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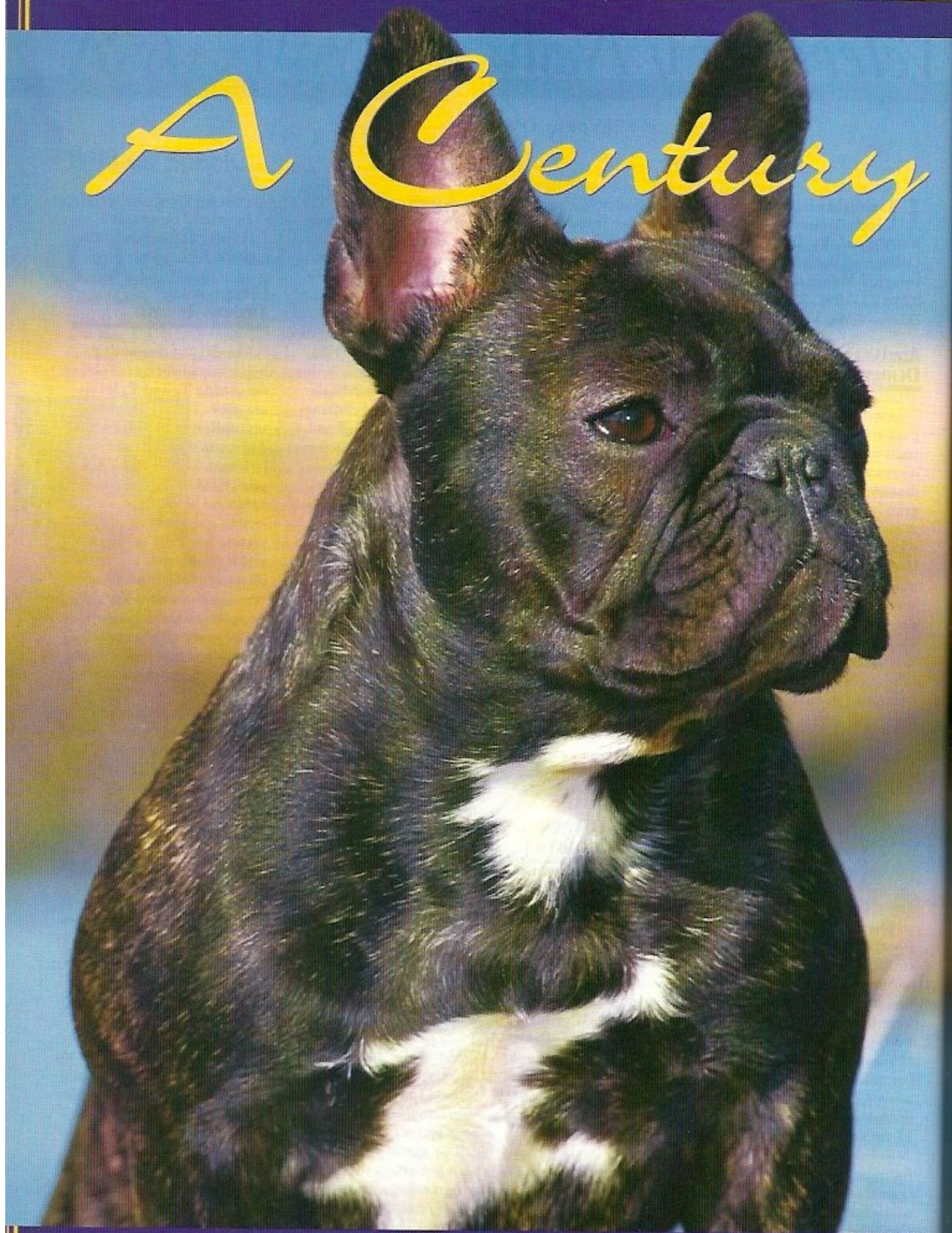
FRENCH BULLDOG
Centennial



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A Century



of Frenchies

With the breed in top form, French Bulldog fanciers enjoy a centennial celebration — and recall a groundbreaking show from long ago.



The French Bulldog Club of America was originally an "invitation only" club, and all its national events were held on the East Coast. As breeders became established throughout the country, however, it became obvious that the annual show had become, in essence, a regional event. About 10 years ago, the club finally made a break from its longstanding tradition and held a national show in Chicago. This event dramatically helped renew interest in the French Bulldog, which at the time had been languishing for over 60 years with little more than 100 registrations annually. If the club's centennial show held in Overland Park, Kan., this past Sept. 23 to 26, is any indication, the breed is again beginning to flourish.

