

Dogs in Korea

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Hardly had I recovered from jet lag after returning from an assignment in China, when I started the grueling travel mode again. As usual with my Asian assignments, it was more than 32 hours from bed to bed, with no sleep possible (for me) on any airplane. But this time the venue was Korea and the assignment was for two weekends of shows plus a seminar for Korean judges at the office classroom of the Korean Kennel Club. Other than changing planes at the Incheon airport, this was my first trip to Korea. My assignments were four shows in two weekends: the end-of-May shows were a Working Group show and a GSD specialty in a Seoul suburb and the June 5 shows (Toys, Terriers and BIS at the all-breed show as well as another GSD specialty) were held in Jeon-ju, about 4 hours south of Seoul.

Thankfully, the only seats I could get at the last-minute (typical of Asian show schedules) enabled me to get into Korea a couple of days ahead of the first show, so I was half-over my jetlag by the time I had to go to work. Between show weekends, I was treated to tours of museums, war memorials, palaces and other historical attractions. I had two trips to the DMZ (de-militarized zone), with different parts of that no-man's land view provided by each of the tour-bus companies. The DMZ and the military demarcation line that runs roughly down its center is a true "front-line" in what is left of the cold war and there is definitely a chilling feeling to be standing on a bomb of sorts with the detonator ready to go off at any second. You can't get any closer to war than the active conflicts now going on against Islamic and gangster terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan. The few English-speaking tourists on the buses described it as "very scary". Most of the buses were filled with Japanese tourists, possibly on a pilgrimage of guilt-cleansing for the atrocities they imposed on Koreans for half a century before their surrender to the Allies in 1945.

The Korean people are extremely polite, bowing frequently and carefully choosing their words in conversation. The food is notable because most is highly spiced with hot chili pepper, much garlic and other condiments. It seemed they eat kim-chee at every meal; this is the vinegared and fermented vegetable pickle made with lots of red chili and mostly consisting of cabbage-family veggies but including leafy dark-green veggies, radishes and other unfamiliar fare. I broke down and went to a pizza place one evening. A couple of times we had unique traditional meals with marinated eggplant strips, tofu wrapped in kim-chee, rice wine and other unusual dishes. A couple of days after the first show, some GSD people took me to a training school, where I gave some critiques on anatomy and tips on handling and grooming.

The first show weekend was easy, with two events for me to judge. The Working Group show was something like the group shows at Terrier-only events in the USA but for the (usually) much larger breeds. In a country with 48 million people, 24% of whom (11.5 million) live in the capital (Seoul), land is at a premium so the most popular breeds are the apartment-sized ones. However, at the first weekend's venue, there was a small plot of grass and parking areas, about half the acreage of a football field, owned or leased by KKC and plenty of room for the big dogs. There were a surprising number of Great Pyrenees, a goodly number of Malamutes and a good variety of other breeds.

The classes in Korea are divided by age, so you have both male and female classes for 4-7 month Baby and 7-12 month Puppies, then 12-18 month and 18-24 month youngsters. Adults are those over 24 months. When the Breed winners for the Groups come back for BIG, their respective age categories are combined, so you have one Puppy Group that can have a male and a female from each of the two ages - up to four of each breed in Puppy Group and the same for Junior Group. The Adult category can have up to two of each (one male, one female), so the Group judging in each of the three age categories is a bigger "ring-full" of dogs than Americans are used to. All three age categories had considerable in-depth quality.

In Puppy Group, I chose a wonderful, typey Great Pyrenees bred in Korea; it also won the following week under another judge and a different part of Korea. In the Junior Group, the award went to a handsome and very correct Tibetan Mastiff imported from China. In Adults, I picked a slightly German-style Boxer (imp Japan) who was not flashy the way some of the heavily white-marked, elegant American style dogs are but who had the appearance of rugged toughness and good strong type of the true working dog. His name is Dream Panshe of M.T. Shuttle but I don't know his pedigree. I later learned that he had won BIS on May 1 at a large show.

The German Shepherd Specialty was held on the same ample grounds in a ring of very adequate size. A couple of outstanding puppies and several excellent youngsters were proof that the Korean fanciers are using the best of German lines and doing something right. By the way, here as almost everywhere else in the world, one does not see the "AKC-type", American-lines GSD that looks so different from his international "half-brothers". There were two or three really outstanding world-class dogs in the adult competition and I put up for the day's Sieger a richly pigmented male of correct medium size, good outline and excellent movement. The Siegerin was a large bitch that reminded me of Karly Arminius, with pigment that could have benefited by a more definite saddle and deeper tan-brown color elsewhere. She had the best forechest and front reach of all the dogs there and very good drive and topline.

