

NISEI WEEK AKITA SHOW 1971

JUDGE'S INTRODUCTION MEETING

A special informal dinner meeting held in honor of Mr. Zenzo Watanabe, the official judge of the 1971 Nisei Week Akita Show was noteworthy in that prominent people of the dog world were present as special guests. They were Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Savage, Mr. Keith Brown, and Mr. and Mrs. Nicolas Kay - "All licensed American Kennel Club judges with a great deal of experience in judging many breeds of dogs in the United States." The Judge and honored guests were presented with a copy of the Akiho Manual and an Akiho Happi Coat to show our appreciation for their participation in our activities.

Mr. Watanabe, the official judge, is one of the three most experienced judges of Akiho. He was formerly a veterinarian and has been an Akiho judge for more than twenty years. He is currently the Assistant Head Judge of Akiho.

As his subject, Mr. Watanabe spoke on the qualities of the most recent Meiyosho award winner and then compared them with the Meiyosho winners of ten years ago. To fully realize and appreciate the significance of a Meiyosho award winner, it is necessary to explain briefly how the award is achieved. Akiho shows are categorized into Branch, Regional and Headquarters shows. The Meiyosho, the highest award attained by an Akita, is awarded to dogs and bitches at Headquarters sponsored shows only. They are chosen among dogs and bitches having achieved the second highest rating of Tokuyu or Superior (awarded to senior dogs and bitches). These dogs are considered to have extra special qualities. "A Meiyosho winner is not merely the top winning dog of a particular Headquarters Show. As the Akita is judged according to an absolute standard, a given show may produce a Meiyosho winner, may not produce a winner, or it may produce more than one winner. Therefore, these winners may be considered the Grand Champions of Akiho Shows."

The following is Mr. Watanabe's presentation, "...the purpose for which I have come to the United States is to judge in the Second Annual Akita Dog Show. Second, the secondary purpose of my trip is to come to you and to speak on the qualities of the Akita so that you may more fully appreciate the qualities of the Akita dogs as they are bred and raised in Japan. And it is my alternate purpose to see you breed and improve the Akita breed in the United States. It is my fervent wish, furthermore, to see the Akitainu Hozonkai, Los Angeles Branch to prosper and to enlarge itself."

"I welcome your questions as to the breed, and practices as they are done in Japan. As I begin the subject of describing the five Meiyosho winners, I will pass photographs of these winners around for you to examine as slides were not available."

"The first picture is Kumomaru, Meiyosho winner in 1969, December 8. He is a male Akita, sired by Nanun and, dam, Makome. Kumomaru, is perhaps what you would consider a slightly-built dog. However, his character is very good. He has a regal bearing, and what makes him outstanding is his offsprings. Judging from the number of Tokuyu award winners that Kumomaru has been able to produce, he is indeed an outstanding dog. He has produced to date, at age seven, 55 Tokuyu winners."

"The second picture is of Tamayu, she won Meiyosho in May of 1969, and was sired by Kumomaru and, dam, Amabuke"

"The third picture is of Toshime, winner on December 6, 1970, sired by Kumomaru and, dam, Hakuunme. She is brindle-colored and it is the coloring of her coat that makes her outstanding. She has what we would call an ideal or near perfect markings. The picture that we have passed around shows her quality of color. This is what Akiho considers near perfect in its standard."

The fourth picture is of Matsukaze-go, winner in the same show as that of Toshime. He was sired by Tetsuyuki, and his dam was Tamamo. Matsukaze-go won his Meiyosho award on the strength of the structure of his body. He is a well-balanced, well-built dog. The color of his coat, red in color, is not as good as we would have liked, but as I repeat, the structure of this dog is near perfect."

"And the fifth picture is that of Hakuunme, also a winner in the same show as that of Toshime and Matsukaze-go. She was sired by Kumomaru, and dam, Yutamame. Hakuunme is as the name indicates, a bitch. She is a well-

balanced, and well-built bitch. However, what won her the award was the purity in her color. It was the first occasion in which a white bitch or dog, for the matter, has been able to win the Meiyosho award."

Note: Mr. Watanabe was asked to compare the most recent Meiyosho winners with those of ten years ago. Because photographs and slides were not available, he will try to describe their differences.

"As you probably know, the Meiyosho winners of today are built more slightly than the Meiyosho winners of ten years ago. They are smaller in stature. However, they are much tighter in built, and have a more balanced structure. This is why we think that the Akitas of today, though smaller, are better than those of ten years ago."

