

## Mike Kowalczuk

Reese and he agreed to sell me one of his upcoming puppies. Schultz came into my life a few months later.

I decided I wanted to get more involved with the breed so I joined the Chicago Club. At my first meeting everyone there was friendly and welcoming to their group. My first volunteer job was to bring my Schultz to participate in the Irish Terrier breed booth at the International Kennel Club of Chicago show. It was a great time talking to the public and showing off my boy. While there, JP asked me if I would consider showing Schultz as he thought he was a good one. I decided to give it a try and about a year later my boy became Ch. Jackpot's Mick Schultz.

All these positive experiences inspired me to get more involved with the breed and the various Irish Terrier Clubs. I joined the Irish Terrier Club of America and made the big leap of getting a bitch to start a breeding program. When they heard of my interest in breeding, Nancy Petersen reached out to me to see if I was interested in a puppy she and Bruce had bred. Her name was Taylor. That was in 1999 and was the start of a 17 year friendship with Bruce and Nancy. They were my mentors not only when it came to breeding but also in volunteering for the clubs. Together we bred 7 champions that descended from my Taylor.

For better or worse, Bruce and Nancy's encouragement (or should I say nudging?) resulted in my becoming President of the Irish Terrier Club of America in 2004. My fondest memory of that experience came at Montgomery 2005 when Judy LaBash showed Harmony in the Parade of Champions. Judy understood what a change Harmony brought about to my life and she invited me to pose with them in the show photo they took. It was a very special moment to me as it brought my journey in Irish full circle.

My involvement with Irish has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life. It's not due just to the dogs but also to the great friends I have made over the years. While many are no longer with us like Bruce and Nancy, Judy, Sue Griffiths and Barb Heine, I cherish my memories of them and always look forward to the new friends I will encounter in the years ahead.



Mike Kowalczuk, Judy LaBash with Harmony, Judge Nancy O'Neal and Peg Gill.