there was a spotlight shining on her alone in the ring. Such a beautiful puppy. The Suntas were also kind enough to show me how to groom to show my own puppy and try to teach me a little about handling.

I apologize for rambling so much in this column but that seems to happen when I start thinking about people and dogs over the years.

I would like to make mention of several special people that we have lost from our English Setter world in the last few months. Annette Carricato passed away in August. She bred and showed under the kennel name Kaliber. She also loved chickens and she was the author of *Veterinary Notes for Dog Breeders*, a terrific book.

Gloria Arata passed away earlier in the summer. She showed and bred English Setters for many years under the kennel name Arkel.

Gail Manning, in Canada, passed away in early September. She bred and showed under the well-known kennel name Wragge Run.

Also in Canada, Lori Stewart passed away in late August. She bred and showed English Setters under the kennel name Artworks.

It's hard losing so many people who have done so much for English Setters in such a short time. We offer the deepest sympathy to their friends and families. They won't be forgotten and their contributions to the breed will live on.

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