

TEXT OF MRS. NAGLE'S TALK GIVEN AFTER THE JUDGING, IWANE SPECIALTY 1980

Transcribed from tape by Pat Reilley

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I got a communication from the AKC with instructions for judging, and that really did frighten me, because as far as I could see they expected archangels and no judge is an archangel, and the longer you do it the more you realize how little you know and how much there is to know. So all one can do is to try one's best and you've got to remember, it's only one person's opinion, and, as I say, the longer you judge the more you realize how little you know about it.

My great effort today was to try and make the judges both here and in England realize that size is not the only thing. They read the first part of the Standard and they absolutely forget to go on where it says the aim is to establish hounds which will average between 32 and 34. They don't say anything about 36 and 37. And I feel that both here and in England they expect them to..... Americans like big things, I know, but they're getting far, far too big and far too lumpy. They're supposed to be an agile dog, with power --that quality-- and I think we're all going far too much for size. The judges in particular will not look at anything unless it's a mile high and leggy. The greatest joy I got today was when I came to the Veteran bitch class to see the quality and the size. Big bitches have never, in my opinion, been likely to breed half so many good dogs as the medium-size quality ones have. It was a joy to see the Veteran bitches. It was just the same at the Specialty (National) the other day to see the Veteran bitches, who were in my opinion better than the younger bitches.

What you've got to remember is that there is such a thing as conformation. It isn't just size. Conformation consists of such things as shoulders and spring of rib and hindquarters. Now, the hindquarters of the Irish Wolfhound Club of America has improved enormously since I first came here to judge -- I can't tell you how many years ago 'cause it was donkey's years ago! -- but they didn't have hindquarters in those days and they were very leggy and tall, especially if they came from California. They were absolutely -- they might have been on stilts! But now you've got a good angulation behind, and now you've got to try the other end, which is the shoulders. I don't know whether people realize, but so many judges don't seem to give you any credit for good shoulders. With a straight shoulder you get a tall dog and you get a straight stifle and probably a flat back, and at the end of that back a sickle tail; because with a flat back the tail comes out right at the top and then it's got to be like the Pom's and turn right over at the top. You want a gentle curve down the back.

I don't know how we're going to teach judges, because in spite of all the instructions from the AKC they don't seem to have learned anything about conformation at the moment. The old-time judges knew far more about a good dog, a good dog of any breed.

It's much easier to get a good head in one mating. You can be very lucky and improve the head, but you can't get good hindquarters unless you've got them all the way back, and that's very difficult (to have them all the way back).

The young bitches today, so many of them were too flat in the back. You want a gentle curve over the loin and you want strength over the loin. In my experience of good stud dogs it is the shorter-coupled dog that is a better proposition as a stud dog. You don't want them a mile

long, and if they're going to do any job like hunting wolves or coursing hares or anything, you want the strength over the loin.

Of course, the tendency over here is to have something bigger than anybody else and you've got to try and resist it if you can. I found in the early classes the same fault, which is the straightness in the back.

A lot of the people weren't very good at showing the mouths of the dogs. You've got to watch those, but you don't want to nitpick on an ear or one tooth, you want to go for the whole thing.

I think you've got enough good hounds here to breed. They're better than ours, taken on the whole. I found a lot, and quite a few bitches I would like to take home. I was very glad to pick out the Best of Breed [*Winner's Bitch, Redtop's Eirena*]. I think she is a beautiful bitch. She has quality, she has substance, she has hindquarters, and she fills my eye. We all have certain weak points, shall we say, a better head? It's not a bad head, it's a good head and she's balanced, and I'm sure that, bred right, she'll breed some very beautiful puppies.

The Veteran Dog who was BOS [*Ch. Brabyns Gog Ma Gog*], well now, he got that because he was a very good mover. Which, for a Veteran dog, he was about as good a mover as there was there. I knew him in England quite a few years ago and he had a very plain head but it has improved enormously. I have seen that he has bred good puppies, both in England and America. And he has got a very good pair of shoulders, which got him home today, because the weakness and the scarcity of good shoulders in dogs is very marked. We're in just the same position in England as you are here. We have got soft coats, we have got bad shoulders, and you've got to remember you must not breed where you've got the same thing on both sides or you'll land yourself with the most terrible things.

