

Masterfully, Michael

Sighthound Review interviews Michael Canalizo



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In the Group ring at the Garden in 1995 with Ch. Tryst of Grandeur.

Your impression of well-known fancier Michael Canalizo likely corresponds to when you first encountered him.

In the 1960s, he was a junior handler, showing his family's Kandahara Afghan Hounds. As his parents, breeder-judges Jim and Lee Canalizo, grew more involved and successful, he evolved into an exhibitor and breeder, always aligned with their mentor, the incomparable Sunny Shay of Grandeur Kennels, a legend as much for the sheer theater of her presentation as the

whose competitive edge and dramatic presentation made him hard to beat, in a career that logged more than 300 Bests in Show. When Shay died in 1978 – of a heart attack while in the Best of Breed ring – she passed the reins to real-estate developer Roger Rechler, who continued the kennel on a large scale, with Canalizo as his handler and kennel manager. Canalizo's eventual retirement from the show ring coincided with the final bow of perhaps his most famous charge, Ch. Tryst of Grandeur, the black bitch who

exceptional quality of her Afghan Hounds. Her Westminster Best in Show with Ch. Shirkhan of Grandeur in 1957 was a first for the breed, and she continued to churn out famous hounds who lived up to their kennel suffix. In her final decade, Canalizo was there, watching and learning.

By the '70s, Canalizo was a professional handler

he piloted to the top-winning hound of all time, with 161 Bests in Show.

Fast-forward to 2000, when Canalizo made the natural progression to judging, approved for the Hound and Toy Groups, Best in Show, Juniors and several breeds in Sporting, Working and Non-Sporting. By the middle of that decade, he had segued to executive field rep for the American Kennel Club, departing the East Coast for the Pacific Northwest. Finally, in 2007, he took the position he still holds, director of AKC event management at the registry's Manhattan headquarters, where his red-letter responsibilities are coordinating much of the flagship AKC/Eukanuba National Championship and the burgeoning Meet the Breeds event in New York City.

Here, Sighthound Review publisher and fellow Long Islander Denise Flaim sits down with Canalizo, under whose tutelage she learned how to show her first show dog a dozen years ago. From his first show memories to his musings on great Afghan Hounds past and present, it's an up-close encounter with one of the sport's most high-profile fanciers.



What's your earliest dog memory?

Our sable Rough Collie, "Prince," from the Bellhaven Kennel in the early '50s. He was the family dog that withstood all the activity three toddlers could dish out.

And your earliest dog-show memory?

My first Westminster and Afghan Hound Club of America national specialty in New York City on the same weekend in 1962. I was all of nine years old. I've only missed one Westminster since.

Who was the first dog you showed?

Babu Bamn of Grandeur ("Tawny"), my parents' foundation bitch from Sunny Shay in 1962. She was the first dog we attempted to show. Tawny was spoiled, and in Afghan Hounds, that means "I don't do cold or wet, and I hate to be brushed."

She carried Int. Ch. Ali Khyber, Ch. Rudiki of Prides Hill and other foundation stock up close. She was first bred to Ch. Shirkhan of Grandeur, and since Sunny had breeder's terms in those days, all but one puppy went back to her. Of course, she had champions from the breeding, and we had one male that didn't turn out.



Winning Best of Winners and a three-point major with Torric of Ramura under Rev. Braxton Sawyer in 1971.

Tawny's next litter, by Ch. Khabira Laurel Ridge Khalib (linebred Turkuman), was much better. Her last was by a Ch. Sahadi Shikari son (linebred on Shirkhan), which also produced champions. Lee started to show the dogs from the second breeding, and somewhere during that time I crossed over from Juniors into the breed ring, where a goofy kid that ran like Groucho Marx could still win with a good dog.

Who was the first dog you finished?

Tawny's daughter from her second litter, Ch. Kandahara's Babu Tara, with four majors and a Hound Group First from the classes. "Tara" was a great mover with beautiful conformation, but she was also the type of bitch that always dropped her coat after a season. Also, being black in the days when "Big Reds" won everything didn't make for a quick finish. What she lacked in head properties (she was very refined



Showing the first dog he finished, Ch. Kandahara's Babu Tara, in 1970.

in muzzle), she made up for with her long neck and correct shoulders, coupled with lofty reach and drive when in action. Carol Duffy was one of the first to give her – and me – points. To this day, both of us can recall every detail of that day! Staten Island Kennel Club, 1968.