People seem to have "rediscovered" the charming French Bulldog as both a loving companion and a show dog. Entries, registrations and, most importantly, overall quality have made noticeable improvements to the extent that many of the animals in the winner's circle 10 years ago would have a difficult time garnering points in today's competitions. Although the standard was revised in 1991, these changes were minor and the differences in the dogs in the ring are a result of the hard work of conscientious breeders who have produced Frenchies with better substance, soundness and uniformity in type.

Today's breeders have demonstrated that the French Bulldog is a distinct and distinguished entity, not some vague animal halfway between a Boston Terrier and a Bulldog in make and shape. In addition, parent-club educational activities and an emphasis on judge's seminars have contributed to a better understanding of the breed. While the breed has also been helped tremendously by several imports that have left their mark as outstanding sires and dams, these dogs are no more prominent in today's pedigrees than an

equal number of American-bred Frenchies. This is ideal for a breed with a relatively small gene pool. The hope is that the breed will continue to show progress over the next century.

Size and Type

Among the four AKC-recognized breeds that have disqualifications for weight, the French Bulldog is unique in that, by original definition, any dog over 28 pounds was not simply an oversized specimen, but an altogether different breed — the Bulldog. When the craze for "Toy Bulldogs" took hold in the 1890s, the



LEFT AND TOP RIGHT: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE FURRY KIND; RIGHT: MARY BLOOM

By Anne M. Hier

The Show of the Century

Today, many fanciers assume their national-specialty festivities will be held within the confines of a luxury hotel that offers every amenity. At your next such show, you might toast the French Bulldog Club of America, which initiated the idea. In 1898, the club sponsored the first show to be held at a hotel — and not just any hotel, but New York City's exclusive Waldorf-Astoria, then located where the Empire State Building stands now.

While anyone with a French Bulldog could enter, all other admittance was by invitation only. All of society was there, enjoying both the show and the ballroom dancing that followed. This was truly one of the events of the social season. No other dog show had ever received so much attention from the press — not even the Westminster Kennel Club's show, which was the target of this particular upstaging and snub.

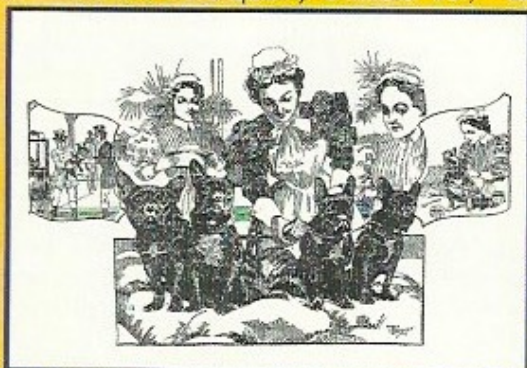
Ah, yes! Controversy in the dog show world. French Bulldogs were first exhibited in America at Westminster in 1896 and, though few in number, were a favorite with the public and

press. From 1896 to 1902, as many as 300 French Bulldogs were imported to this country annually. The so-called "bat" ear caught on here, while fanciers in England and France preferred the "rose" ear. Thus, any Bulldog with upright ears was shipped to America at what soon became astronomical prices — as much as £1,000, or about \$5,000.

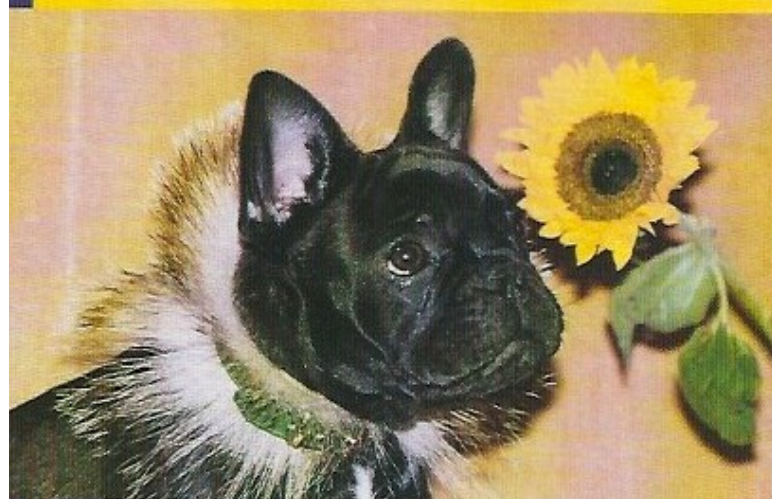
In 1897, well-known English judge George Raper judged Frenchies at Westminster. Highly respected as a Fox Terrier man and an early Bulldog breeder, no one could dispute that his winners were quality animals. But,

