

POWER COUPLE!

Meet Dr. William and Zoila Truesdale, longtime AKC Canine Health Foundation supporters, and 2017 Nominees for AKC Breeder of the Year.

By Sue M. Copeland

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What happens when you combine a lifelong passion for dogs with a generous spirit, and a level of energy that's the envy of many? You get a dynamic duo in the form of Dr. William (Bill) and Zoila (Tina) Truesdale.

Bill, a veterinarian who specializes in reproduction at his clinic in Seekonk, MA, comes from a family of Boxer breeders. In 1987, he and Tina established Hi-Tech Kennel, which has produced numerous champions and Best In Show winning Boxers, with the help of their handler, Kim Calvacca. The couple's outstanding achievements in the Boxer breed earned them the honor of 2017 Nominees for Breeder Of The Year (Working Group).

In addition to Boxers, the Truesdales have had great success with Affenpinschers, including a 2013 Westminster Best In Show with "Banana Joe" (GCH Banana Joe V Tani Kazari), handled by Ernesto Lara.

Outside the ring, Bill and Tina are active in their breed clubs (see, "Giving Back"), as well as their other passion: the AKC Canine Health Foundation (CHF).

Bill is a past CHF director; Tina is a current director. Tina chairs CHF's annual gala, Canines & Cocktails, which will be held Thursday, December 14, in conjunction with the AKC National Championship Dog Show, presented by Royal Canin, in Orlando, Florida. (For more information, go to www.akcchf.org.)

For their generous efforts on behalf of CHF, the couple was presented the AKC Canine Health Foundation 2010 President's Award. The award is presented to individuals, clubs, or organizations who demonstrate

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excellence in advancing the health of purebred dogs.

"They have contributed not only monetarily—often anonymously—but have also devoted their energies, intelligence, and spirit, helping engage others in our quest," said then CHF Chairman, Cindy Vogels.

For Bill and Tina, their energy is fueled by a passion for purebred dogs. They agreed to carve out time from their hectic schedules to answer a few questions about their lives in and out of the dog world.

How and where did you meet?

TINA: We met at my roommate's New Year's Eve party, in 1973, in Springfield, MA. It was love at first sight! I grew up in Costa Rica with lots of animals, they were not pets—they were considered farm animals. But I love animals, so I took to Bill's lifestyle immediately: I loved that his dogs are part of his household.

BILL: It's kind of ironic, because I was actually afraid of dogs early in my life, following a dog bite. My parents wanted to help me get over my fear, so when I was about 13, they offered to get a puppy. My brother wanted a German Shepherd. My sister wanted a cat. I wanted a Bulldog.

My Dad came up with a compromise: a Boxer. He found top breeders in our home state of Michigan, Ray and Jean Anderson, who sold us a puppy bitch that we named Carol. I fell in love with her; my fear evaporated. Jean encouraged me to take Carol to a puppy match. I had no idea what I was doing, but with me on the lead, Carol beat 57 other puppies to go Best In Match. I thought I was Michigan state champion!

I was hooked. That began a life of showing, handling and breeding dogs. It also sparked my interest in animal husbandry, which led me to pursue veterinary medicine. Tina fell in love with the dogs and dog shows after we met; we married in September of 1974.

How did you first get involved with the AKC Canine Health Foundation?

TINA: It was about 24 years ago. I was at a dog show in Chicago. Our handler, Kim Calvacca, suggested I go with her to a CHF function. There, I met Catherine Bell, who was on the CHF Board of Directors. I was really impressed with CHF's purpose, and with its people.

I came home and said to Bill, "CHF is the best thing to happen to dogs!"

Over the years, we donated to CHF's annual gala. I began to co-chair the gala with Catherine in 2006. I also helped CHF put on functions during Westminster KC dog show in New York City for about 16 years. I took over as chairman of the annual gala in 2010, then became a board member in 2015.

BILL: I became involved because of Tina's love for CHF. I also have an obvious interest in canine health. And, our breed has a number of health issues we'd love to resolve. Bob Kelly, who was a CHF Director, as well as its Treasurer, invited me to join the Board in 2002; I served on the Board until 2014. My interest is still there. I live vicariously through Tina!

How does it feel to win Westminster Kennel Club Best In Show?

TINA: Surprised! It takes a great dog to win, but your dog is also in a line up with other great dogs. You realize part of it is being in the right place at the right time with the right dog.

BILL: We expected another dog to win that year. But when Banana Joe ("Joey") won

the Toy Group, and the other dog went second in his Group, Tina and I looked at each other and asked, "Might we have a chance?"

Then, when Joey went Best In Show, we just stood there, paralyzed. We looked at each other again and said, "What just happened?!"

We celebrated that night, and did the media tour the following day. We were on Cloud 9 for a week. We expected the attention to die down quickly, but it didn't.

Not only did the media keep coming around, but any time we did a public event with Joey, people would line up around the block to meet him.

These weren't dog show people. They were people who had seen him on TV, or had read about him. Banana Joe reached people outside the dog-show world, and connected with them. It was amazing.

How did you get involved in Affenpinschers?