How did Lee and Sunny mold you into the dog man you are today?

Both had something every dog person should have: conviction and personality. With the right combination of both, one can be



Canalizo's mentor, Sunny Shay, with Ch. Boy Blu of Grandeur and Michele Billings, 1976. Photo Vicky Cook

very influential and successful.

Sunny had a sharp wit and a keen competitiveness that served her well in the show ring. She also had an uncanny ability to size up a situation ... any situation ... and would always land on her feet – for the most part – in the end. She had an instinctive eye for balance and type. She could also deliver a message better than anyone I knew, then or now. Later, when my relationship with her intensified, she shared much of what she knew, and I got a 40-year education in a five-year span ... Priceless!

Lee – and the Canalizo family – shared a special bond with Sunny, maybe because of Sunny's fondness for children and the novice in general. Sunny influenced all of us to never forget the path we once traveled and to protect newcomers from falling by the wayside. Lee has a marvelous rapport with her exhibitors and is proof that one can judge with a smile and a kind word without losing focus on finding the best dogs. Between Sunny and Lee, I have upheld their important stance on proper temperament above all.

On the other hand, I have a decidedly different reputation. I think exhibitors appreciate my ability to find the best breeding stock, but somehow I missed earning that "warm and fuzzy feeling" that comes from Lee. But I'm still working on that! We both often find the same dogs, for the same reason, and I can count on one hand important dogs that we were far apart on. It's also no secret that I have always allowed the scales to tip in favor of the Bred By Exhibitor dog or the owner-handler if all else was equal.

Dogs aside, what was Sunny's legacy?

Sunny knocked the entire dog world on its ear! Not a person of wealth or social status, she was a woman in "the" gentleman's sport, and her BIS win at Westminster in 1957 with an unknown dog became the Cinderella story that opened the doors to every breeder-owner-handler in the world.

Sunny bred to the wisdom of German Shepherd man Lloyd Bracket, developing what she would term "a pure strain within a breed." As times and practices changed, this type of breeding (needing large numbers of stock and close in-breeding) has been all but phased out. Sunny might have housed too many dogs by today's standards, but it wasn't uncommon for major kennels to have 50-plus dogs in those days.

For the Afghan Hound breed specifically, Sunny's BIS win brought great attention to the breed. The combination of a unique breed and her colorful demeanor was a publicity dream ... *Life* magazine covers, invitations to be the guest of Afghani heads of state, etc.

What lasting lessons did your father leave you?

Jim was proof positive that a hobby breeder who had to juggle responsibilities to his family could still find a way of continuing in the fancy. There is many an "unsung hero" who didn't seek the spotlight but had good, sound judgment when it came to interpreting and applying a breed standard. Many did not know that Jim had a detailed artistic eye, he could recreate an image almost lifelike, he had a natural talent for anything mechanical, he built speed boats, and could fix anything automotive or electrical. Most of all, he loved the dogs as much as any of us and didn't get involved in any of the unnecessary distractions the show ring could create.

You talk about being a less-than-polished handler in the beginning. What made you turn the corner?

Hard work! Handling lessons on the front lawn of Werner Sheldon of Khabira Afghan Hounds, a local breeder with good dogs and a Westminster Junior winner in his daughter Jennifer. He was also somewhat of a nemesis to Sunny.

Moving Moments



Tryst, Afghan Hound Club of America national, 1996. Holloway Photo



Blu Shah, early 1980s.



Saluki Ch. Sedeki Khahi Bud Karisma, Westminster, early 1980s. Callea photo



"TR," Triumph of Grandeur, 1990.



Triumph of Grandeur, Westminster, 1991.



Werner was stern and focused, with a tendency to overwork a situation, whereas Sunny just went with the flow. How I managed to stay close to both still eludes me. As I say this, I begin to realize that I might just be a combination of the two. Having the nickname "Kid Vicious" surely didn't come from my Sunny influence, but it might have from Werner's determination to keep attentive at all times.

