

REFLECTIONS OF A NEW JUDGE

By: Pat Malone, APA and ABA Licensed Poultry Judge
(Reprinted from 1989 APA Yearbook)

I well remember how excited I was when I opened the mailbox April 7, 1984 and found an envelope addressed to JUDGE Pat Malone. I knew instantly I had passed the final exams for my American Bantam Association judges license. It was the culmination of two and one half years of hard work. Almost immediately I applied for admission to the American Poultry Association judge licensing program, and on April 2, 1986 I excitedly opened another letter witch informed me that I had earned the APA general license #1087.

It has been my privilege to judge nearly sixty poultry shows in the past five years. And I love it! This article has been "incubating" in my mind for some time now. I thought it might be helpful to share some reflections from my five years experience judging bantams and three years experience judge large fowl, water fowl, and turkeys.

REFLECTIONS TO POULTRY CLUBS/SHOWS:

1. Hire New Judges:

It's difficult to get a job without experience, but you can't get experience without a job. Judging is a skill, and the only way to develop a skill is through practice. Give new judges a chance, and give them room to grow. Challenge them with difficult classes. I shall always be grateful to shows who both trusted and challenged me with huge classes of Old English, waterfowl, etc. Rehire the competent for future show.

2. Know Judges Qualifications, who is licensed to judge what:

In my opinion, it is unfair to both the judge and the exhibitor to ask him to judge poultry he is not licensed to judge. And the cards are sometimes stacked against large fowl and water fowl exhibitors when on one of the judging team is licensed to judge other than bantam chickens. One judge out of three or four has little chance of convincing the others that the large fowl or water fowl champion should be champion of a show.

3. Be Reasonable in Your Expectations of How Many Birds a Judge Can Effectively Handle in One Day:

Three hundred and fifty (350) birds is a good day's work. Four hundred fifty (450) birds is a hard days work. Some shows want a judge to handle many more. Every exhibitor paid the full entry fee, and deserves his money's worth even if his entry is an inferior bird. The more birds a judge must handle, the less likely the exhibitor is to feel his birds were judged fairly. On the other hand, a judge who can only judge two hundred (250) birds a day is not pulling his fair share of the load, and puts tremendous pressure on the show and fellow judges.

4. Provide a Judge with a Show Catalog Prior to the Show:

I carefully prepare before each show, and I think most judges do. I need to know what specials are offered, what club meets are included, whether one or both Standards are to be used in judging, etc. I want to come prepared to do the very best job I can. A show catalog is essential.

5. Provide Competent Clerks Who Know How to Help a Judge:

A clerk is either a tremendous help or a real hindrance. Just anyone will not do. Younger children and novice breeders/exhibitors generally do not have the maturity and knowledge of what needs to be done. There is much more to clerking than just writing down how a judge has placed a class.

6. Provide Proper Coops for the Male of Longer Tailed Breeds:

Bantam coops, or worse still pigeon coops, do not allow Japanese, Leghorn, Rosecomb, Polish, Sumatra, etc males to be judged properly. They cannot extend their tails fully, and sometimes appear wry tailed or lazy tailed when in fact they are not. Those beautiful tail feathers which took so long to develop will be shredded and damaged beyond repair in a one day show.

7. Inviting vs. Bidding:

Both from the standpoint of a judge and from the standpoint of one who has served as show secretary for many poultry shows, I much prefer the invitation approach.

- A. Decide who you want to be your judges.
- B. Decide what you can afford to pay.
- C. Extend your invitations to judge.

I have missed opportunities to judge one show while being involved in the bidding process of another show. I have vowed that will never happen to me again. And so if I participate in bidding a show, I do so with the clear understanding that if I receive a firm invitation during that bidding process I will accept the invitation. And in some cases, judges who were not selected to judge do not receive the courtesy of being informed of the club's "no" decision. Be considerate of your judges. Issue invitations to judge including what you can pay, rather than asking a judge "what's the least we can get you for?".

REFLECTIONS TO POULTRY EXHIBITORS:

1. Be a Kind Winner and a Gracious Loser:

I will always be grateful to the late Ed Turpin who taught me this great lesson. While traveling to a show together many years ago he said to me, "You will win some that should have lost, and you will lose some that you should have won, but if you will consistently exhibit quality birds you are going to win more than your fair share. Either way, it's just a hobby, so don't act like a horse's tail".

I have found that even some winners are not happy, making the statement "you chose the wrong bird."

2. Refrain from Talking to the Judges While They Are Judging:

That is, of course, unless the judge initiates the conversation. Conversation and other distractions break a judge's concentration. I endeavor to shut everything out except the task before me. There will be plenty of time for conversation and fellowship later, but please, not while the judging is going on.

3. Every Judge Deserves Your Respect, Unless He/She Has Done Something Specific to Warrant Mistrust:

The many judges I have been privileged to work with are all people of integrity. If I ever encounter a judge who is not I will do everything possible to get his/her license revoked. Some exhibitors are suspicious of judges being involved in politics, cronyism, etc. as they go about their work. Maybe it exists, but I haven't seen it.

4. Don't Expect a Judge to Remember Exactly Why Your Bird was Third and Another Bird was Second, Without Looking at the Two Birds AGAIN:

If I handle four hundred (400) birds in a day there is no way I can remember why each decision was made. So don't wait to ask your questions until after the birds have been cooped out.