You will immediately raise a question as to why the change or why we progressed in this direction. In order to explain this, we must begin from the inception of the organization, in 1927, and break this down into six different periods. The first 20 years after the inception of the organization the dogs were huge and emphasis was placed on producing or breeding large dogs. Therefore, the dogs in the first 20 year period did increase in size."

"During this period people who bred horses used to ask, 'What would be the best gait for the horses?' And they said, 'If you could breed a horse that would gait like an Akita dog, then you had a good horse.'"

"That was in the beginning. At the end of the 20 year period, the people who bred Akitas raised the question, 'What type of Akita dogs should you breed or how should they gait?' And people said, 'Well, you should breed a dog that would gait like a horse.'"

"Therefore, the position became reversed. While the size increased, the dog became increasingly sloppy. As a reaction to this development, as the pendulum swung in the other direction, following that 20 year period, there were many small dogs that were bred. The emphasis again was placed on the structure of the dog and, of course, the way the dog moved. As you are aware, there were many small Akitas that were produced. These were the type of dogs that were desired. And so when one aspect of the dogs were de-emphasized and another emphasized, this was the result."

"This trend continued for four or five years. And at the present time we feel that the trend has reversed itself again and the dogs have increased in size and structure. Of course, we are guarding against developing the old type of Akita where we bred purely for the size alone, not considering the other qualities of the dog. Arriving here yesterday, I am more aware of the necessity to produce large, good quality Akitas. It is easy to produce a small Akita with the qualities. However, to produce an Akita in the largest size and to maintain the quality that the smaller dogs have is not easy."

(This report is an excerpt and summary of Mr. Watanabe's presentation as translated by Walter Imai. Presented August 13, 1971)

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JUDGE'S EVALUATION

Mr. Watanabe was quite impressed with the interest shown in the Akita breed by the number of Akitas entered in the Show and the number of people attending the evaluation meeting. It was pointed out, at this time, that the most noteworthy dog produced by Mr. Watanabe was Ichinoseki Goma, the Father of Akitas. Officially, Ichinoseki Goma is known to be owned by Mr. Ichinoseki, however, in reality, he was loaned to Mr. Ichinoseki by Mr. Watanabe and eventually returned to him. The evening began with a general critique of the Show, which is presented here, and concluded with slides of the Spring Headquarters Show held in Odate City on May 3, 1971.

Mr. Watanabe noted many imports among the locally bred Akitas. However, the general tendency in the United States was towards a larger Akita. Upon learning that many people did not show their Akitas because of their large size which is not desired by Japanese Judges, Mr. Watanabe became aware of an immediate danger. He

cautioned us against the possibility of losing the Akita Standard by having two distinct types of Akitas, the large sized local type, and the more slender or trimmer import type Akita. Mr. Watanabe felt that the large size should be continued but should be accompanied by other desirable traits - possibly by breeding larger dogs using imports.

The over-all structure did not differ greatly with those in Japan, though our dogs were found to be looser and the joints lacking in firmness. The ears were not shaped properly, while the eyes were too light, and the facial features, undesirable. The quality and condition of the coat was good while the color of the brindles and whites were found to be fair. The red colored dogs were lacking in brilliance and consistency in that there was a wide range of shades. Tani-rei of Oshio Kennels is considered to have the desired red tone.

There were many dogs showing good character resulting from well developed necks, heads that were held high, good hock angulation, and a firm grip. Generally speaking, however, our dogs did not have the character or spirit required in the Show ring. An Akita of good character should not be aggressive towards other dogs in the ring. Yet, if challenged, he should have the courage to meet or face his opponent. In the ring, he should stand erect with his tail tightly wound giving an impression of alertness and pride. Mika and Daisuki, winners of the novice class, and Daisan Kusakokuryu-Go (10-18 months dog) showed these qualities. To sit or to look from left to right is to display disinterest and a lack of pride. Insufficient exercise and being unaccustomed to the show ring are the major causes for this fault. With experience, more character would be developed and shown in the ring.

The critique was concluded with a discussion of what makes a good Akita. Eight factors based upon the Akitainu Standards are the necessary requirements that must be taken into consideration. The first and foremost factor is proper height. Then, size or weight in relation to height, followed by structure and balance. Next to be taken into consideration is the quality of structure (looseness or tightness of skin) followed by color, quality of coat, spirit or character, and finally, health. If these factors, in the proper proportion and qualities, are present in one dog, then he will be considered an Akita of good quality.

(Presented by Mr. Watanabe on August 20, 1971, as translated by Walter Imai.)

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<http://www.northlandakitas.com>
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