You've taught handling classes for years, and are a booster of owner-handlers. What is the biggest mistake they make?

Lack of confidence in their ability. They have every advantage in having a good relationship with their dog that will come across in the ring. Almost every judge walked the same walk they did, and many fondly reminisce about that shared history; coupled with a good dog, that makes for a winning combination. I'm living proof.

How did you come to handle for the late Roger Rechler?

All my roads lead back to Sunny! Roger got his dogs from Sunny. I saw one at a specialty being ruthlessly picked on by locals who didn't realize Roger was standing next to them as his wife showed. I introduced myself to him, having heard vaguely from Sunny about her new "partner" in the dogs. I shared with him how these people

didn't know what potential lay hidden in the slow-to-develop Grandeur line, and to give the puppy time.

Roger took the initiative to engage me as a handler while Sunny was beginning to be limited in what became a very competitive breed where everything was run way too fast and she literally couldn't keep up. She took it personally when "catalog order" became an accepted practice. She could control things if she was first in line, and usually no one challenged her authority in that sense, but when judges and stewards got to calling the shots, it was a setback for her. My then-young legs, combined with her good dogs, were a hard thing to beat.



Showing Blu Shah for the first time after Sunny's death in 1978, under judge Babbie Tongren.

In 1976, Sunny and I started to travel to the shows together. The Blu Shah litter was born in 1977, and we had started to develop a plan to show this obvious hopeful. Blu Shah revitalized Sunny, as she was still recovering from the setback, both emotional and physical, of the kennel fire that nearly destroyed all her stock – 20 dogs. That night, some of her dogs were at Roger's kennel to be seen at a party he hosted to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Shirkhan's Westminster BIS show win. Fortunately, they were some of her best.

Fire played a tragic part in Sunny's life; after her house fire, she was also in the fire that nearly killed 90 Afghan Hound fanciers at the specialty dinner for the Afghan Hound Club of Southwest Ohio. That was Memorial Day weekend, 1978. On June 11, Lee brought Sunny to a local show, as I had a

The Quotable Afghan Hound

Courtesy of Michael Canalizo

THE AFGHAN HOUND COMMANDMENTS

1. Thou shalt remember that thou art an Afghan Hound, let no man change thee.
2. Thou shalt not walk like a duck, but with thy feet out straight.
3. Thou shalt not look as an owl, with large light eyes.
4. Thou shalt carry thy saddle with pride, for it is a true badge of thy breed.
5. Thou shalt carry thy tail high, and with ring.
6. Thou shalt not have a nose like unto a hawk.
7. Thou shalt move without thy hocks knocking.
8. Thou shalt carry thyself with power and grace, for thou art the hound of antiquity.
9. Thou shalt not believe that only thy color is proper, for all colors are equal.
10. Thou shalt not cover thy faults with excess coat, for thy faults shall be handed down to thy children and to their children.

-- Author unknown, found amid Sunny Shay's papers

"The difference between a good Afghan Hound and a great Afghan Hound is a half-inch more neck!"

Ned Kauffman, Holly Hill Afghan Hounds

"The Afghan Hound is a king! The King wears 'silk,' not 'cotton!'"

Reggie Nesbitt, Bombay Afghan Hounds

"Afghan Hounds 'own' the ground they stand on ... they don't 'sublet!'"

Michael Canalizo, Kandahara Afghan Hounds

"Look for more than just the side view of the dog gaitting. If extension is all you are looking for, get a Shepherd."

Sunny Shay, Afghans of Grandeur

"A good Afghan Hound will win some of the time ... a great Afghan Hound will win most of the time!"

Lois Boardman, Akaba Afghan Hounds

match assignment, only to see Sunny collapse and die in the ring while showing Ch. Boy Blu of Grandeur, after she had gone Winners with his son, Blu Shah.

That was, of course, a major turning point for me. Roger had the years of influence and education from Sunny on her line, he had the best of her stock, and together they had plans for a big future. Roger had a sharp mind, and knew the line would be successful if he followed what Sunny had charted out. He did, and the rest was history. My professional relationship with Roger continued for 25 years as one of the last full-time kennel managers who handled the breeding program and showed the dogs exclusively. Roger was as devoted to the Grandeur dogs as he was to Sunny, and he rarely strayed far from her directives. Sometimes that didn't make him very popular.