5. Believe It or Not, Judges are Human Beings, Too:

Yes, judges put their pants on one leg at a time just like everyone else. The best athlete in any sport has bad days. The same is true in every profession, and so it is with poultry judges. Consider a judge's overall record, rather than basing your opinion on one bad decision or one bad day when nothing seemed to go right.

REFLECTIONS TO FELLOW JUDGES:

1. Maintain Absolute Honesty and Integrity:

It is the Bible principle "avoid the appearance of evil" (1 Thess.5:22). Avoid anything and everything that is questionable. Give absolutely no appearance of being involved in cronyism, politics, etc. Criticism comes with the territory of being a judge, but let's not invite it.

2. Avoid Becoming Defensive When People Criticize Your Work:

The key word here is LISTEN. We want people to talk to us, not **about** us behind our backs. So we are going to have to listen, honestly and fairly. Instead of becoming defensive or angry simply say, "I don't know if I agree with your or not, but I am going to think about what you have said. Thank you for sharing your opinion with me.

3. Be a Growing Judge, Not A Know It All:

This is a pledge I have made to myself. It means I continue to study and learn. It means that I talk to knowledgeable exhibitors every chance I get, instead of waiting for them to come to me with questions. I go to them and ask for their input regarding how I placed a class. Not only have I gained valuable Knowledge from this approach, but many new friends as well.

4. Pay Special Attention to the Young and to New Breeder/Exhibitors:

They are our future. They are hungry and appreciative of information and help. Some judges feel put down when asked to do a junior show. To me it is an honor because it is an investment in the future of our hobby.

5. On Champion Row Our Task is to Choose the Best Bird (s):

I feel no compulsion at all to push the birds that I have judged for grand champion and reserve champion. Who judged what is irrelevant. We must guard against pushing for the birds we judged instead of choosing the very best two birds grand champion and reserve champion.

6. Treat All Birds the Same:

They deserve it. Every exhibitor pays the same entry fee. The time when you choose not to look closely at an obviously inferior bird or to make some derogator comment about a bird is the very time when that owner/exhibitor is watching and listening intently.

7. Develop Your People Skills:

Be courteous, respectful, patient, and kind in dealing with people. My goal is to be loved and respected all across our great nation like my friend and mentor, Dave Sherrill, Jr.

8. Avoid Criticizing Another Judge or Trying to Re-Judge His Class of Birds:

You know from your own experience that you don't know a lot of the variables of what he saw when he judged the class. Talk to him, but not about him behind his back. Send exhibitors directly to him rather than trying to second guess his decisions. We have our APA judges section newsletter "The Judges Stick" and other legitimate means to express criticism. The show room and other exhibitors are not the proper forum.

9. Try to Judge Ten to Twelve Shows or More Each Year:

Certainly, I realize this depends on invitations received. But judging poultry is a skill, and the only way a skill can be developed is through practice. It is the old principle of use it or lose it.

10. Work on the Weak Link in Your Chain:

"I don't know much about d'Uccles so I would rather not judge them," I heard a judge say. I appreciate his concern, but in one sense it is a copout. I know where I am weak and those are the area's where I am endeavoring to grow. Each one of us needs to concentrate on the weak links in his/her chain.

REFLECTIONS TO PROSPECTIVE JUDGES:

1. Go For It!!

It is worth achieving as a level of excellence even if you don't plan to be an active judge on the show circuit. The programs of both the APA and the ABA are excellent and are well administered. You will find many people ready to help you. I feel a debt to the many who patiently instructed and help me to earn the licenses I am privileged to hold. And I look forward to helping others in their study and apprentice programs

2. The Judge Licensing Programs Are Hard, But Fair:

They should be hard. C.P.A. after an accountant's name means something. Not every accountant can earn it. C.L.U. after an insurance agent's name means something. Not every agent can earn that designation. If just everyone could earn a judges license it wouldn't mean much.

3. Stick With Good Teachers When You find Them:

And when you find good teachers work with them over and over and over, even though you can get credit in the apprentice program only one time. Not every knowledgeable person has the ability to teach that knowledge to someone else. But you can learn valuable lessons even from the worst judge. I learned from one individual many valuable lessons about how **Not** to do it. I learned some pitfalls to avoid.

4. Take Time and Make a Way to Breed and Raise Major Breeds:

If your knowledge and experience is limited to few breeds and varieties you are going to find it very difficult to be a competent judge of all. I'm suggesting you can't learn everything you need to know about Modern Games, etc. from a book.

5. Try to Find Small Club or Junior Shows to Gain Some "Hands On" Experience:

Any experience you can gain is critically important. It is one thing to stand and watch a judge and try to second guess his decisions. It is entirely another when YOU are in that aisle and have to make those decisions yourself.

5. Don't Procrastinate Taking Your Final Exams:

I have watched others invest a lot of time and effort in the apprentice program, then procrastinate finishing. "I just haven't had time to study," is the reason I hear most often. The longer you wait the more you will lose. And it's no shame not to pass the first time. How many accountants pass the C.P.A exam on the first try. Not many. Finish what you start! "If at first you don't succeed try, try again."

