



M. Lewis, (left) Alma King, Lillian Sommerville and Betty Davenport belong to Markham Kennel Club.

Local breeders launched show

By ALEX NEWMAN

Sometimes, successes come from the most unusual beginnings. The Markham Kennel Club, which hosts a dog show every year under the auspices of the Canadian Kennel Club, began in 1967 with a group of registered Markham breeders.

At that time, the township was enforcing dog licencing and for a breeder with 25 dogs, that would have been costly. The flat yearly rate for a kennel licence was just \$25.

The group of breeders banded together to "fight the town," says show chairman Betty Davenport, and formed a kennel club to give the group more strength.

The first dog show was "just a fun match," explains Mrs. Davenport, to raise funds to pay the lawyer that attended "council meeting after council meeting" with the group.

Since that time, the dog show has grown into an annual event of huge proportions. The last weekend of August saw 1,562 canine hopefuls entered in the show — dogs that had arrived from across Canada and the States and met with judges from both east and west coast.

Alma King, a dog breeder since 1930, said that trends occur even in the dog world and that breeders must keep abreast of the market, just as in any other business.

When she started out breeding, cocker spaniels and pekinese were popular. Over the years, she has bred schipperkes (Belgian barge dog), fox terriers, greyhounds, and managed an 11 acre kennel on Major MacKenzie Rd by herself.

Being aware of consumer trends doesn't mean that breeders are not reputable. Once the knowledge of dog care, grooming, kennel maintenance, and breeding expertise has been acquired, changing breeds requires research about the dog.

Back yard breeders, on the other hand, are those who get into the dog breeding business and operate "puppy mills" for profit only.

"We have none of them in the Markham Kennel Club," claims King. "All our members have pride in their breeds. But through the years, we have seen some members come and go."

Dog showing and breeding can be an expensive hobby or business, and some new breeders "grow disenchanted if they don't win at shows immediately. But dog breeding requires patience."

The Markham club "hasn't a large membership," according to King, but is a very prosperous one.

When the club first started, each member paid a fee of \$200. Two years ago, the club was able to return that fee to members who could be located.

Because the club is a non-profit organization, all profits are donated to charity. Last year, \$5,000 went to the Stouffville hospital fund. In past years, the kennel club has paid for seeing eye dogs, sponsored the Markham swimming pool, Parks and Recreation projects, and paid for wheelchairs for the hospital.

Part of the show's huge success, said Miss King, is due to the location. "Richmond Green is a beautiful facility and compliments just poured in from entrant's owners."

If the show was any indication, German Shepherds, rough Collies (Lassie dogs) Old English Sheepdogs, Shetland Sheepdogs, and Golden Retrievers are the more popular breeds these days.

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Pge. 20 Item — "L" Wilkinson of England Winegums — Incorrectly described should read 300 G bag.

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