Do you regret that Grandeur exists now only in the history books? Is there any possibility that the kennel will be revived?

That decision to close the kennel was not an easy or capricious one. Roger and

I had many conversations on this, as it was a sore point for Sunny when at the top of her game no breeders who used Shir Khan ever came back again. They took her best and didn't always follow her advice on how to move forward, and she watched her line add some great things to the breed, but felt there was more that could or should have been done with extended breedings.

We discussed a "public" stud dog for which we would require two stud fees up front. The second was to do a repeat breeding or breed to a daughter. This would intensify the line and the end result would be to regain the top-sire status that Shir Khan held for 20 years.

But then we also realize that in five years all that would be homogenized and decided to let the record book stand. Roger's sons were all active, as was and is his wife Evelyn. Should a time come when his relations want to "carry on," there is that possibility. Indeed, one of Sunny's most-used tag lines in her ads was "Grandeur ... where the best is yet to come."



In the breed ring at Westminster, 1996. Photo Marcia G. Adams

What was it about "Tryst" (Ch. Tryst of Grandeur) that made her so successful?

Twenty-five generations of careful breeding gave Tryst her greatness. Was she the best one in the litter? Some would contest that ... she had three sisters who finished and produced BIS champions while she took her most endearing qualities on the road. One could say what one wanted about Tryst on a certain level, but as the poster child for perfection in temperament and showmanship, she was never challenged. Her ability to hold the correct shape of the breed at all times was seen in many of her forbearers. Most just weren't around to relate to the now-famous "Grandeur free stack," but champions Shir Khan, Boy Blu, Blu Shah, Triumph as well as most every dog in the kennel had that ability. Show dog or not.

The jacket ... I know the designer was Michael Kors ... What motivated you to wear it for Tryst's Garden appearance in 1996? Did you think it would have the impact it did?

I can't believe "The Jacket" is still so widely remembered! It came from an innocent comment the Hound Group judge, Dr. Robert Indeglia, made a few months before the 1996 Garden panel was released. He just commented on how cool some of the jackets I wore looked in the ring ... maybe saying it worked well with the breed, I'm not sure exactly. I saw it hanging in the men's store where Roger and I shopped, and of course they had only one, which just happened to be my size!

Well ... after the breed win, I had Anna Stromberg, my assistant at the time,



*"The Jacket" in all its sequined splendor at Westminster in 1996.
Photo Marcia G. Adams*

bring it up to the ready ring where I changed coats, and then all hell broke loose. Mike Scott told me I was nuts, the crowd went crazy, the TV crew told me the number of viewers who were tuning in kept jumping up, and Tryst gave the performance that rivaled the sequins. It was the *perfect* "Perfect Storm" ... until we had to go into BIS, that is ... I seriously thought to change because the Best in Show judge, Roy Holloway, was a good opinion from a good dog man who didn't have the same peculiar sensibilities as someone like Sunny. (She wore full black-and-white riding gear when in the Group at the Garden to win with her black-and-white Ch. Turkuman Nissim's Laurel in 1950.) I guess the fact that many can tell you who wore the sequined tuxedo than they can remember who won BIS vindicates the decisions of the night.

By the way, I still have it, and should I ever grace the green carpet on a February night, some might relive the moment.

Any superstitions in the ring?

When I was just a kid, I asked Sunny if I could pet Shirkhan. Afterward, she told me, "Kid, now you can say you pet the famous Ch. Shirkhan of Grandeur." Somewhere over Tryst's career we got into the habit of needing a "luck pet" from a kid at the shows. Maybe someday another top handler will be able to say they got their "start" with one of those pets!

Do you still have Tryst's DNA stored?

We had her cells harvested for cloning should the science ever be perfected. This came after many years of resistance to any artificial intrusion in the breeding process.

