

## HELPING AT TRIAL

by Lee Netzler

I arrived at the club trial about noon, eager to help. My first assignment sent me rushing to the grocers for two critically-needed quarts of salad dressing. My prompt return was hailed by the kitchen staff as miraculous, and my good reputation was firmly established. Since the kitchen was now well stocked with salad dressing, I left.

I wandered into the trial arena, and at an empty novice ring a club member asked me to be the “gate guard,” claiming that she was needed elsewhere. I accepted and she quickly disappeared. For fifteen minutes I defended the gate alone. Finally a stranger arrived and requested entry into the ring. He wore an official’s ribbon, so I admitted him. He shuffled papers for a few minutes and then suggested that perhaps we ought to begin. It became clear to me then that he was a judge and that he wanted me to be his ring steward. This was definitely a promotion from salad dressing shopping. Inwardly beaming over my rapid rise to success, I confidently agreed that indeed we should begin.

Dogs #1 and #2 couldn’t be found, so we began judging with dog #3. I posted the first group, consisting of dogs #3 through dog #17. After dog #6, the judge suggested that maybe we should officially announce that our ring was open. It seemed a good idea, so the message was dispatched to the P.A. Announcer where it was read during the judging of dog #9. While I was a “post” for the figure eight exercise, I noticed dogs #1 and #2 had arrived at ringside. I was pleased that they had come, even though they were tardy. I squeezed them in by re-assigning dogs #16 and #17 to the second group and placing the two newcomers after dog #15 in the group we were presently judging. The judge hardly noticed the changes, but he was very busy. No doubt he would be pleased with my initiative when he figured out later what I had done.

I frequently amended the ringside chalk board as I juggled entries to accommodate the late exhibitors. Periodically I notified the judge of changes. Things were going very smoothly and I was pleased with the large crowd we were drawing. Even exhibitors and spectators from other rings joined our novice class enthusiasts to watch anxiously as our chalk board changed to reveal the latest up-to-the-minute revisions. It was great to see how the extra effort on our part inspired the crowd’s enthusiasm.

I didn’t hear the grumbling at first, but we must have irritated someone. I noticed the Show Chairman and the Trial Secretary in conference with a fellow outside our ring. Only snatches of their conversation reached me and all I could make out were a few phrases like, “judges complete discretion,” “catalog order,” “and write to the AKC.” The complainer was apparently some sort of poor sport, and since there are a few malcontents at every show, I didn’t let it bother me.

Shortly afterward we concluded the class. I was not asked to serve for the run-offs, but that’s probably because those stewards are selected on some seniority basis. I was just happy to have contributed so much already.

I can hardly wait to help again at our club’s trial next year. With my experience at salad dressing shopping and stewarding in the novice ring, I am probably already on their list.