Very helpful to judges in Korea is the European practice of having a local judge do the preliminary checking of teeth, testicles and tattoos. If there is anything that the main judge should know about, it is brought to his (my) attention; otherwise, the time is better spent judging the other features and adherence to the Standard. Likewise, I did not have to bother with any paperwork the way judges' time is "wasted" in the West. The well-trained steward (usually another local judge) makes sure the dogs are in the right class, lined up properly and their placings marked in the book. All the officiating judge has to do later is scribble his initials on each page of records. What a tremendous savings in time for both judge and exhibitor! Something we could benefit from in North America.

The second weekend, hours south of the capital, was held on the spacious grounds of a Women's College. There were four large rings. I had one for the Terrier and the Toy breeds and groups, and later for the GSD specialty. Fellow judge Paul Hewitt from Sydney had another ring across a wide aisle, where he did Sporting, Hound and Non-Sporting breeds and groups. Most numerous for him were American Cocker and Golden Retrievers. A third ring was under the jurisdiction of KKC Chief Judge Mr Koh, for the Herding (other



Fred Lanting and Paul Hewitt

than GSDs) and Working breeds. In the fourth ring, Hidecki-san from Japan did the Shibas, Akitas and the Korean Native breeds. These three are the Jindo, Pungsan and Sabsari. The Jindo looks a little like a large Shiba-type dog, or similar to the less-known Kai, Shikoku and other medium-size Japan breeds. It was almost eradicated during successive wars and other periods of hardship in Korea, but survived largely on some islands off the southern coast. The Pungsan is larger, white and its origin spread over the northern part of the peninsula, but still of the Akita-Shiba-Jindo "northern Spitz" appearance. The Sabsari originated in Northern Korea and reminds me of a cross between a Briard, Old English and an Italian Maremma - a rather large and very hairy dog bred for watchdog and guard use. It is said to be

very good for guarding one's house against ghosts.

In my ring, there were several excellent Miniature Schnauzers and one very good Wire Fox Terrier that came to the fore among mostly average-quality terriers, but when I got to Toys, I was almost overrun by hordes of super Shih Tzu and Maltese. Toy Poodles, one of the many breeds I used to handle, also had a large and very high-quality contingent for the size of the show. I was told that there was a bit of an upset when I gave 3rd place in one age class to a Poodle that had been doing a lot of winning but I know what I was looking at and had no problem with my choices. One Shih Tzu was on the upper end of the preferred size range and should have had an undershot mouth to be perfect, but his coat, proportions, movement and all else made him worthy of winning the Junior Group.

I believe his name is Final Kennel's Zeus Junior. The outstanding Maltese Adult BOB/BIG winner, Champion of Tinker Bell White, came back under me at the end of the show for his well-deserved BIS.

German Shepherds are not shown with the other herding breeds in Group competition and that does not seem to be a problem. This, after all, is not a breed that is typically standing around waiting for one spin around the ring before standing and waiting again. It may be done in many countries but usually it is the non-international style that you would see in the ring with other breeds. In GSDs, I chose the same big female for the (adult) Siegerin position that I had given that honor the previous week. While he did not have competition in his adult age group, the Sieger was worthy of the respect and made his owner Mr Roh (curiously pronounced "No") very happy. Roh is a famous TV and movie actor, and a day after the show we got together for lunch and a baseball game. The thousands of people who smiled, bowed, waved, blushed and gushed over him everywhere we went were testimony to his great popularity. This big-boned, well-pigmented masculine dog has great character and stability, and may contribute much to the gene pool in Korea.

Overall, the experience of judging in Korea was very enjoyable and I hope I will be invited back to do some more groups and GSD specialties. As in other far-off countries, it's well worth the arduous trip! For those interested in the political structures of the two Koreas and the cultural aspects of the country, a copy of my two-part column for a newspaper in Alabama is available on request and possibly soon in some websites.



Korean breeds - Pungsan (top) and Sabsari (bottom)



Fred Lanting with Mr Roh and Sacco



Korean Breed - Jindos

Fred Lanting is both an SV specialist judge, and an all-breed judge for several overseas dog clubs/registries and UKC. The SV is the Germany-based "parent club" for German Shepherds, and the UKC (United Kennel Club) is a USA-based all-breed registry that holds numerous dog events in North America. UKC is the second-largest dog registry in the U.S., and has a history of well over 100 years of dog shows, hunting trials, and performance events. Fred has judged in about 30 countries and came to Korea to judge and to give a seminar to Korean judges at KKC headquarters. Between weekends he also gave some instruction in handling and grooming to a training facility in Anseong, about 90 minutes SE of Seoul. His articles are found on several websites, such as www.SiriusDog.com, and in many magazines.

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