Sunny was "old school" – if a dog wouldn't breed or a bitch wouldn't conceive, you moved on, end of story. You worked with what was alive at the time and didn't mess with "Mother Nature." We only used frozen semen from dogs while they were alive, and usually because they might have been off showing when they were needed for a breeding. We stopped great show careers to continue the line – Tryst's dam, "Star" (Ch. Shahpphire of Grandeur), was the top-winning BIS Afghan Hound bitch at the time she was bred. One did what was needed to do ... Had we kept "Star" out longer, we might not have had a Tryst from her.



With Tryst's dam, "Star," Ch. Shahpphire of Grandeur, as a 12-week-old and a young adult.

What other Grandeur dogs did you show that made a deep impression on you?

Every dog had a special component. Blu Shah was a powerhouse that was a bit ahead of the curve. He was an important sire for the kennel. Twenty-five champions out of maybe six litters, all in house.

Blu Shah was pivotal in that he had to prove himself, to show that he was as good as we all envisioned and wasn't just going to win on sympathy over Sunny's death. Roger had very hard choices to make at that point. Soon after I finished Blu Shah and on the occasion of his first breed over the top Afghan Hound of the day, Roger was approached by Jane Forsyth to consider allowing her top client, Mrs. Cheever Porter, to back the dog as the last one before Jane and Bob were to retire. It was an incredible offer, but Roger decided to let me take a chance on Blu Shah's career. It was as if Sunny was telling him to give the kid a shot ... again. The rest is history: Blu Shah went on to break records for the most breed and specialty wins, and he became an international champion, with World Dog Show wins and titles in four countries.

Roger needed to test the strength of the line and did a breeding that was tripled on Blu Shah. This was the "Tri" litter that produced Ch. Triumph of Grandeur. "TR" was also a top winner, and he in turn sired many champions, one being Tryst, whose dam, Ch. Shahpphire of Grandeur, was a record-breaking BIS bitch sired by Blu Shah. Triumph's sire, Ch. Sharp of Grandeur, was inbred on Blu Shah, and he produced a handsome



Getting a "luck pet" from a child ringside was part of Canalizo's showing ritual with Tryst. This soggy caress later paid off in a Best in Show.

male we named Ch. Tried and True of Grandeur ("Scout"), who was gave us many great winners.

Scout was also the sire of an amazing dog I thought I would retire with, Ch. Too Good To Be True of Grandeur. All get by Scout had to have "True" in their names (Yours Truly, Rings True, True Love ... all of Grandeur), and this dog's name referred to the fact that he was the most beautiful black-masked silver; a color that was hard to get in the line, as we were so tightly linebred at that point. We called him "Carlos," after a dear friend, Carlos DeBango, who was too beautiful



Ch. Triumph of Grandeur going Best in Show in 1990.



*"Carlos,"
Ch. Grandeur's Too Good to be True.*

and retire as the top-winning hound of all time. Her sire is the next top-winning hound, with 87 Bests.

What special moments have you had in the ring as a handler?

Each dog had a few that got someone – the judge, the spectator or me – choked up. Blu Shah's 1981 breed win at Westminster, against all odds, under judge Robin Hernandez had the crowd screaming, and I realized then and there that anything can happen at a dog show.

TR's recognition as a youngster, with huge wins under my greatest mentors – Anne Rogers Clark at Louisville with over 5,000 dogs, and Frank Sabella a week later at International over a great lineup (read: future Westminster BIS winners) – made for life-changing thrills.

A BIS at Westchester under Edd Bivin was a turning point in Tryst's

and too young to leave us. The same fate befell my beloved dog Carlos, and I will never again name another dog after a person or dog lost too early.

Carlos had every expectation to surpass Tryst's career, and when his career was cut short, the decision to bring Tryst back out – after two litters – was made. I left the ring doing something that was never done before – showing a top dog (bitch) at eight plus years of age, with the end result of having her add more than 30 Bests in Show, to end her career total with 161

"You need to look at a dog as if you never saw it before" ... no matter how many times you beat it or rewarded it. Easy to say ... hard to do. But, once mastered, a very liberating feeling.

