

IRISH TERRIER CLUB OF CHICAGO - A HISTORY

BY

Suzanne N. Griffiths - July, 2002

The Irish Terrier Club of Chicago has a long history.

It was the first regional specialty club to be recognized by the Irish Terrier Club of America, and is the oldest regional specialty club still active today in the United States. Permission to form the Club was requested from the Irish Terrier Club of America in 1918, but no action was taken until 1926. With few exceptions (notably during WWII) the Club has conducted an annual specialty ever since.

In 1952, while Ed O'Keefe (Shannon View) was Club president, the secretary-treasurer Joe Corcoran (Castlebar) died, and his son John (then only 14) took over as secretary-treasurer, with the help of his mother, Beatrice Corcoran. John held the position for several years, and it is his work in these offices which was responsible for keeping the Club going.

The Club's annual shows were held in several venues, ending up with the classes for Irish Terriers at the International Kennel Club of Chicago show being designated as the annual Irish Terrier Club of Chicago specialty. During these years, a dinner and annual Club meeting were held after the judging, always at the Stockyards Inn adjacent to the show venue at the International Amphitheater on Halstead Ave. Neither building is now in existence.

Ed O'Keefe was succeeded as president by Rudolph Jensen (Nutbrown,) and during Rudy's tenure, the Irish Terrier Club of Chicago joined other area terrier clubs to form the Great Lakes Terrier Association in 1969, the ITCC being one of the charter members.

Occasional matches were given in the summer, located at several different places, mostly at the homes of club members who had space to accommodate the function. After the GLTA was formed, matches were held annually in August at the Lake County Fairgrounds, which also was the location of the annual Club specialty in June.

After Rudy's death, Ed Chojnowski (Shannon Mist) became president, and the Club acquired its beautiful banner. This banner was designed and made by Ed's sister. On Ed's death, Tom Johnson (Tyterry) became president. Following Tom, Suzanne Griffiths (Greenbriar) was elected to the office. Sue had served many years as secretary, during the Chojnowski-Johnson presidencies. During these years, John Best (Blackacre) was the Club's treasurer.

The treasurer's and secretary's Minute Book which unfortunately has disappeared had the early history.

Pat Kostal (Airlies) became president in 1992, and at this point the Club adopted a new Constitution and By-Laws. Formerly the membership had elected a Board made up of six members from among whom the officers and board members-at-large were then chosen by consent of these six. The major change at this point was that now each officer was elected by the membership, and the office of secretary was split into a corresponding secretary and a recording secretary, thus making the Board now a body of seven - the two board members being elected by the membership as were the officers. The annual meeting was designated for a particular time of year - May - rather than being held at the time of the Club's specialty show.

Over the years the Club has grown and evolved. It continues to do so. In addition to the members showing their Irish in the conformation ring, many members are enjoying the performance events: obedience, tracking and agility. Rumor has it that even "flyball" is catching interest. All of these activities can be pursued competitively or just for the sheer fun of it. I don't want to fail to mention our working dogs on the farm, in the field, for hunting, and of course, for therapy. Irish Terriers are, in fact, a versatile breed.