Puppy bitches today were better than puppy dogs. They had more spring of rib. You're tending to get a narrowness, and you don't want a "steamroller dog". A "steamroller dog" is like a Wolfhound that has been laid flat on the ground and then a steamroller has been rolled over it. And then it gets up and stands up and there you've got your steamroller dog. I penalized, I must say, very heavily, any very heavy dog, any too-heavy dog today. We're almost getting, in some cases, too much bone. You can get in trouble with too much bone. You want a quality bone, the sort of bone a thoroughbred has, not the sort of bone a carthorse has.

I think you all must learn to show the dog's mouth well, because a lot of them don't seem to like it. In England, we always look at the dog's mouth ourselves, because it is extremely difficult to look at a mouth while it is fighting with its owner.

You haven't got so many bad coats as we have and as I said, I was very pleased you've improved your hindquarters. Take your hindquarters and apply good shoulders to them. I have penalized today, some very typical dogs with very typical heads, because they weren't quite as good in shoulders and quite as good in stifle as the other plainer-headed dogs.

You must socialize your puppies before the age of 9 weeks. You've got to get them used to people and being handled and not frightened of people. I know you get strains in which they don't like men or some who don't like women, but you've got to keep on making them get used to it. The Wolfhound is a great pet, a marvelous pet. It's a far better dog as a pet. Those of you whose dogs aren't show dogs, you've got one of the best pets in the world, one of the best animals with children, one of the most trustworthy dogs. And you must be careful if you see

them nervous, sometimes that might tend to start them biting or something. We've had that happen in England, where dogs have made unprovoked attacks. Now, for a Wolfhound to do that is doing the breed so much harm, because it's a lethal animal when it does that. Because when they attack without even growling — supposing they do that to children? And they've always been known as wonderful pets with children and it's in your hands to keep them like that. I've always found any Hound that you've sent away as a pet somewhere, they always come back after that one has died, because they always say they are a wonderful pet, and how wonderful they are with children. And if you begin to get them nervous, they start off by being nervous and the nervous dog may end up biting. That is a thing you must watch very carefully, and I'm glad to say I had nothing like that in the ring today. One or two were a little nervous, but at least they didn't go jumping and catching something by the ear or something like that, but you must watch that type. Don't forget when you're buying dogs, when you're going abroad to buy dogs, see the parents of the dogs. See how they behave at home and see what the temperament of the dog is.

See what its coat is like, too, because there's no doubt we're getting a lot of woolly coats. I know woolly coats often have very good hindquarters, and they've very good shaped, but you'll get them in and you're going to get a lot of baa-lambs. That kind of coat isn't going to stand any wet or something like that. And we have got an awful lot of them in England.

So, my very great thanks for listening to me and also putting your very good — some of them very good — dogs up, but I am a little frightened to see that your older dogs are better than your younger dogs. You must be very careful how you mate your good bitches, because you can get two litters and get a good mating, but be careful, don't get the same fault. And go and see for yourself, don't be kennel blind, know your own faults. When you get into the ring, look around, and say, "oh, that's dangerous" and "oh, that's a nice dog", and admire other people's good dogs and see the bad points in your own. Unless you're objective, you're never going to be a breeder. The first thing a breeder must be is completely objective and be able to see the good in other people's dogs. Because your dog has faults, it doesn't mean it's not a perfectly delightful pet, because they're one of the best dogs in the world.

Again, many thanks for being so kind and taking it all, because the trouble nowadays is that people aren't taking it like they used to. Spirit is going out of the window and just commercial considerations are coming in. Until you can see the good in other people's dogs you're never going to be a great breeder.

A judge needs lots of moral courage and it's probably one of the most difficult things. You've got to upset your friends, and you've got to put other ones up. You mustn't think of anything but the dog.