I would be remiss not to mention Tryst's Westminster appearances. Each one, win or lose, generated a reaction. I learned from Sunny to not let the pressure get into your head, at least while in the ring. I guess



An impromptu portrait of two great Hound bitches of their day – Ch. Tryst of Grandeur and Ch. Sundown Alabaster Treasure – taken after Best in Show at Shoreline in 1999.

one could see a certain confidence from the dogs and the performances we had. Tryst's wins there were huge – three breeds and three Group placements, including a first – but her "first" retirement performance, in 1997, was under Glorvina Schwartz, a long-time competitor. After a grueling competition, Glorvina awarded her BOB, and the two of us shared a very sensitive moment, allowing years of competitiveness to give way to mutual respect, and that win meant a lot personally.

career. Her national specialty win over a record entry under Bob Stein capped off her year as top dog all –breeds. And her BIS at Shoreline, having competed that day against the great Saluki "Treasure," Ch. Sundown Alabaster Treasure, had the crowd three deep on chairs, and might have been the only time I ever cried at a show. The BIS judge, Mrs. Thomas Powers, was a special hound opinion to me, and the Group judge, Ms. Virginia Lyne, had placed Tryst third in a group a month before this show. This opened my eyes to what another mentor, Steve Shaw, always pounded into my head:



On Tryst's subsequent performances in 1999 and 2000 as a veteran on the green carpet, the judges unfortunately never gave us – or the gallery – a chance to compete with the same intensity of the past, and they made short order of their decisions. That to me was a disappointment, because the show normally generated good, solid comparisons of great dogs, and I could never shake the fact that everyone knew Tryst would never lose a hotly contested competition and would always feel cheated this never came to pass on those days.

What other Sighthounds have you shown?

My association with Sighthounds in general exceeds those that I showed. I had my hands on some very good ones, one way or another. If I didn't actually show the dog, I wasn't shy in asking to "take a feel" by running it and stacking the dog. Some of my most memorable images of great Sighthounds came by virtue of competing with them, watching them in the ring, or from shared times around a whelping box or ex-pen listening to a good breeder share what they saw in the future. I was a known figure around the set-ups of many a breed, and to this day still follow some of the breeders' lines. It was easier to chat about dogs then ... we stayed at the shows until the end. That just doesn't happen nowadays.

Fortunately for me, I was able to see "up close and personal" many of the greatest Sighthounds of the last half-century. Many of them still serve as the template against which all need to be measured in my mind. Aroi Greyhounds, Eagle Irish Wolfhounds, Hewly Greyhounds, Pennyworth Whippets, Jen Araby Salukis, Sirhan Borzoi and more were kennels that had greatness in the ring during this important time for Sighthounds.

How has the Afghan Hound fancy changed since you started in it?

Afghan Hounds are unique in that many of the best and current breeders have been involved for more than 30 and 40 years. When the breed was in its heyday, competition was good for the breed. It was common for Afghan Hounds to have six or eight dogs in the top 20 Hounds.

I couldn't help but notice that the breed took a slide when some keen competitors retired or passed on. On the positive side, we now have competition from across the world, and that's adding new blood (no pun intended) to the



Tryst's Best in Show at Shoreline Dog Fanciers, 1999. Photo Kitten Rodwell

breed is becoming a caricature. Another mentor, Conni Miller, cast this warning in the early '70s, and it was ignored then, too! The Afghan Hound has allure because of the illusion the unique coat pattern holds, but to sculpt the breed into an obtuse outline defeats the standard's intentions.

The other major shift is that the breed is rapidly losing the requisite "square" shape. The drag of the breed is "low and long," regardless of how stylish that balance can be on the move. We want a certain posture that only a square dog with correct footfall of the rear feet landing in the place the front feet left can create. Hard to describe ... easy to see when presented.



Showing Sedeki Khahi Bud Karisma, Best of Winners at the Saluki Club of America National Specialty in 1979. Photo W. Bushman

breed. I can't recall how long it's been that the national specialty had an "all-American" finale in the top awards. There are many years when the international winners take most of the highest prizes.

If I were to single out one thing that needs to be confronted by all, at every level, it would be the disregard for presenting this breed in "its natural state ... no clipping or trimming." This has gotten out of hand the world over. I refused to give any obviously trimmed dog an Excellent when I judged at the World Dog Show in 2009. Every breed standard in every registry supports this directive, and because it is being disregarded

On the plus side, we have nearly rid the breed of the cottony coats that were ever present in the '60s, and it is seldom you see a bushy or sideways-carried tail. Only very recently did I see a major award go to a dog with a tail literally "resting on the back," which the standard cites as a "must never." For a breeder-judge to reward such a defect when it's widely known to be a long-lasting trait that is hard to breed out is amazement to me. I hope this is not a sign of things to come.

