

TERRIER GROUP

Irish Terriers

THE UBIQUITOUS SHOW PERSONALITY

It wasn't long after the end of regular monthly program of the Wunderkind Kennel Club, a club at which they register a lot of breeds that leave you wondering, "What kind of dog is *that?*," when the real order of club business commenced across the street at the Hair of the Dog Tavern.

My friend Red McGaw was holding the floor better than he was holding his drink. "I don't want no gosh-danged, gentrified, city-slicked-up son of a gun telling me that I have to show some fawning, tail-waggin', liver-stupefied moon-pie of a dog in order to win a dog show. My dogs is dog fighters and bear hunters, and we don't want no namby-pambies."

"Wh-wh-what about me?" Harold stammered. "The only thing my dogs should care about is herding, and it don't matter to them what they herd. My old Bess would herd a leaf blowing across the yard. 'Course, some doggy psychologist did say she was obsessive-compulsive. Heck, it ain't natural for her to stand there wagging her tail trying to look happy. She's worried about some sheep you and me cain't even see. It makes her a great herder, and I wouldn't want her any other way."

Belle Apox, who can grow a beard with the



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best of them, had her concerns about her renowned specimens of that old breed, the Monongahela Brush and Swamp Terrier. "You seen what they call sparring in my breed? They want them dogs and bitches to coo and preen and court like preppies at the prom. It's all arched necks and waggin' tails, or it's 'oh, my, that's all wrong.' My bitch don't want a date. Some bitch gets cute with her, and it speaks to the farm dog in her. She pulls up her lip to show those ivory knives and points her tail backwards to help her hold her balance when the fertilizer hits the ventilator."

My friend Ms. D. asked, "So what you're saying is that there's only one type of personality that is wanted in a show dog?"

"That's about the size of it, sis," Belle said. "No matter what they got written in them fancy standards about how each breed is supposed to be ... well, they only give out them ribbons to the happy, tail-waggin' liver-baiters in the show ring."

"I guess you have a choice, then." Ms. D said.

Belle eyed her suspiciously. "Which is what?"

"You can breed dogs as they were meant to be, or you can breed show dogs."

—Ellis West,

e.f.west@atl.net

Irish Terrier Club of America

DAVID WOO AKC