much to the consternation of resident Frenchie fanciers, he consistently selected specimens with rose ears, completely ignoring the American preference. Shortly thereafter, a committee was created to form the French Bulldog Club of America and compose the breed's first written standard. When it was completed in April of that year, it gave specific preference to the bat ear as the only correct form.

The FBDCA's first specialty show was to be held in conjunction with Westminster in 1898. E.D. Faulkner, an early promoter of the breed, was selected to judge. The newly formed club donated dozens of silver trophies, determined to make their first official exhibition memorable. When the premium-list proofs were sent, however, the parent club was shocked to find that Westminster, bowing to pressure from Europeans, had taken it upon themselves to provide two divisions for the breed. One was to be judged according to the American standard, the other according to a standard supposedly adopted by the



Kennel maids tend to the dogs at the Waldorf-Astoria.



Above: This puppy models a badger-bair collar, popular among Parisian Frenchies of 100 years ago. Right: Salvolatile. Far right: Ch. Nellcote Gamin.

Bulldog Club (England) established a minimum weight limit of 28 pounds in an attempt to prevent interbreeding with smaller animals. In particular, they felt that the unique head characteristics of the French imports — large, upright ears, rounded skulls and less underjaw — were unacceptable qualities in a Bulldog.

Although the French Bulldog was developed from the same progenitors as the Bulldog, the breed is not a smaller version of today's Bulldog, but the product of a smaller weight division of Bulldogs established in 1859. Though small or dwarf offspring of Bulldogs could be registered as French Bulldogs (if they had an upright ear carriage) from 1898 onward, the ideal weight for Frenchies was always 22 pounds. Until 1991, when the breed's standard was revised, the under-22-pound and 22-to-28-pound classes were a traditional weight division. This change does not mean that smaller animals are no longer desirable, however, as the standard specifically states that Frenchies are to be of "medium or small structure."

The debate over size and type — and specifically, which type — came to a head at the French Bulldog Club of America's national specialty in 1910, when well-known judge James Mortimer selected Ch. Nellcote Gamin as Best of Breed. Gamin, weighing in at 20 pounds, was the embodiment of the so-called "French type" and, fortunately for



DR. JAMES D. GREE, BELOW: "THE FRENCH BULLDOG" BY STEVE EITZING



THE DOG BOOK BY JAMES WATSON, BELOW: "THE FRENCH BULLDOG" BY STEVE BLINCE

Dimboolaa, left, shown with Diabutus, won the first Frenchie national.

Société Centrale Pour L'Amélioration des Races de Chiens en France.

No such standard existed and the bench shows of the Société Centrale had never offered classes for French Bulldogs. Furthermore, many of the prizes offered by the FBDCA had been transferred to the classes for the rose-eared specimens. When Westminster announced they wouldn't change their classifications, the parent club withdrew all trophies and their judge declined the

assignment. Although a protest was made to Westminster's bench show committee several days before the premium list went to press, the original lists were nevertheless printed and distributed as though nothing had transpired between the two clubs.

Angered at not being taken seriously, the FBDCA called a meeting on Jan. 24, 1898, and decided to host an independent specialty on Feb. 12 in the Sun Parlors of the Waldorf-Astoria. In three weeks, premium lists were printed and mailed, and sumptuous arrangements were made for benching dogs and entertaining guests. The novel idea of holding a dog show in a hotel became the talk of the town and all of society clamored to receive an exclusive engraved invitation. Three New York City dailies sent reporters and sketch artists.

Some said no single event since the Civil War had garnered as many pages of lavishly illustrated reporting. The gowns and frocks of the prominent guests and the beauty and splendor of the dog show were discussed in minute detail. There were also raised eyebrows at the rather risqué act of women

exhibiting their own dogs. But significantly, for the first time ever in mass newspapers, the breed standard was elaborated upon, allowing the public to feel they knew the key features of a prize French Bulldog. Specifically, the unique ear formation was noted as essential to the breed's charm.

