

THREE WEEKS WITH AMERICAN SAINTS

BY: ALBERT DE LA RIE / EUROPEAN JUDGE & PRESIDENT - WORLD UNION OF S. B. C.

via Bernard Bark "HISTORY" submitted by Leila Rei

Our trip was to last three weeks, during which time I would judge at the largest Saint Bernard Specialty (or any specialty) ever held in the world, judge or pass on dogs in four other states, travel thousands of miles, see over one thousand Saint Bernards and an equal number of geninely fine human beings.

October 11, 1969, the day arrived. Never have I seen so many Saint Bernards in one day in forty years of judging. Further, never have I seen so many fine Saint Bernards in one day. I heard that Mr. Schrama said I would put up only Swiss Saint Bernards. He is right. During the N. I. S. B. C. show I saw many beautiful Swiss TYPE Saint Bernards and I had the pleasure to place them winners. It is too bad that there were some Swiss-bred dogs present who were not as good Swiss TYPE as some the the American Bred Saint Bernards. It would be a very strange person who could attend such a show and not come away excited about American progress with our breed. My assignment made it possible for me to judge 163 Saint Bernards.

In terms of quality of type, this was the best class (Open Dogs-smooth). Eight dogs in the class received "excellent" for beauty. I did not see a single dog that showed the "English" characteristics; Houndlooking, black heads and horribly freckled. All of the winners would be assured of becoming winners in Europe. The top two or three of those dogs could also be the two or three top winning dogs in Europe. Imagine seeing twenty-seven (27) excellent dogs in one show! In Europe, there are seldom that many at one show much less excellents. For those who truly know and appreciate the correct type and beauty of a Saint Bernard. This show was sheer heaven. On some of the most beautiful, movement in the rear could have been better, but it is easier to breed for a better rear-end than to regain type once it is lost to the breed. Think of this: A man who walks well but has a hideous face is thought of as "Hideous". A man with a very handsome face and body but might have a slight imperfection in his ankle is still thought of as handsome and admired.

There is no such thing as the perfect dog. In America an excellent bite is an exception. Most dogs have flaws of the bites. Another great flaw in most American dogs are the freckles. Freckles are not mentioned in the Standard and, therefore, they should not exist. A white muzzle band is called for by the Standard no matter who translates it. Any dog, no matter how beautiful, with freckles is sub -standard. A judge must weigh all parts of a dog and if a few freckles are present on a beautiful dog, that is a small thing, but if a judge must put up a dog with freckles, that does not mean breeders must keep justifying them and breeding them into the breed. It is up to the breeders to breed out such flaws.

I would not dare bet on any European Champion defeating the finest American Champions. Of those alive today, Europe would have to line up their best to compare with what the Americans are doing with the breed.

"There is excellent discipline and order during American shows. The presentation of dogs in the ring in America and England is an art all by itself. Americans take great pains with their dogs' condition and grooming before a show. These are not livestock gatherings where the owners sit and drink beer while their dogs are tied somewhere else. Americans make such events real "Shows". Sometimes one sees dogs too fat for a working dog, but seldom does one see a dog that is too thin or presented dirty and untrained.

"The number of visitors to American shows seems very small in comparison to the thousands at European shows. Apparently show officials do not publicize their shows in order to insure a large spectator fee. American shows seem to be geared more to winning championships than in "showing" their dogs to the public."

"In American dogs an excellent bite is an exception. Another great flaw is freckles, freckles are not mentioned in the Standard, and therefore should not exist. Any dog, not matter how beautiful, with freckles is substandard. It is up to the breeders to breed out such flaws.

"...Mrs. Beatrice Knight, the most famous lady in all of the Saint Sport as a breeder. This visit was too important to try to comment on it all within this report; I shall get back to it in detail later. Suffice it to say I was very impressed with the quality and type of her dogs. She is a lady of high ideals who has achieved much more toward accomplishing her ideals than any Saint Bernard breeder anywhere else in the world, Who has breed champions as consistently over 30 years? It is true, she needs more size and more color. She has bred a "strain" which you will rarely find developed and as "recognizable" by any other living breeder. Whereever in America you see a fine smooth, it is almost always a product from Mrs. Knight's fine breeding. She has not failed nor faltered. This is a fantastic achievement by a lady who lives exclusively for her dogs and who does her work practically alone. We had to leave Sancturay Woods much too soon. Where else can one sit and talk about more than 10 generations of breeding, and go the kennel and visit with five generations of breeding stock?"