What did judging teach you?

It's an ongoing challenge to stay abreast of any breed you are entrusted to judge. Once you can overcome personalities and relationships and just "judge the dog with the best of your breeder's instincts," the rest is easy.

I think a good dog shows greatness when asked to compete against another, and if he fails to rise to the challenge on the day, then the decision is clear.

It takes a strong conviction to be totally objective, no matter what it might look like from another

perspective. It's fine to learn from a mistake and second-guess a selection. It's not fine to give a dog a win based on a past performance or record. One always needs to be mindful not to miss a "great one" lurking with the less-than-skillful owner. You're judging breeding stock first; the performance should be a measured addition.

A favorite judging story? A moment where you found a great one?

When I judged the World Dog Show in Bratislava in 2009, with an entry of 90 male Afghan Hounds, I had dogs in my ring that made me quiver. I let the breeder in me control the decision: Every detail was measured against the standard, and when the sum total of each great dog was added in my mind ... I had my winner.

This dog, Ch. Star't Cutting Trax of Jhanzi, went on to compete against another great one in the bitch winner selected by breeder-judge Stephen Wheeler, and he saw fit to award the male BOB. I was dead serious when I suggested that they be bred, and that came to pass, with good results.

Soon after Best in Show was judged – my breed winner had won the Group – I asked to take him for a "test drive." I took him around this now empty, massive ring just to experience what he felt like. It was a personal thrill to have shared that moment.

There was a similar moment of Crown Crest Afghan lawn with Sunny's Blu of Grandeur,

in the early '80s that Kay Finch Hounds had on Roger's front personal favorite, Ch. Boy a dog Kay gave a



specialty win to when Sunny was alive many years before. That moment still lives with me ... this very sensitive dog, who, under the skilled hand of one of Sunny's contemporaries (and sometimes fierce competitor – Kay was well into her 80s at the time), floated across the lawn displayed the very essence of the breed in one unforgettable minute ... never to be repeated again. Unless you experience moments like that in your life, it's hard to describe.

The AKC rep job seems like such a complex one, requiring you to know rules and what-ifs. Was that stressful?

Stressful wouldn't be a term I'd use. Different scenarios generated different reactions. Excitement to see brand-new judges do their first assignment ... and the wave of relief when they hit every mark knowing they are feeling very nervous being evaluated always made for a good day. Having to recommend calling off a show because of lightning and standing water in the rings may have made a handler mad, but I might have saved lives that day!

I loved every facet of the sport – and still do – and could relate to just about any situation. I felt good, sound judgment would always guide me to find the right answers. And if it didn't come quickly to me, I knew where to find the correct answer. The kennel club does a masterful job of preparing those in that position. There is more to it than meets the eye, and that department deserves more credit than it receives from the "customers."

Do you miss being on the other end of the lead?

I think I used good judgment in finding the right time and place to "shift gears" from handler to judge. I do believe that one can't be good at either unless one was also a good breeder. You can't show a dog unless you know the virtues or flaws of the exhibit, and you can't judge a dog well without the same insight.

As a handler, I know I gave some excitement to the Afghan Hound breed in particular, and to the sport in general, which I didn't realize until I retired and letters came in thanking me for inspirational performances that engaged and enlightened exhibitors to set goals with their own dogs.

As a judge, I experienced a similar reaction to my leaving the judging ranks (for the time being in the U.S.). One expression of how I was perceived did strike a chord with me. It wasn't from a Sighthound exhibitor, but a Scenthound breeder... she was quite upset at my going "inactive" as a judge and when asked why so emotional, she replied: "Mr. Canalizo ... you are the only judge I know that truly cared who placed fourth in a class!" I guess it was apparent to more than just me about that type of judging.

When I see a great "unit" of dog and handler, sharing one of those moments in time ... it does not get lost on me. I look for greatness when it presents itself, and I find it, and appreciate it more and more as I continue in the sport. 