Faulkner judged the 26 dogs and 20 bitches entered for competition, awarding the special for Best French Bulldog to Amy Gilleg's brindle dog, Dimboolaa. The overall quality of the dogs was very mixed, with much variation in type, especially in regard to size, head properties and ears. Nevertheless, the show attracted so much favorable attention that within five years American fanciers possessed the best French Bulldogs the world could offer. Most significantly, this show clearly established the absolute right of a parent club to determine "true type" and insist that all judges adhere to the official written standard of perfection.

Though reports tell us what transpired, we can now only imagine the glamour. Indeed, all the accounts seem to agree that the FBDCA's inaugural specialty was truly the show of the last century.

Frenchies in America, was a prepotent and prolific stud dog. At the other end of the spectrum, however, was Winners-Bitch and Best-of-Opposite-Sex Salvolatile, who truly exhibited "Bulldog type." Salvolatile was a big bitch, weighing over 30 pounds and having tremendous bone and substance. Her skull, layback and underjaw were flatter, and were more characteristic of a Bulldog.

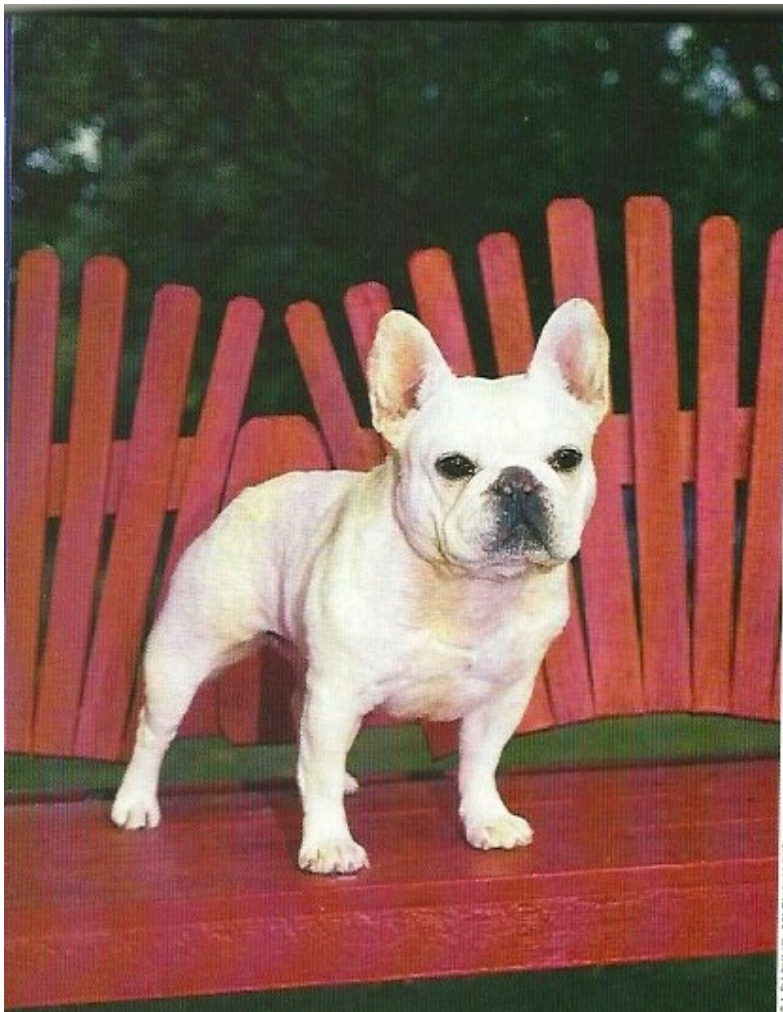
Both Gamin and Salvolatile were impressive animals, and it was clear that whichever dog won the breed would establish correct type for years to come. Many ringside spectators felt that since the original intent of the Toy Bulldog Club in England was to breed a true Bulldog in miniature, Salvolatile clearly had the edge. American fanciers, however, had already long embraced the French type, and Mortimer's final selection reflected his knowledge of this fact. The reporter for *American Field* was shocked at Mortimer's

decision, noting that Gamin was "a grand little dog, but lacking in true 'Bulldog' character, when compared with the bitch." This was absolutely true. Salvolatile came by her Bulldog-like characteristics via her Bulldog

mother; her sire was a Frenchie. In the establishment of new breeds, interbreeding generally has been allowed and duly recorded. In the United States, for example, French Bulldogs were crossed with Boston Terriers as late as 1906. But, by 1910, there were so many French Bulldogs and Boston Terriers in this country that no further crossbreeding could be justified. A protest was lodged against Salvolatile and she was eventually struck from the stud book.

