

2011 Briard Forum

By: Ellen J. Myers

1. When and What first attracted you to Briards?

In 1987, I decided to buy a pure bred dog, and in the course of my research, I got word of a woman who was selling a litter of Briards. I'd never heard of the breed but when I looked it up in the American Kennel Club breed book, I liked what I saw. Although I was based in Manhattan and raising a large dog in an urban environment seemed kind of cruel, I decided to pay a call on the breeder, just to satisfy my own curiosity. We spent a long afternoon together; by the end of the day, I'd made up my mind to buy one of her dogs. Five months later, my new puppy and I quit Manhattan and moved to the countryside.

2. What is your Kennel - Name and how did you come up with it ?

Briards of the Coastline, named after the coastal region -- the East End of Long Island -- where I live.

3. Who has been your biggest influence in the Breed and why ?

I can't point to any one person. The breed standard, however, has always been my guiding light. It's a blue print that I feel must be closely adhered to and respected -- down to the last detail. Elusive as it may seem, producing a dog that embodies every aspect of the standard is my goal. To my mind, the breeder is a caretaker of this very ancient breed, a temporary guardian in a lineage of thousands of breeders, many of whom are anonymous and/or long forgotten. Our job is to build upon and pay tribute to their work by creating exceptional dogs that are true to type.

On a personal level, I felt it was essential to deepen my understanding of the breed, which I did by studying the work of great breeders. I also spent time in France and other countries where the dog has existed for centuries (unlike in the U.S.). Lacking a mentor, I made my own decisions right

from the start. For my first litter, to avoid getting caught up in the favors system that prevails among well-known breeders, I used an untested male. Not even the woman who sold me my first dog knew this stud. (She couldn't believe I traveling to the other side of the country for a breeding!) But because I'd done my homework and taken the lay of the land, I was confident.



4. What would you like to see Judges pay more attention to when Judging Briards ?

In an ideal world, a judge would know the breed standard and the history of the Briard inside out. Such authorities would pay no attention to breeders who claim that this or that aspect of the standard is unimportant. They wouldn't hand out titles to dogs that meet some of the requirements but fall wide of the mark in others. They wouldn't pronounce these dogs 'Great'. (Good dogs are not great or excellent dogs; conversely, excellent dogs don't always look like great dogs. Cut from a different cloth, a great dog stands apart from the crowd.) They would be well-read and familiar with such seminal works as Sedir's 'The Shepherd Dog of Brie' or Noel Wanlin's 'The Briard'. And they would know how to evaluate the best

representative of each type of Briard in the ring. To sum up, I want a judge who cares about the breed enough to have done his homework and more. I want a judge with integrity. Integrity matters.

5. Other than one of yours, of course who were the 3 Best Briards you ever saw and why?

In the past twenty years, I've seen a lot of dogs but here are my nominees for world class Briards:

1. Rebelle des Monts d'en Crouzille
2. Bamboo de la Chaume du Bois Dieu
3. Orton z Pierwszej Ligi.

Each is or was quite different from the other but they are all beautiful exemplars of our breed as defined in the standard.

6. What is the difference and a GREAT Briard?

To my mind, there's a vast divide between 'good' and 'great' (the latter materializes once in a blue moon). Between those two poles you find 'very good', 'excellent', and 'outstanding'. A good Briard is pleasant to look at in every way while a superior one takes your breath away. It's an animating spirit that's hard to capture in a photo. Such a dog exudes greatness with every step and breath and turn of the head.

7. Why are you so passionate about your Breed?

Why do people fall in love? It's a delightful mystery. But more than anything else, I'm touched by the Briard's power, devotion, intelligence, humor, and sensitivity. The breed also exhibits a fantastic interest in interacting with its humans. The breed is also a joy to watch working as it loves to work and they know when they have done something well.