TINA: I was lying in bed watching Westminster on TV and saw an Affenpinscher in the Toy Group. I said to Bill, "Look at that little monkey dog! I want one!"

That was 1987. We tracked down the

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Giving Back

THE TRUESDALES SAY ONE OF THEIR BIG JOYS IN THE DOG WORLD IS GIVING BACK. HERE'S A SAMPLING OF THE ORGANIZATIONS TO WHICH THEY DONATE THEIR TIME, ENERGY, AND MONEY.

- The American Boxer Charitable Foundation. Bill is one of the founders, and currently serves as president.
- Morris & Essex Kennel Club. Tina serves on the board.
- AKC Canine Health Foundation. Bill joined CHF as a Board Member from 2002 to 2014; he also served on the Grants Committee. Tina has been on the Board since 2015. She co-chaired CHF's annual fundraising gala with Catherine Bell from 2006 to 2009. She took over as chairman of Canines & Cocktails in 2010.
- CHF's Founders Society. Both Bill and Tina are members.
- American Boxer Club. Bill and Tina are active members.

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breeder of the dog I saw on TV, but she didn't really know us, so seemed reluctant to sell us a puppy. About 10 years later [RIGHT?], at a show in Greenwich, CT, I walked by Peter Green and Beth Sweigart's set-up. They had an ex-pen with Affenpinscher puppies in it!

I didn't know Peter and Beth at the time, so I asked our handler, Kim, to introduce me. She did, and they let me meet the puppies. I fell in love with a puppy boy named Cosmo.

When I asked Beth if he was for sale, she said, "No." But I wasn't going to take "no" for an answer! I called her every week—I kind of stalked her. Finally, Beth sold him to me.

Long story, short: Cosmo (CH Yarrow's Super Nova) ended up being Number One Toy, with Beth as his handler. And he won the Toy Group at Westminster in 2002 with Beth! I started to breed Affenpinschers, along with our Boxers. Banana Joe is related to Cosmo.

And, our current bitch, GCHS CH Yarrow Hi-Tech Drills N Skills ("Fiona"), is Joey's granddaughter. Fiona is the Number One Toy right now; she's handled by Ernesto.

What is the greatest honor you've received for your work with dogs?

TINA: Without a doubt, it was the CHF President's Award we won in 2010. Ribbons and trophies are wonderful, but canine health means so much to us. We are honored to be able to help CHF move forward in a positive way.

If you could cure three canine diseases or afflictions, what would they be?

BILL: I'd have to say the first

would be cancer. My breed club, the American Boxer Club, along with several other breed clubs, is working with the AKC Canine Health Foundation to find a cure for hemangiosarcoma, an aggressive and fatal form of cancer in dogs. I think and hope we're on the cusp of discovering early diagnostics and treatment. Dr. Jaime Modiano at University of Minnesota is leading the study.

Personally, for my breed, the second would be degenerative myelopathy (DM), which is a neurodegenerative disease similar to Lou Gehrig's disease in humans. Boxers are among the highly susceptible breeds, although it certainly affects other breeds. The American Boxer Charitable Foundation, of which I'm a founder, is working through CHF to support DM research. Dr. Joan Coates at University of Missouri is leading that research. I'm excited about it, and hopeful that we'll see changes in the way we treat DM in the next five years or so.

The third disease I'd love to see eradicated is arrhythmogenic right ventricular cardiomyopathy (ARVC), also known as "Boxer cardiomyopathy," because of its prevalence in our breed. Fortunately, Dr. Kathryn M. Meurs of North Carolina State University, through CHF-funded research, has developed a test for the genetic mutation associated with ARVC. While ARVC is a genetically complex condition, the test can help guide breeders to help reduce its prevalence.

What do you like to do when you're not involved in the dog world?

BILL: We love to do a lot of diverse things. But what we always seem to do is dog stuff!

TINA: IT's the dogs that get us up and moving every morning. We take

long walks with them. We go to handling classes. We are always working with or thinking about our dogs!

BILL: I have an app on my phone that tells me who has won what at the shows that day. Before I have my glass of wine at night, I have to check that app! It's definitely a compulsion. Tina teases me about it, and tells me to put the phone away. But not before she asks who won!

What is the theme of this year's AKC CHF Canine's & Cocktails gala?

TINA: It will be the Roaring 20s. We will have Flappers dancing, and a band playing 1920s music. We're hoping people will dress up! It's going to be fun. So far, ticket sales are up over last year. We are proud to be able to help raise money through the gala for CHF. This function is for everyone, and really helps fund research for dogs' health.

What does the future hold for you and your dogs?

TINA: I've said to Bill, "You know, maybe we should tone down all this breeding." Bill says back, "Get real, Tina! This is your life!"

BILL: That's right. We had our "last litter" about 10 litters ago!

TINA: It's what we do. We keep trying to get better at breeding better dogs, and we thank everyone who has helped us along the way. We strive to produce good, healthy dogs and place them with individuals and families that love them as much as we do.

We just want to benefit others in a positive way from day to day. Bill does that every day at his clinic. We also try to do it every day through our dogs and through CHF and other great organizations. It is a purposeful life.