

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . .



The Public . . . ya gotta love 'em. Yes, we really do because we too were once who they are. Whether or not motivated by commercial gain, major dog-food companies and the two-largest pet store chains have helped to bring more and more public exposure and awareness to pet ownership than at any time in history. Yet, why are the entries to the traditional specialty shows and field trial events not picking up in numbers instead of moving generally downward? New toys, new gadgets, new restaurants, new shopping malls, new sporting events, more and more demands on the family's time . . . combine that with the aging of our societies as a whole and we have a great formula for putting most dog clubs out of existence. Mind you, I did not say putting pet-related family home activities out of existence. It's just the registration levels and the organized breed-related activities that seem to be suffering.

In business, growth is generally thought of as having shown an improvement in the numbers over the previous year in gross dollars. If they cannot bring in more, then they gain more out of what they do . . . the business becomes more efficient and the result is more realized net profit dollars. As a breed parent club, we can define growth in various ways. Growth of membership, educational awareness, attitudes, etc., however, when it comes right down to it, we are mostly defined by membership numbers and/or event entries. While the traditional specialty events of Show, Field Trials and Obedience are generally not in a growth mode, there are substantial gains being recorded in some of the other areas of the sport; i.e. Agility, Hunt Test, and Tracking. Also, however regrettable there is growth in Rescue activities as well. Of course, some of these interests are coming from within our own ranks so while that does provide a true picture of club development, it does not present a tangible number in the growth column of our organization. It is, however, doing more with less. An educated guess would place the BHCA generally even in the membership area as we usually gain as many as we lose in a given year. Nonetheless, both the Membership and the Public have gained tremendously over the past several years in the disciplines of education, communication, quality of products (examples: the *Tally-Ho*, the National events, Regional event opportunities, etc.). All of this should sharply increase our understanding that if the Club is to survive, it must . . . it must, pay attention to its newest members and their individual aspirations.

In the Mar/Apr *Tally-Ho*, the Conformation article by **Jackie Fogel** certainly brought home some truths in the form of questions. No answers . . . but reasons to stop and think about what we are doing as breeders, competitors and club members. In the early Seventies, the term "mentor" was rarely used. Instead, we just went out and found people that could offer us something we knew that we didn't have in the way of knowledge . . . sometimes, quite by accident. Using myself as an example, I recall that I was doing some local crabbing about what the BHCA was or was not doing (of course, I really knew little or nothing about it) and someone sarcastically said that maybe someday I should run for President. My sharp-tongued reply was "Sure, why not?" From that point forward (I later found out), I had been labeled as someone with designs upon the political structure of the Club. Of course, it was all news to me since all I wanted to do was raise some winning hounds. The point is and as *Jackie* alludes to in her article, somehow, somewhere, someone was probably miffed at the sheer audacity of this new-comer saying such a thing. Fortunately, I met and enjoyed talking and working with the late **Bob Arbs** who helped me to learn about the BHCA and to get involved. Years later when I got a call from the Nominating Committee regarding a Director position, I was not only surprised, I was flabbergasted . . . but because of unofficial mentoring, I was basically prepared. By then, I had been in the BHCA twenty-three years and still not considered a sure bet. My contention is that we must allow people to grow within the Club and if we are the "elders" of the breed at the time, should not feel threatened by it and instead try to be helpful and not get put-off by someone's unenlightened comments since as of yet, they know no better. We were all there once. The real test is when and/or if their time comes will they have the knowledge and will they be ready to put out the effort? Look around, if the people you think of as new-comers are still here and interested ten or twenty-years from now, will they be ready to lead the Club through the Committees, or as Directors or Officers? The BHCA's future and our breed depend on them being ready and it's our job to make sure that they are.

Among the myriad of items that will be discussed at the Spring Board meeting, there are some other ideas that might help to bring even more involvement between the Club, the Members and the community. Some discussion will center on ideas for committee-level positions in such activities as a Basset Bedside Brigade (hospitals and nursing homes), School Days (show and tell activities possibly combined with other breeds as well), anyway . . . you get the idea. Possibly there should be a Mentoring program set up for new BHCA members who want to not just own but also breed their hounds. These types of programs can also gain us new breed awareness and breed-dedicated members. If you have any other thoughts, please send or tell them to any of the Board members.

As they were my local club activities, I was present at the BHC of Gtr. San Antonio specialty and the BHCA Regional which were built around an all-breed cluster. Although weather took its toll on one of our judge's travel plans, as the old saying . . . "*the show must go on*" and it did. Next week I will have the pleasure of being with our members at the BHC of Sacramento specialties. I am looking forward to the great hospitality spread that this group normally puts forth. And, not to forget . . . if you can, try to get to this year's Spring Field Trial events in Coraopolis, PA to be held May 28 - 31.

Our new Ways & Means Chairman, **Ralph Scarrow**, has asked me to remind you that there are Raffle tickets available for the 2004 drawings that will have cash prizes of \$700, \$200 and \$100. 50% of the net proceeds will be utilized by the 2005 BHCA Nationals and 50% will be donated to the AKC/CHF – Basset Hound Donor Advised Fund.

Whether buying a Raffle ticket or "a ticket to ride" . . . travel safe . . .

Randy Frederiksen