In resolving the difficult question of size as an element of type — or in some debates, size versus type — breeders, exhibitors and judges today must keep in mind that a quality French Bulldog of 28 pounds is as correct as a quality Frenchie of 20 pounds. Though breeds change over time, bigger is not necessarily better in regard to those dogs which go well beyond the disqualifiable weight of 28 pounds. Yes, these dogs have tremendous bone, substance and large imposing heads, but can a 35-pound animal really lay claim to the name "French Bulldog," historically or otherwise? Even today we hear breeders refer to different dogs as being either of "terrier type" (meaning Boston Terrier) or "Bulldog type." While these monikers can serve as general descriptions, neither is fully correct. Surely, after a century of advances within the breed, all fanciers now realize that the only





TARA DARLING; BELOW: ANNE M. HER

correct type to breed for, exhibit and judge is something unique — "French Bulldog" type.

The Centennial Event

Never was this highly sought-after type more evident than at the club's centennial national specialty at the Radisson Hotel in Overland Park. The hosts for this landmark event were the active and hardworking breeders of greater Kansas City, Kan. With no local club to fall back on for support, the club's Centennial Committee was remarkable in their willingness to take on such a monumental project. The seminars, hospitality, displays, evening dinners and, of course, the dogs, made this a perfect week for anyone who loves the French Bulldog. Co-chairs Brenda B. Buckles and Dr. Janice D. Grebe are to be congratulated for planning and expertly executing every detail.

While the actual show started on Thursday, Sept. 25, festivities began that Tuesday, with the opening of the hospitality suite for early arrivals and the club's board meeting. Visitors from 16 foreign countries were present, including six presidents of French Bulldog clubs from three continents. Many of these familiar faces represent some of the best-known kennels in the world.

The new "Illustrated Breed Standard" was presented to members by the club's board. These booklets are always difficult to produce, as the product must best represent the views of the parent club on the correct interpretation of the breed standard.

The following day began with the Judges and General Education Seminars. At the Judges Breed Study Group, this author gave a computer imaging presentation on the breed standard. Next, a packed house heard an informative discussion on canine communication and behavior led by Wayne Hunthausen, DVM. Following that, Jim Grebe, Buckles and I gave a unique presentation on the breed's and club's colorful, at times controversial, history. Jim Grebe had also prepared an ambitious display of French Bulldog memorabilia that was on view the entire week. There was little time to rest, as the next agenda item was the club's annual general meeting. To end the day, the "French Bullytin" magazine hosted its annual welcome party with talent, costume and Frenchie-collectible contests.

Thursday began with an astounding entry of 14 Frenchies in the regular obedience classes for judge William Oxendale. To the chagrin of a few owners, the crowd loved the nonqualifying but spontaneously inventive routines of those Frenchies that, on this particular day, chose to play the traditional breed role of canine clown. Nevertheless, there were some outstanding performances from the five qualifiers. High in Trial went to Fisher's Champagne Sylvain, UD, owned by Hope F. Sylvain. For the first time ever, the club was also able to award the High Combined in Trial, which went to the same team. The morning also brought the unveiling of the trophy table. To commemorate its centennial, the club authorized the reproduction of a beautiful and meaningful Marguerite Kirmse medallion design.

Next, a tremendous sweepstakes entry of 110 young Frenchies greeted longtime breeder Herschel Cox. Cox, who has consistently bred and exhibited some of the top winners and producers in this breed, was clearly moved by the honor of judging this event. The sweeps class at the Frenchie national is limited to those puppies that are not champions of record, and no professional handlers may compete except with dogs they have bred. Usually judged by another breeder, any win in these classes is highly coveted. The final winner came from the 12-to-18-month bitch class: Wildwood Calendar Girl, owned by Jean Blair-Robertson.

