

Anatolian Shepherd Dogs – January 2016

What's the buzz, tell me what's happening...

I come to you in the warm, comfortable afterglow of the 2015 Anatolian Shepherd Dog Club of America national specialty. Our national specialties have long been called the Gathering of the Clan and that name is fitting for our large and far-flung group of fanciers.

This year was special because I brought a newcomer along with me on the long drive to Maryland and that allowed me the opportunity to see the specialty through her eyes. It was a lot like watching a kid walking into the living room on Christmas morning, and it made me start thinking about why we hold specialties.

Many people might ask 'What's in it for me? Why should I bother coming to a national specialty? Just what is the buzz all about? It's just another dog show, right?'. After all, the specialty might be a day or two drive from where you live (or even a five day drive as it was for one couple this year who drove from California to Maryland to attend). It can be expensive to put your day-to-day life on hold, and take a week off of work, all just so you can load up the van and haul the dogs to a show.

Here's why national specialties are worth the time and effort to attend, especially for a small-numbers breed like ours.

Nowhere else will you get the chance to see so many of the breed – of all ages and descriptions – in one place at one time.

You get the chance to sit in on the judges' education seminar and take part in the hands-on segment by bringing dogs for the judges to examine and critique with the presenters. I am over the moon any time a judge expresses an interest in learning more about our breed, and want to do anything I can to help out, so taking part in the hands-on is a no-brainer for me.

You get to see the pups born in the last year in the puppy sweepstakes classes and see how that stud dog you've had your eye on has produced when bred to different lines. Likewise, you get to see the veterans and get an idea of how different lines in the breed age. Who manages to hold together longest and is there a common thread amongst the dogs that age well?

You get to see old friends and make new connections in the breed. Most importantly, you get the opportunity to find new mentors and sometimes you find yourself becoming a mentor to someone new. Remember, our sport is predicated upon the mentoring model, and there is always something new to learn in dogs. Without these relationships the dog show community would wither and die.

Did I mention seminars? Specialties are a wonderful place to find breed seminars! 2015 brought a free seminar on reproduction by a vet who is a respected reproductive specialist and a

successful show dog breeder, having produced a Westminster winning dog. We also were treated to a brief presentation from one of the people who helped collect working specimens of Livestock Guarding Dog (LGD) breeds from their counties of origin and did much to promote the use of working LGDs in the United States.

Where else will you find all of this in one place outside of a national specialty? The answer is simple. You won't.

If you've never been to the national specialty, I encourage you to attend. Make plans to travel to Pleasanton, California for the October 21-23, 2016 Gathering of the Clan. We'll be looking for you there.

What's the buzz? It's all the folks dedicated to the breed planning for our next national. Volunteers welcome!

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