Due to the large entry, the schedule had to be altered; besides the regular dog classes, the 6-to-9-



Judge Anne Rogers Clark examines one of the 92 bitch-class entrants at the centennial show.

month and 9-to-12-month puppy bitch classes were also judged on Thursday. Sixty-one class dogs were entered, with entries from 36 states, as well as Canada, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Belgium. At the national, open classes are divided by color into brindle, cream and fawn, and pied and white. The quality of the dogs was good throughout. Judge Anne Rogers Clark proceeded efficiently through her classes, selecting Mariannette Sunset Bullyvard, owned by Nannette Goldberg, as Winners Dog. The Reserve Dog, Mystic Major Force Mariannette, is co-owned by Goldberg. Veteran Dog was Sidney and Sally Monroe's 9-year-old Ch. Cox's Goodtime Make His Marc. This brindle dog also won the stud dog class.

Five competitors entered Junior Showmanship to receive the opinion of Clark, one of the best handlers of her day. She selected Meredith R. Van Scoy as Best Junior. As if that weren't enough activity for one day, the evening ended with a Kansas-style barbecue, and talk, talk and more talk about everyone's favorite subject: French Bulldogs. A raffle was also held, which raised \$3,200 for the club's general fund to help defray show costs.

A Spectacular Showing

Friday morning began with 74 Frenchies taking a lap around the ring in the parade of champions and obedience titleholders. The show committee had installed a huge and humorous replica of the *Arc de Triomphe* for all the dogs to pass under as they entered the ring. Immediately following, Clark stepped into the ring to go over the remaining bitches. Competition in these classes was close; in every class the placements were hard-earned. Coming out victorious as Winners Bitch was a Canadian entry, Platinum Belboulecan Babalou, owned by Dorit Fischler and Dr. Richard Meen. Reserve Bitch was PBN's Miss Independence, owned by Pauline Nedeau. There was an entry of nine in Veteran Bitches, and the final winner was Ch. LeFox Goodtime Steel Magnolia, owned by Sarah Sweatt. Brood Bitch Class was won by Ch. Wildwood Peggy Sue, owned by Jean Blair-Robertson.

After a short break, the premier event began when a spectacular entry of 110 specials entered the ring for Best-of-Breed competition, judged by Clark. Always an efficient ring manager, she sorted and re-sorted her dogs, then

Sweeps judge Herschel Cox evaluates one of the 110 French Bulldog pups entered in competition.

her bitches, making appropriate cuts until those she felt were the best were alone in the ring. In the end, she awarded the Best-of-Breed rosette to Ch. Blazin's Ironside Perry of NRW, owned by Elisabeth McNeil. Best of Winners went to the Winners Dog, with Best of Opposite Sex going to the veteran bitch. In addition, there were five awards of merit.



COLETTE SECHER, BELOW: ANNE HIER

And still the festivities were not over. To conclude the centennial celebration, the club held a formal banquet called "An Evening Remembered — A Night at the Waldorf," recalling the club's first national specialty (see sidebar on page 38). The banquet lived up to its billing, with many guests arriving in late 19th-century costumes. The menu was clever, featuring a Toulouse-Lautrec drawing of a Frenchie on the cover and a parody of a typical French menu, including such entrees as "Grand Vin Blanc du Bouledogue Français" and "Grilled Pork Tenderloin With Wild Mushroom Demi-Glace Pourquoi Pas."

The bill of fare was, in fact, exquisitely prepared French cuisine — an appropriate finish for, and superb accolade to, those who worked so hard to make this a perfect week. Although its membership roster is only about 300, the French Bulldog Club of America is disproportionately generous in its support of the breed, raising an unbelievable \$13,000 in a silent auction of French Bulldog memorabilia and artifacts that evening. These moneys are specifically dedicated to education and rescue. In addition, six Kirmse medallions were auctioned off, bringing in another \$4,000. And, for the third year in a row, the club voted to donate \$1,000 to the AKC Canine Health Foundation.

For anyone who loves the French Bulldog, it was particularly gratifying to see so many superb specimens in the ring at one time — and so many fanciers working together for the betterment of the breed. Thanks to the involvement of such dedicated breeders and exhibitors, the French Bulldog Club of America can surely begin planning another 100 rewarding years. Much like the club's first specialty in 1898, this centennial celebration in Kansas will be talked about for decades to come. 🐶

Anne Hier was an active Bulldog and French Bulldog breeder, exhibitor and judge before she joined the AKC staff in 1993. She has written about dogs since 1977 and has received awards as editor for both the "AKC Judges Newsletter" and "Judges Institute Workbook."

